



Implications of Artificial Intelligence on Alternative Journalism Practice in South East Nigeria

Dr. Rosemary Itaman Urukpe¹, Ojokoh Oyinmiebi Harriet², Dr. Stella Adannaya Nelson-Ogbaeja³, Dr. Nelson Iroabuchi Ogbaeja⁴

^{1,2}Department of Mass Communication Wellspring University, GRA Benin City

³Department of Mass Communication Evangel University, Akaeze, Ebonyi State

⁴Department of Mass Communication Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki

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ABSTRACT

The emergence and fast-growing nature of artificial intelligence age in journalism practice in developing countries like Nigeria required a multi-faceted approach, piloted through research and innovation to handle. This study was carried out to examine the effects of application of artificial intelligence on alternative journalism practice in South East Nigeria. With three specific objectives focused on the nature, role and effect of artificial intelligence on alternative journalism practice in South East, technological determinism theory was adopted. The population was crafted from registered and practicing journalists in South East Nigeria that has 1,450 in number and a sample size of 385 determined from it via Australian Scientific Calculator. Questionnaire was designed and administered via online mechanism and data collected were analysed using descriptive method. Results obtained showed that AI is a technology that facilitates professional and citizens' journalism practice. It was recommended that AI use for AJ should be regulated, guided and appropriately applied in line with journalistic standard in South East Nigeria.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Alternative Journalism Practice, Implications

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of Artificial intelligence in the field of mass communication has brought a lot of technological advancement that affected the nature and mode of operations of mass media channels and platforms. Makinde & Kalu (2025) reveal that the innovation of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies has made the future promising by bringing new prospects for advancement in all areas of life. One aspect of the advancement is the application of artificial intelligence on alternative journalism practice. Journalism practice in recent times is facing some technical and technological challenges as a result of the introduction of artificial intelligence. Dodds, Zamith & Lewis (2025) write on the knowledge level of some practicing journalists whereby many of them were lacking full knowledge of the phenomenon in the present age. This shows that some journalists do not have the technical know-how about artificial intelligence.

The development of artificial intelligence came as a result of innovations and advancements in technology in the mass media sector. This has made the idea of digitalization in journalism has come to stay. AI emerged as a tool used to make more news contents accessible through the creation of realistic and accurate translations of articles (Arguedas and Simon, 2023). The AI system can act as interpreter of information by summarizing and synthesizing journalistic contents for the reach and consumption of mass media audience (Ufarte-Ruiz et al., 2023). In the same vein, AI can act as an information dissemination agent for human journalists. Alternative journalism frequently exposes biases, inaccuracies, or omissions in mainstream reporting by providing varieties of information that are often underrepresented (Resendez et al., 2023).

On the other, the emergence of alternative journalism came as a grassroots, non-corporate approach to news creation that bypasses mainstream media conventions to provide diverse, often oppositional, viewpoints information to the audience. It emphasizes on community participation, activism, and the use of citizen journalists to report underrepresented issues, frequently rejecting traditional objectivity in favour of advocacy and, first-person testimony. These affect the credibility, factuality and authenticity of information. Atton & Hamilton (2009) reveals that the work of alternative journalism is not only concerned with who is able to be a journalist, but also with representing the interests, views and needs of underrepresented groups in society. Thus, alternative journalism also tends to be organised in non-mainstream ways, often non-hierarchically or collectively, and almost always on a non-commercial basis.

However, the integration of AI into alternative journalism practice seems to be a welcome development due to its expected impact and contribution in reshaping and rebuilding the mass media industry cum profession in the present digital society. For instance, Atton & Hamilton (2009) observe that artificial intelligence in journalism represents a transformation phase that seems poised to embed itself within journalism's norms and routines. As artificial intelligence tools and processes become more ubiquitous, they may lose their novelty and instead be seen as just another way of doing journalism. This poses question to the original practicing standard in journalism.

Alternative journalism practice encompasses a citizen journalism, independent online platforms, and niche digital media which have a profound impact on the modern media landscape by acting as a direct counterpoint to mainstream news/information gathering and dissemination while influencing its practices and audience engagement. Thus, practitioners of alternative journalism seek to redress what they consider an imbalance of media power in mainstream media, which can result in the marginalization of certain social and cultural groups and movements.

While AI seems to be complicating the ideal order of the existing professional, social, political, and economic structures in journalism, Tom, Rodrigo & Seth (2025) opine that it also offers new ways to realize desired journalistic objectives that were previously considered to be impractical, if not impossible. Alternative journalism may be home to explorations of individual enthusiasm and sub-cultural identity just as much as it may be home to radical visions of society and the polity. If conventional media power is indeed at stake in its varied principles and practices, it is imperative to study how it relates to the dominant ideology and practices of mainstream journalism.

It is based on the above ground that this study was carried out to investigate the effects of Artificial intelligence on Alternative journalism practice in a socio-political and economic developing society like Nigeria.

Problem of the Study

The increasing usage of artificial intelligence by classes of members of the Nigerian society has brought some criticisms and ill feelings against ideal journalism practice. It has equally affected the performance of conventional cum mainstream journalists in the discharge of their roles in the society (Tom, Rodrigo & Seth, 2025). However, due to the high rate of fake news and unverifiable flow of information through various social media platforms, it has become a serious concern to know the views or position of professional journalists with a view of finding ways of controlling the free flow of untruthful and unbalanced dosages of information. This is the problem this study sought to solve so as to restore public confidence on online news flows and as well rebuild trust on journalism practice in South East Nigeria.

Research Objectives

The general objective of this study is to ascertain the effects of application of artificial intelligence on alternative journalism practice in South East Nigeria. The specific objectives are:

1. To ascertain journalists view on the nature of alternative journalism practice in South East.
2. To find out the role of artificial intelligence on making alternative journalism practice in South East.

3. To determine the effect of artificial intelligence and alternative journalism on mainstream journalism practice in South East.

Research Questions

Base on the above research objectives, the following are research questions of this study:

1. What is journalists view on the nature of alternative journalism practice in South East?
2. What is role of artificial intelligence on making alternative journalism practice in South East?
3. What is the effect of artificial intelligence and alternative journalism on mainstream journalism practice in South East?

Significance of the Study

The relevance of this study cannot be overemphasized. The usefulness and benefits of this study are of three dimensions. Firstly, it will serve as a working document to journalists, mass media institutions, the government and social media platforms coordinators on the effects of Artificial Intelligence on Alternative Journalism in South East Nigeria.

Secondly, this study will serve as a library cum research material for scholars in this field for advancing knowledge about this study. Thirdly, this study will be an eyes opener and a practical guide to journalists and social media news audience on the nature and application of artificial intelligence on alternative journalism practice in South East Nigeria.

Scope of the Study

This study on artificial intelligence on alternative journalism practice in South East Nigeria was designed to focus on the opinion of practicing journalists in region on the applicable effect of Artificial intelligence on Alternative Journalism in South East Nigeria. Other aspects of journalism practice were not within the scope.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Concept of Alternative Journalism

Alternative journalism is a new but fast-growing phenomenon in the society as a form of mass media practice. Alternative Journalism by Atton & Hamilton (2008) investigates and analyses the diverse forms and genres of journalism that have arisen as challenges to mainstream news coverage. From the radical content of emancipatory media to the dizzying range of citizen journalist blogs and fanzine subcultures, this book charts the historical and cultural practices of this diverse and globalized phenomenon. This exploration goes to the heart of journalism itself, prompting a critical inquiry into the epistemology of news, the professional norms of objectivity, the elite basis of journalism and the hierarchical commerce of news production

The nature and application of Alternative journalism affect all aspects of journalism practice due to its features and capabilities. Study reveals that alternative journalism creates journalists who are working for the interest of their communities and produce news that is relevant to those communities. It attracts information that arrests the interests of public collaboration and support. The practices of alternative journalism are opposed to the dominant, professionalized media practices, which tend to marginalize or misrepresent the majority of social actors (Guanah, Agbanu, & Obi, 2020).

Alternative media are viewed as people's or audience media that have wide range of media production activities embedded in everyday struggle by communities and individuals. For Fuchs (2010), alternative media in the societal point of view can be regarded as the communicative dimension of the counter-public sphere. Alternative media challenges the dominant capitalist forms of media production, media structures, content, distribution and reception and is characterized by critical perspective and content. In addition, alternative media has the potential to stimulate public debates. Therefore, it is frequently connected to protest movements that make use of these

media for information, communication, coordination and cooperation processes. There is oppositional content which forms alternatives to the dominant repressive approaches reflecting the rule of capital, patriarchy, racism, sexism, nationalism and so on. Such content includes oppositional ideas, counter-information and counter-hegemony that represent the voices of excluded social groups.

Atton (2002) in his work on “Alternative Journalism” in 2009 investigates and analyses the diverse forms and genres of journalism that have arisen as challenges to mainstream news coverage. From the radical content of emancipatory media to the dizzying range of citizen journalist blogs and fanzine subcultures, this book charts the historical and cultural practices of this diverse and globalized phenomenon. This exploration goes to the heart of journalism itself, prompting a critical inquiry into the epistemology of news, the professional norms of objectivity, the elite basis of journalism and the hierarchical commerce of news production.

The alternative journalism has affected conventions of news sourcing and representation; the hierarchical and capitalised economy of commercial journalism; the professional, elite basis of journalism as a practice; the professional norm of objectivity; and the passive role of audience as receiver (Atton, 2009). This is despite the fact that the study of community and alternative media forms has blossomed over the past 10-15 years, highlighting different ways that journalists working outside the mainstream have been able to engage their readers and facilitate public involvement during times when people were increasingly turning away from traditional journalism, and refusing to participate in broader democratic activities. This paper attempts to tackle an apparently simple concept, to define what it is about alternative journalism that makes it different. While discussions around this issue have continued for some time now (Atton & Hamilton, 2008; Atton 2009)

Recent study on alternative journalism reveals that Nigeria is thriving through digital platforms, citizen reporting, and hashtag activism, challenging the monopoly of mainstream media by focusing on social justice, grassroots voices, and satire. Driven by smartphones and social media, this landscape thrives on platforms like X (formerly Twitter) and YouTube, acting as a crucial watchdog during elections and in cases of corruption (Taylor and Francis, 2026)

Forms of Alternative Journalism in Nigeria

Eziefula (2025) in her study investigated the trend of alternative journalism facilitated by hashtag activism in Southern Nigeria and how it has been used. Five forms of alternative journalism existing in Nigeria are stated as follow:

1. **Citizen Journalism:** Ordinary citizens use smartphones and social media to report on local issues, breaking news, and corruption, bypassing traditional media gatekeepers.
2. **Hashtag Activism:** Social media campaigns like #EndSARS (2020) and #EndBadGovernance (2024) serve as powerful, decentralized reporting tools used to highlight injustice and mobilize social change.
3. **Satirical Journalism:** Programs such as Keepin’ it Real with Adeola and Pararan Mock News use humor and satire to critique political leaders, reaching wide audiences on Facebook and YouTube
4. **Guerrilla Journalism:** A tradition stemming from the 1990s military era, this involves militant, radical, or undercover reporting, often utilized by journalists to expose government malpractices.
5. **Community-Based Reporting:** Localized reporting, such as "Avant Garde" journalism in the Ijaw riverine communities, focuses on environmental degradation and local stories overlooked by mainstream news outlets.

It is important to note that the prevalence of alternative journalism has given rise to three journalistic factors namely: a. **Ethical and Legal Lapses & Fake News:** Citizen journalism is often criticized for a lack of professional training, ethical standards, and the spread of unverified information, b. **Government Repression:** Despite the return to democracy, activists and citizens engaging in alternative journalism often face pressures from governmental authorities and c. **AI and New Technology:** The adoption of AI is becoming a new trend in

newsroom activities, though it presents challenges regarding professional standards and ethics (Taylor and Francis, 2026).

Eziefula (2025) reports that alternative journalism has provided an avenue for alternative voices to make themselves heard. Apart from being a form of media production, Harcup (2013) sees alternative journalism as a form of education that teaches the important lesson those ordinary persons could help them with what they expected professionals to do (Harcup 2013). Framing and gatekeeping of information is in the hands of a network of social media users; comprising of a greater majority of ordinary individuals and few elite communicators. This debunks the myth that alternative journalists are only comprised of ordinary, illiterate citizens.

Alternative journalism has been massified to include a large number of people which was previously not feasible but has become possible today due to the ubiquity of digital technologies and hashtag activism (Eziefula, 2025). The common denominator is that their channel is not an established or institutionalized channel for disseminating such information (Ofori-Parku & Moscato 2018). Farooq (2020) makes a distinction between citizen and alternative journalism by describing the former as constituting “non-professionalized, user-generated news-gathering and dissemination practices undertaken by ordinary citizens and professionals alike. He describes the latter as citizen discursive spaces that ordinary individuals and small groups can be in command of...can function as vital and pervasive undercurrents and reservoirs of political commentary and potential mobilization (Farooq 2020).

Artificial Intelligence in Journalism

The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies have become an important part of the field of journalism that has led to radical transformations (Galily 2018). Omebring (2016) see the technology as an objective alliance to change the professional practices of journalism, along with changing journalist skills. Artificial intelligence (AI) is changing present day journalism (Nnamdi & Anyanwu, 2021). Technology has become an essential requirement of contemporary media production. How does technology fit in the news production? According to Mark et al (2017), AI increasingly assists in reporting, content creation, distribution, and audience interaction, to name a few examples. Recently, crowd sourcing, brainstorming, and fact-checking tools are being developed to aid data information gathering and, particularly, to structure relevant data. Among contemporary newsrooms, automation is a key tool in competing favourably in the news industry.

The AI time and usage in journalism is not just the future of journalism; it is already part of its present tool of operation. Journalists around the world are increasingly becoming engaged with artificial intelligence as part of their technological tool in their day-to-day work (Dodds et al., 2025), and managers of journalistic outlets are making decisions about the future of their organizations with AI in mind (Simon, 2024). While changes intricately tied to technological development aren't novel in the news industry (Hermida and Young, 2021), the recent impart of using AI to fast-track and advance journalism practice, including its risks and dangers to news value and credibility.

Consequently, AI appears to be diffusing within journalistic spaces in a way that has notable distinctions from past technologies—in part because journalists for years have expressed an unusual level of excitement for using AI to accelerate and augment their work, even as they expressed some unease about the existential threat it could pose for the nature of producing media (Lind'en, 2017). Indeed, developments in AI—and generative AI, in particular, because of its capacity to produce humanlike content at scale in ways that threaten some of journalism's core creative capabilities. Guzman and Lewis (2024) present a pivotal moment in the future of news, and one that may shape what counts as journalism, how news is made, and how people access and make sense of it.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted descriptive survey design as a suitable method for gathering vital facts from the appropriate respondents on the subject matter of this study. The population of this study, 1450 was drawn from the number of registered and practicing journalists Zone C chapters in South East Nigeria. They were adopted as participants to ascertain the effects of artificial intelligence on the making alternative journalism practice in South East



Nigeria. This number covered journalists cum media practitioners across the 5 States of the South East: Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo.

Based on the population size, a sample size of 384 journalists gotten through the use of online scientific Australian Calculator was. The 385 sample size formed the participants of this study and was selected through a purposive sampling technique to ensure adequate representation of members in each State. Each State had a sample size of 77 participants/journalists/respondents. The researcher used a well designed questionnaire as instrument of data collection to elicit their views and responses on the problem of this study.

However, the questionnaire was verified by other expert in Mass Communication before it was sent online via some of their key officers who equally served as research assistant for effective administration of the questionnaire. After proper follow up, 375 soft copies of the questionnaire were retrieved and arranged simple frequency and percentage tables.

RESULTS

Data collected from the selected practicing journalists in South East Nigeria were analysed and presented in the following tables for description and interpretation.

Table 1: Nature of alternative journalism practice in South East Nigeria

Variables	Frequency Rate	Percentage rate
It is journalism by layman/citizens via online channels	66	16.3
It reports subjective and unverified story telling	152	40.5
It is used by activists for advocacy and interest reasons	140	37.3
It is unprofessional and has target selective audience	22	5.9
Total	375	100.0

Based on results presented in the above table, most of the respondents responded that alternative journalism focuses on the use of artificial intelligence apparatus to report subjective and unverified information by some individuals in line with their interests without following professional mass media practice standard and guidelines.

Table 2: Role of artificial intelligence in making alternative journalism in South East Nigeria

Variables	F	%
For automatic content creation/information generation	94	25.1
For verification/checking of facts or information before dissemination	169	45.1
For personalized and close audience engagement in journalism	96	25.6
For immediate packaging and dissemination of information	16	4.3
Total	375	100.0

The above table revealed that most of the practicing journalists in South East Nigeria had not adopted alternative journalism method or approach in their profession. On this note, AI can be used for verification/checking of facts or information before dissemination by AJ practitioner.

Table 3: Effects of applications of AI on AJ practice among journalists in South East Nigeria

Variables	F	%
Promotes spreading of fake news and unverified sources of information	66	16.3
Contradicts mainstream journalism laws and ethical practices	152	40.5
Devalues the respect and dignity in journalism practice in the society	140	37.3
Reduces public confidence and trust on journalism practice	22	5.9
All of the above	375	100.0



total	364	100%
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Results revealed in the above table showed that majority of the journalists were against the use of AI in AJ in this modern age. Most of them were of the view that AI image in AJ practice is against the laws and ethics of journalism practice promotes the spread of fake news and devalues public trust on professional journalism practice.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Based on the results attained after critical analysis of data collected from the respondents, it was observed that some important points were derived. On question one as presented in table one, it was revealed that alternative journalism emerged in the society as a form of journalism that focuses more technology and people. News of events in the society is presented via AJ for public consumption especially through social media platforms such as facebook, YouTube etc. Alternative journalism is made possible by Artificial Intelligence. It focuses on the use of digital social media platforms to report both facts and subjective and unverified information by some individuals in line with their interests without following professional standard mass media practice.

This finding supports the findings of Nnamdi & Anyanwu (2021) which reveal that AI in its most basic form is a system that makes autonomous decisions, performing tasks that mimic acts of human intelligence like solving problems, understanding language or recognizing sounds and objects. By using machine intelligence in the newsroom, reporters can increase efficiency in their creation processes. Since journalists have to serve different audiences on different platforms, it is not unusual to hear them complain about repetitive, monotonous tasks they have to perform.

On the second question designed to ascertain the role of artificial intelligence in making alternative journalism in South East Nigeria. The result showed that most of the practicing journalists in South East Nigeria had not adopted alternative journalism method or approach in their profession. However, it is fast becoming a popular mechanism for information gathering and dissemination especially among publics who are professional journalists. While on one side, it disseminates unverified and fake news, it can be used for verification/checking of facts or information before dissemination by AJ practitioner

In a related study, it was observed that AI is already meaningfully embedded in contemporary journalism. AI is today being used across the entire media cycle, from making archival content more accessible to automating note-taking and reducing the cost of transcriptions to copy-editing and summarizing content to erecting increasingly dynamic pay walls. In other words, it is sometimes harder to find aspects of journalism that have not yet been touched by AI (Simon, 2022). Likewise, as more journalistic functions become tied to.

The result of the third question which focused on the effects of the use of AI on AJ practice, it was ascertained that majority of the journalists in south east Nigeria frowned at the practice. Alternative journalism practice is regarded as an act of downgrading the dignity, respect and professionalism of ideal journalism practice in such a way that it promotes fake news and spreading fake news, reducing public respect and weakening the integrity of the profession.

The findings on the effects give credence to the result of Toms, Rodrigo & Seth (2025) in which the authors reported that the increasing nature and influence of AI in some newsrooms. Borchardt (2022) reveals that AI will only complicate some news consumers ability on what's happening in the world around them and exacerbate problems of "burnout" with news, with even more people experiencing frustration as they consume journalism or avoid it altogether. Adeyeye, Nwabufoe, & Owobu (2026) laments of Algorithmic bias of AI systems to produce outcomes based on prejudiced patterns embedded within their training data. In journalistic practice, this can result in skewed coverage, marginalization of minority voices, or reinforcement of harmful stereotypes. Also, there may be fear of job loss and compromised professional ethics may explain journalists' cautious approach to AI adoption for alternative journalism practice in South East Nigeria.



CONCLUSION

This paper is assessed the opinions and views of journalists in Nigeria on the use or application of artificial intelligence on alternative journalism practice in the area. The results of this study have proved that AJ existence and practice. This practice recommended that for awareness and sensitization of the public in Nigeria through the mass media on preventing the use of artificial intelligence on alternative journalism practice through social media platforms or online channels is out of main stream rule and order. This study shows that true journalists in the fields were not on support of its emergence to a large extent due to its functional effects on the society on the body of mass media practitioners

This study stands as eye openers to the influx of uncoordinated, unorganized and unprofessional forms of journalism practice known as alternative which gives room for quacks untrained so-called reports to take advantage of social media platforms to flood the digital cum online space with unguided and unverified packages or dosages of information for public consumption. It is on this note that this study stands as a challenge to weak professional journalists up as well as researchers on developing studies and strategies to create a balance between conventional journalism practice and artificial intelligence mediated journalism called alternative journalism in the contemporary Nigerian society.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the objectives, findings and results of this study, the following recommendations are made to guide further studies and relevant bodies on the way forward on this study.

1. This study recommended that journalists in South East Nigeria should make adequate public awareness on the gap between artificial intelligence, alternative journalism and mainstream journalism practice in South East Nigeria.
2. The management of digital media platforms such experts in AI making, in agreement with the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) should organize Artificial Intelligence Media Awareness Summit to develop standard functional strategy of AJ for public trust and confidence.
3. The governments of Nigeria should collaborate with NUJ to stipulate verifiable code of operation/conduct and rules on the use of AI application for alternative journalism practice.

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