Assessment of Social Media Digital Image Usage by *Scannews* and *NewsRescue* during the 2015 Presidential Election and its Implication for Professional Practice in Nigeria

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Abstract

The introduction of digital imaging in journalism practice, especially, on social media has provided new opportunities for the integrity of journalism photographs to be questioned. Faked photos are becoming commonplace, and not all the pictures seen on social media platforms are true to their nature. It is against this backdrop that this study examined digital image usage by *Scannews* and *NewsRescue* during the 2015 presidential election campaign in Nigeria. The study focused on the volume of digital image usage, forms, context, intended purpose as well as the implications of displayed images for professional photojournalism in the Nigerian context. Content analysis and survey method were used as the research designs for the study. A sample of 57 published photographs of *Scannews* and *NewsRescue* and 372 journalists constitute the sample size. The study found the forms of digital image techniques used by *Scannews* and *NewsRescue* to include: toning, flatting, changing costumes, cloning and retouching. In addition, images displayed were found to be driven by security consciousness of the aspirants, health ground and corruption. Findings also show that the contexts of digital image usage by *Scannews* and *NewsResue* impede professional virtues of objectivity, accuracy, truthfulness, fairness and balance. Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended among others that journalism as a profession should be anchored on five key principles of objectivity, accuracy, truthfulness, fairness and balance, which must be upheld in all published news photographs; and that news photographers should employ journalism canons as yardstick for ethical decisions regarding the use of photographs in their stories.

Keywords: Social Media, Digital Image, Image Usage, Professional Practice, Picture News, Nigerian Journalism