

**INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY REVOLUTION AND THE FUTURE OF PRINT
MEDIA IN NIGERIA: USAGE ACROSS AGE GROUPS**

By

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Abstract

This study examines the interplay between information technology revolution, age factor in the audience use of mass media and the dwindling newspaper future. Survey as a form of descriptive research was used for the systematic collection of information on newspaper use and information technology revolution from staff and students in the University of Ilorin and Federal Polytechnic Offa, through questionnaire. The findings show that audience exposure to media (newspaper, radio, television and Internet) varies considerably across specific demographics and it can be decisively said that the Internet which houses online newspaper is a major predictor of the dwindling print media readership in Nigeria.

Keywords: Internet, print media, information technology, circulation, media

Introduction

Experts in the nation's media and marketing communication industries at a forum organised by the Advertising Agencies' Association of Nigeria, (AAAN), in 2010 In Lagos, raised alarm on the future of newspaper in Nigeria. Majority of them concluded that unless the

print media braced up to the challenges posed by the new media, it might go extinct in the nearest future.

This apprehension was no doubt a fall-out of the report which portrayed an alarming slide in the patronage of newspaper. According to the 2010 study carried out by the Advertisers Association of Nigeria (ADVAN) across the country, the daily sales figure of all the newspapers was less than 300,000, meaning that only one in every 470 Nigerians buy newspapers daily (Ekeng, 2010). Putting this reality in proper perspective, Popoola (2010) said that all the newspapers in Nigeria today have combined circulation figure that is far less than 500,000 copies per day of *Daily Times of Nigeria* in 1980 when the population of Nigeria was about half of what it is today. Presently the stockpile of unsold copies of newspapers and magazines in the circulation departments of most print media organizations is a vivid sign of this challenge.

Ekeng (2010), disclosed that *The Punch* as the number one selling national daily only circulates 34, 264 copies, *The Sun* was ranked third with 25, 632 unit sales. *Vanguard* got 25, 241, while *Guardian* and *Thisday* came 5th and 6th respectively, with 25, 222 and 21, 703 daily sales. *Daily Trust*, the most popular newspaper up North has 11, 672 daily unit sales. *Tribune*, the oldest surviving newspaper in Nigeria, was another surprise, managing only 8, 314 daily sales. The above mentioned dailies constitute what is known as the top 8 in the standing. The others combined, including *Compass*, *Daily Independent*, *Leadership*, *National Life*, *New Nigeria*, *Mirror* and *Westerner*, could barely rake up 1,600 daily sales.

The question then should be why the alarming slides in the patronage of newspaper? This is very important as a wrong diagnosis will invariably lead to an inappropriate treatment. Ekeng (2010) noted that circulation decline is a global phenomenon as the newspaper industry in America, Europe and even Asia is also affected. This, he said is primarily due to the impact of Internet, which guarantees quick news for free. Topping the list of all the causes is the crashing local economy, which has greatly reduced the purchasing power of most Nigerian. According to the United Nation (2009), Nigeria is one of the poorest nations on earth and about 70 percent of her population lives on less than one dollar per day. Impact of this, Ekeng (2010) noted was between 2003 and now, when sales figure dropped from 570 000 unit per day to less than 300 000 unit, signifying almost 50 percent drop. Generally, people seem to agree that two factors are

responsible for the dwindling circulation figures of newspapers—the sad state of Nigeria economy and the ever decreasing quality of education. But when one reflects on the situation in other countries believed to be buoyant economic wise, the first might be true to some extent, while the second might be brushed aside. Reiterating Femi Kusa, a veteran Journalist, Omoniyi (2010), notes that many factors are contributory. For one, many people are not brought up from childhood to appreciate the reading of newspapers. It is not just a part of them. So as adults they do not even read books, not to talk of newspapers. The activities of vendors are not also helping matters. Many of them encourage this free readers syndrome, where you can read as many newspapers as possible for a token which goes into the vendors' pocket. These vendors at the end of the day return the copies as unsold. Why would you want to buy a paper when you can read as many as possible for as low as N20? That is what these vendors encourage subtly.

Most editors do not connect to the reading public through their publications which in most cases lacks depth and quality content that serves the majority. In the last two decades, the World has witnessed increase in the population of active middle age folks. This increase has brought about new social life which is global in scope. Such influential newspapers as *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Chicago Tribune* are also facing the same challenge of plummeting circulation figures, Popoola (2010), concluded.

The Internet brought this social state. Most of the newly empowered middle class have access to the Internet and seriously have developed a mind set. Why should I buy a newspaper for information when the same is available on my blackberry free of charge? Moreover, the Internet gives me access to different sources for the same information—all for free.

Importance of newspapers as information source

According to Ola and Ojo (2006) quoting Okojie (1993), “Despite keen competitions from other mass media, newspapers have exerted the greatest influence because of the inherent advantages of being relatively cheap, portable, more widely available and are frequently published thus ensuring the most up-to date information and readability by individuals with varying reading abilities as and when they like.” Reiterating this fact, the Editor-in-Chief, Vanguard Newspapers, Mr. Gbenga Adefaye in Lagos while Presenting a paper in 2010 titled, “Forget Circulation Figures, Print Media is still very relevant,” argued that the print media was

evolving, adding that in spite of the influx of new technologies, it was still regarded as one of the most trusted sources of information by many Nigerians. He noted that though the new media presently provided various platforms of communicating, a lot of Nigerians were not sophisticated enough to take full advantage of the new technology. Adefaye therefore argued that instead of being a threat, the social media platform would only complement the efforts of the print media to survive.

Generally, newspapers have four basic functions – to inform, to interpret the news, to provide a service to readers, and to entertain. These functions explain what the newspaper does, and they are why people read it. A newspaper aims at a large circulation of general readers and is primarily a vehicle for topical news and information (Rudin and Ibbotson. 2002). Nigeria has one of the most pulsating media systems in Africa. According to Ganiyu and Akinreti (2011), there are 400 print titles of varying formats in Nigeria, out of this number, 216 are newspapers, 63 magazines, 44 interest magazines, 16 vernacular publications and 16 religious publications. Some of these newspapers are owned by the government but majority by private individuals. The Nigerian newspapers include esteemed dailies, well-liked tabloids and periodicals that defend the welfare of ethnic groups in Nigeria.

Newspapers help readers become informed citizens and make better decisions by providing lots of facts. Hard news stories, vital statistics, weather, sports stories and scores, and event calendars are examples of items that help inform readers. Some newspaper articles help interpret, or explain, the meaning of news to readers. These stories often include the opinion of the writer or newspaper management. Editorials, opinion columns, news analysis, and reviews are some examples.

Newspaper stories provide information that helps readers solve their business, home, recreation, and daily living problems. Adverts assist in informing readers about products and services. Hard news stories, feature stories, classified adverts, and display adverts are items that provide a service.

Some items in the newspaper are designed to amuse or provide enjoyment to readers. Feature stories, comics, puzzles, and humor columns are entertainment items. At the risk of

generalization, newspapers will normally contain a mixture of hard news and features including sport, finance, foreign affairs, opinion, analysis, reviews, leaders, etc.

Information Technology Trends

Alongside the traditional mass media as sources of information and education are the new media, offshoot of information technology. New Media is a broad term in media studies that emerged in the later part of the 20th century. It holds out a possibility of on-demand access to content anytime, anywhere, on any digital device, as well as interactive user feedback, creative participation and community formation around the media content. Another important promise of New Media is the "democratization" of the creation, publishing, distribution and consumption of media content.

In a fast paced world where information can be found with the click of a button, newspapers are finding it hard to compete. Since the early 1990s the image of a new revolution has been haunting us. Variouslly called the Information Revolution or the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) revolution, it assumes a classic shift in production processes and relations, the emergence of a new knowledge-based economy, and a quantum leap from an industrial society into an information society. Also, the Internet, a major force behind information technology, is argued by Song, Shao and Wu (2010, 5) to represent the most significant change in the media market during the past decades. The Internet is becoming the dominant force in the information world, transforming the ways in which information is aggregated, stored, searched, and retrieved. In addition, Campbell, Martin, and Fabos (2009, 8) noted that the Internet is facilitating the convergence of media forms, "the process whereby old

and new media are available via the integration of personal computers and high-speed satellite-based phone or cable links". Meyer (2009, 63) argued that a newspaper can beat the Internet in portability. "You can read it in the bathroom, at the breakfast table, in the back yard, or on the bus. But computers are getting smaller and more portable and are no longer in need of being hard-wired to the Internet. They can even hide in your mobile phone, turning it into a multiple-use device for e-mail, Internet browsing, and GPS navigation. These developments tend to leave very little for a newspaper to do" Virtually all Nigerian newspapers have been adapting themselves to this new media age. The traditional medium for publishing content is paper, and now newspapers have tried certain new medium such as online newspaper edition and mobile phone newspapers. As at today, 60 Nigerian newspapers are online, www.onlinenewspapers.com/nigeria, while some operate mobile phone news service, such as *Mobile Nation* (www.thenationmobile.net), *Mobile Punch* (<http://mobile.punchng.com/default.aspx>), and *Vanguard Mobile* (<http://m.vanguardngr.com>).

Sounding this warning in 2005 the media mogul, Rupert Murdoch, chairman and chief executive officer of News Corporation, In a speech delivered to an audience of newspaper editors, noted that the "dynamic revolution taking place in the news industry today revolves around the fact that 'technology-savvy young people' are becoming increasingly likely to turn to the web as their news medium of choice."

According to Amodu (2007) cite in Anaeto and Anaeto (2010) the unprecedented success of the Internet in most aspects of human endeavour, particularly e-commerce, has precipitated the incorporation of the same into the communication process. Also explaining the usefulness of the Internet in communication, Negroponte (1995) in Anaeto and Anaeto (2010) states that the fact that the Internet has the power to cut across social and geographic distance and help find new ways of facilitating the flow of information and knowledge makes it an especially attractive medium for communication.

Bunt (2000) suggests that, the openness of the Internet allows disenfranchised and marginalized groups to circumvent mainstream media and to subvert hegemonic discourses along the lines of gender sexuality and age. Similarly, Merniss, (2006) argues that the introduction of the Internet in the world has “destroyed the frontier that divided the universe into a sheltered private arena, where women and children were supposed to be protected and a public one where adult males exercised their presumed problem solving authority”.

According to Baran (2002), the Internet is different from these more traditional media. Rather than changing the relationship between audiences and industries, the Internet changes the definition of the different components of the process and as a result, changes their relationship. On the Internet a single individual can communicate with as large an audience as can the giant, multinational corporation that produces a network television program.

Theoretical Framework

The interplay between information technology revolution, age factor in the audience use of mass media and the dwindling print media future was guided by the theoretical framework of Uses and Gratification. Theory presumes that people are in control, active, and goal-directed, in contrast to passively receiving media messages. Hence, Papacharissi and Rubin (2000) note that people take the initiative to link gratification needs with their media choices and uses, from among available alternative media sources.

Uses and gratifications theory attempts to explain the uses and functions of the media for individuals, groups, and society in general. These functions however, were derived from the three main objectives of uses and gratifications theory:

1. to explain how individuals use mass communication to gratify their needs. “What do people do with the media”.
2. to discover underlying motives for individuals’ media use.
3. to identify the positive and the negative consequences of individual media use.

McLuhan’s central notion that the medium is the message can be applied to the internet or to particular forms of World Wide Web, such as online news sites (Tremayne, 1997). Marshal McLuhan theory which basically explains the fact that changes in communication technology

produced profound change in our societal order and the culture we create emphasizing the transformatory power of the media. Here, communication technology is seen to have the power to transform the sensory capacity and therefore transform the way we live our life.

In this sense, the ‘medium is the message’. That it is not the content of the message of the media that actually influences our lives; rather it is the media capability to extend our lives through time and space. This is the reason why he also noted that media are extension of human beings.

Based on these theories and the need to establish the existing trend in Nigeria with regard to the impacts of IT and the already dwindling print media circulation, the following hypotheses were formulated:

Research Hypothesis

Three major hypotheses that have been developed to be tested are:

Hypothesis 1: there is a causal relationship between media use and the ages of the audience.

Hypothesis 2: Internet news and not cover price is the cause of dwindling newspaper readership.

Hypothesis 3: workers are favourably disposed to buying newspaper than students.

Research Questions

The research questions raised are:

R.Q.1: What is the level of access of staff and students to Information and Communication Technology?

R.Q.2: What is the attitude of staff and students of the University of Ilorin and Federal Polytechnic Offa to newspaper?

R.Q.3: What kind of change has occurred in the staff and students of the Institutions as a result of using new media?

Method

Survey as a form of descriptive research was used for the systematic collection of information on newspaper use and information technology revolution from staff and students in the University of Ilorin and Federal Polytechnic Offa, through questionnaire between 3rd May and 11th May 2012. The two institutions were selected because of their diversity. The population of the two institutions cut across all states in Nigeria and some countries across the world, mostly Africa and Asia, which may be considered a somewhat good representation. The data were collected from a random survey of 200 staff and students of which 50 was allocated to each of the category in both institutions. The data obtained was processed by SPSS, using frequency counts and percentages.

The survey developed in two parts. The first part measured demographical characteristics and the second part the access and uses of media among the institutions' staff and students. A total of 18 questions, all open ended formed the questionnaire distributed to the 200 sampled respondents.

Results

The first set of results have to do with the demographic data of the 200 staff and students of both University of Ilorin and Federal Polytechnic Offa that formed the sampled population of this study, while others are on informational data.

The results show that majority of the students are within the age range of 21 – 30 years as indicated by 27.5% (55), followed by those within 31 – 40 which is 12.5% (25). A very few of them are under 20 years and 41 – 50 as indicated by 7% (14) and 3% (6) respectively.

Among the staff, majority are in the 41 – 50 age range which is 23.5% (46), followed by those in 50 and above 12.5% (25). For the 21 – 30 and 31 – 40 ranges, 3% (6) and 11.5% (23) are represented. None of the staff is 20 years and below.

On the use of computer, majority of the staff, 42.5% (85) claimed they use while only 7.5% (15) did not. On the other hand, 42% (84) of the students use computer and 8% (16) don't use. By this result hypothesis one which states that there is a causal relationship between media use and the ages of the audience was not confirmed because, it showed that high percentage of staff as much students use computer which is a major device of information technology.

On whether the respondent read, watch or listen to news, all the 100 sampled staff 50% (100) responded in affirmative while 45.5% (91) student indicated yes, only 4.5% (9) said no.

The result shows that majority of the staff get their news through physical newspaper 25.5% (51), 16% (32) of them expose to news through the electronic media, while 8.5% (17) of them indicated online newspaper. Among the students, 27.5% (55) access news through online newspapers, 13.5% (27) through electronic, while only 9% (17) through physical newspaper.

This response confirmed hypotheses 2 and 3 which proposed that Internet news causes dwindling newspaper readership and that workers are favourably disposed to buying newspaper than students. Majority of the students use online news against the majority of staff that uses traditional physical newspaper.

Table 1: Source of Exposure to News

Source	Staff % (n)			Student % (n)			Total
	UNILORIN	FEDPOFFA	Total	UNILORIN	FEDPOFFA	Total	
Physical Newspaper.	12.5 (25)	13 (26)	27.5	3.5 (7)	5.5 (11)	9	34.5 (69)
Online Newspaper.	5 (10)	3.5 (7)	8.5	15.5 (31)	12 (24)	27.5	36 (72)
Electronic Media.	7.5 (15)	8.5 (17)	16	6 (12)	7.5 (15)	13.5	29.5 (59)
Total	25 (50)	25 (50)		25 (50)	25 (50)		100 (200)

Source: **Field Survey** (2012)

The findings in table two below reveal that a sizeable number of the staff respondents, 12.5% (25) buy newspaper, while on the part of the students, 2.5% (5) of them only buy newspaper.

However, 11.5% (23) of the staff access newspaper through Internet (online) and 12.5% (25) indicated office/ library as against 17.5% (35) of the student who indicated online and 10.5% (11) library.

Meanwhile, among staff of the two institutions, 9% (18) read newspaper through the newsstand (vendor) as against 17% (35) student. Also, 5% (10) of the staff read newspaper through friends, while, only 2.5% (5) of the student indicated same.

Table 2: Means of Access to Newspaper

Access to Newspaper	Staff % (n)			Student % (n)			Total
	UNILORIN	FEDPOFFA	Total	UNILORIN	FEDPOFFA	Total	
Friends.	2 (4)	3 (6)	5	1 (2)	1.5 (3)	2.5	7.5 (15)
Newspaper Stand.	4 (8)	5 (10)	9	7.5 (15)	9.5 (19)	17	26 (52)
Buying.	6 (12)	6.5 (13)	12.5	1.5 (3)	1 (2)	2.5	15 (30)
Office/Library.	7 (14)	5.5 (11)	12.5	5 (10)	5.5 (11)	10.5	23 (46)
Internet(online)	6.5 (13)	5 (10)	11.5	10 (20)	7.5 (15)	17.5	29(58)
Total	25 (50)	25 (50)		25 (50)	25 (50)		100 (200)

Source: **Field Survey** (2012)

On those who buy newspaper, the findings reveal that only 6.5% (13) of the staff purchase newspaper weekly, 3.5% (7) daily, 2.5% (5) occasionally, 1% (2) monthly and those who do not buy at all amount to 31.5% (63). Among the students, 1% (2) each buy daily and weekly respectively, but for occasional 1.5% (3), while 56.3% (93) don't buy at all.

On the reason for reading newspaper, most of the staff 21% (42) indicated news, as against student 14.5% (29). For staff, sports are the next reason as 12% (24) said, while 18.5% (37) of the student also went for sports. The staff that indicated entertainment are 3% (6) compare to students 16.5% (31). Among the staff, 6.5% (13) said opinion article was the reason and student 2.5% (5).

The study also reveals that majority of the staff 13.5% (27) access Internet through modem, 10% (20) cybercafé, 3% (6) mobile phone, while 23.5% (59) lack access. Among the students, 22% (44) access Internet through mobile phone, 16.5% (33) cybercafé, 6% (12) modem and 5.5% (11) lack access.

Among the respondents, 14% (28) staff read news online while 36% (72) do not. For students majority of them 39.5% (79) read news online and a few 10.5% (21) do not.

The findings also show, in table three below, that majority of those who read news online do so, because of access to more newspapers online as indicated by 9.5% (19) staff and 23.5% (47) student. Other reasons given are access to achieve 2.5% (5) staff and 8% (16) student, searchability of online news 2% (4) staff and 8% (16) student. Nobody gives reason of immediacy and interactivity.

Table 3: Reason for Online News Preference

Preference	Staff % (n)			Student % (n)			Total
	UNILORIN	FEDPOFFA	Total	UNILORIN	FEDPOFFA	Total	
Immediacy.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Searchability.	1(2)	1 (2)	2	3 (6)	5 (10)	8	10 (20)
Access to							
Achives.	1.5 (3)	1 (2)	2.5	4.5 (9)	3.5 (7)	8	10.5 (21)
Access to more							
Newspapers							
Online.	5 (10)	4.5 (9)	9.5	12 (24)	11.5 (23)	23.5	33 (66)
Interactivity	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Not Response	17.5 (35)	18.5 (37)	36	5.5 (11)	5 (10)	10.5	46.5 (93)
Total	25 (50)	25 (50)		25 (50)	25 (50)		100 (200)

Source: **Field Survey** (2012)

Discussion of results

Due to the threatened future of newspaper and the perceived role of new media, the study examined the direct interplay between Information Technology, audience age factor and

dwindling newspaper patronage. To establish this, the study raised three hypotheses along with three research questions that served as bases of investigation.

H₁: There is a causal relationship between media use and the ages of the audience.

H₂: Internet news and not cover price is the cause of dwindling newspaper readership.

H₃: Workers are favourably disposed to buying newspaper than students.

The first hypothesis was not supported. It was found that audience age is not much of a predictor, because a substantial numbers of adult among staff exposure to computer, though more youth, students, prefer Internet, and online news. However, H₂ was upheld in table one where online newspaper was significantly the source of news for students, while slightly, majority of the staff of the two institutions indicated physical newspaper. Also, H₃ was upheld though slightly, the result shows less than half of the staff 12.5% (25) buy newspaper as the same 12.5% (25) access it through office/library respectively.

The results also supported past research and findings by Mayer (2009), Amodu (2007) and Murdoch (2005) that Internet is the major cause of dwindling newspaper readership. This study however went further to bring out the reason which is access to multitude of other online newspapers local, national and international.

Conclusion

As audiences for online journalism continue to grow across ages, the study revealed, it has become necessary for Nigerian publishers to respond adequately to the challenges from this new media. To the credit of some Nigerian media organisations, they have already established a strong presence in cyberspace; amongst the pioneers are *The Guardian Newspapers*, *The Thisday Newspaper group*, *The Independent Newspaper group*, and *New Age Newspaper*. These media houses have continued to be veritable sources of news and information to both Nigerians at home and in the diaspora, but none of them except Next 234.com provides the readers the opportunity of accessing the news either as audio, video, graphics or text. This which is referred to as multimedia is necessary for Nigerian newspapers in other for them to grow more in popularity and attract more revenue as bail out from the dwindling news stand newspapers.

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