
Marketing Newspaper in A Digitalized World; Challenges and Prospects

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ABSTRACT

This paper examined the revolution of the print media by the technological innovations. Technology via the internet seemed to have redefined many of the features of mass communication with opportunities to gather information, process information and send the information with ease, speed and accuracy to the mass media audience. This revolution seems to have posed a greater challenge to the marketing of newspaper as Nigerians are readily fascinated with the flexibility and utilization of the new media technology that offers instant news and access to online news media. Findings show that many Nigerians don't wait for the vendors to deliver copies of newspaper before getting their information. The decline in newspaper sales however may not necessarily be the collapse of the newspaper business as most newspapers in Nigeria now have websites where stories and photo news are published for the readers to read. Such contents also contain advertisements that generate revenue for the newspaper establishments. The concern now is how to remain relevant to their audiences rather than marketing the hard copies in a digitalized world the newspaper proprietors find themselves. It is then proposed that the opportunities offered by the online journalism should be utilized to repackage newspapers by enriching contents that will appeal to the readers, advertisers and compete favourably with other media that have flooded the web.

Keywords: Marketing, Digitalized, Online, Offline, Mediamorphosis

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1. INTRODUCTION

Newspapers are the mostly hit by the digitalized world of the information dissemination occasioned by the current trends in information technology. The dynamics of the new media platforms have redefined media audience. Nigeria is fast becoming an online society as people do not have to wait for the newspapers to break the news. News are readily available on the web and people are always participating in the debates and posting their comments on the issues before hard copies of newspaper get to the newsstands across the country. Newman (2019) posited that technological innovations have inspired news media to explore the internet enabled platforms such as whatsApps,facebook, instagrams and other messaging platforms to disseminate news particularly in developing countries. According to the scholars, around 120 million people are said to be using WhatsApp. Currently, the newspapers and magazines make use of the World Wide Web (www) among other services of the net to create and maintain web servers in which they publish contents of their newspapers (Okoro & Diri, 2010).

The flourishing of newspapers and magazines online, they observed, may not be unconnected with some possible secondary reasons- including enthusiasm for new technology and the general sense that one wishes to be part of the new wave at the moment not minding the adverse consequences. They also argued that the production and distribution of the offline edition (hard copies) of newspapers may be hampered thereby impinging on the revenue profile of some newspaper organizations. The prediction of Okoro and Diri seems to have come to reality with the recent scenario of young adults and educated elites adopting and utilizing new media that is accessible using digital technologies such as smartphones, androids, tablets and other mobile devices. These categories of users perhaps prefer to read news as they break on the web as the new media offer flexibility and convenience as noted by Okoro and Diri; for instance, the offline newspapers (the hard copies) are in part a process of manipulating symbols and in part a straightforward industrial production process. The newspaper industry is facing two simultaneous crises stemming from the decline in newspapers' circulation and advertising revenues and the rise of widely available and free online news content. A good number of people are either free readers at newsstands or they borrow from friends. Some just rely on newspaper review or newspaper headlines review on radio and television stations (Nwabueze, 2011; Agboola, 2014).

New media is essentially a cyber-culture with modern computer technology, digital data controlled by software and the latest fast developing communication technology. Most technologies described as "new media" are digital, and often have characteristics of being networkable, dense, compressible, interactive and impartial. Examples are the internet, websites, computer multimedia, games, CD-ROMs and DVDs. Young people are attracted to the easy means of getting information with internet based terminals or hand phones which provide them information of their choice anytime, anywhere (Agboola, 2014).

1.1 Statement of problem

Newspapers in Nigeria is bedeviled by the neglect occasioned by the rise of the internet that offers the mass audience instant news on the web. The implications are noticeable decline in the sales of the hard copies of the newspapers as the distributors and vendors struggle daily to market the conventional newspapers. The preference of the online version of the newspapers to the conventional hard copies can be attributed to a numbers of factors. This paper x-rayed the metamorphosis from the offline to the online version that the audience prefer and the factors responsible for the preference and decline in the sales of newspapers in Offa Local Government area of Kwara State.

1.2 Objectives of the study

The major objectives of the study were;

- (i) To investigate which version is preferable by the audience between online and hardcopies of the newspapers
- (ii) To examine the factors that were responsible for the decline in readership and sales of hard copies newspapers
- (iii) To find out how the vendors market the newspapers with the advent of digital revolution that make news readily accessible online.

2. CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

McLuhan's proposition of a global village aptly applies here. The theorist's central notion is that the medium is the message. This can be applied to the internet or to particular forms of the World Wide Web, such as online news sites (Tremayne, 1997) in (Anaeto, Onabajo and Osifeso, 2008). McLuhan's idea is that new media often have old media as content. Several studies have documented the tendency for online newspapers to repackage material from print newspapers (Tankard and Ban, 1998) in (Anaeto et al., 2008). In today's communication media, two powerful forces have emerged and they seem to have altered the face of mass media. The first is the use of computers to process and disseminate information. The second is the capacity of technology to enhance communication across time and space, Nwurah (2005). Much of the research on digital communication has been driven by specific questions, particularly questions about the effects and uses of the new media.

The central concepts of interactivity, hypertext, and multimedia have also been the focus of numerous studies. One theory that has been developed is Roger Fidler's idea of mediamorphosis which tries to explain the relationship between new and old media (Anaeto et al., 2008).

2.1 The Technology Acceptance Model

To further argue the course of this paper, Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is used to substantiate the place and influence of technology on media. Etymologically according to Bagozzi, Davis & Warshaw (1992) TAM is one of the most influential extensions of Ajzen and Fishbein's Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) in the literature. Davis' technology acceptance model is the most widely applied model of users' acceptance and usage of technology. It was developed by Fred Davis and Richard Bagozzi. TAM replaces many of TRA's attitude measures with the two technology acceptance measures—ease of use, and usefulness. TRA and TAM, both of which have strong behavioural elements, assume that when someone forms an intention to act, that they will be free to act without limitation. In the real world there will be many constraints, such as limited freedom to act.

To further situate the position of the theory in this study, Ijeh, (2008) and McQuail, (2007) shared a similar view that, Readership of online newspapers is an information sourcing and sharing activity. The phenomenon of online newspapers is believed to have greatly enhanced information sourcing and sharing activities in several ways. A number of benefits accrue to online newspapers in their information sharing efforts. Online newspapers provide easy, widespread, and timely access to information; allow for interactivity among information users; and enable users to store, share and retrieve their content quickly and easily

2.2 Mediamorphosis

Fidler (1997) cited in Anaeto, Onabajo and Osifeso (2008) defined media morphosis as 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 essence of mediamorphosis is the idea that the media are complex adaptive systems. The media as other systems, respond to external pressures with a spontaneous process of self-reorganisation. Fidler was said to have argued that new media do not arise spontaneously and independently; rather, they emerge gradually from the metamorphosis of older media. Like McLuhan, Fidler also suggested that emerging forms of communication media propagate dominant traits from earlier forms (Anaeto, Onabajo and Osifeso, 2008).

3. METHODOLOGY

Descriptive survey research method was employed. The data of the study was sourced from both the primary and secondary sources. The primary source employed interview (structured and unstructured) with the respondents who were vendors and mass audiences drawn among young adults and educated adults in Offa Local Government Area of Kwara State. The secondary source included journals, newspapers, books and other desk studies. Both purposive and convenience sampling techniques were employed in selecting respondents. Purposive was used because the samples were restricted to educated adults and young adults who are computer literate. Convenience was adopted based on availability of potential and willing members of the target population.

4. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

Findings have revealed that majority of the people get news on line either through their smartphones or androids. It is evidenced from the opinions and views of some respondents that it is more convenient to access news and information online than going to the newsstands to read newspapers. It was also discovered that older people listen to news on radio stations that are available on their mobile cell phones. Although, some few adults claimed they enjoy reading hard copies of newspapers and they believed it is more real and convenient than reading from phone or computer screens. Vendors are really struggling to market the newspapers as most of them claimed they use motorcycles to move round offices in banks, schools and hospitals to distribute copies to certain numbers of people who are still very loyal to buying the hard copies. The vendors claimed that most of these buyers don't pay immediately they pay on month ends as they are civil servants or salary earners. Economic status and hardship in the country are some of the factors that contribute to the dwindling in the sales of newspapers as many Nigerians cannot afford buying newspapers everyday.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Newspapers should be concerned about how to remain relevant amidst dynamism of the digitalization and competitive nature of news media business. There is need to focus more on quality of newspapers in terms of aesthetic and news value to make contents more appealing to the readers. Principles of journalism, such as objectivity, fairness, balance and truth should also be strictly adhered to while ethical and legal considerations are as well important for the readers to continue to trust newspapers as credible source of news. However, there is need to incorporate an online content with the traditional print versions that will be attractive to the advertisers and the mass audience in order to stay in the newspaper business.

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