

The Influence of Online Newspaper Readership on Print Newspaper Purchases: A Study of Nigerian Universities in the South-East

Michael UKONU, *Ph.D*

University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu State

&

Moses ANI

University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu State

&

Chinyere NDUBISI,

University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu State

Abstract

The advent of the Internet has introduced the posting of news and information on-line for people to read and make useful comments. This poses a great challenge to the circulation of print newspapers. It is against this backdrop that this study examines the influence of on-line newspaper readership on print newspaper purchases with a focus on staff and students of Nigerian universities in the South-East. Survey research design was adopted and the questionnaire was used to collect data from 399 respondents from three randomly selected universities in the South-East. The findings reveal that even though on-line newspapers have significant benefit over print newspapers, this does not in any way have direct impact on print newspaper purchase. In addition, the paper argues that social media use has influenced the level of print newspaper readership among youths in Nigeria. Hence, the researchers recommend that

newspaper proprietors should ensure that information contained in print media does not become stale at the time of publication to compete favourably with the social media as well as boost print newspaper purchase.

Keywords: On-line newspaper, Print newspaper, Readership, Social Media, South-East, Nigeria

Introduction

The world of newspaper has undergone considerable transformation from linotype to offset printing and now on-line publication. On-line newspaper readership has made the literate audience custodians of information that is timely and up-to-date. Ukonu (2006, p. 95-96) sees the speed with which news travels in the new technology of communication thus:

News has moved from the pace of horses to the speed of light, from the tidings about a neighbourhood to a global marketplace and from just announcement to tools of international power struggle and image making. From the laborious handwriting of news through the drudgery of Gutenberg's letterpress to the apparent miracle of electronic publishing, one can say that communication technology is in steady flux.

The introduction of on-line newspaper has indeed brought a new approach to seeking information and by extension; the use of social media has attracted much attention to the use of Internet enabled gadgets.

Competence in the use of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) will greatly enhance access and the use of on-line newspaper, which cuts across all shades of opinion and subject areas, makes it possible to accommodate different groups of mass audience who are potential users of the Internet.

In Nigeria, the story has not been different as virtually all

national and local newspapers have found their way on-line. Websites like www.kwenu.com and www.nigeriannewspaper.com contain publication from *The Guardian, Vanguard, Daily Sun, ThisDay, The Punch, Daily Trust, Daily Independent* to mention but a few.

These newspapers went on-line due to the advancement in modern technology and the need to compete favourably with their counterparts across the globe. The new trend of publication came also because of the need for information storage as archival materials for reference purposes in future. According to Ram (2007, p. 14):

By the late 1990, the availability of news via 24-hour television channels and then Internet posed an ongoing problem to the business model of most newspapers in developed countries. Paid circulation has declined, while advertising revenue, which makes up the bulk of most newspaper income, has been shifting from print to the new media, resulting in a general decline in profits. Many newspapers around the world launched on-line editions as an attempt to follow or stay ahead of their audience...

Many reasons abound to buttress the rationale behind the recent exodus of some newspaper organizations from the traditional method of information dissemination to this “new move of communication technology” known as on-line newspaper. The number of people who embraced this new trend in information dissemination in Nigeria has continued to increase. Internet penetration according to the 2010 report of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) reveals that 43.9 million Nigerians now have access to the Internet, surpassing even South Africa, the continent's largest economy (Okereocha, quoted in Akpan and Nnaane, 2011).

The report also reveals that a good number of these people

read newspapers on-line and consequently the assumption is that this has resulted in a huge decline on revenue realized from the sale of printed editions. Some people believe that reading printed newspapers has a reduced influence on global warming than reading on-line newspapers because journalism as it has been known on television and in print no longer competes.

The assumption is that print newspaper readership has gained wider acceptance due to its accessibility and relative presence almost everywhere, breaking the barrier posed by power failure associated with accessing on-line newspapers. The role of print newspaper in the dissemination of information to its audience who are often very eager to know what is happening in the society cannot be over-estimated. Newspaper proprietors therefore, have the responsibility of satisfying the audience by way of giving them in-depth news coverage of event especially through investigative journalism.

The impetus given by the social media appears to have reduced the use of printed newspapers as most people now have access to news and other information through their mobile phones via the Internet because of their economic implications coupled with the urgency associated with “Net”. Hume in Oshorn (2001, p. 7) note that with the emergence of the new media, “the Internet”, the time for proper checking diminished. Many abandon the scoop culture of 100 years age.

Statement of the Problem

The advent of on-line newspapers during the mid-90s seems to have threatened the circulation of printed newspapers as well as their purchase due to the emergence of social media with their adjoining techniques as used by Nigerian universities.

The introduction of online newspaper has paved way for a new paradigm in the use of printed newspaper. The assumption is that a good number of people read newspapers on-line due to

convenience and other inherent advantages, which has largely attracted much attention of the literate populace. The consequence will be a huge decline on the revenue realized from the sale of print newspapers. This growing awareness on the perceived advantages of on-line newspaper over the printed ones has necessitated the fear that the printed newspaper circulation is being threatened and might well be on its way into extinction as more attention is given to on-line newspaper.

The extent to which the newspaper industry is able to navigate the storm of this new technology has been a challenge. This is because the level of literacy in any given society determines, largely, the relevance of printed materials in addressing the perceived needs of the people. The growth in literacy level of the people should correspond to the growth of newspaper circulation and vice versa.

Therefore, the fear that print newspaper purchase is being threatened by the presence of on-line newspaper and the attention given to it by a large number of literate public necessitated this study, which examines the influence of on-line newspaper readership on newspaper purchase in Nigeria, with a focus on the universities in the South-East.

Objectives of the Study

This study among other things seeks to achieve the following objectives:

1. To find out the frequency of on-line newspaper readership in the South-East universities in Nigeria.
2. To ascertain the extent to which on-line newspaper readership influences print newspaper purchase in South – East universities in Nigeria.
3. To find out other factors that influence print newspaper purchase in South – East universities in Nigeria.

Research Questions

This study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. How often do Nigerians in the South – East read newspapers on-line?
2. To what extent has on-line newspaper readership influenced print newspaper purchase in South – East universities in Nigeria?
3. What other factors influence print newspaper purchase in South-East universities in Nigeria?

Significance of the Study

On-line newspaper, based on recent studies, appears to be gaining significant attention among literate populace in Nigeria due to current happenings. This makes this study relevant at a time like this. Hence, the significance of the study is as follows:

First, it will help print media owners to look for ways to bridge the gap between on-line newspaper and printed newspapers to boost the latter's circulation.

Second, this study will help government to develop new policies on how to harness the potentials of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) through on-line publication of official gazettes through on-line newspapers.

Scholars of mass communication will also benefit from this study, as it will broaden their horizon on the significant benefits of on-line newspapers over printed newspapers, hence paving the way for further research.

The general public stand to benefit from this study since it will broaden their knowledge on the relevance of up-to-date information from on-line newspapers as they affect their present needs.

Literature Review

Communication scholars carrying out research on media content as a category that has an advantage and disadvantage for on-line newspaper and print newspaper, point out that while the audience is not limited to only those hit in the distribution efforts, it is also not the dedicated group of readers that most print publication can count on. Therefore, while the publication may be more widely available, that does not mean that people are reading it (Chappell, 1970).

Bearing this in mind, scholars are eager to know the effect or influence of their mass mediated message by examining the media-audience relationship by feeling the pulse of the audience themselves through research. “Readership research is very essential to editors and publishers, especially in a dynamic and ever changing society” (Dominic et al, 2002).

Against this backdrop, Thorson *et al* (2007) note that since the earliest days of on-line news, there has been a consistent finding that the use of on-line news is positive in relation to the use of print news. In an early study, Bromely *et al* (1995) shared a positive correlation, while Chyi and Lasorsa (1999) in a survey in Austin, Texas, noted that while readership of a local newspaper dominated in print, the national newspapers did better on-line.

Similarly, Thorson *et al* conducted a research on “prediction of print and on-line newspaper readership from indices of news quality” and found that the correlation between website usage and local newspapers weekday and Sunday was less than 0.05 and 0.06 respectively. Meaning these correlations had little practical significance. One of their hypotheses suggested that access to the Internet and use of cell phones would be a positive predictor of readership. This was supported by their findings for print readership where none of the variables was ever significant.

However, it was correct of website use for the whole sample. Thus, preference for news media features predict on-line but not print newspapers readership.

In an attempt to refine readership numbers, in on-line newspaper readership, website use had only 8% of its variance accounted for but the only place where readership of the newspaper website was strongly predicted was in the unusual non-metro where website use usually emphasized there, an impressive 20% of the variance was accounted for. This has important implications for any future understanding of what drives on-line newspaper readership. There were no demographic predictors but concluded that younger males showed higher readership of the smaller on-line newspaper.

The above findings are in conformity with the study of “frequency of readership” by Gollin and Salibury (1980). According to them, the multiple correlation of the demographic variables was relatively low ($r = 0.398$) and therefore concluded that demographics provide limited predictive power for newspaper readership researches.

George (2006), in his research, documented the extent to which Internet has altered the audience for daily newspapers and examined how coverage has changed in response. He found that even with rapid expansion of Internet access, college educated individuals make up a larger fraction of the Internet audience than the general population in 2003, 42% and 49%.

He further concluded that high Internet penetration is associated with higher newspapers sales as long as unobserved market attributes such as overall appetite for news do not change over time. According to him, markets with larger increases in Internet penetration are not losing circulation as fast as those with slower Internet use. He observed that:

This is counter-intuitive in that it suggests that Internet expansion increases newspaper circulation (or slows the decline caused by other sources) complementariness are not entirely implausible and might arise if for example individuals who peruse the news on-line during

the day become more likely to purchase a newspaper to follow-up on a story.

He, therefore, gave another interpretation of his finding thus: "Internet expansion is correlated with other trends positively affecting newspaper sales."

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on two theories namely: Technological Determinism Theory and the Uses and Gratification Theory.

Marshal McLuhan laid the foundation of Technological Determinism Theory in 1965 in his famous dictum "The Medium is the Message." He asserts, "The content or message of any particular medium has as much importance as the stenciling on the casing of an atomic bomb..." According to Folarin (1998, p. 117), the basic premise of the theory is that the media are extensions of the human body and that they alter not only their environment but the very message they convey; they bring new perceptual habits while their technologies create new human environments.

Griffin (1991, p. 293), also captures another variation of McLuhan on the theme: "The Medium is the Mass-Age." He asserts, "be it oral, written or electronic, the primary channel of communication changes the way we perceive the world. The dominant medium of any age dominates people." It is a kind of joining the "Band Wagon." Technology has nothing to do with opinions or concepts of the audience but rather "alters" them thereby allowing the message to flow without audience resistance.

Wolfe, in Griffin (1991, p. 293), summarizes McLuhan's thesis thus:

The new technologies...radically alter the entire way people use their five senses, the way they react to things and therefore, their entire lives and the entire society. It doesn't matter the content of a medium like TV twenty hours a day sadistic

cowboy caving in people's teeth or.... Pablo casals
droning away on his cello.

Further research in this field was conducted and Kunczik (1988, p. 128-134) notes that new communication technologies also tend to alter the journalists' working environment. Folarin further explained that installation of electronic (computerized) news distribution systems tend to level out the differences between editorial production phases of journalistic work. Folarin's observation also confirmed McLuhan's assertion that:

The day of the individualist, of privacy of fragmented or “applied” knowledge of points of view and specialist goals is being replaced by the over-all awareness of a mosaic world in which space and time are overcome by television, jets and computers – a simultaneous, all-at-once world in which everything resonates with everything else as a total electric field (McLuhan in Griffin 1991, p. 295).

Going by the above observations of some scholars about technology, one will not hesitate to state that technological advancement has exerted enormous power as to subtly influence the way people make their choices in the selection of any medium that satisfies their desire. The avalanche of social media today gives credence to this assertion, as one will be at a place and collects information from other countries within minutes.

Therefore, the level of awareness of this new technology (on-line newspaper) by the masses will determine the level of influence the new technology will have on print newspaper purchase in South-East universities in Nigeria, since technology alters the perceptions of the audience, coupled with the fact that “the dominant medium of any age dominates people.” The impact is that audience will first be engulfed consciously or

unconsciously by any technology (medium) be it newspaper, television, radio etc and by extension its usage tend to alter the entire way people perceive the world thereby bringing to bare the reason for considering the technological determinism theory appropriate for this study.

According to Folarin (1998, p. 65), the Uses and Gratification Theory perceives the recipient as actively influencing the effect process since he selectively chooses, attends to, perceives and retains the media messages on the basis of his or her needs, belief, etc. Eighmey (1997, p. 59) opined that the media can have little or no impact on person's who have no use for them; that media fare is selected rather than imposed and that particular media offerings are chosen because they are meaningful to those who choose them. The approach assumes audience members are active gratification seekers interacting with the media content to meet specific needs.

The use of on-line newspaper will among other factors depend on how people perceive the need of this new media – the Internet, as well as its inherent advantages. The choice of medium is dependent on the satisfaction of the audience needs by the medium. This is also in agreement with the opinion of Felsenthal (1976, p. 82) who says that as individuals devote a larger proportion of their time to the mass media, they correspondingly derive a greater proportion of their gratification from the them.

Method

For the purpose of this study, survey research design was used. This method is appropriate because whenever there is need for primary data as a source for a particular study it would require a survey design.

The researchers used staff and students of South East universities as the target population for the study. This is because these staff and students serve as a representative arm of literate

populace in South East Nigeria that read newspapers. These universities include Federal, State and Private Universities in the South-East of Nigeria.

Out of a population of 2,500,000, a sample size of 399 was drawn and used for the study and it was divided across Federal, State, and Private Universities (133 for each university) in the south east and this was done in ratio 8:2 for students and staff respectively based on the strength of their population.

The researchers adopted a multi-stage sampling technique for the study. First, the cluster technique was used to divide the South-East universities in all the five (5) south east states (Abia, Anambra, Enugu, Imo and Ebonyi) into Federal, State and Private.

Table 1a: Details of Universities in South-East Nigeria

S/N	SOUTH-EAST STATES	UNIVERSITIES		
		Federal	State	Private
1	ABIA	-	1	1
2	ANAMBRA	1	1	2
3	ENUGU	1	1	2
4	IMO	1	1	1
5	EBONYI	-	1	-
	TOTAL	3	5	6

(Source: NUC, 2011)

Since these clusters (i.e. Federal, States and private) are not evenly distributed among the South-East states, the researchers carried out a simple random selection of one university from each cluster, which gives a total of three universities in all. The universities selected were Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Renaissance University and Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

Primary methods of data collection were adopted in this study. The questionnaire was the primary source of collecting data. Both closed ended and open-ended questions were used, respectively, to elicit the desired response from the respondents.

Method of Data Analysis

Quantitative and qualitative methods of data analysis were used

for the study. While the former employed the use of frequency distribution tables and percentages, the latter used interpretation of tables and discussion for better understanding of the tables and the figures presented.

Findings

In this section, the researchers presented the data gathered using charts to show frequencies and percentages and tables to show means and standard deviation where the researcher made decision from the findings based on the deviation of the variables from the mean cut-off. The mean cut-off was given as $(4+3+2+1) \div 4 = 10 \div 4 = 2.5$

Table 1: Distribution of data based on number of staff and students that read newspapers

	Frequency	Percentage
Students that read newspapers	295	98
Students that do not read newspapers	5	2
Total	300	100

Newspaper Readership	Frequency	Percentage
Staff that read newspapers	85	86
Staff that do not read newspapers	14	14
Total	99	100

From the above tables, out of a total of 399 respondents (i.e. 300 students and 99 staff) drawn from the three universities, 295 students (98%) and 85 staff (86%) of the sample agree that they have access to and do read newspapers both on-line and printed copies as the need arises. This figure is considerably high and can be traced to the advent of the new media of technology and increase in knowledge.

Table 2: Extent of Readership of Newspapers On-Line

Response	SA	A	D	SD	M	StD	Decision
I read newspapers online	132	198	40	10	3.19	0.723	Yes
I read newspaper for information	217	146	11	6	3.51	0.635	Yes
I read newspapers for education	153	157	67	3	3.21	0.753	Yes
I read newspapers for entertainment	76	167	92	45	2.72	0.917	Yes
I read on -line newspapers everyday	61	64	190	65	2.32	0.939	No
I read newspapers occasionally	94	165	83	38	2.83	0.916	Yes
I read newspapers only when the content interests me	65	141	109	65	2.54	0.967	Yes

The result shows that a total of 330 out of 380 respondents actually read on-line newspapers, with a mean score of 3.19 and standard deviation of 0.723, leading to the “yes” decision made by the researchers, 310 read newspaper for education (with mean score of 3.21 and standard deviation of 0.753) while 243 read newspapers for entertainment which accounted for a low mean score of 2.72 and standard deviation of 0.917. Here, the researchers meant both on-line and print newspapers.

Lastly, the table revealed the frequency of on-line newspaper readership thus: 125 respondents read on-line newspapers everyday (with mean score of 2.32 and standard deviation of 0.939, this informs the “No” decision made). The figure is significantly low compared to those that said they access and read on-line newspapers. This means that 38% of respondents that read newspapers on-line do so every day, perhaps with their mobile phones most of which are students.

Those who read on-line newspapers occasionally accounted for 259 (with a mean score of 2.83 and standard deviation of 0.916, leading to a “No” decision. This number represents 78% of those who access and read on-line newspapers. Of this number, 206 respondents said they read on-line newspapers only when the content interests them. This number accounted for the mean score of 2.54 and standard deviation of 0.967, hence, the “yes” decision (even though it was slightly above the mean cut-off point of 2.5)

Table 3: Distribution of responses to show the level of influence on-line newspaper readership has over print newspaper purchase in universities in the South-East Nigeria

Responses	SA	A	D	SD	M	StD	Decision
On-line newspapers are up-to-date	144	179	46	11	3.20	0.760	Yes
Print newspapers are not up-to-date	60	80	160	80	2.32	0.977	No
On-line newspaper contents are not reliable	23	66	167	124	1.97	0.862	No
On-line newspaper contents are always stale	15	80	187	98	2.03	0.792	No
On-line newspaper contents are not detailed	41	116	154	69	2.34	0.897	No
People don't buy printed newspapers since they are available on-line	44	136	134	66	2.42	0.908	No
People prefer on-line newspapers because its contents are up-to-date	60	140	148	32	2.60	0.852	Yes
There is a decline in print newspaper purchase because of its availability on-line	88	177	105	10	2.90	0.778	Yes
It is cheaper to read on-line newspaper than print newspaper	188	108	61	23	3.21	0.924	Yes

From the above table, the level of influence which on-line newspaper readership has over print newspaper purchase is quite significant. First, it contains up-to-date information as affirmed by 323 respondents, with the mean score of 3.20 and standard deviation of 0.760, which is significantly high, hence, the decision “yes”.

Even though print newspapers are also up-to-date (as indicated by 240 respondents negating the statement); on-line newspapers are more reliable in content as affirmed by 291 respondents than print newspaper. Also, the table shows that on-line newspapers are more detailed with current information as affirmed by 223 and 285 respondents respectively, with mean scores of 2.34 and 2.03 respectively, debunking the negative statement that its contents are not detailed and are always stale, hence, the decision “No” as indicated in the table.

More respondents (about 200 as against 180), affirmed

that people do not buy newspapers not because they are available on-line but for some other obvious reasons, which they stated in subsequent part of the questionnaire. Conversely, more respondents (200 as against 180), affirm that the reason people prefer on-line newspaper to print is because of the currency of its information. This can be seen in the mean score of 2.60 and standard deviation of 0.852, which led to the “yes” decision.

On the decline of print newspaper purchase, 265 respondents agree to that with a mean score of 2.90 and standard deviation of 0.798 resulting in the “yes” decision. This was followed by the response that it is actually cheaper to read newspapers on-line (in the comfort of their room or office) as affirmed by 296 respondents with a mean score of 3.21 and standard deviation of 0.924. This is the highest mean score recorded in the table. This must have accounted for the decline in print newspaper purchase as pointed out in the responses above.

Table 4: Other Factors That Influence Print Newspaper Purchase in Universities in the South-East Of Nigeria

Responses	SA	A	D	SD	M	StD	Decision
There are other factors that influence print newspaper purchase apart from on-line newspaper readership	153	153	52	22	3.15	0.866	Yes
Cover price of print newspapers are too expensive	92	142	136	10	2.83	0.824	Yes
Print newspapers contain too many grammatical errors	29	72	218	61	2.18	0.740	No
Print newspapers have good design	93	150	121	16	2.84	0.842	Yes
Use of social media (like <i>facebook</i> , <i>twitter</i> , etc) has influenced print newspaper purchase	153	122	65	40	3.02	0.998	Yes
People don't believe in print newspaper contents	31	60	161	128	1.98	0.907	No

From table 4 above, 306 respondents out of 380 affirm that there are other factors that influence print newspaper purchase apart from on-line newspaper readership, which authenticates similar finding made earlier in this study. This number represents 81% with a mean score of 3.15, which ranked highest and standard deviation of 0.866, hence, the “yes” decision.

In attempting to enumerate these other factors that

influence print newspaper purchase, out of the five listed factors, more of the respondents (275) share the believe that the use of social media like *facebook*, *twitter*; and so on, for information dissemination has influenced print newspaper purchase, with a mean score of 3.02 and standard deviation of 0.998.

The above result also shows disagreement from the respondents to the statements that “print newspapers contain too many grammatical errors” and that “people do not believe in the content of print newspapers.” The former had 279 respondents while the latter recorded 289 respondents, both with mean scores of 2.18 and 1.98 as well as standard deviations of 0.790 and 0.907 respectively. This represents the lowest of all the mean scores, hence, the “No” decision.

From the table also, 234 respondents out of 380 believe that the cover prices of print newspapers are too expensive (with mean score of 2.83 and standard deviation of 0.824), hence, it has some level of influence on print newspaper purchase. In addition, 243 respondents point to good design and layout as a factor that is responsible for low purchase of print newspapers (with the notion that it leads to increase in cover price of print newspapers).

Discussion

The advent of new media technologies that saw many newspapers going on-line has contributed greatly to the way and manner people disseminate information.

Research Question 1: *How often do Nigerians in the South-East read newspapers on-line?*

The frequency of on-line newspaper readership is found also in the frequency of its accessibility. Readership is guaranteed by level of accessibility. The importance of newspaper readership cannot be over-emphasized as studies have rightly shown. One of such studies is by Maduekwe (2005, p. 353). His study agreed with the concept of “the medium is the message” while stressing the importance of newspaper readership. According to him:

..the implication of this is that if your medium no longer connects, you are unlikely to be heard. It is almost as if you had no message; if some coconut fell in some distant forest, very far from any human habitation and no one heard it, was a sound made?

The above assertion underscores the essence of readership in newspaper. It is not enough to have access to a newspaper, much more than having access, it is essential also to read. Meyer (2004) in her study agrees with the findings in this study by pointing out that the advent of technology has given a boost to readership of print materials on-line. According to her “with the advent of the Internet and the explosion of other news channels and sources of news, the question of readership, both print and on-line have become more crucial.”

Onwubiko (2005) carried out a similar study on the importance of newspaper readership in Nigerian universities. According to him: “Newspapers have been accorded a great deal of importance in the transmission of government policy, priority changes and even interest charges... students, scholars, administrators, the barely literate and so on, have high demand for newspapers through self – acquisition, exchange and borrowing from friends, relatives and from libraries.” This agrees with the findings that more people now read newspapers on-line due to its great demand and its up-to-date information to help individuals make well-informed decisions.

Research Question 2: *To what extent has on-line newspaper readership influenced print newspaper purchase in South – East universities in Nigeria?*

In determining the level of influence which on-line newspapers have over print newspaper purchase, the researcher used the following parameter: being up-to-date, its contents being reliable, its content being current (not stale) and its economic advantage.

A greater percentage of the respondents (i.e. 296

respondents representing 78%) affirm that on-line newspapers economic advantage has influenced print newspaper purchase. It is cheaper and more convenient to read newspapers on-line. It has overtaken the barrier of time and space, which print newspaper accessibility and readership created. Myer (2008) agrees with this aspect of the finding in this research by pointing out that the circulation and purchase of print newspapers have been a challenge to newspaper proprietors due to high interest penetration.

Another area that on-line newspapers have gained greater advantage over print newspaper is in currency of information. The most current happenings around us can easily be posted on the web pages of the newspapers on-line than on the pages of the daily newspapers at the newsstand. Individuals who go for current information use the on-line version of the newspapers. Griffin (1991, p. 293) further confirms this in his assertion that: “the impact is that audience will first be engulfed consciously or unconsciously by any technology (medium) be it newspaper, television, radio, etc and by extension its usage tends to alter the entire way people perceive the world.”

Nworah (2007) in his findings affirms, “the Internet has also provided Nigerian journalists with international exposure... they can file a story from the remotest part of Nigeria and the story pasted on the Internet.” Hence, the freedom between the writer (source of the news) and the audience (receiver of the news) is greatly enhanced through on-line dissemination of information.

Even though print newspaper contents are up-to-date from the findings in this research, it has been proved from similar findings that one can easily rely on on-line newspapers up-to-date information due to its 'almost immediate' nature of dissemination of news notwithstanding the location of the news.

The findings in this study also reveal that the reason why people do not buy print newspapers regularly is not necessarily their availability on-line; there are several other factors, which account for the decline in the purchase of print newspapers. This

agrees with the findings made by George (2006) in his study that “Internet expansion is correlated with other trends positively affecting newspaper sales.” It is obvious that even though there may not be that direct relationship between on-line newspaper readership and decline in print newspaper purchase, but from all that has been discussed, on-line newspaper readership correlates with several other interlocking factors that are responsible for the decline in print newspaper sales as well as purchase.

Research Question 3: *What other factors influence print newspaper purchase in South – East universities in Nigeria?*

The findings revealed other factors that affect print newspaper purchase in universities in the South-East. The use of social media (e.g. *facebook*, *twitter*, etc) has greatly affected print newspaper purchase as affirmed by 275 respondents (72%). In addition, its expansive nature, which is traced to improved design of the print newspaper, has also affected its purchase.

Scholars have come to agree that there are limitations faced with sale of print newspapers. In his study on newspaper readership among staff and students of universities in the South-East, Ekwurumadu (1978), came to the following conclusions:

Most literate people read newspapers, although this is not without limitations such as lack of purchasing power, poor content of the paper, poor distribution network. One's choice of local newspaper to keep abreast of what is happening in the community and availability of radio and television has reduced the rate of newspaper readership.

Social media, which became widespread because of the Internet explosion, have influenced the purchase of print newspapers. Other electronic media such as radio, television, which provide “news in a hurry” and have reduced the much attention people give to print newspapers. The findings in this study that print newspapers do not contain too many grammatical

errors tend to disagree with the decline in print newspaper purchase.

Even though there appears to be a decline in print newspaper purchase, it has not reduced the significant benefits people have as 289 respondents believe that people still have confidence in the contents of print newspapers. Also, print newspapers serve as archival materials for students who carry out research in colleges and institutions. This has nothing to do with its cover page.

Conclusion

The above findings have provided a build-up on related studies as well as opened up new areas for further study. Newspaper readership is as important as the content of the newspapers and related studies have shown that there is a direct relationship between the advent of the Internet and the decline in print newspaper purchase. Among other things, this study concludes as follows:

1. A greater percentage of Nigerian students (98%) have access to and do read newspapers on-line compared to staff in universities in the South-East.
2. On-line newspapers have significant benefit over print newspapers but that these benefits do not in any way affect or influence print newspaper purchase.
3. The findings also revealed that the significant benefit of on-line newspapers correlate with other factors (like cover price of print newspapers, audience appeal, etc) which are responsible for the decline in print newspaper purchase.
4. The use of social media is a major factor that influence print newspaper purchase.

Recommendations

The findings informed the need for recommendations. Hence, the researchers put forward the following suggestions:

- (1) Newspaper proprietors should endeavour to strike a

- balance between the cover price of print newspapers and the benefit, which the readers derive from the newspaper.
- (2) The reading of print newspapers in universities and colleges should be encouraged by constantly engaging students with rigorous assignments that would make them get newspapers for themselves which serve as useful reference material.
 - (3) Publishers and editors should endeavour to present information that will not lose its currency over time in print newspapers to sustain its purchase and increase turnover. They can do this effectively by reviewing their editorial and news judgment policies.
 - (4) Publishers and editors of print newspaper should also engage in market survey to enable them feel the pulse of their customers. Lack of market survey contributes to most newspapers inability to survive in the midst of competition coming from the online newspapers.
 - (5) Print newspaper contents should be improved in both aesthetics and volume of information (with particular reference to wider area of interest) so as to attract wider readership, which will boost sales.
 - (6) There should be a convergence between online newspaper and print newspaper such that the latter will provide the required background information to back up the scoop captured by the social media and online newspapers.

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