

DIGITALISING THE MEDIA LANDSCAPE: A DISCOURSE ON SELECTED NATIONAL DAILIES

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Abstract

With increasing growth in popularity, the social media have steadily been replacing traditional media of communication especially in this century as individuals now communicate more with one another through the social media. The qualitative method was used to gather data for this study. The growth of the digital media has resulted in the proliferation of on-line platforms that allow readers access news and information at no cost and this can be attributed to one of the factors that has led to the steady decline in circulation of newspapers in the country. Backed by mediamorphosis and technological determinism theories, the study discusses the growing trend of convergence between traditional and new media of communication using ThePunch and DailyTrust Newspapers as a case. The study found that the two papers have been able to effectively embrace the new technology thereby leading to positive growth and sustained survival. The researchers therefore recommends that newspapers, magazines, radio and television stations take maximum advantage of the digital media in order to expand their horizon which will enable them reach out to a larger audience.

Keywords: Social Media, Traditional Media, National Dailies.

Introduction

Since the mid-1990s, the conventional modes of communication have steadily been superseded by social media, with increasing growth in popularity. Social media platforms, such as Internet forums, email, personal websites, sophisticated bulletin board systems, and on-line chats have enabled a vast number of people to hear the voices of individuals (Hong, 2012). Even, while many media organisations are still operating in the monologue mode, they are starting to see the need for adapting to the digital mode in general, and social media, in particular.

Individuals communicate with one another more via social media, which has rapidly become the major way of communicating. It has transformed the way people and businesses interact over the past decade; and, this is particularly true now when the globe is being plagued by a Coronavirus pandemic. As Internet connections spread into every nook and cranny of society, it has become possible to be involved in multi-media communications and engagements. A substantial threat to the dominating traditional and conventional media has been posed by the multi-dimensional compliance of social media, which has resulted in an additional degree of quick international access to other social media platforms (Kasturi and Vardhan, 2014).

For quite some time now, the media business in Nigeria has been confronted with a variety of difficulties. In recent years, there has been a steady decline in the circulation of newspapers in the country. This can be attributed to a variety of factors, including the high cost of newsprint and the introduction of the Internet which has resulted in the proliferation of on-line platforms that allow readers to access news and information at no cost (Dare, 2011).

The introduction of on-line newspapers has undoubtedly impacted the method in which journalists cover news. Studies have found that one of the challenges confronting reading of newspapers in Nigeria is the use of social media platforms (Tuncan, 2020). Despite the difficulties that the newspaper-business is experiencing, publishers make use of modern media-technologies to reach audiences all over the globe. This is because new-media platforms allow reporters to collect news and receive reports from other media-organisations (Ekhareafa et al, 2013). The Internet allows journalists, who write for the print media, to gather information and do fact-checking, as well as make inquiries into facts and numbers or historical background material, without leaving their homes or workplaces.

As a consequence of the popularity of social media, it has begun to encroach on newspaper reading habit of the people, especially because of its accessibility and simplicity of use, the popularity of on-line news in Nigeria has witnessed a significant increase. On-line news is in high demand; thanks, in part, to the Internet which, among its many properties, allows for the delivery of real-time information (Hassan et al, 2018). On-line news is always being updated, informing consumers of any breaking news that has occurred and, with the use of mobile phones, these 'alerts' may be received almost immediately.

Statement of the Problem

With the emergence of digital media-technologies and Internet-based platforms, where readers may get news for free, newspapers are becoming less popular among the general public (Hassan et al, 2015). Yet, despite this tendency, the newspaper business is quickly expanding its use of social media as a cutting-edge tool. In the light of this widespread acceptance of social media by the newspaper-industry, only a few studies have explored the nature of the adoption and use of social media platforms in the context of the on-line news industry so far.

Though there has been some fairly current discourse on the use of the conventional digital mode (Chukwu, 2014; Oladosu et al; Agbo and Chukwuma, 2016; Roger n.d),they have till date received only scanty academic examination, especially in relation to the focus of this study;yet, given the role of digital media in today's news' landscape. It is, therefore, pertinent that this gap in the literature be filled. This paper thus reports on an exploratory study of selected national daily newspapers' adoption of digital media, the nature of adoption and use, and how the national dailies have been able to overcome the challenges posed by technological advancements through convergence.

Objectives of the study

The study is guided by the following objectives:

1. To discuss the relevance of social media in this era.
2. To highlight both the key advantages of and challenges posed by social media to conventional media.
3. To review the concept of 'media convergence'.
4. To explore the selected Nigerian dailies' adoption of social media.

Significance of the Study

The researchers were motivated to conduct this study by the necessity to relate recent scientific findings in this professional field. As a result, this study focuses on current empirical data to serve as useful resource-material for prospective scholars in the area. Findings of the study can strongly convince traditional media practitioners to learn how to effectively use social media to improve their journalistic profession. Furthermore, academic and research institutes can benefit greatly from this study in the learning and teaching of convergence between digital and traditional media.

Conceptual Review

Developments in communication technologies combined with the use of the Internet, up to the first part of the 21st Century, have made access to information fast and economical for individuals. Many people see digital media as a vital part of their lives because the internet has been able to offer a lot of information free of charge while at the same time providing users with a lot of possibilities" (Balci and Tiryaki, 2018,p.11).Digital media,as digitised content can be transmitted over the Internet or computer networks; and, it includes any format or device used to convey content using digital signals. It includes text, audio, video, and graphics. Television-news, newspaper, and magazine presented on a website or blog,also, falls into this category.According to Das (2020), digital media refers to media that are encoded in machine-related formats. Digital media can be created, viewed, communicated, modified, and presented on digital electronic devices, such as softwares, digital images, videos, web-pages, websites, social media,digital data, digital audio, and E-books.Nayyar (in WEF, 2016, p.6) in general terms defined digital media as "products and services that come from the media, entertainment,and information industry and their sub-sectors". It is made up of digital platforms, such as websites and applications, digitized

contents, text, audio, video, and images and services that can be accessed and consumed through different digital devices.

However, specifically, Shailashree (2019) asserts that digital media are communication technologies that enable and facilitate user-to-user interactivity and interactivity between user and information. Digital media helps users to establish relationships and, also, experience a sense of belonging, despite temporal and spatial boundaries. According to Norris (as cited in Shailashreen, 2019), digital media change continuously because they are constantly modified and re-defined by the interaction between the creative use of the masses, emerging technology, cultural changes, and other factors.

With the evolution of communication basically because of the advent of technology and media, individuals and organisations now have several ways in which they can display their work, voice their opinions on different issues as well as spread information and knowledge globally. Supporting this trend, Vorhaus (2020) claims that in these days of pandemics, demonstrations, economic distress, and worry among the earth's population, a newly released research reveals that consumers increasingly move away from conventional media sources for information and are increasingly turning to social media and messaging-services. Newspaper -consumption has plummeted greatly, as have national broadcast ratings, and the shift to new sources of information has increased significantly (Vorhaus, 2020). Traditional media-operators, on the other hand, are researching and embracing digital media in order to stay in the business of news collection and transmission. The emergent notion from the traditional media operators' embrace of digital media is known as "media convergence".

Media convergence is the blending of both traditional and digital media with the help of the Internet as well as portable and highly interactive technologies through digital media-platforms. The most popular examples of media convergence are: (1) smart-phones-converging camera, music, the Internet, books, and all other media together; (2) On-line radio- converging radio with the Internet; (3) E-books- converging paperbacks with digital technology; and, (4) news websites and applications. Jenkins (2006) defines media convergence as the merger of different tools and equipment for the production and distribution of media content. He argues that since media audience today have become the content producers and distributors, therefore, media convergence must be understood from the perspective of social as well as technological transformations within human society. The inter-connection of various media formats constitute both the essential and fundamental characteristics of media convergence. Deuze (2008) opines that media convergence is the 'cooperation and collaboration' between diverse media forms which were previously unconnected. Media convergence has blurred the boundaries between various media forms and assimilated them in distinctive digital forms that are universally accessible to all the existing types of audience. Burnett and Marshal (as cited in Nadaf, 2019) defines media convergence as the blending of media, telecommunications and computer industries. Under rapid convergence which is happening in the contemporary

media industry, various media formats- television, print, radio, and on-line media sources- are facilitated by portable and interactive digital technologies.

Nadaf (2019) explains that there are two dominant perspectives of media convergence- technological and economic media convergence. Advancement in media technologies and the different ways in which news is being transmitted across communication networks in the media industry can be said to be one of the most dominant driving forces behind media convergence.

Media consumers, in this age, have access to media content in a rapidly hybridising media environment because of the proliferation of advanced Internet networks and digital devices like smart phones, tablets and smart televisions (Nadaf, 2019). Nadaf(2019) also opines that the specificity of one media form is no more identified with a particular media category such as print newspaper, print magazine, broadcast, or radio. Today one particular device- e.g. smart-phone- provides access to a diverse array of media content in multimedia forms and formats that include text, video, audio, and photos. He argues further that news organizations are no longer simply identified with one particular media form like print, audio-visual or radio rather as the resources of news information that constitute all media formats such as text, videos, and audio podcasts, etc. The convergence in the media sector is due to the advancement in digital technologies and this had led to the combination of digitisation and computer networking that has transcended the boundaries of the traditional segregation of media forms. Both the old and new media forms have been integrated and this had led to both instant and rapid exchanges of news information across the globe. The explosion of Internet networks in the 1990s had also prompted a quick convergence in the media industry across the globe.

Media convergence facilitated by the advancement in digital technology has led to the democratisation of media and this has enabled a common Internet user to have access to digital media on a computer network, and also, to produce or disseminate media content. It has brought some visible changes in the way journalism is being practised in the media industry. Content producers no longer have a monopoly over the dissemination of information and digital technology has equipped previously called 'media consumers' to become 'media producers' as well as 'communicators'. Digital technologies now enable users to generate content and consolidate their roles as a media producer. In the production of media content, both distribution and dissemination have been accelerated, expanded, and facilitated by technological convergence. The convergence in the media industry for greater revenue and corporate business prompted the merger of big media houses in the beginning of the 21st Century that led to the emergence of giant digital media players who are controlling global media content. The giant media players that merged as a result of corporate convergence are *Viacom-Paramount* in 1994; *Disney-ABC* in 1995; *Viacom-CBS* in 2000; and, *NBC-Universal* in 2004 (Flew, 2017). The merger between media entertainment giant *Time Warner* and *America On Line (AOL)* is often considered as the biggest corporate merger and a great example of media convergence that engulfed various forms of media content production and distribution (Nadaf, 2019).

Agbo and Chukwuma (2016) sought to determine the extent to which broadcast journalists, in South-East Nigeria, use social media for news collection and dissemination in their research. The Questionnaire schedule was the measuring 'tool' in the survey-research approach. The research population consisted of all 867 broadcast journalists in Nigeria's South-East geopolitical zone, from which a sample of 274 was selected using Taro Yamane's technique. The researchers discovered, using the purposive sample approach, that broadcast journalists in South-East Nigeria had not extensively adopted social media in news collection and transmission. It was observed, among other things, that broadcast journalists in South-East Nigeria embraced social media platforms, as they constitute powerful tools for the practice of contemporary journalism.

Oladosu et al (2021) investigated the trends and patterns of on-line publishing in Nigeria. The research was grounded in the notions of technological determinism and mediamorphosis. It used content analysis as its design to make sense of both the trends and patterns of on-line publications in Nigeria; namely "Sahara Reporters" and "Premium Times". Following a research of the patterns of the two chosen on-line news sources, it was found that there was a preference for deep investigative articles and multi-media presentation with hyperlinks that allow readers to easily have access to various areas of the stories. It was also observed that the two on-line newspapers often connect their content to video snippets that readers can see on their mobile devices. It may be argued that this is one of the primary developments driving on-line newspapers which has also improved online audience adoption of news platforms.

In addition, Chukwu (2014) examined the changes that Internet journalism has brought to the Nigerian media environment. While technological determinism holds that technology is the fundamental cause of change in society, mediamorphosis theory believes in the unification of previously existing institutions with the changes brought about by technology. As a result, rather than being supplanted by Internet journalism, conventional media need to collaborate with new media to improve its operations. He suggested that the Federal Government of Nigeria and media employees work together to provide media organizations with the necessary infrastructures to remain afloat in this digital age, since on-line journalism is here to stay.

Theoretical Frameworks

The convergence of media in contemporary times is mostly attributed to factors, such as digital technology, corporate consolidation, and government deregulation. News organisations are shifting to multi-media news creation and dissemination in order to reach a bigger audience and reap greater financial rewards as a result of the convergence brought about by digital technologies. Therefore, this study is anchored on technological determinism and mediamorphosis theories of mass communication.

According to Marshal McLuhan's (1963) thesis of technological determinism, media convergence has been made possible by advances in communication technology. The thesis asserts that media technology influences how people think and behave and how societies

function as they transition from one technological period to the other. According to this hypothesis, technological advancements play a major role in society's evolution because he views "electronic media as mechanistic and capable of inducing unrestrained effects on individuals and society", McLuhan (as cited in Asak and Ohiagun, 2013, p.83). People's behaviour and actions are increasingly influenced by their interactions with digital media. Consequently, it has helped to shape the way civilisations grow and evolve in the future. For this research, it is important to consider this idea since it enables us to comprehend how Internet technology has altered the newspaper industry in Nigeria and globally. New technology has made it possible to obtain news on a variety of electronic devices at the same time. Put differently, the industry would not have to rely only on conventional mass media for both the collection and distribution of information; instead, it does use the new types of communication platforms provided by social media. There are several major media outlets engaged on social media sites such as "Facebook" and "Twitter".

Roger Fidler's "Mediamorphosis" hypothesis, which he presented in his book "Mediamorphosis: Understanding New Media" (1997), is the second theory on which this research is based. Mediamorphosis is a holistic approach to understanding the growth of communications media technology over the last century. As a result of the ever changing media environment which is brought about by the coming together and growth of media forms, steady mediamorphosis of new media forms from old ones and the challenges brought about by the adoption of new media. New and old media are related and connected (Nwammuo, 2011). In another way, when new media forms mature and develop, they have an impact on the development of other existing media over time and to varying degrees. Rather than the emerging media replacing the old one, it enhances it. Media constitute sophisticated adaptive systems in mediamorphosis. Thus, the media like other systems are able to self-organise in response to external stimuli (Anaeto et al, 2008). Using these theories, we can better understand how internet journalism has changed the way conventional media works.

Study's Design

Using technological determinism and mediamorphosis theories of mass communication, this study investigates and analyses the literature in respect of media convergence, with a focus on selected Nigerian national newspapers. Punch newspaper and Daily Trust newspaper were purposively selected for this study because while the former is one of the most widely read newspapers in Nigeria, the latter is one of the most widely read in North Nigeria. This work "summarises, recapitulates, reiterates, interprets, and decisively assesses an existing body of information (published or unpublished material) in order to identify parallels within the understanding of a subject matter", by applying a qualitative approach of literature review (McKinney as cited in Unwuchola et al, p. 78). This study not only assembles expert perspectives on the subject, it also examines literature to identify deficiencies, strengths, and gaps in the body of knowledge, with the purpose of arriving at a position that can provide suitable remedies to plug the gaps identified.

Analysis of Selected Newspapers and Discussion of Findings

i. The Punch Newspaper

Punch (Nigeria) Limited was established on August 8, 1970, under the Companies Act of 1968, to print newspapers, magazines, and other types of periodic publications. It was intended to educate, amuse, and enlighten Nigerians as well as the rest of the world.

"Happy Home", a lovely family-magazine, was originally published by the firm in 1971. Mr. BunmiSofola was the first Editor at the helm of the publication's reins. *Sunday PUNCH*, the company's first weekly newspaper, debuted on the news-stands on March 18, 1973. The publication's first Editor was Mr. AjibadeFashina Thomas. The mission statement of the newspaper states: "To provide our nation with a distinctive Sunday publication that blends the finest in serious and popular journalism with refreshing information and enjoyment" (Punch.com).

Punch publications, such as *THE PUNCH*, *SATURDAY PUNCH*, and *SUNDAY PUNCH* have long dominated the Nigerian media market: this has not slowed the corporation's progress. As technology advances, the world adjusts to new methods of operating a newspaper company. The firm has made major expenditures on new technologies and personnel training. *The Punch* of the 1970s and the present are significantly different in terms of character and substance. The media firm is projected to maintaining its lead position in the sector.

As a consequence of the convergence brought about by digital technologies, news organisations are transiting to multi-media news development and transmission in order to reach a larger audience and reap greater financial advantages. Through digital media, a wealth of information is now available at the user's fingertips. It is apparent that newspapers in Nigeria that want to give thorough coverage of certain critical issues are using social media as a source of collecting information and its distribution or as a forum for information exchange. Nigerian newspapers have been able to reach out to their audiences using social media platforms, such as "Facebook", "YouTube", "Twitter", "Instagram", and "LinkedIn", which have reduced travel costs and stress. Furthermore, since it is accessible 24 hours a day, social media is a key information resource for both journalists and news readers.

The Punch Newspapers is seen to be active on social media sites such as "Facebook", "YouTube", "Twitter", "Instagram", and "LinkedIn", among others. Through social media platforms, users may exchange information, ideas, and other forms of content through virtual communities and networks. The Punch Newspaper has 2,209,702 "Facebook" fans and 4,500 "Twitter" followers (<https://m.facebook.com/punchnewspaper/>). The Punch newspaper's "YouTube" channel see<http://m.youtube.com/user/MobilePunch234> has around 46.6k subscribers. Nigerian television broadcasters have a ready competitor in The Punch Newspaper TV on "YouTube". There's a section called "So This Happened..." that presents tales that have lately gone viral. This "YouTube" page has received 276 videos of

news events from Nigeria and across the globe in the previous six months. This is a basic example of media convergence at its best.

Also, between the 21st and 23rd of January 2022, around 430 news stories were published, with some receiving over 1.9k likes and comments. Towards readers' satisfaction, the newspaper's management is making use of social media's vast and pervasive communication advancements. Because of the increasing use of social media, the newspaper may soon be regarded as an international daily, with a readership that reaches well beyond the boundaries of Nigeria. The Punch Newspaper has a significant following on "Instagram", with over 955k followers, and on "LinkedIn", it has over 93000 followers (<https://linkedin.com/mwlite/company/punchnewspaper>). The flexibility and augmentation of conventional media by social media is referred to as "Mediamorphosis" by Roger Fidler (1997).

According to Anaeto, Onabajo and Osifeso (2008), as new media forms mature and grow, they have a long-term and varying influence on the evolution of other existing media. Rather than replacing the old media, the new media enriches it.

The Punch newspaper's motto: "Most widely read newspaper in Nigeria," is quite accurate, given the paper's massive social media following. Indeed, the instance of Punch newspaper has proved that media, as theorized under mediamorphosis, are complex adaptive systems. This newspaper has obviously embraced the notion of convergence when it comes to coping with the danger presented by technological innovation. The definition of media convergence provided by Jenkins (2006) is adequate. He describes it as the combination of diverse instruments and equipment used in the creation and delivery of media content. Jenkins (2006) thinks that media convergence must be understood through the lens of human society's social and technical advancements since today's media viewers are content creators and distributors. This study, however, contradicts the assertion that Agbo and Chukwuma (2016) made that broadcast journalists in South-east Nigeria have not actively used social media in news gathering and delivery. In the light of this, Chukwu (2014) suggests that, rather than being overtaken by on-line journalism, traditional media should work with new media to enhance their operations.

ii. Daily Trust Newspaper

Media Trust Limited is a privately held Nigerian newspaper publishing company that is based in Abuja. It publishes *Daily Trust*, *Weekly Trust*, *Sunday Trust* and *Aminiya* newspapers. It is one of the leading newspaper companies in northern Nigeria. *Daily Trust* was established in January, 2001, and ranks among the top seven in advertising revenue generation in Nigeria (Olaiya, 2009). The Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer is Kabiru Abdullahi Yusuf. The major objective of the company is to grow steadily into a world-class, integrated communication company.

Just like Punch newspaper, *Daily Trust* has been able to embrace the innovations arising from the advancement in media-technologies. The media organisation has been able to transit to multimedia news development and dissemination in order to take advantage of the larger audience presented by the digital media. *Daily Trust* Newspaper has been active

on various social media sites in the exchange of information, ideas, and other forms of expression. This is clearly evident in its online presence as *Daily Trust* has 1, 355, 521 “Facebook” fans (facebook.com/dailytrust), 1.9 million followers on “Twitter” (twitter.com/daily_trust), 436,000 followers on “Instagram” (linktr.ee/daily_trust) and 2.05k subscribers on its “Youtube” page (youtube.com/c/DailyTrust). *Daily Trust* has been able to reach large audiences through its various social media platforms because these platforms do not only serve as a way of disseminating news, information, and entertainment but, also, as a veritable platform of sourcing for news as a paper while its reporters cannot be everywhere even if they want to be.

On “Youtube”, Trust Tv has been able to upload 108 videos which mainly contains documentaries, interviews, Voxpop, news, coverage of protests, etc in the past six months (youtube.com/c/DailyTrust). This is a clear indication that *Daily Trust* is maximising the usage of social media to get across to its numerous audience, thereby uniting the old and new media. By embracing digital media and effectively adjusting to the intricacies of technological advancements, *Daily Trust* has indeed proven that the concept of media convergence is actually relevant as they have been able to combine diverse instruments and equipment in the creation and delivery of media contents.

This study is in agreement with the findings of Chukwu (2014), that conventional media organisations should cooperate with new media technologies in order to improve on their operations. This is so with the way *Daily Trust* has been able to use the new media for the growth of its media organisation.

In a nutshell, this study found that both *The Punch* and *Daily Trust* newspapers have been able to effectively incorporate digital media into their operations and this is clear in their usage of the various media platforms which they are currently using in reaching out to their teeming audiences

Also, by their usage of digital media, both papers are in competition with broadcast stations, especially in the area of news dissemination. Unlike in the past when print media hardly break stories because of the nature of their medium; now, through their social media platforms, the newspapers can break live stories as they unfold.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper discusses the growing trend of convergence between traditional and new media of communication. It is evident that digital media may have influenced the growth of both *The Punch* and *Daily Trust* newspapers as the two papers have been able to effectively embrace the new technology. Backed by mediamorphosis theory which says that rather than an emerging media replacing old ones, the new media enhances the old; and, thereby leading to its positive growth. Properly harnessed, new media would help traditional media to grow which translates to greater wins and sustained survival. As a result of the pluralisation of content, media firms, specifically *The Punch* newspaper and *Daily Trust* newspapers in this study have been able to expand with better circulation online while

reaching out to much larger audiences, than witherto, as information and news have become cheaper and more accessible.

This study, therefore recommends, that newspapers, radios, and television stations should take maximum advantage of digital media in order to expand their horizons and,thereby, reach out to larger audiences as the world has, invariably, moved on with the ‘train’ of digital media.

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