

## **Students' Preference between Hardcopy and Online Newspaper in Nigeria: A Study of Selected State-Owned Tertiary Institutions in Taraba State**

Professor Joseph M. Lucas, Zulizza Dahiru & Adeniyi M. Adebisi

Department of Journalism and Media Studies, Taraba State University, Jalingo

Email: [josephlucas928@gmail.com](mailto:josephlucas928@gmail.com), [zulizzadahiru12@gmail.com](mailto:zulizzadahiru12@gmail.com) & [adenex2004@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:adenex2004@yahoo.co.uk)

### **Abstract**

The study investigates students' preference between hardcopy and online Newspaper in Nigeria with focus on selected State-owned tertiary institutions in Taraba State. Four objectives and research questions guided the study. The objectives were to: determine students' reading preference between online and printed copy of newspaper; investigate the factors responsible for students' preference between online and printed copy of newspaper; to what extent does course of study influence students' continuous use of preferred channels between online and printed copy of newspaper and examine methods for sustaining students' preference between online and printed copy of newspaper. The study was anchored on the Technological Determinism theory. Survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study was 15,000 students from State-owned tertiary institutions in Taraba State Nigeria. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency and percentage. The findings of the study revealed that 71% of the respondents preferred online newspapers than hardcopy newspaper. The findings also revealed that course of study influences the kind of newspaper the students prefer. From the findings, the study concluded that students from State-owned tertiary institutions in Taraba State preferred online newspaper to the hardcopy. Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended that more newspaper publishers in Nigeria should be encouraged to go online and there should be better management of content and site of online newspaper in Taraba State.

**Keywords:** Hardcopy, online Newspaper, preference, students, tertiary institutions

### **Introduction**

From 1859 when the first newspaper in Nigeria was published by Rev. Henry Townsend till the present moment, newspaper has been playing a vital role in the daily lives of Nigerians. The objective was, "...to get the people to read and to beget the habit of seeking information by reading" (Omipitan, 2016). Dissemination of information is the hallmark of news media. Changes in technology have brought about numerous changes in the socioeconomic lives of people and these include approaches to routine activities. Invention of printing machine aided the establishment of print media around the world.

Perhaps, the greatest invention of all time has been touted to be computer. Its application to all human endeavours made it to be unavoidable. With the invention and integration of internet into computer, computer became so powerful and has changed the ways many things are being done in the society. One of these changes is the ability to access any information from the internet. This development brings about rebranding of trades and businesses to be accommodated by the internet. Both printing and electronic media have rebranded by making their presence known on the

internet. The implication is that youth may find it easy to access needed information from the internet rather than reading newspapers.

Many scholars have delved into this issue in recent time. For instance, Hakirkir (2018) carried out this same study in Taraba State University and found that many students preferred online copy of newspaper to printed copy due to cost factor. However, Ashong and Ogaraku (2017) found that larger percentage (80%) of readers in Imo State read both online and printed copies of newspaper on daily basis. Although there is a difference in the sample studied in the two works, it is important to note that young people/students have different reasons to access either online or printed newspaper copies.

While many pieces of information are available and can be easily accessed online, newspaper publishers are found not to put all their contents online. Specifically, contents such as job adverts and important government releases and companies' vital information and reports are not published online or made accessible free of charge. This means that consumers of these contents would have to buy the hard copy of the preferred newspaper or register and pay access fee to access such information. Even though many factors such as availability of browsing phones and cheap data are making readers to consume more online contents, hard copies of newspapers remain competitive. However, it is assumed that students may find it easier to access soft, online copies of newspaper than the printed copy if access is given.

Between 2018 and 2020 there has been increase in the number of internet users in the country (Ogaraku, 2017). According to an online monitoring site, *statista.com*, online users increased from 72.3 million in 2018 to 96.05 million in 2020. Although there have been many researches on the preference between hard and online copies of journals, newspapers and other contents and materials from 2010 to 2018, this researcher believes that factors such as availability of cheaper, easy to operate browsing phones with improved browsing environment (from 2g to 4g), downward review of cost of browsing data and wider internet service coverage might have influenced the findings of recent researches on the preference of readers between hard and soft/online copies of newspaper in year 2020. While the central objective of this study is to determine students' most preferable choice between soft/online and hardcopy newspaper; attempts have been made to determine factors influencing students' preference between the two media platforms in the study.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Newspaper is an integral part of every society. Newspaper makes available information needed for peoples' activities, actions and social development. Newspaper helps in sensitising people on socio-political situations in the society. It is also a source of knowledge and entertainment for teeming youths. Students in particular find newspaper useful in their social and academic lives. Opinions on current situations, discussions on different fields such as sciences and arts, news on entertainment and sports provide students with resources needed in their academic pursuits and social lives. The need for newspaper has made it to be evolving with technology in the society. Today, both hard (printed) and soft (online) copies of different kinds of newspapers are available for consumption.

This study was designed to investigate students' preference between hard and soft copy of newspaper using state owned tertiary institutions in Taraba State as the case study. Use of newspaper is prevalent among students in tertiary institutions either for their academic

engagements or social functions. Therefore, this study investigates whether course of study influences students' continuous use of preferred channels between online and printed copy of newspaper.

### **Objectives of the Study**

This study is designed to achieve the following objectives;

- i. Determine students' reading preference between online and printed copy of newspaper.
- ii. Investigate the factors responsible for students' preference between online and printed copy of newspaper.
- iii. Examine methods for sustaining students' preference between online and printed copy of newspaper.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is anchored on Technological Determinism theory. The theory was propounded by Marshall McLuhan in 1964. According to Nwabueze (2014), the theory posits that technology determines the trend of events in the society. McLuhan posited that changes in modes of communication shape human existence, that inventions in technology invariably cause cultural change (Griffin, 2000). Technological determinism, according to Lievrouw and Livingstone (2006), is "the conviction that technologies have an overwhelming power to influence human actions" that result in social change.

The theory holds that machines and their developments drive socio-economic and cultural changes. Scholars use the emergence of print to illustrate this theory; that print led to a fundamental shift in the world, from oral culture to literate culture. According to the theory, the introduction of every new technology change society, sometimes in unexpected ways (Griffin, 2000). Putting it in the context of the media, Lievrouw and Livingstone (2006) affirm that in each cultural era, the medium in which information is transmitted is a decisive factor in determining the character of that culture. Radio and television made us all first-hand observers. Xerox made us all publishers. The Internet makes us all journalists, broadcasters, columnists, commentators and social critics (Nwabueze, 2014). In the same vein, Nwabueze (2014) gave the following basic tenets of technological determinism theory:

- (i) Communication technology is fundamental to society;
- (ii) Each technology has a bias to particular communication forms, contents and use;
- (iii) The sequence of invention and application of communication technology influences social change
- (iv) Communication revolutions lead to social revolutions.

McLuhan (1964) in Nwabueze (2014) explained that the way people live is a function of the way they processed information. The medium is the message and also the message, that is, the medium changes people more than the sum of all the messages of the medium (Nwabueze, 2014). The theory posits that people's perception of the world is determined by the dominant medium of any age. McLuhan (1964) stated that people adapt to their environments through a certain branch or ratio of their senses and the primary medium of the age bring out a particular sense ratio. McLuhan saw every medium as the extension of human faculty, with the medium of communication,

exaggerating the particular sense. What dominates the media will influence human beings by affecting the way they perceive the world.

Individuals, particularly young people and students, have a strong need to express themselves using the language of the political and socioeconomic reality of their generation. This implies that students might follow suit and use technology to access online resources, which is now popular. Students now favour reading internet content over reading printed content. Strong opposition to this theory claimed that McLuhan's postulates were unsupported by any available evidence. The technological determinism theory explains how communication processes made possible by technology effect or are likely to affect society. The theory is good at analyzing what has happened in the past and what is happening in the present, but it does not consider what communication may look like in the future.

### **Conceptual Clarification**

#### **Newspaper**

Sanderman et al (1976) cited in Okunna and Omenugha (2012) defines newspaper as an unbound printed publication issued at regular intervals which presents information in words, often supplemented with pictures. In the same vein, Nwodu (2006) also describes Newspaper as a printed unbound paper that contains news about current political, economic, socio-cultural, educational, environmental, scientific-cum-technological and sundry affairs. Okunna and Omenugha (2012) simply define newspaper as “news-carrying paper” because the happenings contained in the newspaper are new and timely and therefore qualify as news.

Newspapers carry information on a broad spectrum of issues which include: news, advertisement, politics, education, science and technology, religion, commerce etc. The average daily newspaper contains far more news than available in radio, television or any other medium (Alozie, 2009). Of all the print media, newspapers provide the most current information. Newspapers are published either daily or weekly.

Newspapers can cover a wide variety of fields such as politics, business, sports and art, and often include materials such as opinion columns, weather forecasts, reviews of local services, obituaries, birth notices, crosswords, editorial cartoons, comic strips, and advice columns. Most newspapers are businesses, and they pay their expenses with a mixture of subscription revenue, newsstand sales, and advertising revenue.

The journalism organizations that publish newspapers are themselves often metonymically called newspapers. Newspapers have traditionally been published in print (usually on cheap, low-grade paper called newsprint). However, today most newspapers are also published on websites as online newspapers, and some have even abandoned their print versions entirely (Shaw, 2021).

#### **Classification of Newspaper**

Newspaper can be classified based on time of publication, frequency of production, language of production, area of coverage, ownership, appeal, size or format and mode of production Agbanu, (2013) cited in Patrick and Melchizedec (2014).

- i. **Time of publication:** This refers to the period or time of the day that a newspaper gets to the readers. Asemah (2014) posit that there are some newspapers that hit the stands in the morning, some in the afternoon while others hit the news stand in the evening.
- ii. **Frequency of publication:** This entails the numbers of times a newspaper is published within a period of time. In explaining this, Asemah (2014) notes, going by this classification, we have dailies and non-dailies. He further states that daily newspapers are those newspapers that are produced on daily basis, for example, The Vanguard, Guardian, Daily Trust and so on. The non-daily newspapers are the ones that are produced weekly, bi-weekly, fortnightly, etc. They are not produced on a daily basis. The Nigerian Standard for example is produced once in a week. The Viewer Newspaper owned by Centre for Continuing Education, Jos, is produced once in a year.
- iii. **Area of Circulation:** This is the geographical area where people read the newspaper. It could be local, national or international. In Nigeria, local newspapers circulate within a small geographical area such as a state while national newspapers are those that circulate in all the six geo-political zones of the country (Agbanu, 2013).
- iv. **Size or Format:** According to Asemah (2014) the physical form or size of the newspaper is used to classify them. Here newspapers are classified into tabloid and standard.
  - a. The Tabloid newspapers are those that are 12 by 16 inches in size. The size of the newspaper could also range from 11 by 13, 11 by 15 and 11 by 16. Some have four, five or six columns. The tabloid size newspapers are the bye products of quarter size early newspapers which were pamphlet in nature.
  - b. The Standard size can also be called broadsheet or blanket size. They are much larger than the tabloid size newspapers. It is an improvement on tabloid and it is the product of the 19th century. Galadima (2000, p.16) in Asemah (2014) says that the standard newspapers are mostly found in the developed nations of Europe and America.
- v. **Technology of Production:** These to Agbanu (2013) are the print-based newspapers that have hard copies and online newspapers that are web-based. Some print-based newspapers also have online editions. However, the online or web-based newspapers are published only on the internet with no hard copies.
- vi. **Area of Interest:** Some newspapers have specialized area of appeal while others appeal to general interest. General interest newspapers discuss issues that appeal to the majority of the people or segment the publication in such a way that different sections appeal to different classes of the people while the specialized ones discuss special issues.
- vii. **Ownership:** There is government ownership which is further categorized into federal, state and local governments. But hardly have we any local government newspaper in Nigeria. Some of the state-owned newspapers in Nigeria according to him include: The Voice, Benue State, The Nigerian Standard, Plateau State, The Observer, Edo state. An individual can also own a newspaper; it could be one man, two or three persons coming together to establish a newspaper. Such newspapers are called private newspapers. We have religious newspapers, educational newspapers, political newspapers, community newspapers etc. (Ola & Ojo, 2017).
- viii. **Language of Publication:** In Nigeria for instance, there are newspapers that publish in local or indigenous languages such as Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba etc. Others publish in English language which is the nation's lingua franca. Those publish in local languages such as Ogene (Igbo language newspaper) Gaskiya (Hausa language newspaper), Alaroye (Yoruba language newspaper) are called vernacular newspapers (Agbanu, 2013).

## **Online Newspapers**

According to Bittner (2003) cited in Asemah (2014) the first newspaper to offer readers electronic contents via the computer was the Ohio Columbus Dispatch which adopted the services provided by CompuServe, a computer software company based in Ohio in the United States of America. A home user needed a computer, and a modem to couple the telephone to the computer, to connect to the data base and access online versions of the Columbus Dispatch newspaper. Today, many (if not all) national newspapers in Nigeria offer electronic versions through the Internet in addition to their traditional hard copy newspapers, while some newspapers offer only online versions (Uwakwe, 2010; Mbachu, 2003).

The emergence of online newspapers is, no doubt, a product of technological innovations. In the words of Hanson (2005), "Evolving technology has brought changes to newspaper business". In the beginning, online newspapers merely offered electronic versions of their hard copy contents (Mbachu, 2003). This form of publishing online newspapers is still visible today as pointed out by Ganiyu (2011). According to Patrick (2015), in traditional hard copy newspaper versions, interactivity is accommodated under 'letters-to-the-editor' and these normally take time to be published. However, readers of online newspapers do not need to wait long before their comments on news stories are published.

There are benefits in the instant interactivity made possible by the Internet (Nwanne, 2007). The author stated that online newspapers overcome the constraint of circulating hard copy newspaper versions by transportation, with its concomitant loss in time. Online newspapers are accessible all over the world immediately they are published and this achieves great circulation speed. Another feature of online newspapers which doubles as a benefit is the possibility of depth of news stories and multi-media presentations. Multi-media presentation refers to the possibilities of presenting Internet contents with a combination of more than one of the mass communication modes of text, still photography, audio, and audio-visual. With multi-media presentations in online newspapers, specific section of a news story may have hyper-links that enable the reader to navigate to other sections of the Internet and read more texts, view more photographs, listen to audio and/or watch motion picture related to the news story. This makes it possible to listen to and/or watch online newspaper contents. No wonder it has been said that online media contents blur distinctions among media modes of mass communication (Ijeh, 2008). These multi-media possibilities in online newspapers give their news stories greater depth than news stories contained in the traditional hard copy versions.

Online newspapers have their constraints just like other media, especially in a country like Nigeria. Gapsiso (2008) outlines some of the constraints facing online newspaper publishing and readership in Nigeria to include monetary restraints; poor telecommunication services; and electricity. It is common knowledge that to publish and/or read online newspapers, both the newspaper and its readers must have access to requisite technology. This therefore means that for both the newspaper publishers to commence/sustain online publication, and for members of the public to read same, they must be financially able to procure information and communication technologies (ICTs) infrastructure which are not cheap.

## Print and Online Newspapers: A Comparison

An indication of downturn in print newspapers has surfaced in recent years. The advancement in technology has influenced the reading habit of newspapers which caused it to transcend from print newspapers to online news (Liew, 2014). Liew adds that quantitative research has been conducted to examine the preferences between print newspapers and online news in Malaysia. The result has shown that the readership towards print newspapers in Malaysia media landscape is shrinking and it has shown an indication of the preferences is shifting towards the online news. In comparative, the gratifications obtained from online news media were relatively higher than the print newspapers. Meanwhile, print newspaper was shrinking in the recent years due to the emerging of the electronic media, and the print circulation has dropped (Grabowicz, 2012).

The mass communication media in the present age are blurring and blending into what is now considered a single system or a set of interrelated systems. To a very large extent, technologies are shaping the scope of the mass media and all media now share a common denominator- technology. To a great extent, the entrenched internet medium has utilized the power of the fast-paced Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) in diverse ways and leaving its awesome influence in all spheres of human activities. One of such influences could be readily noticed in the online newspapers phenomenon that has greatly increased the accessibility of people to information services which the ‘traditional’ mass media- radio, television, newspaper, etc. are pursuing after, especially in developed societies where computer usage is eagerly being embraced (Okoro & Diri, 2010). Kperogi (2012) notes that:

Two momentous developments have defined the Nigerian journalistic landscape in the last ten years. The first is the migration of all major Nigerian newspapers to the Internet (while actively sustaining their print editions) in hopes of reaching the highly educated Nigerian migratory elite in the diaspora). On the surface, these developments seem contradictory, even counter-intuitive: the migration of news content from homeland legacy newspapers to the Internet should have functioned to satisfy the thirst for domestic news by geographically displaced diasporan Nigerians and therefore obviated the need for diasporan-run citizen news outlets.

According to Kperogi “Post Express, under the direction of the late Dr. Stanley Macebuh, is widely acknowledged as the first Nigerian newspaper to migrate its content to the Internet in 1996”.

Guardian, Punch, Vanguard, and ThisDay Newspapers, had websites where they episodically republished selected contents from their print editions. By the early 2000s, almost all the legacy newspapers in Nigeria had some Web presence, aided in part by the aggregation and distribution of their content, along with those of other African newspapers, by the AllAfrica.com, the Washington DC-based multimedia content service provider widely recognized as the world’s largest Africa-centered site. Since their emergence they have continued to break sensitive news stories that have radically altered the journalistic practices and politics of Nigeria (Kperogi, 2012). While corroborating this view, Nwora (n.d.) affirmed that:

One does not need to search very far to begin to see some of such impact. To their credit, some Nigerian media organisations have already established a strong presence in cyberspace, amongst the pioneers are *The Guardian Newspapers* ([www.ngrguardiannews.com](http://www.ngrguardiannews.com)), *The Thisday Newspaper* group ([www.thisdayonline.com](http://www.thisdayonline.com)), *The Independent Newspaper* group ([www.independentng.com](http://www.independentng.com)), *New Age Newspaper* ([47](http://www.newage-</a></p></div><div data-bbox=)

online.com) and so on. It can be said therefore that the Nigerian media are measuring up with their counterparts in other parts of the world by their maintaining strategic presence on the information super highway.

As compared to the past where people only have access to news through certain news media, people are now able to read the news through wider range of medium. The growing use of the Internet is particularly prevalent as people nowadays can easily access the Internet at most of the places. Consequently, this growing has brought forth the challenges to the traditional news media, and sooner or later the shrinking of readership in the print newspapers (Yang & Chyl, 2011).

However, “during the early years of the internet, online newspaper sites were slow to innovate. There was a fear that the Web site would steal readers for the print version. Thus, many of them simply took their print stories and placed them online, updating them only once a day. Some even withheld stories until they were published in the print edition. Newspapers however, now realize that if they want to compete with other news sites such as CNN and CBS News, their Web sites have to do more (Dominick, 2010).

The difficulty is that the increasing numbers of online readers are not translating into enough advertising dollars as print newspapers are losing readers to online media. In 1995 about 4 percent of the U.S. population went online at least once a week to get their news. By 2010 the figure was more than 40 percent (Dominick, 2010, p.126). Additionally, it was found that the readership of newspaper was spiralling downward since 1990, and declined about 40 percent among the American proportion (Scott, 2010).

The matter is largely compounded by the fact that Nigerian advertisers have not yet started taking advantage of the opportunities presented by the internet, to advertise their products and services in the websites of some of these media organisations. Only a few advertisers are doing this at the moment. It was hoped that such advertisements may actually increase so that the free news now readily available on the internet can be subsidised, and also to make up for the shortfall from the hard copy sales (Nwora n.d). But Waal et al (2005) note that:

There are differences between traditional newspaper and online newspaper, in spite of the fact that both provide information and news. Both of the mediums served in different roles, yet the question arose, whereby the online newspaper has substituted the traditional newspaper or it served as a complimentary role.

A Pew Research Centre cited by Dominick (2010, p.130) states that, “one in seven Internet users have reduced the amount of time they spend with daily newspapers. The key demographic group that reads most of its news online is young adults- the same group that reads print newspapers the least. When people go online for news, however, they do not necessarily go to online newspapers. This scenario has therefore painted vividly the fact that the online newspapers are gaining grounds and threatening the readership level of the Print Newspapers. Not only that, the advent of the online newspaper has brought with it a lot of challenges to the print version.

But Biagi (2011, p.62) asserts that “today’s newspapers are maintaining most of their readership but only because they have added Internet editions. Big city newspapers lost readers as people moved to the suburbs, and suburban newspapers grew, as well as suburban editions of big-city papers. But as people stop reading the printed newspaper and migrate to the Internet, and as younger readers abandon newspapers altogether (even online), newspaper revenues are declining



very quickly and some newspapers have been shut down. More than 100 newspapers closed in the U.S. in the first six months of 2009 alone.

It's worth noting that online newspapers also attain substantial usage from outside the print market, although the potential of this long-distance market segment remains underdeveloped. Technically, online newspapers can go beyond the local market boundaries defined by their print counterparts to reach both local and long-distance audiences, but most online newspapers still target audiences in the local market, even as the print newspapers, target audiences in the same local market, the print newspapers' franchise for audience share and especially for advertising revenue.

In their study of the European newspaper industry, Leurdijk et al (2012 insert page number) stated that;

newspapers have become major internet players. These days most newspapers have websites and offer a number of additional services to their readers. On the internet, newspaper publishers have to compete with broadcasters, citizen journalists and online-only news providers and have lost some of their readers and advertising revenues to these 'new' online news providers.

Online news has become a popular source of news and the internet has overtaken newspapers in popularity as a news source, and the distribution of news on the same platform could implicate those newspapers, which publish their content online, have a potential worldwide audience. In practice most news consumers prefer national or local news sources in their own language, although some of the major news providers did manage to build a worldwide audience online. Online, news providers are looking for alternative revenue streams to compensate for lagging advertising revenue and declining subscriptions to their print newspapers.

And because information online is often free and easily accessible, legacy news organizations are losing their power over audiences and advertisers. The audience for news has fragmented and this has a negative effect on advertising income. Some newspaper publishers have tried to compensate for the loss of print advertising by launching or taking over successful websites (dating sites, online market places etc.) a considerable part of print newspaper readers have shifted to online news sources (Leurdijk et al, 2012).

Lule (2013) observes that "With declining readership and increasing competition from blogs, most newspapers have embraced the cultural shift and have moved to online journalism. For many papers, this has meant creating an online version of their printed paper that readers will have access to from any location, at all times of the day. By 2010, over 10,000 newspapers had gone online. But some smaller papers - particularly those in two-paper communities have not only started websites but have also ceased publication of their printed papers entirely".

## **Methodology**

A quantitative research design was employed for the study which is concerned with collecting and analysing numerical data. The study covered the three (3) state-owned tertiary institutions in Taraba State. These are Taraba State University, Jalingo; Taraba State Polytechnic, Suntai; and, Taraba State College of Education, Zing. The study population constitutes students of Taraba State University, Taraba State Polytechnic and Taraba State College of Education. There is no official record of the total number of students in the three Institutions. However, according to Oberiri and Tunca (2020), the student's population in these institutions is about twenty-two thousand (22,000).

This recorded figure was used as the study population. The study adopted Taro Yamane (1973) formula with 95% confidence level to calculate the sample size from the study and arrived at 390 which served as the sample size for the study. Simple random sampling was also used to select the required respondents from the sample frame to give each respondent the chance of being selected equally. Questionnaire was employed as research instrument to elicit information from the students. Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics.

### Result of the Findings

Data collected from administered questionnaire were presented and analysed. The presentation was quantitatively done using frequency distribution table and simple percentage while the interpretation of the data was qualitatively inclined as can be seen below;

**Table 1: Respondents' frequency of reading newspapers**

Respondents' frequency of reading newspapers	Frequency	Percentage
Everyday	144	37
Once a week	172	44
Once in a while	74	19
<b>Total</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source: Field Survey, 2021*

Table 1 revealed the respondents' frequency of reading newspapers. As shown in Table 1, while 37% of the respondents read newspapers every day, 44% read newspapers at least once a week and 19% read newspapers once in a while. The implication of data collected here is that at least all the sampled respondents read newspapers.

**Table 2: Respondents' regular newspapers channels**

Respondents' regular source of newspapers	Frequency	Percentage
Online (social media platforms)	218	56
Newspaper stands on campuses	90	23
Purchase of hardcopy from vendors	27	7
Hardcopy from schools' libraries	31	8
Other sources	24	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source: Field Survey, 2021*

Table 2 showed respondents' responses on their regular channels through which they read newspapers. The Table 2 showed that 56% of the respondents used online platforms such as newspapers websites and social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter to access newspapers, 23% patronized newspapers stands in their various campuses to access newspapers, 7% claimed they used to purchase hardcopies themselves, 8% said they used to read newspapers of their choice in their various schools' libraries and the rest 6% claimed they use other sources including getting to read from friends that purchase newspapers and bring them to class.

**Table 3: Respondents' preference from the newspaper's channels**

<b>Respondents' preference among the newspaper channels</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Online (social media platforms)	277	71
Newspaper stands on campuses	93	24
Purchase of hardcopy from vendors	12	3
Hardcopy from schools' libraries	4	1
Other sources	4	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table 3 revealed respondents' preference among various newspapers channels listed. These channels can be divided into two groups - softcopy and hardcopy channels. Table 3 showed that majority of the respondents (71%) preferred online (most especially social media platforms) channels which are softcopy. However, 24% of the respondents preferred using newspapers stands in the campuses to access newspapers, 3% would rather buy their copies (hardcopy) than accessing somewhere else, 1% claimed they preferred libraries and another 1% said they preferred other sources.

**Table 4: Type of newspaper respondents read more due to course of study**

<b>Type of newspaper respondents read more due to course of study</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Soft (online) copy	215	55
Hard (printed) copy	35	9
Both soft and hard copy	62	16
Course of study did not influence reading	78	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table 4 presented data on the type of newspapers respondents read more due to their course of study. The Table showed that majority of the respondents (55%) utilized soft (online) copy of newspaper, 9% utilized hard (printed) copy of newspapers, 16% utilized both soft (online) and hard (printed) copies of newspapers.

**Table 5: Newspapers respondents found most difficult to access**

<b>Newspapers respondents found most difficult to access</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Online based newspapers	4	1
Purchasing hardcopy from vendors	20	5
Reading hardcopy in the library	8	2
Accessing soft and hardcopy newspapers from others	4	1
None	354	91
<b>Total</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table 5 showed that 1% of the respondents found online based newspapers difficult to access, 5% found purchasing hardcopy newspapers from vendors difficult, 2% found reading hardcopy of newspapers in their libraries difficult and 1% found accessing softcopy and hardcopy of newspapers from others, especially family and friends difficult. However, majority of the respondents (91%) claimed they did not find accessing any newspapers difficult to access.

**Table 6: Ways of sustaining reading of newspapers among tertiary students**

Methods of sustaining reading of newspapers	Yes (%)	No (%)	Total (%)
Reduction in the cost of data	312 (80%)	78 (20%)	<b>390 (100%)</b>
Availability of cheap browsing phones	254 (65%)	136 (35%)	<b>390 (100%)</b>
Increase in newspapers in the schools libraries	218 (56%)	172 (44%)	<b>390 (100%)</b>
Improved socioeconomic situations in Nigeria	332 (85%)	58 (15%)	<b>390 (100%)</b>
Giving of more related newspaper publication assignments	312 (80%)	78 (20%)	<b>390 (100%)</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table 6 revealed that 80% of the respondents believed that reduction in the cost of browsing data will sustain reading of newspapers among the students, 65% claimed that availability of cheap browsing phones will sustain reading of newspapers among them, 56% acclaimed that increase in the provision of newspapers in their schools' libraries will help, 85% pointed that improved socioeconomic situations in the country will help to sustain reading of newspapers among them and 80% opined that giving of more related newspaper publication assignments in the class will help to sustain reading of newspapers among the students.

Further study of the responses revealed that while two of the methods mentioned (cheap data and hand phones) will help to sustain online reading of newspapers among the students absolutely, two methods (improved socioeconomic situations in the country and giving of more newspaper related assignments in class) can help to sustain reading of both softcopy and hardcopy newspapers among the students while provision of more newspapers in the libraries will solely help to sustain reading of hardcopy newspapers among the students.

### Discussion of Findings

This study revealed that, the students in state owned tertiary institutions in Taraba State preferred online copy of the newspapers to the hard copy. This finding agreed with Technological Determinism Theory. McLuhan (1962) states that people adapt to their environments through a certain branch or ratio of their senses and the primary medium of the age bring out a particular sense ratio. McLuhan further posits that changes in modes of communication shape human existence, that inventions in technology invariably cause cultural change.

In the same manner, media dependency holds that, people will become more dependent on media that meet a number of their needs than on media that provide only a few one (McLuhan, 1962). If a person finds a medium that provides him several functions that are central to his desires, he will be more inclined to continue using that particular medium in the future (McLuhan, 1962). It is revealed by Berger et al in Shahbazi (2016) that printed edition of a newspaper is the most preferred format among all customer groups, but the ownership of mobile devices reduces this preference.

This preference is based on cheapness of the online version of the newspaper and the features possesses by the online version of the newspapers as postulated by Ijeh (2008). One feature of online newspapers which doubles as a benefit is the possibility of depth of news stories and multi-media presentations. Multi-media presentation refers to the possibilities of presenting Internet contents with a combination of more than one of the mass communication modes of text, still photography, audio, and audio-visual. These multi-media possibilities in online newspapers give their news stories greater depth than news stories contained in the traditional hard copy versions.

It was revealed that most students access online newspaper through various social media platforms. This is in concomitant with Ashong and Henry (2017) submission that access to online media outlets and favourable environment were found to be instrumental to content or medium preference. Findings revealed that majority of students in state owned tertiary institutions in Taraba State read newspapers online every day.

## Conclusion

Emerging realities in the media business, especially the newspaper, show that the paradigm is shifting. With the coming of the online newspaper, the print newspaper seems to be losing its hegemony. The hardcopy newspaper is losing its hegemony base on some features that the online version possesses. With multi-media presentations in online newspapers, specific sections of a news story may have hyper-links that enable the reader to navigate to other sections of the internet and read more texts, view more photographs, listen to audio and/or watch motion picture related to the news story. This makes it possible to listen to and/or watch online newspaper contents. Although the online version may be enjoying some relative edge over its hardcopy counterpart, a handful of readers still go for hardcopy newspapers no matter what. Both versions of the newspapers still possess unique features or attributes which endear them to their respective readers, both appear to complement each other in Nigeria. Although, as more readers appear to go online, print still graces the newsstands daily.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that:

- i. More newspaper publishers in Nigeria should be encouraged to go online.
- ii. Efforts should be made to make internet connectivity available and affordable in all state-owned tertiary institutions in Taraba State. This will help students in accessing news features online with ease.
- iii. All newspaper organizations should have online presence. They can set up websites for their news features or open accounts on different social media platforms available on the internet.
- iv. There should be better management of Nigerian online newspaper sites and contents.
- v. More effective and functional Newsstand should be established in all state owned tertiary institutions in Taraba State to encourage hard copy newspaper patronage.

## References

- Agbanu, V. (2013). *Mass Communication: Introduction, Techniques, Issues*. Enugu: Rhyce Kerex Publishers.
- Alozie, V.O. (2009). *The Print Media Newspaper and Magazine Production, Editing, Graphics and Organisation*. Owerri: Pilvic Communication.
- Asemah, S. (2014). *Principles and Practice of Mass Communication*. (2nd ed.) Jos: Great Future Press.
- Ashong, C. & Ogaraku, C. (2017). Content preference among online and hardcopy Newspaper readers in Imo State. *Journal of New Media and Mass Communication*. 4(1), 1-15.
- Biagi, S. (2011). *Media/Impact: An Introduction to Mass Media* (9<sup>th</sup>ed.). Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning

- Bittner, J.R. (2003). *Mass communication: An introduction*. 5th Ed. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books.
- Dominick, J. R. (2002). *The dynamics of Mass Communication: Media in the digital age* (6<sup>th</sup>ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill
- Dominick, J. R. (2007). *The dynamics of Mass Communication: Media in the digital age* (10<sup>th</sup>ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Gapsiso, N. D. (2008). ICTs and the future of newspapers in Nigeria. In E.M Mojaye, E. Arhagba, E. Soola & L. Oso (eds.) *Media Dialogue, Peace Building and Reconciliation* (ACCE Conference Proceedings 2008). Abraka: African Council for Communication Education, pp 184-190.
- Grabowicz, P. (2012). *The transition to digital journalism*. Retrieved on 26th of June, 2014, from World Wide Web: <http://multimedia.journalism.berkeley.edu/tutorials/digital-transform/print-editions-decline/>
- Griffin, E. (2000). *A first look at communication theory*, (4th Ed.). Boston: McGraw Hill.
- Hakirkir, I. (2018). Comparative Analysis of Online and Hardcopy Newspaper: A Study of Taraba State University, Jalingo. [academia.edu/39624681/comparative\\_analysis\\_of\\_online\\_and\\_hard\\_copy\\_newspaper\\_a\\_study\\_of\\_Taraba\\_state\\_university\\_jalingo](http://www.academia.edu/39624681/comparative_analysis_of_online_and_hard_copy_newspaper_a_study_of_Taraba_state_university_jalingo). Accessed on 1/10/20
- Ijeh, N.P. (2008). Assessment of the Nigerian mass communication environment within the framework of the world wide web. In E.M. Mojaye, O.O. Oyewo, R. M'Bayo & I.A. Sobowale (eds.) *Health Communication, Gender Violence and ICTs in Nigeria*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press pp. 311-326.
- Kperogi, F. (2012). *The Evolution and Challenges of Online Journalism in Nigeria*. Retrieved from: [http://www.academia.edu/2023253/The\\_Evolution\\_and\\_Challenges\\_of\\_Online\\_Journalism\\_in\\_Nigeria](http://www.academia.edu/2023253/The_Evolution_and_Challenges_of_Online_Journalism_in_Nigeria) on 23th February, 2015
- Leurdijk, A., Slot, M. & Nieuwenhuis, O. (2012). *Statistical, Ecosystems and Competitiveness Analysis of the Media and Content Industries: The Newspaper Publishing Industry*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2012
- Lievrouw L. A. & Livingstone, S. (2006). *Introduction to the Updated Student Edition*. In: LA Lievrouw, S Livingstone (Eds.): *The Handbook of New Media*. Updated Student Edition. London: Sage.
- Liew, C. K. (2014). *Print Newspaper versus Online News Media: A Quantitative Study on Young Generation Preference*. Retrieved on August 22, 2014 from: [https://www.academia.edu/6125892/Print\\_Newspaper\\_versus\\_Online\\_News\\_Media\\_A\\_Quantitative\\_Study\\_on\\_Young\\_Generation\\_Preference](https://www.academia.edu/6125892/Print_Newspaper_versus_Online_News_Media_A_Quantitative_Study_on_Young_Generation_Preference)
- Lule, J. (2012). *Understanding Media and Culture: An Introduction to Mass Communication*, v.1.0. Retrieved 26<sup>th</sup>June, 2014 from [http://catalog.flatworldknowledge.com/bookhub/reader/3833?e=lulemedia\\_1.0-ch04\\_s05](http://catalog.flatworldknowledge.com/bookhub/reader/3833?e=lulemedia_1.0-ch04_s05)
- Nwabueze, C. (2011). *Magazine & newspaper management and production: An introductory text*. Owerri: TopShelve Publishers.

- Nwabueze, C. (2014). *Introduction to Mass Communication: Media Ecology in the Global Village*. Owerri: TopShelve Publishers.
- Nwanne, B.U. (2007). *Organizational/Business Communication and Globalisation*. Owerri: Top Shelve Publishers.
- Nwora, U. (n.d). *The Impact of the Internet on Journalism practice in Nigeria*. Retrieved on February 23, 2015 from: <http://www.nathanielturner.com/journalismnigeria.htm>
- Oberiri, D.A. & Tunca, E.A. (2020). The utilization of internet resources for learning and research among students of Taraba State University, Jalingo, Nigeria. *Library Philosophy and Practice*, ISSN 1522 0222.
- Okoro, N. & Diri C. T., (2010). *The Challenge of Online Newspaper Phenomenon to Offline Newspaper Patronage and Revenue in Nigeria*. Vol. 2, Nsukka: Society for Research and Academic Excellence, 2010. Retrieved on 26/6/14 [http://academicexcellencesociety.com/challenge\\_of\\_online\\_newspaper\\_phenomenon\\_to\\_office\\_newspaper\\_patronage.html](http://academicexcellencesociety.com/challenge_of_online_newspaper_phenomenon_to_office_newspaper_patronage.html)
- Okunna, C. & Omenugha, K.A. (2012). *Introduction to Mass Communication*. Enugu: New Generation Ventures Ltd.
- Ola, C.O. & Ojo, R.J. (2017). Creating Electronic Access to Newspaper Information in Nigeria: The Information Aid Network (IFAnet) Experience. *Educational Research and Review*, 1(2): 196-200.
- Onipitan, T.O. (2016). Iwe Iroyin: The First Newspaper in Nigeria. [oldnaija.com/2016/03/30/iwe-iroyin-the-first-newspaper-in-nigeria/](http://oldnaija.com/2016/03/30/iwe-iroyin-the-first-newspaper-in-nigeria/). Accessed on 1/10/20.
- Patrick, U. & Melchizedec, Y. (2014). Assessment of pattern of editorial readership in Nigerian newspapers, Kogi State University, *Journal of Mass Communication*, 3,143.
- Reuters (2012). Online readership and ad revenue overtake newspaper accessed on the 4<sup>th</sup> November, 2012 @ [www.Reuters.com](http://www.Reuters.com).
- Scott, R.M. (2010). *Newspapers offer more news than do major online sites*. *Newspaper Research Journal*, 31(1), 6 Socialbakers. (2012). Malaysia Facebook Statistics. Retrieved on 7th of June, 2014 from World Wide Web: <http://www.socialbakers.com/facebook-statistics/Malaysia>
- Shaw, M.J. (2021). *An Inky Business: A History of Newspapers from the English Civil Wars to the American Civil War*. ISBN 978-1789143867
- Uwakwe, O. (2010). *Introduction to mass communication in the digital-print-radio-tv-film-internet-industry effects*. Onitsha: Base 5 Publishers.
- Waal, E.D., Schönbach, K. & Lauf, E. (2005). *Chapter 3 Online newspapers: A substitute or complement for print newspapers and other information channels*
- Yang, M. J. and Chyl, H. (2011). Competing with whom? Where? And why (Not)? An empirical study of U.S. online newspapers' competition dynamics. 8(4), 59–74. *International Journal of Research in Arts and Social Sciences (IJRASS)*. Retrieved on 26/6/14 <http://www.interestjournals.org/irjass/archive>.