

# Print Media And The Challenges Of Social Media

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**Abstract:** This paper examines the print media and the challenges posed by the social media. It is no doubt that the social media has altered the news gathering and processing paradigm but the print medium remain relevant in news dissemination. The study is anchored on technology determinism theory by Marshall McLuhan. The theory states that media technologies shape how we as individuals in a society think, feel act and how a society operates as we move from one technology age to another. In another way, McLuhan predicted that we would be in the midst of a revolution, and that the world will never be the same due to the advance in technology. Scholarly journals and conference papers formed the sources for secondary data for this study. Findings from the study reveal that the new media have caused the print media, particularly the newspaper a huge lost in revenue and advertisement. The study also discovered that the social media have altered the traditional gatekeeping theory of the print media; hence it is common to find all sort of information on social media platforms. The study also reveals that media technology has aided the media audience to become more sophisticated thereby being able to manipulate the new media in effect creating audiences that have contributed in reshaping the information gathering and dissemination process on the social media. Furthermore, the paper succinctly reveals an emerging paradigm in media convergence; it discovered that the new media converge on the traditional media. As a result, the new media also need the traditional media to survive. The implication of this study is therefore, with the continuous development in technology it becomes safe to argue that no mass medium will totally triumph over the other.

**Keywords:** Media, Print media, Social Media, New Media, Technology

## Introduction

The media landscape has been in constant metamorphosis. Improvement in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has made information sharing easier (Udenze, 2017). It is difficult to distinguish the conventional media from the new media in this age technological advancement. Miller et al (as cited in Udenze, 2017, p.148) succinctly argue that “the growth in ICTs have closed the gap between the conventional and

private media”. The internet has revolutionized information gathering and dissemination. Talabi (2011) assert “the internet changes the face of communication; journalists are beginning to have a new way of packaging and disseminating news to the public”. The social media is an important offshoot of the Internet (Udenze, 2017). Rajendran and Thesinghraj (2014), submit that the social media have been part of today’s society. The scholars further opine:

The presence of the new media and the social media has posed a challenge to the printed newspaper. Readership habits seem to be changing as users turn to the Internet for free news and information. The alternative source of news is not only free but also acts fast. The ‘instant’ feature of the social media and the online news were one of the smart options for the consumers to accept it globally, (p. 609).

On the other, some other scholars believe the social media have improved the gathering and dissemination of news. Talabi (2011) argues thus:

Beyond sending email to headquarters and receiving instructions from the same internet has created new opportunities for journalists to sell stories not only to other media houses locally but across the globe. The internet has made the world smaller for journalists to explore. This wonderful technology has also made research on various subject matters available via chatting and exchange of messages. This has created new markets and form of journalism where journalists specialize and work as online journalists, content managers or editors for particular websites.

From the foregoing it can be observed that the social media is like a two-edged sword. The social media has its pros and cons. This technology has democratized information dissemination and the same time made other medium- newspaper to suffer. Overall, the social media are integral part of the society. Technological developments are creating a society in which social media is embedded (Ahmad, n.d).

## Objective of the Paper

The aim of this paper is to critically appraise the challenge of the social media on the print media, particularly newspaper, with the purpose of highlighting emerging

trends in the print media. This study also looks at the potential of the social media and how it has affected traditional journalism.

## Methodology

Data for the study were sourced secondarily via scholarly journals and conference proceedings, hence a qualitative methodology.

## Theoretical Framework

Theoretical framework is the basis upon which any scholarly work is built on. This study is anchored on

Marshall McLuhan (1963) Technology Determinism theory (TD). Obalanlege (2015), states that most new media and journalism studies are based on technology determinism theory. The theory states that media technologies shape how we as individuals in a society think, feel, act and how a society operates as we move from one technology age to another. In another way, McLuhan predicted that we would be in the midst of a revolution, and that the world will never be the same due to the advance in technology. The Internet has created the “global village” that McLuhan envisioned in the early 1960s. McLuhan viewed every new form of media innovation to be an extension of some human faculty; book is an extension of the eye, wheel is an extension of the foot, clothing is an extension of the skin, electronic circuit or the computer is an extension of the central nervous system. According to Marshall McLuhan, the medium is the message. Talabi (2011) writes that with the advancement of technology, the media profession after test running the effects of latest medium then explores its potentials to reach the audience. Today, journalism depends on the new media (Talabi, 2011). The social media is a great determinant of how news information is gathered, processed and disseminated. Technology determinism implies that technology determines the functioning of the society. It is no doubt that the new media have altered the conventional news procedures. Overall, this theory sees technology as the driver of social change (Obalanlege, 2015).

## Conceptual Clarification

### The Social media

In the course of this paper, social media, social networking site and new media will be used interchangeably. The social media is a medium that has come to stay. It advent has challenged the media industry from diverse dimensions. The instantaneous feature of this medium has endeared individuals, media organizations and media practitioners to it. Hasan & Pfaff (as cited in Ekwenchi and Udenze, 2014, p.1) “productively catalogued the new media as including websites, audio and video streaming, chat rooms, e-mail, online communities, web advertising, DVD and CD-ROM media, virtual reality environment, Internet telephony, digital cameras and mobile computing”. This categorization of new media is all-encompassing. The categorization catalogued the new media to include all forms of new technologies. Similarly, Agboola (2014, p.105), believe that “most technologies described as “*new media*” are digital, and often have characteristics of being networkable, dense, compressible, interactive and impartial. Examples are the internet, websites, computer multimedia, games, CD-ROMs and DVDs”. Logan (2010) sees new media that are interactive, incorporate two computing as opposed to “old media” such as the telephone, radio, and TV. Boyd & Ellison (2007)

describe social network as a web based services that allows individual to: constitute a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection and view and traverse their list connection and those made by others within the system. The first known social networking site was Six degrees, launched in 1995. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) define social media as “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user generated- content “(p. 60). The social media is regarded as alternative source of public communication (Poell and Borra, 2011). Social media differ from conventional media in different ways, including quality, frequency, usability, immediacy, and permanence (Adegbilero and Ikenwe, n.d). Kaplan and Haenlein (2012), posits that social media has become an integral modern method of communicating with one another. Kaplan and Haenlein consider it to be made up of: collaborative projects such as Wikipedia, blogs and micro-blogs (eg. Twitter), content communities (eg. Youtube), social networking sites (eg. Facebook), virtual game worlds (eg. World of Warcraft), and virtual social worlds (eg. Second Life) (2012). The new media is best characterized by its “archive content” that can be easily and constantly accessed (Rajendran and Thesinghraj, 2014). Agber (2017) outlines the features of social media thus:

- Participatory media
- Personal interest/online community
- Conversational
- User generated content
- Turns down the boundary of authorship

The new media can be described as a personal media; it gives its user a sense of ownership. The user can easily retrieve information at any given time.

### The Print Media

Despite the emergence of the new media, the print media remain a strong force to reckon with in the media landscape. The print media flourished in the pre-new media era when access to new electronic technologies was limited. With the advent of these technologies, the dynamics of information access has changed significantly (Rajendran and Thesinghraj, 2014). The print media, particularly the newspaper still enjoys readership from the ageing population of the society. One strength of the print media is in its ability to disseminate well-researched information. This is unlike the social media that is widely open to anybody. The gate-keeping theory still applies to the traditional media till date. Kurt Lewin (1947) founded and popularized the gatekeeping theory. This theory enables news managers to sieve out unnecessary items that are considered not news worthy. Shoemaker (as cited in Barzilai-Nahon, n.d, p.3) defines gatekeeping thus:

Simply put, gatekeeping is the process by which the billions of messages that are available in the world get cut down and transformed into the hundreds of messages that reach a given person on a given day.” Ten years later Shoemaker admitted a broader concept of gatekeeping: “However, the gatekeeping process is also thought of as consisting more than just selection. ... In fact, gatekeeping in mass communication can be seen as the

overall process through which social reality transmitted by the news media is constructed, and is not just a series of 'in' and 'out' decisions.

From Barzilai-Nahon contribution it can be deduced that the theory of gatekeeping explains how large amount of information are trimmed down in order to get the necessary information out to the news consumer. Newspaper organizations use this principle in deciding what news item to publish. From the reporter down to the editors, decisions on news worthy information are taken collaboratively. The new media technology is the opposite of this principle. The internet is an open and bottomless warehouse. It allows everybody and anybody to write and publish. In as much as the emergence of the new media have democratized information dissemination, it is worthy of note to mention that the openness of the medium has avail all manner of information to be available to the public. Information that is supposed to be censored is now found online. In addressing the case of the social media, Newman (2017, p.8) posits, "Fake news threatens to undermine democracy all around the world. Faced with this threat, news publishers can't afford to retreat behind paywalls: we need to be out there, in people's newsfeeds, challenging the lies at scale, treating disinformation on social media platforms as an urgent frontline beat". The gatekeeping power of the traditional media still has a huge significance in the media landscape due to its ability to censor information that is capable of affecting the society

negatively. The theory is synonymous to the social responsibility theory.

### **The Print Media: Assessing the challenges of the Social Media**

The conventional media, especially the newspaper is struggling to survive amid the technologically revolution that has engulfed the media landscape. Silicon Republic Knowledge and Events Management Ltd. (as cited in Agboola, 201, p.109) believes that "media houses from newspapers to TV stations are struggling to compete and stay relevant, as the reader can opt to be informed by Facebook status feeds or by following Tweets on Twitter or RSS feeds on whatever they fancy". Some observers believe that the threats faced by traditional media, especially newspapers, have to do with dwindling readership and advertising revenue, and the inability of newspapers to monetize their online abilities (Yap, 2009). Agboola (2014) writes that the new media have caused some media outlets in Nigeria to lose their revenue. Salman et al (2011) argues that major players in the newspaper industry have pointed accusing fingers at Google. Google is now so powerful that media tycoons believe that it has been forcing the newspaper industry out of business. Price (2015) clearly articulates his opinion on the threats of new media to newspaper:

The "death" of newspapers' has long been predicted. Although consumption of news from television had affected sales prior to the internet, the advent of digital media has taken this trend to new dimensions... Still, there is no doubt that the rise of social media and the ubiquity of online news and opinion pose an existential challenge to the traditional newspaper model in which professional journalists act as guardians and privileged distributors of (scarce) information (p.2)... The decline in advertising revenue has lagged the decline in circulation, but since 2000 advertising revenues in Europe have also slumped as advertisers themselves have shifted to new media and personalized marketing; the latter now accounts for 75 per cent of advertising spend. This shift is challenging accepted journalistic notions of factual reporting, accuracy and balance. The so-called 'news' provided by social media may not present the full picture. It may give a partial, partisan or deliberately distorted view of an event. The insistence on the factual 'who', 'what', 'when', 'where' and 'why' of any story – which traditionally underpinned reported journalism – is being eroded. The irony of the situation is that the proliferation of free news demonstrates the continued need for journalists of integrity, but also threatens the very revenue streams needed to support their work (p.3).

Price (2015, p.3) argues further, Social media is also disrupting the news industry by allowing consumers to disaggregate their preferences. Newspapers have long acted as aggregators, combining general news with coverage of sports, business, entertainment and so forth. Now, the aggregating role is increasingly being taken over

by services such as Yahoo and Google. The news-related profits of Google, Facebook and so on could compensate for declining revenues in newspapers. On the other hand, Talabi (2011) is of the opinion that the internet audience is equally responsible for the plight of the traditional media. He argues thus:

Journalism today finds itself at a rare moment in history where, for the first time, its hegemony as gatekeeper of the news is threatened by not just new technology and competitors but potentially, by the audience it serves. Armed with easy-to-use web publishing tools, always-on connections and increasingly powerful mobile devices, the online audience has the means to become an active participant in the creation and dissemination of news and information; and it's doing just that on the internet.

The media audiences are becoming sophisticated by the day. Individuals are moving in par with technological

development. Media gadget do not operate itself, it is the individual that manipulates the gadgets. By so doing, the

operator becomes sophisticated and domesticates the medium to suit his/her need. The domestication of new technology could be explained to be an unending process. The operator of the technology keeps searching and discovering new ways of using the technology. Despite the challenges posed by the social media, it is important to state that the social media has liberalized information. Access to news is at the punch of a button. Social networks and social media at the same time offer a great tool for journalists for research and as a source for stories (Moller, 2012). The quality of new media platforms promotes the endorsement of a two-way communication model, challenging the traditional practices of journalism that are based on one-way communication. This modern journalism allows its readers to participate actively in the production of news and allows the sending of their personalised feedback to key writers from the industry (Thomas, 2013).

### Media Convergence Revisited

The improvement in technology has made media of communication to converge on a medium. The conglomeration of different media on a medium has made accessibility of information easier. For instance, with a

smart phone it is easier to listen to radio, watch TV news, read newspaper and make calls. Media organizations are embracing the power of media convergence. Nowadays, newspapers maintain a healthy online presence. Thomas (2013, p.10) "The online newspapers follow the choices of interactivity, rapidity and selectivity, with users being able to select their favorite topics through the aid of hyperlinks or newsletters. In this way, newspapers open an ongoing communication channel between them and readers, which permits a live flow in conversations and in opportunities to give feedback to stories. This creates the basis for personalised journalism". Media convergence is synonymous to new media, but in the course of this study it was found that the new media also converge on the old. In a study entitled "*New media in Old: the Nigeria case*" by Adegbilero-Iwari and Ikenwe (n.d, p.7). Findings from the study reveal that punch newspaper has a segment that is dedicated to happenings on the Internet. The i-Punch is equally dubbed by The Punch as "... *your daily internet monitor*". This further explains the intent of the section. The i-Punch was incorporated into the newspaper in February, 2013 The i-Punch has since maintained a steady representation on pages 14 and 15 of the punch newspaper Monday to Friday.

The i-Punch captures new media issue in seven (7) subsections:

- *i-tip*, on the top of page 14, a kind of quotable quote on social media or technology;
- Technology news usually culled from the internet, on the far left of page 14;
- "*Buzz... social media diary* comments of the internet public from networks on at least three topical issue class;
- Report bothering on comments from matter in the society; and also on an important personalities activities on Twitter or Facebook;
- "*Trending- Nigeria*", at the top of page 15, with popular names making the headlines bulleted as it would appear on Twitter;
- An educative corner on the far right hand side of page 15 just below "Trending-Nigeria" to teach the social media and other Internet technologies;
- And also, there is the *Photo of the day* that capture credibly funny picture sourced from Facebook, BBM, blogs and other social media platforms.

Adegbilero-Iwari and Ikenwe also found that the new media also converge on the broadcast medium. The scholars found an example in the Channels TV i-witness feature. Traditional broadcast media also employ the use of social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, email, YouTube etc in their broadcasting. It is common sight to see comment from the social media platforms on most broadcast programmes. The use of social media platforms encourages a sense of interactivity in broadcast programmes.

### Revitalizing the Print Media Industry: Newspaper

The newspaper industry has to stand up to the competition posed by the new media. The new media is fast taking out the newspaper industry out of business. But the question is, amid the powers of the new media, will the print media survive the holocaust. Agboola (2014) in his wisdom offers this solution:

The way forward for newspapers, mainstream as well as other conventional media particularly in Nigeria would be first of all, to improve their credibility. As it is now there are segments of the society which see mainstream media as the mouthpiece and propaganda tool of the ruling government (p.110). The entrance of alternative online sources of news also marked a new era of digital competition. Thus, it suffices to mention that the assumption by media analysts and commentators that the newspaper industry is in perpetual decline is half true and dependent on circumstances. Therefore, the idea of the "death of print" is better founded on the realistic assessment of the impact of technological advancements (p.11).



## Conclusion

The social media has caused a paradigm shift in the news gathering and dissemination process. News audiences are both consumers and producers of news. Despite this shift, the traditional print medium remains an important contributor to the information distribution chain. Van Doorn (as cited in Agboola, 2014, p.111) “concur that, journalism will not be extinct, however, it will have to coexist and try to differentiate itself”. From the foregoing assertion it can be argued that the print media is coexisting side by side with the new media. The convergence of different media on a medium reveals that to some extent no medium can stand on its own as findings from this study reveal that the traditional media converge on the new media and vice versa. In as much as technology will continue improving, it will be difficult to predict the dimension the media landscape will assume in the future.

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