Trends and Patterns of Online Newspapers in Nigeria: A Study of Sahara Reporters and the Premium Time

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Abstract: **The drift of readers, viewers and advertisers from newspapers and broadcast stations to online news publications is not only limited to the developed world but has also become a visible trend in the developing countries such as Nigeria. Since Professor Marsha MacLuah opined in 1987 that the world would become a hamlet of communication, online publication has truly made the world a global village by providing easy access to the media contents which the readers at their convenient times and places can read as the news breaks. This study examines trends and patterns of online publications in Nigeria. This study is anchored on two theories: the technological determinism theory and the mediamorphosis theory of mass communication. It employs content analysis as its design so as to know what constitutes the trend and pattern of online newspapers in Nigeria, in this case, Sahara Reporters and Premium Times. After the analysis of trends of the two selected online news media shows that the selected media, it was discovered that they have a penchant for deep investigative stories and multimedia presentation with hyperlinks that make it easy for readers to navigate to other sections of the stories. It was also discovered that the two online newspapers usually link their stories to video clips which the readers could watch with their mobile devices. This can be concluded to be one of the major innovations that drive online newspapers, which has also increased the adoption of the news platforms by online audiences. It was recommended that media owners should not allow the commercial interest to derail them from the media social responsibility expected of it in the society by using latest technology to make access to information easy for their readers.**

Keywords: **Sahara Reporters, the Premium Times, Online Newspaper, Diffusion of Innovation**

I. INTRODUCTION

The prediction of Marshall McLuhan in 1987 about the global village phenomenon has brought an unequalled surge in the introduction of new and better information tools, which are increasingly complementing and replacing older traditional tools of mass information. New media delivery systems, new information processing, storage and retrieval systems have become the vogue. Currently, newspapers and magazines make use of the World Wide Web (www) among other services of the net to create and maintain web servers in which they publish contents of their papers. (Agba, P. C. 2001).

The flourishing of newspapers online may not be unconnected with some possible secondary reasons- including enthusiasm for new technology and the general sense that one wishes to be part of the new wave at the moment not minding the adverse consequences. If these speculations and assumptions hold true, then the production and distribution of the offline editions may be hampered thereby impinging on the revenue profile of some newspaper organizations.

Above all, this phenomenon may signal an attempt at subsuming and fusing the print media into the fast paced communication technologies which are daily best-riding the communication space (Baran, 2004)

The online newspaper, essentially, is no longer distinguished by the fact that it appears every morning as opposed to the continuous flow of the broadcasters or the weekly and monthly periodicity of the magazines. Moreover, all these different media now exist in exactly the same space.

The geographic distances that previously segmented the market so powerfully have now more or less, been abolished. The online readers can have access to any information from anywhere in the world-at any time they want.

Conversely, the advertiser can gain access to the most dispersed readership through new media and in new ways. The upshot of all these is that for the first time in years, newspapers face serious challenge and competition in their core business.

They no longer or hardly have the privileged relationship with readers and thus with advertisers, that were to a large extent the foundation of their success in the offline world (Baran,2004).

In the colonial days, readership of newspapers was marketed by interaction and argument, in which news stories served as what historians in America described as gambits, provocative first moves for some game readers to play.

Newspapers of the century were usually read to the family and interpreted by the man of the house. The twentieth century news television anchor assume the role, and some observers believe that today, internet has returned us to the spirit of then as people discuss news items in forum of various types (Rodman, 2010).

However, the advent of Information Communication Technology (ICT) has changed the patronage of the mainstream media (newspaper, radio and tv), especially the newspaper, which has been the oldest among the trio.

At the moment, newspaper publishers make use of the World Wide Web (www) among other services provided by the

Internet Service Providers(ISPs) to create and maintain web servers in which they publish contents of their papers. This is a clear departure from the traditional hard or print copy that has lasted for over centuries.

The flourishing of newspapers online may not be unconnected with some possible secondary reasons including the urge for new trends in technology and general sense that one wishes to be part of the new trend at the moment not minding the adverse consequences. The surge in the introduction of new and better information tools of mass information courtesy the advent of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has increasingly complemented and replaced older traditional means of mass information. New media delivery systems, new information processing, storage and retrieval systems and readership patterns have irresistibly dominated the communication scene (Rodman, 2010).

Apart from this seemingly odious situation about the print newspaper, McNamara (2007) states that about 20% of the US public obtain daily news from the internet. The online newspaper may slow down the revenue of the traditional mainstream newspapers and therefore capable of putting them and some large extent, out of business.

McNamara (2000) states that newspapers sites must look for alternative ways to offset that revenue from other online sources. Clearly, newspapers face much greater completion from online for news and information than they did in the earlier time of the three UK networks, local radios, and newspapers. All these legacy media are using the internet as an alternative channel for distributing news and the portals, as well as pure play news sites, add to the competitive dynamic.

Denmen (2000)included in one of his monologues recently, a word of congratulations to the New York Times for being in business for years. Denmen (2000) showed that readers are moving to online newspaper sites for their news, either exclusively (i.e., they are becoming only online news readers) or as a complement to their print news reading.

In this way, the electronic pages of newspapers are brought to the doorsteps of the readers in Nigeria, and foreign countries as long as these people are connected to the net.

Today, online newspapers are common features. Many (if not all) national newspapers in Nigeria now 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)

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).

Statement of the Problem

Events of recent time have shown a considerable switch of readers from printed newspapers to online newspapers. This situation has drastically reduced the readership of the traditional mainstream newspapers and thus increases the online newspaper readership.

However, the phenomenon of online newspapers in Nigeria has reached a stage where it can no longer be ignored. Consequently, a number of scholars have examined different aspects of the phenomenon.

Okuna (2007) discusses how online newspapers have blurred the distinctions between newspaper as a read-alone medium and the broadcast media that can be listened to and/or watched. Adedina (2008) emphasises the prospects and challenges of online newspapers along-side other media of mass communication that explore the internet to disseminate their contents. He avers that, in spite of the issues of lack of absolute gate-keeping and redundancy arising from the deluge of information occasioned by the use of the internet to convey mass media contents, there are issues of easy, widespread and instant reach and feedback mechanisms associated with online newspapers. This, he says, makes people read online versions of newspapers more than the hard copy versions. As a result, it becomes important to consider what makes readers attracted to online newspapers. The study, therefore, seeks to examine the trend and pattern of two of these online newspapers.

Research Question

1. What constitutes the trend and pattern of online newspapers in Nigeria?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview of Online Newspapers in Nigeria

Besides the benefit of instant interactivity made possible by the iInternet, online newspapers overcome the constraint of circulating hard copy newspaper versions by transportation, with its concomitant loss in time (Nwanne, 2007).

One manifestation of this lies in the highly interactive nature of online newspapers, as a result of the interactivity that the internet permits. Interactivity in online newspapers is instant. This is because there is an interactive portal contained in online newspaper websites that permits readers to post their comments on every report with minimum delay. These posts become interactive as subsequent posts react to both the news story and the earlier posts from other readers.

In traditional hard copy newspaper versions, interactivity is accommodated under 'letters-to-the-editor' which normally takes time to publish.

On the other hand, readers of online newspapers do not need to wait long before their comments on news stories are published. Online newspapers are accessible all over the world immediately they are published and this achieves great circulation speed. (Patrick, 2015).

With multimedia 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 pictures related to the news story. This makes it possible to listen to and/or watch online newspaper contents. Multimedia 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 audiovisual. No wonder it has been said that online media contents blur distinctions among media modes of mass communication (Ijeh, 2008).

Mcquail (2005) describes 'online newspapers' as newspapers that are widely accessible as text on the internet. While Okonofua (2012) defines online newspaper as a newspaper that exists on the internet either separately, or as an online version of a printed periodical, Mathew (2013) opines that:

> It is a 'web newspaper'. There are two classes of online newspapers: those that exist exclusively online without a print version (online-only newspapers) and those that have online versions as well as the print version. Such newspapers as The Atlantic Herald in the US, Southport Reporter in the UK and Daily Post, the Premium Times, Sahara Reporters, City Mirror in Nigeria are examples of online-only newspapers. The New York Times in the US, The Telegraph in the UK and The Punch, Tribune, The Guardian, Vanguard in Nigeria are examples of newspapers that have both online and print versions.

With the popularisation of the internet in the 1990s, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] (2010, p. 16) states that the first online newspaper was published in 1994 by *Palo Alta Weekly* California. Since then, the worldwide online newspaper has grown significantly with the *French Le Monde* setting up its website in 1995 and the *New York Times* in 1998. By 2001, the number of online editions of newspapers had grown to 10, 600 (Moller, 2001).

In recent times, online newspapers have grown tremendously such that "It would be difficult to find a daily newspaper in the UK, United States or Nigeria, in fact in the world, that does not have or share a website" (Okonofua, 2012).

"The first Nigerian newspaper to go online was the defunct *Post Express*, which began its internet edition in 1997.*The Guardian*, *The Punch*, and *The Comet* (now defunct) joined the *Post Express* on the internet in 1999" (Akoh, 2012, p. 44-45). The 2000s saw a surge in internet use across the world, and newspapers in Nigeria took advantage of it to fit into the trend. Thus, in 2008, there were about 22 Nigerian newspapers on internet (Okonofua, 2012).

The Trends and Patterns of Online Newspapers in Nigeria

Sahara Reporters

Nigeria's media landscape experienced a major alteration with the emergence of *Sahara Reporters* on January 25, 2006, as a news website for citizen journalists. The citizen website proudly invites every Nigerian citizen to report event around them, expciay that of corruption or human right abuses. This is what William Dutton of the Oxford Internet Institute calls the 'Fifth Estate of the Realm'.

Perhaps nothing better describes essence of the work of *Sahara Reporters* than the preamble found on Alexa.com, a web information company.

> *"Sahara Reporters is an outstanding, ground-breaking website that encourages citizen journalists to report ongoing corruption and government malfeasance in Africa. Using photos, text, and video dynamically, the site informs and prompts concerned African citizens and other human rights activists globally to act, denouncing officially-sanctioned corruption, the material impoverishment of its citizenry, defilement of the environment, and the callous disregard of the democratic principles enshrined in the constitution".(Dutton,2009)*

The day of its launch, *Sahara Reporters* issued a 750-word press statement in New York and emailed it to thousands of Nigerians at home, diaspora and Nigerian media houses. It announced its birth unabashedly. In the introduction, the new citizen website anchored its conviction on Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers" (Dare,2011).

It was a far-sighted move that would later inoculate it against several lawsuits and attempts to censor and proscribe it. The website then moved quickly to place the ownership of the site in the hands of the ordinary citizen; "It is a unique organization, composed of ordinary people whose only mission is to seek truth and publish it without fear or favour. This means that apart from the team of professionals running its affairs, *Sahara Reporters* is also an umbrella for anyone who has something to say and who seeks an avenue to say it, as far as what he/she says is verifiable and ascertainable as true and the information therein, is in the public interest".

From the start, Omoyele Sowore, the activist behind *Sahara Reporters* was upfront about his mission and the nature of journalism to which he hoped to dedicate his site.

He bluntly stated that "we are unapologetically practitioners of advocacy journalism, because to us journalism is not an end in itself". Apart from making Nigerians its primary audience, it sought to establish a continental platform:

> *We are here because we have something to give to our people; we are here because we want to give them the power of information, the power of truth. We believe with this power, the Nigerian and African people can begin to get it right, in all that is wrong with our mother continent.*

Few years into operating as a citizen online newspaper, *Sahara Reporters* issued a re-worded editorial policy in which

it sought to re-state the rationale behind its operation and answer some of the questions and allegations thrown at it. It declared on October 25, 2010, in its "Philosophy and Editorial Policy" that, "We are Citizen Reporters, not Professional Journalists". This was no doubt a direct answer to many who have criticized the quality and bent of the stories the site had carried. It stated further that "We depend on the efforts of concerned citizens who act as whistle-blowers as well as the main sources for our exposes. The information on this site, sometimes in the form of rare documents, photos, videos and audio records, comes from citizens anxious to see change.

And with this, the site firmly locked in place the citizen orientation of its content and practice of journalism. Describing itself further as a "Public Trust", the online forum defines its target audience as Nigerians: "*Sahara Reporters* accepts story ideas from Nigerians and friends of Nigeria, particularly if they include documents that would facilitate our investigations. *Sahara Reporters* maintains the faith that ordinary citizens, reporting a country about which they truly care, can build that country by opening up all the dark corners where both criminals and detractors try to hide."

On the whole, *Sahara Reporters*, as a citizen journalism website, makes no pretence about its philosophy of aggressively exposing corruption using ordinary citizens as foot soldiers and sources of information and content.

The site has also attained a traffic rank of 40 among Nigerian users in a recent Alexa 3-month survey(Dare, 2011).

Premium Times

Another online new platform that has changed the way news is disseminated in Nigeria is *Premium Times. Premium Times* is a Nigerian media organisation based in Abuja with a vision to help strengthen Nigeria's democracy, advance the socio-economic wellbeing and rights of the people, promote and enrich their cultural practices, and advocate for best practices, good governance, transparency and human rights, in line with the values expected of a modern democratic state.

Proprietors of the organisation believe that of all the institutions of a modern democracy, the media matters in large measure. It can help forge new communities, pursue political and social agenda in support of a better society, and help build visions of hope and resistance.

Sadly, the media can also lead in negative directions; dividing people and truncating hope and vision. In our country, the media have played both roles at different times in our history.

Premium Times, launched in 2011, believes that the time has come for Nigeria to embrace the challenge of progress and development in a substantial, concrete sense. The news medium brings a huge commitment to offer Nigeria the type of media that will advocate for the people and nudge the nation on the path of development and social reengineering.

It is of the view that in terms of its formalistic processes, and its philosophy of content, the new media that will help spur the challenge of educational revolution, cultural rebirth, and economic development in Nigeria must be reflective, thoughtful, analytic and empathetic without a sense of entitlement and insularity.

It is a medium that emerged to fill that lacuna in the Nigerian press, and therefore raise the bar of journalism in Nigeria. It publishes across all formats on the platform where it hopes to appeal to the bulk of young and middle class elites with a vision of the future and a belief in social change.

Online Newspaper versus Traditional Mainstream Newspaper Readership in Nigeria

It is believed that more people read online newspapers than traditional hard copy newspapers. Gapsiso (2008) points out that traditional newspapers are increasingly lured into reinventing themselves to explore the internet in content delivery because online newspapers provide readers more information, with more depth and greater speed than the hard copy versions. Uwakwe (2010) discusses the features that distinguish online newspapers from traditional newspapers. He posits that the phenomenon of online newspapers makes it possible for newspapers as a medium of mass communication to compete more effectively with radio and television. A sort of consensus exists among the above cited works on online newspapers. They point to the convergence between the internet and traditional newspaper publishing in its attempt to remain relevant in the face of growing opposition from the newer and more technology-based media of radio and television. That online newspapers have come to stay and that people read them are not issues that anyone should contest. Instead, the patterns of their readership and their trends in an environment where internet connectivity is common, such as Nigerian cities, should be worthy of attention.

The Technological Determinism and the Mediamorphosis Theories of Mass Communication

This study is anchored on two theories: the technological determinism theory and the media-morphosis theory of mass communication.

Technological determinism is a reductionist theory that presumes that a society's technology drives the development of its social structure and cultural values. The term is believed to have been coined by Thorstein Veblen (1857–1929), an American sociologist. It interprets technology in general and communications technologies in particular as the basis of society in the past, present and even the future. He holds that technologies such as writing, print, television or the computer "changed society". In its extreme form, the entire form of society is seen as being determined by technology; new technologies transform society at every level, including institutions, social interactions and individuals. At the least, a wide range of social and cultural phenomena is seen as shaped by technology.

This theory helps us to understand that the advent of the internet has changed the pattern and the trends in newspaper

business not only in Nigeria but in the world. Instead of having the news printed on paper, they are now on different electronic gadgets and accessed at the same time, thanks to new technology.

The second theory on which this study is premised is the Mediamorphosis, a theory by Roger Fidler that simply translates to media undergoing morphisms, which he published in his book, "Mediamorphosis: Understanding New Media," in January, 1997.

Mediamorphosis is a unified way of thinking about the technology evolution of communication media. Fidler derives his mediamorphosis principles from the concept of co-evolution, convergence and complexity.

The thrust of his position is that as new media forms evolve, and develop, they influence overtime and to varying degrees, the development of other existing media such that rather than the emergent media displacing the existing one, the existing one converges with it to enhance its operations. The essence of mediamorphosis is the idea that the media are complex adaptive systems. That is, the media, as other systems, respond to external pressures with a spontaneous process of self-organization. (Anaeto & Anaeto, 2008).

Both theories are appropriate for this work because, they explain how online journalism has affected the day-to-day activities of the traditional media.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study employs content analysis as its design because it is the most suitable for the focus and the philosophy of the study. It is also the most appropriate for the study because it helps to know what constitutes the trend and pattern of online newspapers in Nigeria, in this case, *Sahara Reporters* and *Premium Times.*

It is the study of the content with reference to the meanings, contexts and intentions contained in the news contents of these online newspapers. The study makes use of a coding scheme which is the combination of coding guide and coding sheet. Coding sheet was mainly used to collect data through which manifest contents of online newspapers were categorised. The researchers opted for a coding sheet because, according to Nwodu (2009), it allows for easy qualification and subsequent measurability and analysis of highly qualitative data.

Sampled dates of four constructed weeks for six months - Nov 1, 2016 –May 9, 2017

Mondays	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
1-11-2016	8-11-2016	15-11-2016	22-11-2016	29-11-2016	6-12-2016	13-12-2016
20-12-2016	27-12-2016	3-1-2016	10-1-2017	17-1-2017	24-1-2016	31-1-2017
7-2-2017	14-2-2017	21-2-2016	28-2-2017	7-3-2017	14-3-2017	21-3-2017
28-3-2017	4-4-2017	11-4-2017	18-4-2017	25-4-2017	2-5-2017	9-5-2017

Content Categories and Variables

The researchers developed four sets of categories through which the contents of online newspapers were analysed. The categories include news, editorials, features, opinion and pictures, while the variables designed for measurement are nature of stories, prominence and subject matter. In this way, prominence was operationally adopted to examine the trend of online newspapers while the nature of news story and subject matter were deliberately used to give operational meanings of pattern and packaging of online newspapers because of their peculiar use in newspaper content categorisation.

IV. FINDINGS

Trends of online newspapers in Nigeria

The analysis of trends of the two selected online news media shows that the selected media have a penchant for deep investigative stories and multimedia presentation with hyperlinks that make it easy for readers to navigate to other sections of the stories. The five- point content categorisation reveals the interest areas of the news media and their inclination level to specific areas. As online news media, the coding identifies news, editorials, features, opinions and investigations as the focal points of the two media.

The aesthetic innovations with which news and feature stories are packaged seem to have a connection with the popularity and high usage of online newspapers among people these days. This always comes with some attractive features on the homepage of the selected publications with frequency of coverage, which is more attractive to the online audience of the selected newspapers than the traditional newspapers. Editorial and opinion also feature prominently in their pages to give the readers a complete reading space. Next in prominence are pictures and investigations. The pictures are generously used to lay credence to the stories carried on the pages of the newspapers while the investigative stories make the two online tabloids reliable sources of news to the mainstream media and the readers.

The easy accessibility of online news media is further reflected in the use of mobile phones to access stories from the two online newspapers sampled for this study. The readers' accessibility to these categories of stories such as politics, corruption, scandal, election, agitation, terrorism, crimes, investigations and labour matters may not be unconnected to involvement of technological innovation.

From the analysis of the manifest contents of the two online newspapers, it was observed that the majority of the stories

were hyperlinked to video clips which the readers could watch with their mobile devices. This is one of the major innovations that drive online newspapers, which has also increased the adoption of the news platforms by online audiences. This discovery is in agreement with Everett Rogers' diffusion of innovation theory, and it may raise the readers' consumption of online news because they are more technology and innovation inclined to receive current and global reports.

The patterns of online newspapers in Nigeria

In analysing the patterns of the two selected online newspapers, the researchers examine the form, structure and style of online news reporting. The two selected online newspapers structure their contents into top news, opinion, investigations, politics, health, sports with banner pictures as entry into the stories. *Sahara Reporters* uses video news, document, crime, legal, business, human right, photo boxes and other headlines as its pattern while *The Premium Times* makes use of a big photo entry and segments other stories across the regional lines of South-West, South-East, South-South, North-East, North-West and North- Central. At the far left, it places the weather report while in the beneath are video news, opinion, editorial entertainment, features and interviews. It was observed that the idea of using video news by the two publications was made possible by innovation of digital communication and increase in the adoption of internet connectivity. Segmentation of news coverage along the regional line by *The Premium Times* attests to the uniqueness of the pattern of the online news medium.

Packaging of online newspaper contents

The packaging of contents of the two selected online news newspapers is done with preference to technological innovation and multimedia bias. The heavy use of video news and pictures for news reporting is innovative, and it is in line with the diffusion of innovation theory, which provides a framework for this study. The selected online newspaper use technology to package their editorial contents in such a way that it can be accessed through mobile applications, mediated media and other internet based platforms.

The packaging of contents of online newspapers is done to the advantage of ICT compliant audiences since the innovation that drives online news reporting is communication technology. Readers who reside in the internet deficient areas such as villages and other rural areas, lacking in ICT, may not fall among the adopters of online news readership.

V. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Findings from this study revealed that readership of online news media is seriously influenced by the use of multimedia technological innovation to access stories from the two online newspapers sampled for this study. This finding is in line with the findings of Ijeh (2014). According to him, multimedia 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 multimedia presentations in online newspapers, specific sections of a news story may have hyperlinks 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 pictures related to the news story. This makes it possible to listen to and/or watch online news platforms.

This claim is supported by the argument of Dare (2010), when he states that the use of social media in Nigeria in the past 4-5 years remains unprecedented, aided largely by internet technology, the privatization of telecommunication services and indeed mobile telephony, often referred to as the GSM (Global System for Mobile communications) revolution. In 2009 there were about 120 newsgathering and distribution websites based on Nigeria content and largely controlled by Nigerian citizens at home and in the Diaspora. But there were a number of pre-Sahara Reporters websites and blogs that relied heavily on citizen contributions. Such Online news sites and discussion forums were www.nigeria.com, www.USAfricaonline.com, www.nigeriacenral.com, odili.net (also known as Nigeriaworld.com), www.naijapolitics.com, www.nigerianvillage square.com, and nairaland.com among several others. While mainstream media use new media largely to place on the internet the online version of their print edition, the emergent citizen journalism sites use the new tools for different purposes.

The use of digital communication system also gives the readers accessibility to a wide range of stories such as politics, corruption, scandal, election, video news, crimes, investigations and labour matters, without recourse to carrying or paying for papered news. This lends credence to the issue of access to the right of information and communication as part of human development.

The researchers also discovered that the two online newspapers usually link their stories to video clips which the readers could watch with their mobile devices.

This is one of the major innovations that drive online newspapers, which has also increased the adoption of the news platforms by online audiences. This discovery is in agreement with the technological determinism and the media-morphosis theories of mass communication, and it may raise the readers' consumption of online news because they are more technology and innovation inclined to receive current and global reports. The view is in agreement with the finding of Dominick (2010) where he reports that it is probably obvious by now that the traditional print newspaper is not a great place to look for a job. Since 2000, the total number of people employed in the newspaper industry has declined by about 20 percent. The number of editorial employees (reporters, photographers and editors) has decreased slightly more, and additional layoffs and paper closings are likely. Therefore, from the newspaper industry's point of view, an alarming trend among changing patterns of readership is a generally lower circulation and, more ominously, a lower

readership among young people, who are failing to take up the newspaper reading habits of their parents. He says the average age of today's newspaper readers is 53 years.

Similarly, Nwora (2016) also argues that in a way, the internet has led to a decrease in the revenue of some of the media organisations in Nigeria, while at the same time increasing their costs, as money would have to be invested into setting up such web sites, and also paying the staff that would constantly maintain them.

 Apart from this, Dominick (2010) believes that "print newspapers are losing readers to online media. In 1995, about 4 percent of the US population went online at least once a week to get their news".

Dare (2010) further states that major newspapers in Nigeria have also set up online editions with a comment link after every story or opinion piece. He said millions of Nigerians were online, according to the internet world statistics. By the mid-2020, newspapers without their own websites became the exception rather than the rule. It was precisely the period during which the web presence of Nigerian newspapers became entrenched and normalized that citizen online news sites owned and operated by Nigerians living in the Diaspora sprouted and grew rapidly (Kperogi, 2012).

The pattern of editorial packaging of the two online newspapers explains the uniqueness of the online news media as against the offline newspapers. The parading of all news items with hyperlinks, banner pictures and video news attests to the fact that the online news will continue to attract readership from the ICT compliant audience as well as make the contents more attractive to them. This is corroborated by the opinions of Okoro and Diri (2010) when they opine that the print media should, at all times package good and contemporary editorial, feature articles, and other genres that the online newspapers may not treat in great details. news.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Media owners should not allow the commercial interest to derail them from the media social responsibility expected of it in the society by using latest technology to make access to information easy for their readers.

Media owners should allow their employees exercise professionalism in the day to day activities to boost and maintain media objectivity and credibility of the media because the credibility of the information is determined by the credibility of the media house. Therefore, credible source of information impresses the public and make them trust any information from such media including advertisements or commercials thereby increase the influence of commercial messages on the media audience.

Government and private- owned media should improve their mode of operations, in the areas of staffing, programming and packaging in such a way that their messages would be accepted by the audience and consequently increase audience exposure to it.

Media practitioners should uphold high professional conduct and the ethics guiding media profession should be adhered to at all time and in all situations irrespective of external or internal influence and pressure.

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