

# Newspapers' Usage of Multiple Channels in News Dissemination and Its Implication on Their Business Survival

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**Abstract:** The introduction of internet technology came with multiple channels through which newspaper now distributes their contents to readers to keep them informed to make profits. This study looks at newspapers' use of multiple channels for news dissemination and the implication for their business survival. To tackle this research work, the survey method with the use of a questionnaire was adopted. The Technological Determinism theory was chosen for this study. Data for the research work were obtained from the staff of *The Nation newspaper*, a leading national daily in Nigeria. The data obtained were presented, analyzed, and interpreted with the use of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The study found that the introduction of multiple channels has affected news production as readers are now used to getting news content from various channels just as the profit from multiple channels is sustaining newspaper enterprises. The study recommended, among other things, that newspaper companies should seize the initiative from digital platforms to create workable online multi-channels to draw large readerships while still retaining their print version, and since it is obvious that readers are now adapting to multiple channels, they should fully adopt the use of multiple channels to stay afloat in business.

**Key Words:** Newspaper, Multiple channels, Media enterprise, Media market

## I. Introduction

### Background to the Study

The rise of technology is harming the newspaper industry (Kalombe & Phiri, 2019). This suggests that the conventional approach to newspaper content production and delivery may soon be obsolete (Ardia et al., 2020). Across the globe, the majority of newspaper readership has shifted to the internet, where content is increasingly accessed using electronic devices such as computers, cellphones, e-readers, tablets, cable news, and business blogging platforms, among many others (Chido, 2018). This makes it easier and less expensive for readers to get news because they can access a wide range of news sources from one location. Also, the internet provides readers with easy ways to more actively participate in the communication process through rapid feedback boards, which facilitate lively discussions between readers and moderators who are representatives of the news outlets (Chido, 2018). For this reason, most media firms have moves successfully providing content for a single digital channel to providing digital channels. The present shift toward multiple channels has changed not only the products and operations of the media industry, but also how media managers conceptualize content. The amount of media content has generated greatly increased as a result of multiple channel tactics and the audience now has more options when consuming newspaper content (Markhortykh et al., 2021).

Many media companies have shifted to a multiple-channel method of content generation and distribution in recent years as a response to digitalization. For instance, the production of content for dissemination on print, internet, and mobile platforms is rapidly happening in newsrooms are completely integrated (Chido, 2018). The fact that resources have been severely curtailed for the majority of media companies in recent years does not appear to have significantly hindered a tremendous increase in the volume of content provided to audiences across various platforms. Despite the associated economic difficulties facing media enterprises, the multiple-channel environment has enabled such an ostensibly miraculous improvement in productivity levels across the media business. If anything, the desire of the audience to obtain material through multiple sources has compelled the media sector to diversify into multiple channels (Wilding et al., 2018).

Today's newspaper businesses have access to a wide range of multi-channel distribution options. It is therefore essential that the use of these multiple channels by newspaper outfits is carefully evaluated in terms of their economic viability and sustainability of the newspaper enterprise.

Newspaper is considered a conventional mass media outlet, along with magazines and television. Newspapers used to take great satisfaction in being a powerful medium of mass communication with extremely high patronage before the development of internet technology. It used to be available only through vendors and special subscriptions that may be delivered to your house or place of business. This merely means that it was previously only accessible through a hard copy (Adeniran,

2023). Hardcopy of newspapers started to lose readers and customers as social media and other internet-enabled communication channels emerged (Adeniran, 2023). To remain in business, this compelled newspaper publishers to explore alternative ways to connect with readers. This research was inspired by the many channels that newspapers today utilize to reach their readers, how they are being sustained by those multi-channels, and how readers use those channels to read newspapers.

Since the beginning of the 21st century, Nigeria has experienced a transition from hard copy newspapers to digital newspapers. According to Ajala, Ajala, and Oduye (2013), the number of hard copy newspapers in Nigeria had decreased by half in 2010 compared with 2005. This can be attributed to the increasing number of digital papers that are now available. High-tech services such as internet, digital broadcasting and mobile phones have supported this shift from hard copy newspapers to digital newspapers in Nigeria (Achikene, Chukwudi, & Ozidi, 2016). With the digital revolution taking place in the country, digital newspapers have become increasingly popular in contrast to hard copy newspapers.

Digital newspapers contain a variety of features that distinguish them from hard copy newspapers. For example, digital papers often have fewer restrictions on the length of the newspaper article, as well as on the frequency of publication (Afolabi, Orimoloye, & Akorede, 2016). Moreover, they often have a wide international reach that hard copy newspapers cannot provide (Uberedu & Timothy, 2013). Additionally, digital newspapers are typically easier to access as most are available online free of charge, and they can be accessed from anywhere in the world with an internet connection (Afolabi et al., 2016).

In conclusion, Nigeria has experienced a transition from hard copy newspapers to digital ones, and this is due to the increasing availability of digital technology and services in the country. Digital newspapers offer more diverse features than hard copy newspapers, and are typically more accessible.

The objectives of this research work are to:

1. Find out if the introduction of multiple channels has affected the way *The Nation Newspapers* are used to produce news.
2. Investigate whether the readers of newspapers are responding to the introduction of multiple channels in the *The Nation Newspapers*.
3. Examine if the introduction of multiple channels is profitable enough to sustain the production of the *The Nation Newspapers* as a business enterprise.

Correspondingly, the research had three research questions:

1. How has multiple channels changed the Nation newspaper mode of news production?
2. How has the readers been responding to the multiple channels in the Nation newspaper's production?
3. How profitable can multiple channels be in terms of sustainability of the operation of the Nation newspaper?

## II. Multiple Channels and Their Usage

Multiple channels refer to a tactical approach where media businesses concentrate on creating or assembling various media products and services to produce and disseminate such materials on not just one but several platforms. A multi-platform strategy takes into account a variety of content delivery options, such as web, mobile, interactive games, and more, rather than focusing solely on one channel, like print or traditional television (Barone, 2023).

Multi-platform material is referred to as multiple-channel media. This might range from news, videogames, and music to films and television shows. The phrase is frequently used concerning digital media because more and more material is being produced with this kind of consumption in mind. Media use several channels in a variety of methods (Chan-Olmsted & Rang, 2019). Many examples include:

**Television Station:** In addition to broadcasting transmits live over the air, online, on mobile devices, and through video on demand, a television station can also offer its material on social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter.

**Radio Station:** In addition to broadcasting content on AM, FM, or HD channels, radio can also stream content online, offer a range of podcasts and use social networking sites to exchange information, conduct research and grow audiences.

**Newspapers and magazines:** They can be produced in hard copies and published online as soft copies that readers can access on their computers and smart phones.

**Book:** Books can be printed in physical copies and soft copies, as audio books and online for download, electronic reading, and podcast versions.

According to Morah (2017), some of the main multiple channels that media companies can employ to reach customers include Personal Digital Assistants, E-book readers, Internet TV, Mobil/smart phones, Satellite radio, Mp3 players, SMS/MMS, iPod, Tablet, blogs, HD radio, Multicast TV, Video game consoles, User-generated content, Digital video recorders, Broadband Social media podcast/video casts, Video on demand(VOD), Internet radio, DVD/Blue-ray, RSS feeds, Sling box/Apple TV, Wi-Fi/WiMAX and High-definition TV(HDTV).

It should be emphasized that media businesses now use the Internet as their main platform for content dissemination. The internet serves as the primary means of distributing most content, whether it is through social media, podcasts, online radio, or newspapers. Users can access the internet using a variety of devices, including desktop, laptop, mobile, and net book computers. Morah (2017) asserts that not all media companies can deliver content across several channels. Some media firms decide to create strategic alliances to aid in distribution to become multiple-channel media enterprises and remain competitive in a media market where audiences have a demand for cross-media content. A strategic alliance is a partnership between two or more businesses that aims to integrate operational activities, share risks and harmonize corporate cultures to gain a competitive edge. To distribute content online, for instance, several media organizations have partnered with YouTube, the most popular video-sharing website with billions of users worldwide. Several media firms provide official, branded YouTube accounts with entire episodes of their original content in addition to video clips.

With an increasing number of media firms offering content across several channels, understanding how users interact with different platforms is crucial. It is an undisputed fact that traditional company models have been challenged by the digital world (Ren, 2022). In an analog environment, access was constrained and media companies controlled the content. These limitations do not exist in the digital realm. On that basis, understanding how consumers utilize these several platforms can assist media companies choose the most effective way to reach their target audience with their content. It has been discovered that modern audiences are cross-platform consumers who access as well as consume content through a wide range of platforms and devices. These viewers can multitask effectively, so they can watch television and browse the internet at the same time. Also, they can use their mobile phone to access other programs while simultaneously listening to a radio broadcast (Ren, 2022).

### Income Generation in Multiple Channels

Nobuko (2020) asserts that there are various ways for media businesses to profit from multiple channels. To put it in another way, there are various business models for multi-platform, including:

- i. **Advertising-based model:** Under this model, content is typically provided without charge in exchange for integrated advertisements. The majority of online media companies frequently use this model.
- ii. **subscription-based model:** It allows readers to access content completely or in part by paying a regular charge. When you must pay to access a media outlet's material, this is the business model applicable.
- iii. **Pay-per-use model:** When a user does this, they only pay for the material they access at specific times. Instead of signing up for a recurring subscription, the user pays for a certain sort of material. This approach can be used for audio files, motion pictures, and previously published articles from periodicals, newspapers, and broadcast websites.

Other models include three-party/two-sided markets (one category subsidizes another), which involve free content in substitution for adverts, premium content in return for advertising, and direct cross-subsidies, which involve free testing magazine/newspaper subscriptions being used to sell new subscriptions (some customers subsidize others).

### Advantages and Disadvantages of Multiple Channels in Media Enterprise

According to Nielsen et al. (2016), adopting a multi-platform for a media organization has several benefits. He lists the benefits and drawbacks of using many channels. Some benefits include:

- i. **It has a wider coverage:** Using multiplatform media to distribute material across a variety of channels is the greatest approach to reach a wider audience.
- ii. **It is more convenient:** Because you are not constrained to a certain time or location to watch or listen to your information, multiplatform media is more convenient than traditional media.
- iii. **It is more cost-effective:** It is less expensive than conventional media. With traditional media, you can also have to pay for certain channels or shows in addition to your cable or satellite subscription. With multi-platform media, you can frequently access content for nothing at all or at a much-reduced cost.

- iv. **It is more flexible:** When watching traditional content, your options are constrained to what is offered on the platform you are using. With more contemporary platforms, you can frequently find content that is either not or just seldom offered on your old platform.
- v. **It is more engaging:** You have more control over the message and can interact with the audience more directly. Also, you can engage with the information and even change how the tale is told.

According to Nielsen et al. (2016), multi-platform has some disadvantages:

- i. It necessitates time and effort to produce high-quality content that is appropriate for each platform. This is because distributing media content on various platforms would demand effort and time in the process of customizing the content to the platform. Different platforms also require different methods of writing, both in terms of style and time.
- ii. If not executed properly, it might come across as dispersed or disorganized. This is because each platform often has a separate content structure.
- iii. Multiplatform diversification requires significant financial resources and any conventional media that lack finance risk going out of business.
- iv. There is also the high cost associated with maintaining and updating so many platforms, as well as the additional difficulty associated with trying to monetize these platforms.

### III. Empirical Review

Thurman and Fletcher (2018) conducted a study to determine whether traditional newspapers are moving toward Post-Print Obsolescence as a result of the introduction of multi-channel distribution, particularly digital media. The researchers focused on *The Independent*, a public UK national daily that was solely published online starting in March 2016. They specifically looked into changes in the title's readership and in the interest it receives after implementing online multi-channel using data from com Score, the UK's National Readership Survey (NRS), and the Audit Bureau of Circulations (ABC).

They discovered that although *The Independent's* British readership increased by 8% during the initial 12 months after it became an online-only publication, those same readers spent 81% less time overall on the brand, a discrepancy brought on by significant variations in reading habits between online and print readers. *The Independent* saw a sharp decline in readership from its home market after the publication of the article, while there was a 50% growth in readers from outside the country. This shows that when newspapers solely publish online, they may return to profitability but also lose a lot of the attention they once had. As a result, they argue that newspapers must continue to provide physical copies as one of their many ways to contact readers.

A study by Onyinge and Kithae (2020) titled "Managing Change in Media Transition from Print to Multi-Platform Delivery: A Case of Kenyan Newspapers" was conducted to ascertain how the difficulties associated with print media's shift to many channels are impacting their operations. The study employed the desktop research technique by reading through pertinent literature and document analysis. According to the study, print media companies have managed to withstand the threats posed by the internet as well as digitization because they have employed the right change management techniques, adopted cutting-edge media management frameworks, and improved the technical and managerial abilities of media managers. It was noted that even though media companies are integrating online and digital strategies into their business models, they still have not begun making a realistic amount of money from advertising on their digital platforms because the majority of online advertising revenue currently goes to social media sites like Google, Facebook, and Twitter.

Therefore, the study suggested that a model be created that will succeed in content dissemination without sacrificing money generation. It also advised media companies to enhance their business executives' capabilities to handle fierce competition, the importance of economic factors, change management, and fast adaptation and responsiveness to market.

The following researches conducted above are however not situated using the Nigerian audience. It is as a result of this that the researchers use the Nigeria audience see whether it will arrive at same conclusion from the above since there are different social, political and economic realities in the countries where those studies were conducted.

### Theoretical Framework

The Technological Determinism theory serves as the foundation for this study. Thorstein Veblen invented the phrase "Technological Determinism," which reflect the idea that technology in every given civilization defines it. A society's culture is said to be driven by technology, which also shapes the path of its history. The goal of technological determinism theory is to establish a causal connection between technology and the character of civilization. It clarifies who or what might be in charge of human affairs. The hypothesis contests the extent to which technology influences human thought or behaviour (Griffin, 2000).

Winner (1980) provided two hypotheses for this theory:

- i. The different methods by which a society functions are fundamentally influenced by the technology of that culture.
- ii. Technological advancements are the main and most significant factor driving social transformation.

The concept that technology determines the many decisions we make and that, as a result, a changing society may be linked to changed technologies is an outgrowth of the aforementioned theory. Many instances from history justify the idea that technology shapes the society in which we live. The development of the gun altered the nature of conflict resolution and combat. A gun could be successfully used with the least amount of effort and expertise and from a comfortable distance. This resulted in a significant change in the types of weaponry employed in warfare when compared to prior conflicts waged with swords and archers.

Marx (1926) argued that as technology advances, novel modes of production emerge in society, which in turn affect its cultural, political, and economic facets and consequently changed society as a whole. He utilized the gradual transformation of a feudal society using a hand mill into an industrial capitalist society after the invention of the steam mill to illustrate this point. Many manifestations of technological determinism exist. It begins with the introduction of fresh technology, which brings about a variety of changes and occasionally these changes can also result in the loss of prior expertise. For instance, the spread of more modern agricultural tools and techniques has resulted in a progressive loss of understanding of traditional farming techniques. As a result, technology also has an impact on society's degree of knowledge.

Because new media are new technologies as well as extensions of existing media, they do have deterministic elements. There is a famous quote by McLuhan (1962) that "The medium is the message." This indicates that the method of communication affects the recipient's mentality. The development of news media such as print, television, and the internet has demonstrated how changes in technology affect the community we live in. Therefore, this theory effectively captures the main concept of this research in the context that multiple-channel technologies are periodically introduced in media enterprises and this has caused a change in the method of news dissemination. To meet up with the new technology and remain competitive in the news production industry, newspaper establishments must continuously keep abreast of the new technology that the audience uses for regular news content consumption. According to the theory's predictions, conventional methods of consuming newspaper information, such as purchasing them from newsstands, have dramatically diminished as more people now prefer to access the content through the variety of multiple channels which are currently available. In line with this theory, the vendor-to-internet shift in newspaper culture has occurred. So, the theory of Technological Determinism is ideal for this discussion.

#### IV. Method

The study employed a survey design because of its goals. *The Nation* newspaper staff makes up the study's population. *The Nation newspaper*, according to its website, employs 200 staff. Using Taro Yamane's sample size calculation formula, the study's sample size was determined. The formula is given below:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$

Where

n = sample size

N = population

e = 0.05

$$n = \frac{200}{1 + 200(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{200}{1 + 0.0025}$$

$$n = \frac{200}{1.0025}$$

n = 199.5 (Approximately 200)

n = 200.



Since the Taro Yamane sample size calculation formula indicates that the whole population should be used, 200 which made up the total population of *The Nation* staff, therefore, served as the sample size of this study.

**Data Presentation and Analysis**

Out of the 200 copies of the questionnaire that were issued to the staff *The Nation newspaper*, 180 or 90% were retrieved and used for this study.

Table 1: To what extent has the introduction of multiple channels changed the way *The Nation* newspaper is used to produce news?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very large extent	46	25.6	25.6	25.6
	Large extent	92	51.1	51.1	76.7
	Not sure	15	8.3	8.3	85.0
	Some extent	20	11.1	11.1	96.1
	Not at all	7	3.9	3.9	100.0
	Total	180	100.0	100.0	

Table 1 shows that the introduction of multiple channels has changed the mode of news production in the newspaper business. This assertion was made clear by 92 of the respondents representing 51.1%. It was again strengthened by 46 of the respondents constituting 25.6%. Respondents that were not sure of the implication that multiple channels have on newspaper production were 15 representing 8.3%. Respondents that believed that multiple channels have affected news production were 20 or 11.1% while those that said they have not changed news production were 7 representing 3.9%.

Table 2: How much have the readers of *The Nation* newspaper been responding since the introduction of multiple channels in the newspaper?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very much	85	47.2	47.2	47.2
	Much	54	30.0	30.0	77.2
	Not sure	28	15.6	15.6	92.8
	Not much	11	6.1	6.1	98.9
	Not at all	2	1.1	1.1	100.0
	Total	180	100.0	100.0	

In Table2, readers of *The Nation newspaper* have adopted multiple channels in their consumption of the newspaper as confirmed by 85 of the respondents representing 47.2%. Fifty-Four (54) of the respondents constituting 30.0% also supported that the view that readers of *The Nation* newspaper have responded much since the introduction of multiple channels in the operation of the paper. 28 or 15.6% of the respondents were not sure of their stand while 11 of the respondents representing 6.1% believed that the readers have not responded much. Respondents that said the readers have not responded at all were 2 representing 1.1%.

Table 3: How profitable has it been since the introduction of multi-channels in *The Nation* newspaper?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very much	36	20.0	20.0	20.0
	Much	81	45.0	45.0	65.0

Not sure	28	15.6	15.6	80.6
Not much	31	17.2	17.2	97.8
Not at all	4	2.2	2.2	100.0
Total	180	100.0	100.0	

In terms of multiple channels' profitability to *The Nation* newspaper, it can be concluded from Table 4.1.3 that multi-channels are much more profitable to *The Nation* newspaper as agreed by 81 of the respondents constituting 45.0%. Also 36 of the respondents constituting 20.0% the profitability level very high. Respondents that were not too sure were 28 or 15.6%. Those that said the profitability level was not much were 31 representing 17.2% while those that said the introduction of multiple channels by *The Nation* newspaper was not profitable at all were 4 constituting 2.2%.

**V. Discussion of Findings**

**Research Question 1:** How has multiple channels changed *The Nation* newspaper's mode of news production?

Multiple channels have changed the way the paper used to produce news. This was clearly stated in Table 1 where 92 or 51.1% of the respondent which constitute the majority said the introduction of multiple channels has changed the way that the newspaper used to produce news. This finding is in line with Markhorthykh et al's. (2021) assertion that media migration towards multiple channels has altered not just media industry processes and output, but has re-configured how content is now being conceptualized by media managers. He argues that multiple channel strategies have encouraged a vast expansion in the volumes of media content and give the audience different choices while consuming media content.

It can be inferred from the above assertion that the traditional way of only producing hard copies of newspapers for vendors' distribution has changed to having many channels through which newspapers can be distributed and read. This has automatically changed production format as the hard copy version may be different from the online media version in terms of layout and length of the stories.

**Research Question 2:** How has the readers been responding to the multiple channels in *The Nation* newspaper's production?

The finding shows that readers have been responding to multiple channels in *The Nation* newspaper as shown in table 2 where respondents numbering 85 or 47.2% said the readers have been responding very much to the use of multiple channels in *The Nation* newspaper. This finding is in line with Anyim's (2021) postulation that print, has a dynamic way of attracting readership loyalists by its style of news reporting. He notes that the online version of the newspaper is now receiving much attention in Nigerian society, but conventional newspapers still receive good attention from readers that are not able to get close to any of the devices used in gaining access to the internet.

The adoption of multiple channels of reading newspapers are also confirmed by Ismail (2018) who discovered that more and more Nigerians have started reading newspapers through online multiple channels. This reveals that online newspaper accounts for more readers than print newspapers in the country even when some people still stick hard copy. The above assertions imply that readers of newspapers are adopting to multiple channels in consuming newspapers.

**Research Question 3:** How profitable can multiple channels be in terms of sustainability of the operation of *The Nation* newspaper?

The finding reveals that the use of multiple channels by *The Nation* newspaper is profitable enough to sustain the media outfit. Table 3 contains this finding where 81 of the respondents representing 45.0% said multiple channels are much more profitable to *The Nation* newspaper. This finding is in agreement with Onyinge and Kithae (2020) who said that print media companies have been found to continue surviving the internet and digitization threats due to employment of appropriate change management strategies, new media management models, and strengthening of technical and leadership skills of media managers. The finding, however, contrasts Berthel's (2017) observation that print editions of newspapers struggle with declining readership and advertising revenue. He noted that online newspapers while growing modestly, fail to fill the void on the more important metric of revenue. It can therefore be deducted from the above positions that many newspaper enterprises like *The Nation* newspaper are getting profits from multiple channels while others may not.

**VI. Conclusion**

The study concludes that newspaper enterprises can no longer do without multiple channels in their drive to stay afloat in the media business. Multiple channels in newspaper enterprises imply that a lot has changed from how newspapers used to produce and disseminate news. With the advent of internet technology, the internet remains the most prominent catalyst for

multiple channels for newspaper enterprises, and to have an effective multiple channels strategy to attract readers, newspaper enterprises must key into internet technology.

Though multiple channels have come to be part and parcel of media enterprise, the place of professionalism and expertise to handle these multiple channels concerning media content remains very important in this era of technology-driven journalism. When multiple channels are correctly used, the needed audience will be attracted which will in turn give rise to profit generation which happens to be one of the objectives of newspaper enterprises.

From the finding it can be concluded that technology has redefined production and consumption of news content in Nigerian which is the main focus of the Technology Determinism Theory.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- i. Newspaper industry should always try to be abreast, adapt, and adjust to new technology that will enable them to always meet up with the changing face of news production and dissemination.
- ii. Newspapers should seize the initiative from online platforms to develop viable online multiple channels to attract huge readership while still maintaining their print version
- iii. Newspaper establishments should introduce profit-making methods like subscription and other profit-generation strategies to their various distribution channels, especially digital channels.

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