

BETWEEN THE PAPER AND TECHNOLOGY: DIGITIZATION AND NEWSPAPER CIRCULATION CRISIS

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ABSTRACT

In light of the crisis in newspaper circulation, this paper explores the complex interrelationship between digital technology and conventional print media. Newspapers now have the difficult task of preserving their legacy in the digital age while adjusting to the way information is consumed. It critically evaluates the factors that led to the shift from print to digital formats, the effects of digitization on circulation trends, and the tactics used by newspapers to deal with the circulation crisis, drawing from known literature and theoretical frameworks. The study examines the dynamic dynamics of the newspaper industry through a thorough analysis, emphasising the interaction between established print techniques and newly developed digital platforms. Integrating ideas from academic literature with actual studies, it clarifies how technology is changing the way news is distributed and how journalism is changing as a whole. Moreover, it provides a nuanced viewpoint on the difficulties newspapers encounter when juggling the fusion of digital innovation and print tradition. In addition to offering useful insights for media organisations battling digitization, this study advances theoretical understanding of the changes occurring in the media sector. Through an analysis of the interface between paper and technology, the study provides a framework for comprehending how newspapers are changing in an increasingly digital world. In the end, it emphasises how critical it is for newspapers to adopt new technologies while maintaining journalistic standards and satisfying the changing needs of contemporary readers.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Traditional print newspapers find themselves in a difficult balancing act between embracing the digital age and maintaining the integrity of their paper-based heritage in an era driven by rapid technical breakthroughs and digital innovation (Onumah, 2019). The emergence of the internet, along with the widespread use of digital platforms and mobile devices, has completely changed how news is disseminated, drastically changing the journalism landscape and upending the established traditions of the print media sector. Due to this change, there is currently a phenomena known as the "newspaper circulation crisis," which is typified by a decline in print readership, a decrease in circulation figures, and difficulty adjusting to the evolving tastes of contemporary audiences (Onumah, 2019). Traditional newspapers have a variety of difficulties as a result of the move to digital consumption habits, including issues with editorial integrity, audience engagement tactics, and financial sustainability (Ashong & Ogaraku, 2017). Newspapers are forced to manage the challenges of digitalization while also dealing with the fallout from a falling print readership base as consumers increasingly rely on online sources for their news consumption (Nwanne, 2016). In light of the newspaper circulation issue, this research paper aims to investigate the complex dynamics of this shift by looking at how traditional print media and developing digital technologies interact.

2. THE EARLY PRACTICE OF THE NEWSPAPER AND SUDDEN INTERVENTION

Despite the fact that newspapers are typically sold for a minimal price that is insufficient to cover costs, newspapers have relied on circulation and advertising revenue as traditional information producers for decades (Teece, 2010; Barclay, 2012). Publishers looked to advertising revenue to cover remaining costs and profit. According to Ahmadu, Mohammed, Alhassan, and Mohammed (2018), the conventional revenue streams for newspapers are advertising, newspaper stands, and subscriptions. They also sell space. Newspapers also function as a bridge between two distinct groups, which are advertising and readers. Newspaper circulation is declining, and fewer journals are now reaching a far wider audience (Kamarck & Gabriele, 2015). As more individuals,

particularly among the younger segments of the population, gain access to the Internet, their consumption habits for information and entertainment change significantly. Instead of watching TV or buying music from their local record store, many people prefer to stream or download it via the internet (Kamarck & Gabriele, 2015). Newspaper article "stealing" has been charged against Google and Yahoo by publishers such as Sir David Bell. Early in April 2009, media magnate Rupert Murdoch made a similar argument. The CEO of News Corporation wondered, "Should we give Google all of our copyrights?" (Steel & Angwin, 2010). In a similar vein, Sam Zell, the owner of the Tribune Company, which owns the Chicago Tribune, Los Angeles Times, and Baltimore Sun, asserted that American newspapers were the ones who gave Google permission to steal their content for free. However, he questioned what Google would do and how profitable it would be without the contents. (Angwin & Steel, 2010). The business, which was founded ten years ago by two students in their university residence hall, has been criticised by large newspaper chains. Google has become so big that media titans fear it could eventually supplant the newspaper industry. Google believes that these allegations and claims are unfounded and unfounded. The giant search engine contends that the true threat to the conventional newspaper business model is the Internet. Instead of ruining the industry, Google is helping newspaper websites attract more people. Copyright rules are adhered to by Google News, which displays only headlines, a line or two of text, and links to the story's website. Furthermore, there are indications that the ways in which individuals consume news are evolving. In the fourth and first quarters of 2008 and 2009, respectively, the average daily circulation of US newspapers decreased by 7%, according to the most recent data available from the Audit Bureau of Circulations. The study indicates that a change in consumer behaviour has led to an increase in the number of people obtaining their news and information online (Mahmud, 2009).

3. THE REAL WAR ON PRINTED CONTENT BY ONLINE PUBLICATIONS

The economic downturn has reduced advertising revenue in addition to the so-called content theft that occurs in the US. The

Internet has also cost newspapers a substantial amount of money from classified ads. To exacerbate the situation, more consumers are cancelling their newspaper subscriptions as a result of the economic slump, and businesses are lowering their advertising budgets as part of larger cost-cutting measures. Newspaper closures, bankruptcies, job losses, and salary reductions are consequently frequent (Mahmud, 2009). In the US, newspapers reported staggering losses. The Christian Science Monitor, for instance, stopped publishing daily editions and now only publishes weekly editions due to annual losses of about \$18.9 million. The Rocky Mountain News in Denver, which had been published for 149 years, finally stopped publishing print editions on April 3, 2009, citing monthly losses of \$1.5 million (Mahmud, 2009). According to observers, these websites work well because they are different from the traditional newspaper industry and because they have all been successful in drawing in new customers and bringing in fresh money (Gilbert, 2002). Moreover, a large number of Americans own a personal internet connection, which enables them to read newspapers online. The United States is the second-largest Internet user nation in the world, after China, with 227.7 million users. The United States has a 74.1 percent population and internet penetration rate (Internet World Stats, 2009).

In contrast to their American counterparts, Nigerian publications have a distinct experience. The number of readers has not dropped to extremely low levels, and marketers continue to view traditional media as the preferable medium. Even though the Internet has grown to be a powerful political tool, the majority of Nigerians still get their news from conventional media like television and newspapers. However, this does not mean that Nigerian newspapers should sit back and hope that their readership would increase or remain the same (Yap, 2009). Even so, things are still under control in Nigeria, and owners of traditional media, especially newspapers, are working hard these days to counter the threat that the Internet and new media technologies pose. This suggests that they need to have an electronic version of their print publication available online. Just as in the US, people in Nigeria use the internet to read newspapers for free. For instance, virtually all Nigerian newspapers are available for reading online at Nigerian newspaper websites (Aliagan, 2016). Some of the readers who used to buy print periodicals have been drawn to this. Newspapers in Nigeria and the United States will still publish print versions in spite of these developments. Many people worried that radio would become outdated when television was initially introduced in the West. On the other hand, radio is still around today and is getting better and more popular (Aliagan, 2016). According to Barthelemy, Bethell, Christiansen, Jarsvall, and Koinis (2011), the print industry is clearly undergoing significant changes, particularly with regard to efforts to monetize online content and find new revenue streams to offset declining print advertising revenues. However, the industry's decline has been exaggerated. News organisations are undergoing a phase of change and adjustment. Moreover, research indicates that the narrative regarding newspapers' perpetual downfall is predominantly Western-focused, disregarding regional differences and the fact that print newspaper sales are thriving and growing in numerous developing countries (Thurman, 2018).

Even though newspaper circulation in Nigeria has decreased due to a decrease in readership, some newspapers, like The Sun, have experienced significant growth. The Sun used to have 100,000 copies per day, but now it distributes 300,000 copies every day for both print and online versions by using the free paper model, which also increases ad revenue (Thurman, 2018). Some observers argue that the advent of New Communication Technology presents both opportunities and challenges for traditional media professions such as journalism (Aliagan, 2016). When writing for newspapers and magazines, journalists can access news over the Internet and conduct fact-checking, research into numbers and facts, or review background information directly from their homes or places of employment.

4. THE TECHNOLOGY WONDERS AND CHANGING OF BUSINESS MODEL

Opportunities for creativity and efficiency are presented by the ways that digital technology is altering the relationships between media providers and audiences (Storsul & Krumsvik, 2013). Thanks to modern technologies, suppliers now have an unmatched chance to

better understand their customers and match content to their needs and preferences (Turow, 2012). Improved consumer preference has led to a significant increase in content providers' ability to track, analyse, monitor, and better serve audiences' changing and specific tastes and interests. Moreover, digital platforms provide a significantly more comprehensive and intense engagement between content creators and consumers, creating new avenues for both artistic and commercial expression (Napoli, 2011). Decisions about how to produce and distribute news content, as well as the kind and combination of resources needed to operate a newspaper publisher, have all been significantly impacted by the shift to digital multi-platform publishing. A desire to capitalise on the possibilities of digital distribution and an understanding of the multi-platform dimension might impact the selection of news items and the manner in which they are covered. Many managing editors in the UK national newspaper sector concur that images, graphics, and video are particularly crucial for telling a story on digital platforms, and that in certain situations, the availability of, say, an engaging video clip will influence whether or not a piece of content is deemed newsworthy (Doyle, 2014).

When it comes to competition, printed newspapers enjoy local or regional monopolies on the dissemination of news and information; yet, in the digital sphere, these same newspapers face competition from a plethora of websites, blogs, and news channels. There has been a decline in employment within the industry. As the newsroom has been most severely impacted by the sharp fall in advertising income for general readership papers, Kamarck and Gabriele (2015) report that many journalists who used to work for broad audience newspapers are now employed by specialty presses. This is because news is easily accessible on blogs, news aggregators, and internet news sites; as a result, a growing portion of the public now obtains their news online rather than via traditional print media. Even though printed newspapers have a poor future, this does not mean that traditional newspapers are doomed (Obijiofor & Green, 2013). At a debate on the topic of "print and digital co-exist" at "Redefining Ancient Concepts: Digital Media and the Print Sector" during FICCI Frames 2015, experts said that both print and digital co-exist in the Indian market, according to Vikram (2022), citing a Business Standard Report. Analysts report rising circulation figures in India, where print media still accounts for a sizable share of advertising revenue. Print media's approach needs to be reevaluated as digital media develops traction in order to compete with the digital service. Vikram (2022) claims that there are a few reasons why readers would rather read a traditional newspaper in print form than one online. He proposed that because most people still have their conventional newspapers delivered to their homes on a regular basis, they remain a popular source of information for most people. For the more important news from the previous day, many consumers prefer reading online newspapers. The vast majority of people do not have access to the internet. In-depth reporting and investigative journalism were the hallmarks of Indonesia's print media era, as evidenced by periodicals (Vikram, 2022). However, online media now includes investigative journalism and in-depth reporting due to technological improvements (Vikram, 2022). Major community weekly newspapers may have been less impacted by the recession, according to certain data, despite the financial struggles daily newspapers have faced over the past ten years. But unlike the daily newspaper sector, research articles don't usually report on changes in the weekly newspaper industry (Coulson, Lacy, Riffe & Blom, 2012).

5. CONCLUSION

The meeting point of digital innovation with paper-based tradition signifies a turning point in the newspaper industry's development. The study presented in this paper highlights the complex opportunities and challenges involved in managing the newspaper circulation issue by illuminating the subtle interactions between the tangible medium of print and the intangible world of digital technology. In the face of dwindling print readership and the need to adjust to digital developments, newspapers must embrace technological innovation while maintaining editorial integrity. This research highlights the need for adaptive resilience and forward-thinking initiatives within the industry by examining the factors driving the transition towards digital news consumption and the

strategies newspapers are using to minimise the effects of the circulation issue. Furthermore, the study's conclusions provide insightful information about the changing dynamics of media consumption habits and the revolutionary effects of digitization on society and journalism. In the future, newspapers must never stop looking for new and creative methods to interact with readers on digital platforms while maintaining the standards of authenticity and journalistic ethics. Newspapers can overcome the difficulties presented by the circulation issue and come out stronger and more resilient in the digital age by utilising technology to improve narrative, encourage community involvement, and diversify revenue streams. In the end, newspapers will survive in an ever-changing media market if they can embrace change, adjust to changing audience tastes, and take advantage of digital innovation as the paper and technology converge.

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