An Assessment of Online Newspaper Readership among Residents of Apata, Ibadan, Nigeria

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Abstract

The rapid growth of digital technology has revolutionised the media landscape significantly altering the ways people access news and information. Online newspapers have emerged as a popular platform for news disseminating, offering numerous benefits over traditional print media. This study investigates online newspaper readership among the residents of Apata, Ibadan due to its demographic uniqueness and dense population. The survey method with the use of questionnaires was utilised for data collection from two hundred and fifty participants randomly selected. Results revealed that 70% access online news daily, with 60% preferring social media platforms. Factors influencing online newspaper readership include age, education, income, and internet access, indicating high reliance on online platforms for news consumption within the community. The study applies the Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT) as it explains the motivation behind the residents' preferences for specific online platforms and Diffusion of Innovation Theory to shed light on the adoption of digital news consumption as a modern trend. Results reveal that participants primarily consume online news for informational needs, entertainment, and fostering social interaction. Based on findings, the study recommends that online newspaper publishers enhance mobile-friendly accessibility, leverage social media integration, and offer localized content to boost engagement among Apata residents. Findings from the study contribute to understanding online newspaper readership in Nigeria and inform media development in the digital age.

Key Words: Assessment, Online Newspaper, Readership, Residents, Apata

Introduction

Online newspapers have emerged as significant platforms for news dissemination offering several benefits over traditional print media. These benefits include: instant accessibility and global reach, up-to-date and real-time news, multimedia content such as videos and podcasts,

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interactive features like comments, social media sharing and cost-effectiveness. This has transformed the way people engage with the news as a significant shift for the media landscape, making online newspaper readership an essential area of study. In Nigeria, online newspapers have gained widespread acceptance, with many traditional print media outlets transitioning to digital platforms. However, despite the growing popularity of online newspapers, there is a lack of understanding about the readership habits and preferences of readers.

An understanding of this phenomenon is crucial for media practitioners, researchers, and stakeholders as it provides insights into the role of online newspapers in shaping public opinion, influencing political decisions, and disseminating information like the traditional medium. Furthermore, this study contributes to the existing body of knowledge on online newspaper readership as it informs media outlets about the needs and preferences of their audiences, enabling them to create targeted content and strategies that will enhance continuous online consumption shaping public opinion, improving wealth of life and influencing political decisions among others.

Also, the online news platforms provide real time opportunities for the dissemination of information during crises and emergencies, enabling diverse perspectives and voices for the public as well as to facilitate citizens' engagement and participation in public discourse. This study aims to assess factors influencing online newspaper adoption and usage, among the residents of Apata, Ibadan being a densely populated area with unique demographic and diverse distribution. This is in order to provide valuable insights into the online newspaper readership habits in such area while contributing to the existing body of knowledge on digital media consumption.

Statement of the Problem
The lack of understanding about online newspaper readership habits and preferences hinders the effective dissemination of information and news, thereby creating a knowledge gap where available online newspaper readers are not adequately utilising online newspapers due to unclear factors despite the potential benefits it provides with up-to-date information with diverse perspectives, and convenience. Despite the growing popularity of online newspapers in Nigeria, there is a lack of understanding about the readership habits and preferences of readers with limited awareness and adoption of online newspapers. This hinders access to diverse perspectives and information with inadequate understanding of the factors influencing online newspaper readership making it challenging for media practitioners to create targeted content and strategies.

It has also been observed that limited research on online newspaper readership creates a knowledge gap that highlights the need for a comprehensive study on online newspaper readership to provide insights into the readership habits and preferences. This study aims to investigate these identified challenges from observation by assessing the level of awareness, adoption, and preference of online newspapers among residents of Apata, Ibadan for peculiar

reasons already identified in order to provide insights for improving online newspaper dissemination and consumption through the following objectives:

   i.   to identify the factors influencing individual choices of online news platforms;
   ii.   to examine how the format of online news platform content affects user engagement and comprehension;
   iii.   to analyse the influence of social media preferences on online news consumption.

Literature Review
Information Technology Trends
In addition to traditional mass media, new media has emerged as a significant offshoot of information technology, offering novel ways of accessing and disseminating information. New Media is a broad term in media studies that emerged in the later part of the 20th century that holds out a possibility of on-demand access to content anytime, anywhere, on any digital device, as well as interactive user feedback, creative participation and community formation around the media content. Another important promise of new media is the provision of general opportunities to create, publish, distribute and consume media contents. Online newspaper readership has been increasing globally, with more people accessing news online (Pew Research Center, 2020; Reuters Institute, 2020). For example in other climes, a study by the Knight Foundation (2018) found that online news sources are increasingly important for Americans, with 71% of adults getting news online. In Nigeria, online newspaper readership is growing particularly among urban residents (Ibrahim, 2017; Adesina, 2020). However, Nigerian online newspapers face challenges such as poor internet infrastructure, limited digital literacy, and competition from social media (Adesina, 2020; Oyediran, 2018). A study by the Nigerian Communications Commission (2020) found that internet penetration in Nigeria has increased by 19 million with a (+22%), but still lags behind other African countries. In a fast paced world where information can be found with the click of a button, newspapers are finding it hard to compete due to lack of content adaptation, content authenticity, social media integration, technical infrastructure, among others. Since the early 1990s, the image of a new revolution has been daunting with the realisation of a classic shift in production processes and relations, the emergence of a new knowledge-based economy and a quantum leap from an industrial society into an information society. Also, the Internet, a major force behind information technology, is argued by Song, Shao and Wu (2010) to represent the most significant change in the media market during the past decades. The internet is becoming the dominant force in the information world, transforming the ways in which information is aggregated, stored, searched, and retrieved. In addition, Campbell, Martin, and Fabos (2009) noted that the internet is facilitating the convergence of media forms, the process whereby old and new media are available via the integration of personal computers and high-speed satellite based phone or cable links. The traditional medium for publishing content is paper, and now newspapers have tried certain new mediums such as online newspaper edition and mobile

phone newspapers, as at today, most Nigerian newspapers are online indicating that majority of Nigerian newspapers have been adapting themselves to this new media age (Okon, et.al, 2022).

The unprecedented success of the internet in most aspects of human endeavour, particularly e-commerce, has precipitated the incorporation of the same into the communication process (Amodu, 2007). Also explaining the usefulness of the internet in communication, (Anaeto 2010) states that the fact that the internet has the power to cut across social and geographic distance and help find new ways of facilitating the flow of information and knowledge makes it an especially attractive medium of communication. In the last decades of the 20th century, readership and consumption of newspaper content was declining steadily especially among young readers who became more attracted by audiovisual products. Their advertising share was disputed by the increasingly fragmented television and other audio-visual market. Like any other social institutions, being sensitive to innovations in communication technologies, they have used technology in the production and distribution process to gain relevance and boost their economic value.

Media and Technology Convergence
Before the 1990's, technological devices were separate, each operating a specific task. A camera was used to take pictures only, a phone was for making and receiving voice calls only, a tape deck or compact disc player was for playing music only and a computer was majorly for typing. In recent, these have changed as technological innovations and development take place almost on daily basis. A single device can be used to perform all these functions, for instance, purchases, transactions and other forms of interaction happen on mobile devices. Furthermore, advanced chip technology has changed computers from room-sized machines into hand held devices which place vast amount and other information resources into the hands of the consumer. Thus, media and technology convergence are driven largely by the revolution of ICTs. This convergence is based on technological innovations in micro-electronics, computers and telecommunication. Through digitisation, all kinds of data irrespective of origin and size can be manipulated and integrated on the basis of a common ICT structure.

Lately, there came a multi-level media world where all modes of communication and information are continually reforming to adapt to the enduring demand of technologies, changing the way we create, consume, learn and interact with each other. The benefits of this phenomenon are to reduce complexities and cost. It follows therefore that the media in the modern age are blurring and blending into a single system or a set of interrelated systems with multimedia devices, hand held data banks, national fiber optic networks, advanced facsimile messaging, the internet, social media applications and platforms, among others. Computerisation is now the module for all forms of electronic information: sound, video and print. Computers are forcing a massive restructuring of media services to have an interface becoming like TV sets while TV sets are becoming computerised with this result, a new kind of electronic hybrid is

Yetunde Ayobolu **665**

emerging (Rodney, 2005). Few studies have focused on online newspaper readership in specific geographic areas. There is a need for more research on the factors influencing online newspaper readership in Nigeria, particularly at the local level. A study by the Journal of African Media Studies (2020) highlighted the need for more research on online news consumption in Africa.

The Internet as Veritable Tool for Online Journalism

 The world has known three revolutions; these include the emergence of the written words thousands of years ago, the invention of the printing centuries ago, and the ongoing internet revolution which allows anyone on the planet to share information instantly (Randall:2002). The internet has revolutionised nearly every industry, and journalism is no exception. Its impact on news production, distribution, and consumption has been profound, ushering in a new era of online journalism. Traditional newspapers, which once dominated the media landscape, have had to evolve to meet the demands of the fast-paced digital world. They've reshaped their content to suit online platforms, while also adapting to the evolving preferences of readers. Also, journalism has been transformed by offering real-time reporting capabilities, global accessibility, and multimedia integration. Unlike traditional journalism, which was heavily dependent on physical distribution, online journalism allows news to be disseminated almost instantaneously to a worldwide audience (Javid and Kenzie, 2025). This shift has democratised news production, enabling not only professional journalists but also citizen journalists to contribute to the media landscape.

Pavlik (2001) argues that the internet has enabled new forms of journalism that include multimedia storytelling and interactive journalism, which go beyond the confines of traditional print and broadcast media. This has given rise to a variety of platforms, including blogs, online news outlets, and social media, where information is updated and shared in real time. For instance, breaking news stories—such as natural disasters or political events—often first appear on digital platforms, highlighting the speed and accessibility of online journalism.

Moreover, the internet equips journalists with tools like data analytics, enabling them to understand audience interests and tailor content effectively. Features like live streaming, interactive polls, and real-time comment sections engage readers in ways that traditional newspapers cannot, fostering a sense of community and dialogue with the audience. As newspapers moved to the digital space, their content had to adapt. Traditional print media, with its long-form, static articles, has evolved to include more concise, visually engaging content online. Headlines are now crafted with search engine optimization (SEO) in mind, ensuring that they are visible in a crowded digital space. The integration of multimedia content, such as videos, infographics, and photo galleries, has also become a significant feature of online newspaper articles. Leading newspapers like The New York Times and The Guardian have adopted digital storytelling techniques that offer interactive elements to enhance the reader's experience.

Doyle (2013), states that the advent of the internet has forced traditional media to rethink not only their content but also their business models, as advertising revenue shifts to digital platforms. With ad dollars increasingly directed toward digital platforms, many newspapers have embraced strategies like paywalls, subscription models, and sponsored content in an attempt to generate revenue. However, this shift has created a divide between freely accessible content and quality journalism behind paywalls, raising concerns about the accessibility of reliable information. The internet has significantly altered how and where people consume news. Readers now expect instant updates and prefer accessing news via smartphones, tablets, and computers, as opposed to waiting for the morning paper. This has led to a noticeable decline in print circulation, with digital platforms becoming the primary source of news for many people.

However, this shift is not without its challenges. The abundance of online news sources has given rise to misinformation and fake news, undermining the credibility of journalism. Additionally, the convenience of free online content has made it difficult for traditional newspapers to sustain operations without securing substantial digital revenue streams.

While the internet offers numerous opportunities for online journalism, it also brings significant challenges. On one hand, the internet provides unprecedented reach, allowing newspapers to engage with global audiences and experiment with innovative storytelling techniques. On the other hand, it has disrupted traditional revenue models, forcing newspapers to rely heavily on advertising and subscription models. The competition for readers' attention is fierce, with platforms like Facebook, Google, and Twitter dominating the market. This intense competition has led to the rise of clickbait headlines and sensationalism, often at the expense of in-depth reporting and journalistic integrity. Despite these challenges, the internet has also opened doors for independent journalism and niche publications. Platforms like Substack and Patreon allow journalists to bypass traditional media gatekeepers and build direct relationships with their audiences. This model has the potential to create a more diverse and inclusive media landscape, fostering a wider variety of voices and viewpoints.

The Place of ICTS in the Nigeria Print Media Industry
As Omenugha and Oji (2017) point out, "social media has become an indispensable tool for Nigerian journalists, allowing them to monitor trends, break news, and connect with sources in real-time." For example, during crises or protests, journalists can track live updates from eyewitnesses through social media posts. Smartphones, equipped with high-resolution cameras and recording tools, also allow reporters to document events as they unfold. Advancements in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) have transformed industries across the world, and Nigeria's newspaper media industry is no exception. ICT has changed how newspapers operate, from gathering news to production and dissemination, allowing them to keep up with the fast-paced digital era. The way Nigerian journalists gather news has significantly improved with ICT. Traditionally, reporters had to rely on physical interviews,

manual note-taking, and delayed access to information. Now, tools like social media platforms, search engines, and mobile phones have made information gathering more seamless. Platforms like Twitter and Facebook are invaluable for breaking news and monitoring public opinion.

Additionally, email and video conferencing have removed barriers to remote interviews, for instance, a journalist in Lagos can now interview a source in London without incurring travel costs. This has been particularly beneficial for Nigerian newspapers in covering global stories or reaching regions previously considered inaccessible. ICT has also simplified and sped up newspaper production in Nigeria, eliminating many of the challenges that came with manual processes. For instance, layout and design software like Adobe InDesign and CorelDRAW allow designers to create polished, professional-looking pages in a fraction of the time it took before.

Oso and Olatunji (2017) note that ICT's have transformed the entire newspaper production system by ensuring higher quality in output and faster turnaround times. This efficiency has made it easier for newspapers to meet tight deadlines without compromising on quality. Moreover, digital printing technologies have reduced production costs, making newspapers more affordable for readers. Content management systems (CMS) are another invaluable tool, helping newspapers organise and store their archives digitally. This allows for easy retrieval of past editions and repurposing of old content for online platforms.

One of ICT's most visible impacts on the Nigerian newspaper industry is how it has expanded readership. With the internet becoming more accessible, newspapers have shifted from relying solely on physical circulation to building robust online platforms. Websites, mobile apps, and social media pages now serve as key channels for reaching readers. According to (Statista, 2023), over 122 million Nigerians now use the internet, creating a massive audience for online newspapers. Outlets like The Guardian and The Punch have capitalized on this by launching websites and apps that deliver news in real time. These platforms also include interactive features like comment sections, polls, and share buttons, making news consumption more engaging.

The shift to digital has allowed newspapers to reach Nigerians in the diaspora as well, creating a truly global audience. With just a smartphone and an internet connection, a reader in Canada can access the latest headlines from Vanguard or Daily Trust. ICT has also opened up new revenue streams for Nigerian newspapers. With a decline in print advertising, many newspapers have turned to online ads, subscription models, and sponsored content to stay afloat. Nwabueze (2014) explains that "ICT tools empower newspapers to deliver personalised advertising, increasing value for advertisers and enhancing revenue streams." For instance, analytics tools help newspapers track what their readers are most interested in, allowing them to target ads more effectively. Some newspapers, like Premium Times, have even introduced paywalls, requiring readers to subscribe for premium content. While this model is still gaining traction in Nigeria, it shows how newspapers are exploring ways to monetize their digital platforms.

Despite its many advantages, ICT adoption in the Nigerian newspaper industry has not been without challenges. One major issue is the rise of fake news. The speed at which information spreads online makes it difficult to verify facts before they go viral, which can damage the credibility of reputable newspapers. By addressing these challenges and continuing to invest in ICT, Nigerian newspapers can build a sustainable future that balances innovation with the core principles of journalism.

Theoretical Frameworks

Uses and Gratifications Theory
The foundation of Use and Gratification Theory can be traced to early studies in mass communication. Researchers like Harold Lasswell and Paul Lazarsfeld contributed to the idea of understanding media consumption behaviours. However, the theory was formally conceptualised in the 1970s by scholars such as Elihu Katz, Jay Blumler, and Michael Gurevitch. These theorists introduced a paradigm shift, focusing on "why" people use media rather than what media does to people (Mcquail, 2010). They emphasised that audiences are not homogeneous but diverse, with different needs shaping their media choices and consumption patterns.

The theory is also prominent for examining how individuals actively engage with the media to fulfill their specific needs, desires, and interests (Katz, et.al, 1974). Developed in the early 1940's as a response to traditional mass communication theories, it emphasises the media's direct influence on audiences, the theory places the audience at the center of the communication process. Instead of viewing individuals as passive recipients of media messages, the theory posits that people use media purposefully, selecting content that aligns with their goals. This approach highlights the self government of the audience in their interaction with media.

The theory is highly relevant in today's media landscape, especially with the rise of digital platforms. Social media, for instance, offers users opportunities for self-expression, connection, and entertainment, all tailored to individual preferences. Similarly, streaming services like Netflix and YouTube allow users to actively select content based on their moods, interests, and routines. Applying UGT to online newspaper readership in Apata, Ibadan, will provide the phenomenal explanation of online newspaper readership among residents.

Diffusion of Innovations Theory
According to (Rogers, 2003), the diffusion of innovation theory can be used to understand the adoption and diffusion of online newspapers in Apata, Ibadan. The theory by Rogers explains how new ideals, technologies, or products spread and are adopted by individual or groups by identifying five key elements that influence the adoption of innovations which are: innovation, communication, time, social system and individual.

Diffusion of innovation theory remains a foundational framework for understanding how new ideas and technologies spread within societies (Greenhalgh, et.al, 2004). Applying this

theory to this study would shed light on the phenomenon exploration through the five stages of adoption (knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation) and identify factors that facilitate or hinder adoption through the following; understanding the role of communication channels in disseminating information about online newspapers, analysing the social system and individual characteristics that influence adoption and develop strategies to promote online newspaper adoption and diffusion (Rogers, 2003). By emphasising the role of communication, social systems, and individual decision-making, the theory provides valuable insights for designing effective strategies to promote innovation. While it has limitations, its adaptability makes it a powerful tool for encouraging positive change.

Methodology

Bryman (2023) posits that research design is a detailed plan or blueprint for conducting research, which includes the specification of research questions, objectives, methods, and procedures for data collection and analysis. This study is quantitative adopting the descriptive survey research method carried out at Apata Community, Ido Local Government area located in Ibadan south west, Oyo State. The population of the area is 103,261 with 51,750 male and 51,511 female based on the 2012 National Population Census projection. Kumar (2019) describes sampling technique as a method used to select a subset of individuals or cases from a large population, with the goal of making inferences or generalisation about the population. The sampling technique used for this research is the random sampling technique because it allows each number of populations the equal chance to be selected as a subject for the research. For the purpose of this research a total of 250 respondents were drawn from the population of the study. Questionnaires are instruments specifically designed to elicit information that will be useful for analysis (Hussain, 2022). Questionnaires were used as data collection instruments to address the research objectives. The questionnaires were divided into four sections: A representing the demographic data of the respondent. Section B to D representing the three research objectives in this study. The copies of the filled questionnaires collected were arranged and used for analysis. The data collected from the field were analysed by using descriptive statistics. The data are presented in tables based on the frequency count for occurrence of respondents using simple percentages.

Findings
Table i: Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	109	43.6
Female	141	56.4
Age		
25-29 years	107	42.8
30-39 years	81	32.4
40-49 years	54	21.6
50 years and above	8	3.2
Marital Status		
Single	114	45.6
Married	116	46.4
Divorced	14	5.6
Widowed	5	2.0
Separated	1	0.4
Educational Qualification		
O' Level	54	21.6
OND/NCE	47	18.8
HND/B.SC	130	52.0
M.SC/MBA	9	3.6
Others	10	4.0
Occupation		
Civil Servant	86	34.4
Self Employed	139	55.6
Unemployed	25	10.0
Religion		
Christianity	163	65.2
Islam	87	34.8
Total	**250**	**100**

Source: Field Work, 2024

　　　Table i shows the demographic distribution of the participants of this study. Results reveal that 56.4% of the respondents are female, while 43.6% are male. Thus, a conclusion can be drawn that female respondents constitute the larger population of the study. Also, respondents with the age of group of 25 and 29 years are the highest group which occupies 42.8 %. The next is the group of respondents who are from 30 to 39 years old which has the figure of 32.4 %. The respondents who are at the age of 40 and 49 are 21.6 %. And the respondents group of 50 years and above has 3.2 %. Therefore, the result shows that respondent's age group of 25-29 years constitute the larger population of the study. Findings also reveal that 46.4 % of the respondents who participated in the study are married, those who are single 45.6 %, followed by 5.6 % respondents who are divorced, while widowed and separated are 2.0 % and 0.4 % respectively. This shows that larger proportions of the respondents are married. The majority of individuals 52.0 % have attained HND/B.SC certificates, followed by those who have completed high school 21.6 %. The next of the respondents that have attained OND/NCE certificates are 18.8 %. A smaller percentage 4.0 % have completed Ph.D Degree Programmes, while a similar percentage 3.6 % hold M.SC/MBA certificates. Thus, it implies that the individuals who attained HND/B.SC certificates constitute the larger proportion of the study. Also, of the 250 respondents, 55.6% were self-employed, followed by 34.4% of the respondents who are civil servants and followed by 10.0% of the respondents who are unemployed. The result indicated that a very large number of the respondents were self-employed while, 65.2 % follow the teachings of Christianity and those who practice Islam are 34.8 %.

Research Objective 1: To identify the factors influencing individual choices of online news platforms.

　　　The data below represent the factors that influence individual choice of online news platform.

Table ii: Factors that influence individual choice of online news platform

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	U	D	SD
7	Online news platforms should provide accurate unbiased information?	173(69.2%)	56(22.4%)	13(5.2%)	5(2.0%)	3(1.2%)
8	Online news platforms should change the way news and information is consumed?	87(34.8%)	126(50.4%)	25(10.0%)	9(3.6%)	3(1.2%)
9	Online news platforms are responsible for the spread of misinformation and disinformation?	107(42.8%)	82(32.8%)	41(16.4%)	14(5.6%)	6(2.4%)
10	Online news platforms have a responsibility to respect users' privacy and data?	117(46.8%)	90(36.0%)	20(8.0%)	16(6.4%)	7(2.8%)

11	Online news platforms make it easier to access news and information?	120(48.0%)	86(34.4%)	29(11.6%)	7(2.8%)	8(3.2%)

Source: Field Work, 2024

Table ii shows that 69.2% of the respondents strongly agreed that online news platform should provide accurate unbiased information. This is followed by 22.4% respondents that agree, 5.2% of respondentsa were undecided, 2.0% disagreed and 1.2% strongly disagreed. A relatively large population of the respondents, (48.0%) strongly agreed that online news platforms make it easier to access news and information; 34.4% of the respondents agreed, 11.6% were undecided, 2.8% respondents disagreed and 3.2% strongly disagreed; 46.8% of the respondents strongly agreed that online news platform have a responsibility to respect users' privacy and data; 36.0% respondents agreed, 8.0% were undecided, 6.4% respondents disagreed and (2.8%) respondents strongly disagreed respectively. Also, 42.8% of the respondents strongly agreed that online news platforms are responsible for the spread of misinformation and disinformation; 32.8% respondents agreed, 16.4% respondents were undecided, 5.6% disagreed and 2.4% strongly disagreed. About 34.8% of respondents strongly agreed that online news platform should change the way news and information is consumed; this was supported by 50.4% of respondents that agreed, 10.0% were undecided, 3.6% of respondents disagreed and 1.2% strongly disagreed. A larger percentage of the respondents strongly agreed with the items in the table with high percentages. Thus, it implies that all the items in the table influence individual choice of online news platform. It was discovered from the study that factors that influence individual choice of online news platform are: online news platforms make it easier to access news and information, online news platforms have a responsibility to respect users' privacy and data, online news platforms are responsible for the spread of misinformation and disinformation, online news platforms should provide accurate unbiased information and online news platforms should change the way news and information are consumed.

Research Objective 2: To examine how the format of online news platform content affect user engagement and comprehension

The data in Table iii represent how the formats of online news platforms content affect engagement and comprehension among users.

Table iii: How the formats of online news platforms content affect user engagement and comprehension

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	U	D	SD
12	Online news platforms use visualsand interactive elements to enhance engagement and comprehensions?	130(52.0%)	89(35.6%)	19(7.6%)	5(2.0%)	7(2.8%)
13	Online news platforms should prioritize personalisation to increase engagement and relevance?	71(28.4%)	120(48.0%)	44(17.6%)	13(5.2%)	2(0.8%)
14	Online news platforms should make it easier to engage with news and information?	95(38.0%)	87(34.8%)	44(17.6%)	16(6.4%)	8(3.2%)
15	Online news platforms should make it easier to engage with news and information, fostering a sense of community and participation?	103(41.2%)	81(32.4%)	32(12.8%)	25(10.0%)	9(3.6%)
16	Online news platforms should prioritise fact-checking and verification of information to combat misinformation?	121(48.4%)	69(27.6%)	25(10.0%)	20(8.0%)	15(6.0%)

Source: Field Work, 2024

Table iii reveals that 52.0% of the respondents strongly agreed that online news platforms use visuals and interactive element to enhance engagement and comprehensions, 35.6% of respondents agreed, 7.6% respondents were undecided, 2.0% of respondents disagreed and 2.8% strongly disagreed respectively. This was followed by a relatively large number of the respondents (48.4%) who strongly agreed that online news platforms should prioritise fact-checking and verification of information to combat misinformation, 27.6% of the respondents agreed, 10.0% were undecided, 8.0% and 6.0% of respondents disagreed respectively. About 41.2% of the respondents also strongly agreed that online news platforms should make it easier for them to engage with news and information, fostering a sense of community and participation. 32.4% of the respondents agreed, 12.8% were undecided, 10.0% of respondents disagreed and 3.6% respondents strongly disagreed. Also 38.0% of the respondents strongly agreed that online news platforms should make it easier to engage with news and information, 34.8% respondents agreed, 17.6% were undecided, 6.4% of

respondents disagreed and 3.2% respondents strongly disagreed. Respondents that strongly agree that online news platforms should prioritise personalisation to increase engagement and relevance are 28.4%. This was supported by 48.0% respondents that agreed, 17.6% were undecided, 5.2% respondents disagreed and 0.8% respondents strongly disagreed. A very significant number of respondents indicated strongly agreed with the items in the table with high percentages. These findings reveal the format of online news platforms content and how it affects engagement and comprehension among users to include: online news platforms use visuals and interactive element to enhance engagement and comprehensions; online news platforms should prioritise fact-checking and verification of information to combat misinformation; online news platforms should make it easier for users to engage with news and information, fostering a sense of community and participation. Online news platforms should make it easier to engage with news and information to increase engagement and relevance. It therefore implies that online news platforms content affects engagement and comprehension among users.

Research Objective 3: To analyse the influence of social media preferences on online news consumption

The data representing how individual's social media preferences influence their online news content consumption is represented in Table iv.

Table iv: The influence of social media preferences on online news consumption

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	U	D	SD
17	Social media platforms change the way news is consumed, making it more personalised and interactive?	133(53.2%)	77(30.8%)	21(8.4%)	14(5.6%)	5(2.0%)
18	Social media platforms have a responsibility to promote media literacy and critical thinking among their users?	92(36.8%)	109(43.6%)	32(12.8%)	14(5.6%)	3(1.2%)
19	Should social media platforms prioritize local and community-based news content over national and international news?	97(38.8%)	71(28.4%)	49(19.6%)	22(8.8%)	11(4.4%)
20	Social media platforms should prioritise news content that is relevant to your local communities and interests?	104(41.6%)	92(36.8%)	18(7.2%)	27(10.8%)	9(3.6%)

21	Social media should have a significant impact on shaping your opinion on publics and political discourse?	103(41.2%)	71(28.4%)	43(17.2%)	15(6.0%)	18(7.2%)

Source: Field Work, 2024

Table iv reveals that 53.2% of the respondents strongly agreed that social media platforms change the way news is consumed, making it more personalised and interactive, 30.8% of the respondents agreed, 8.4% were undecided, 5.6% respondents disagreed and 2.0% strongly disagreed. This was followed by 41.6% of the respondents that strongly agreed that social media platforms should prioritise news content that is relevant to one's local communities and interests, 36.8% of the respondents agreed, 7.2% were undecided, 10.8% respondents disagree and 3.6% strongly disagreed. This was followed by a similar number of the respondents (41.2%) that strongly agreed that social media should have a significant impact on shaping someone's opinion on publics and political discourse, 28.4% respondents agreed, 17.2% were undecided, 6.0% respondents disagreed and 7.2% of the respondents strongly disagreed. Also, 38.8% of the respondents strongly agreed that social media platforms should prioritise local and community-based news content over national and international news, 28.4% of respondents agreed, 19.6% were undecided, 8.8% of respondents disagreed and 4.4% of respondents strongly disagreed; 36.8% of respondents strongly agreed that social media platforms have a responsibility to promote media literacy and critical thinking among their users, 43.6% of respondents agreed, 12.8% were undecided, 5.6% of respondents disagreed and 1.2% of respondents strongly disagreed. Strongly agree responses have the higher percentages. The result shows how individual social media preference influences online news content consumption to include that social media platforms change the way news is consumed, making it more personalised and interactive. It therefore implies that individual social media preference influences online news content consumption.

Discussion of Findings
The internet stands as a pivotal technological innovation that has forever altered the landscape of communication, information access and commerce, thereby becoming the dominant force in the information world transforming the ways in which information is aggregated, stored, searched, and retrieved (Curiosity, 2023). Also, previous observation has shown that the deteriorating readership and mounting rivalry from blogs have led to most newspaper agencies embracing the shift from the traditional print to online platforms (Ubogu, 2017). This has led to the adoption of online platforms as avenues of information dissemination by majority of newspaper organisations. As online news consumption becomes increasingly popular, understanding what influences these choices is critical to the future of digital journalism. These are discussed further in this section through the objectives of the study.

Factors Influencing Individual Choices of Online News Platforms
Considering the factors influencing individual choices of online news platforms, results showed that online news platforms make it easier to access news and information, and the platform is also expected to respect users' privacy and data. With the internet offering a vast array of news sources, individuals have the power to choose platforms based on their preferences and needs. These choices are shaped by various factors such as trust, ease of access, content quality, and personalisation features. As online news consumption becomes increasingly popular, understanding what influences these choices is critical to the future of digital journalism. This finding is in support with the findings of Song, Shao and Wu (2010) as they argued that internet is the major force behind information technology, and represents the most significant change in the media market during the past decades.

Online news platform content and User Engagement and Comprehension
The format of content on online news platforms is crucial to how readers engage with and understand news articles. With the rise of digital journalism, platforms are increasingly using different formats to enhance user experience and comprehension. Multimedia elements such as images, videos, and infographics are integral to online news content. These visual aids not only make articles more engaging but also help readers better understand the information being presented. As regards online news platforms user engagement and comprehension, it was discovered that visuals and interactive element enhance engagement and comprehensions among viewers as beautiful designs in form of images that are appealing to the sight have a way of attracting readers' attention. The findings corroborate that of Rodney (2005), who asserted that computerisation is now the module for all forms of electronic information (sound, video and print) that forces a massive restructuring of media services to have an interface that fosters a sense of community and participation. This is achieved by providing windows for people to engage with news and information with the capacity to increase engagement and relevance. According to the Digital News Report (2020), "Visual content, including videos and infographics, enhances user engagement by providing more context and making news stories more vivid and digestible." For instance, a news article about a political event may include photos of key figures or a video clip, allowing readers to visualize and better grasp the story's significance.

The layout of an online news platform can influence how readers engage with content. A clean, organised design allows for easy navigation, improving the user experience and increasing the chances of longer visits. Nielsen Norman Group (2018) emphasizes that "users are more likely to engage with websites that feature clean, easy-to-scan layouts, where they can quickly access the news they want without frustration." On the other hand, a cluttered or confusing layout can drive readers away, decreasing their engagement with the platform.

The length and structure of articles also play a role in reader engagement and comprehension. Shorter articles, typically under 500 words, tend to capture the attention of users who are

looking for quick updates. However, long-form content is valuable for in-depth analysis. As the American Press Institute (2016) points out, "Readers are more inclined to engage with shorter articles for quick information but appreciate longer pieces when they seek deeper insights." Striking a balance between brevity and comprehensive reporting is essential to engaging a broad spectrum of readers.

The Influence of Social Media Preferences on Online News Consumption

Social media platforms have changed the way news is consumed, making it more personalised and interactive, with platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram increasingly used for news updates, social media preferences significantly shape how individuals access and engage with news. Instead of relying solely on traditional news outlets, users now turn to social media platforms for real-time updates. There is window to comment and to ask questions for further clarity of the news disseminated. This could also be a method of evaluating the source of the information. The findings for the objective is in line with the findings of Kovach and Rosenstiel (2001), they reported that citizen journalism is a type of journalism that allows individual with the help of information and communication technologies such as the Internet, mobile phones, etc, package and transmit, information to media houses on one hand and also, sort information and try to establish the truth or the veracity of the story without recourse to the journalist who usually packages the information prior to now.

According to Pew Research Center (2021), "Nearly 53% of U.S. adults get news from social media platforms, with Facebook being the dominant platform for news consumption." This shift has led to a more fragmented news ecosystem, with people discovering news through their social circles, which can lead to a more personalised yet sometimes skewed view of current events. Social media platforms use algorithms to personalize news feeds, prioritising content that is likely to generate engagement. While this helps users see content that aligns with their interests, it also limits the variety of news they encounter. As Pariser (2011) notes, "Algorithmic filtering creates a filter bubble, where users are exposed primarily to content that supports their existing viewpoints." This can result in users only encountering stories that reinforce their beliefs, limiting exposure to diverse perspectives and potentially contributing to polarisation.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Media organisations especially those in the print media should utilise and avail themselves of the various social media platforms to disseminate information and prioritise news content that is relevant to readers' local communities and interests. Online journalism has impacted positively on readers making it easier for them to access information without much stress, efforts or resources. Newspaper readers now have access to various print contents via various online platforms in real time with several interactive opportunities and feedback. It is therefore recommended for the print media to adopt the use of the social media to gain significant

impact by prioritising local and community-based news content as well as national and international news in order to shape the readers' opinion on public and political discourse with news and information consumption regardless of place, space and time while giving the media outlets increased projection and consumer interaction with real time feedback.

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