



## ASSESSMENT OF NEWSPAPER CIRCULATION AND READERSHIP IN NORTHERN GHANA

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### Abstract

*There is a widespread concern that the print newspaper industry across the world and in Ghana particularly faces an uncertain future and a long-term decline in readership and circulation due to the prevalence of internet mediated News websites, making print newspapers obsolete in their present format. This paper is an assessment of the circulation and readership of printed newspapers in the northern regional capital, Tamale. It investigates preferred News sources among newsreaders and examines consumption pattern of newspapers in the metropolis. It discussed the challenges the print media industry faces in the wake of News websites' proliferation in the Ghanaian media landscape. The paper is based on exploratory research design. It sampled four leading print newspapers in Ghana (Daily Graphic, Daily Guide, Ghanaian Times and Business and Financial Times) as reference points for data collection. Four newspaper vendors who vend these newspapers in the metropolis were sampled through simple random sampling. The paper finds a sharp decline in circulation and readership of printed newspaper in the metropolis in favour of internet powered News websites. The paper concludes that although newsreaders prefer sourcing News online, they still find the traditional printed media as the most credible and reliable sources for News. The paper recommends that the traditional print media take advantage of the reach of internet powered platforms to create online presence and ensure that they innovate to get newsreaders subscribe to their brands since print newspaper readership is gradually declining in the metropolis.*

**Key Words:** *Assessment, Online newspapers, Newspaper readership, Print newspaper, Tamale*

### Introduction

The world over, newspapers are considered very vital instruments to the social, political and economic growth of many nations. According to Babalola (2002), newspapers are very common to both young and old generation due to the important role they play in connecting governments with its people. He further posits that, they are very useful tools for promoting literacy. Cheyney (1992) further demonstrated the significance of newspapers when he described newspapers as the textbooks that provide updated information on every aspect of human society as well as local and international affairs. Hamilton (1992:43) also affirms that, "newspapers are the first draft of history" and that through their reporting and commentaries; they influence politics, make or break public careers and even decide the fate of governments. He further argues that, there is no other medium in our history that records every aspect of human life over the last 300 years on a daily basis like newspapers.

Newspapers in a wider sense can be depicted as unbound productions issued at normal interims that look to inform, analyse, impact and engage (Academic American Encyclopaedia 1994:171). The primary type of the newspaper showed up in Germany as news handouts in the late 1400s. Also, the earliest predecessors of the newspaper in the English-speaking world were the *corantos*. The *weekly news* of 1622 was the first successive title to be published. A number of various titles in the comparable news book form followed in the 1640s and 1650s. The *London Gazette* of 1666 was the primary ever newspaper in English. In West Africa however, the earliest forms of the newspaper were found in countries such as Sierra Leone, Nigeria, and the then Gold Coast.

For instance, J.C May and E.W Blyden founded Sierra Leone's *Weekly News* between 1884-1922 and it became a major newspaper on the west coast of Africa for over 60 years. *The Lagos Weekly*

*Record* (Lagos, Nigeria) 1891-1921 was established through the effort of a Liberian immigrant John Payne Jackson who was against and often criticized British colonization and control of Lagos and forcefully urged racial consciousness and African nationalism (World newspaper archives, 2013).

The print media in Ghana since its development in the nineteenth century have assumed exceptionally key roles in political discourse and national development. They have likewise acted as tools for independence struggles, national solidarity, development and democracy.

Sir Charles McCarthy's *Royal Gold Coast Gazette* of 1822 was the first newspaper to be produced in the Gold Coast, which later became known as Ghana. This newspaper aimed to provide British merchants in the Gold Coast with economic and commercial information, as well as to disseminate news concerning Britain and the West African colony. Given that Sir Charles McCarthy was the governor of the Gold Coast from 1822 to 1824, the English journalistic tradition that he implanted in the colony "set the tone as a sociopolitical reference point for subsequent governments throughout the history and development of journalism in Ghana" (Anyidoho, 2016: 104). According to Heath (2001), this type of news production gradually became standard practice in British colonies throughout sub-Saharan Africa from 1822 to 1930. Pre-independence governments in Ghana that followed published the *Gold Coast Assize* in 1883, the *Gold Coast News* in 1884, and the *Gold Coast Pioneer* in 1921 (Jones-Quartey, 1975).

The production of newspapers by local African elites began in the mid nineteenth century with the publication of the *Accra Herald* by Charles Bannerman in 1858. Like McCarthy's colonial paper, the *Accra Herald* was additionally written by hand and was distributed to somewhere in the range of 300 supporters, half of them African. The success of this paper gave rise to the proliferation of African-owned newspapers since it was able to stand the test of time for more than a decade. Among them were the *Gold Coast Times*, *Western Echo*, *Gold Coast Assize*, *Gold Coast News*, *Gold Coast Aborigines*, *Gold Coast Chronicle*, *Gold Coast People*, *Gold Coast Independence* and *Gold Coast Express* (Press Reference Ghana, 2013).

The early Gold Coast weeklies were very critical of the colonial government, challenging specific officials and questioning and opposing policies. By the 1930s, the nineteenth century newspapers in the country became more of anticolonial protest. They

were requesting for political rights for nationals, enhanced expectations for everyday comforts and self-government. Political activists like Dr. Kwame Nkrumah in 1948 started the *Accra Evening News*, and it was a publication that stated largely the views of the Convention People's Party (CPP). The paper demanded self-government and opposed the colonial government. Interestingly, the *Daily Graphic* was built up in 1950 by the London Daily Mirror Group, headed by British newspaper tycoon Cecil King (Press Reference Ghana, 2013). The *Daily Graphic* sought to maintain a policy of political neutrality and placing emphasis on objective reporting by local African reporters (Anyidoho, 2016).

However, the rise in Internet powered platforms, including news websites, and news aggregators in the twenty-first century has spun a lot of debate about the fate of print media or newspapers. One of such issues is whether the newspaper industry is being hit by these news sites and will get back on their feet, or whether they are steadily rendering printed newspapers out of date in their customary form. Several studies have been conducted in the area of print media, some of such studies have focused rather on assessing the effects of electronic media usage on the sales of print media in Ghana (Afrifa, 2015) and also newspapers as instruments for building literate communities (Babalola, 2002). The focus of these studies has been national. This study seeks to contribute to the discourse on the fortunes of the print newspaper industry in the wake of the threat posed by online news services by focusing on the experience of northern Ghana.

Historically, the Tamale metropolis and indeed, Northern Region as a whole has not been noted for being a source of newspaper production. Only three newspapers are known to have ever been published in the area. The first newspaper was the *New Ghanaian*, with Alhaji L Alawa as its only known editor from 1996 to 1998. A second newspaper to have sprung was *Arewa*, which was published from 2004 for only eight months and folded up. The only sustained publication from Tamale is the *Advocate*, published by RUMNET, a media development NGO and edited by Abdallah Kassim-Perez since 2002 (Interview with Kassim-Perez on 10 December 2018). The *Advocate* continues to be published as an irregular monthly. The newspaper reading market in Northern Region has been consistently dominated by Accra-based publications.

There is, however, a widespread concern that, the print newspaper industry across the world and in Ghana particularly faces an uncertain future and a

long-term decline in readership and circulation due to the prevalence of Internet powered platforms or news websites (Peiser 2000). The emergence of information and communication technologies in the twenty-first century has seen an upsurge in websites that provide news for free, rendering the traditional news sources helpless. The electronic media have supplemented existing sources of news, not only undermining the market for newspapers but also, the circulation of newspaper from content producers to consumers.

Additionally, statistics of Internet penetration in Ghana over the years clearly shows there is a prevalence of these Internet powered platforms (news websites and news aggregator websites). As at 2011, Internet penetration in the country was 5 percent of the population where it is accessible from Internet cafes, at home or from cell phones that have the Internet facility (Africa Media Barometer, 2013). Also, statistics from the Ghana National Communications Authority (NCA, 2017) have revealed that, the overall internet penetration rate in the country increased from 40 percent to 40.7 percent at the end of August 2013. This shows a significant growth in internet penetration rate in the country. Thus, a strong presence of online audience that needs to be reached has created a boom for online news service providers to reach the newly fragmented audience.

It is against this backdrop of declining readership for hard copy newspapers and the need to understand the dynamics of the print media circulation markets in the Northern Region that this study has been conducted. A study of the impact of online news websites on newspaper readership would be very relevant to repositioning these papers to respond to the market. This study will particularly focus on the impact of news websites on newspaper readership in the Tamale metropolis of Ghana. Specifically, it aims at identifying the preferred news sources among newsreaders and determining the consumption pattern of newspapers in the metropolis and examining the challenges the newspaper industry face in the wake of these news website proliferation.

## **Literature Review**

### ***News Websites***

News websites according to Kammer (2013) in his study, “News on the web” is a different news medium that has its options in terms of presentation and dissemination and has a special set of affordances for news producers working in news

production. For Kammer (2013), news websites are frequently observed as “internet newspapers” and the term recommends some level of remediation- that is, “the representation of one medium in another” of the printed newspaper.

Most studies have demonstrated that, news websites have become one of the most important sources of news consumption (Pew Research Centre, 2010; Schröder and Kobbarnagel, 2010). News websites additionally constitute a focal medium for scattering information in the public sphere (Allan, 2006).

### ***Online News Consumption***

As indicated by Oliver and Ohlbaum (2013) the internet has changed the course in which readers get and connect with news. The news consumers now approach a more extensive scope of sources than at any other time, and using these diverse sources in various ways, while some conventional news outlets like TV, newspapers and radio that individuals have relied upon throughout the years for news have endured a decrease in readership and advertising revenue.

Obijiofor and Hanusch (2013) additionally contends that online news have changed journalistic practices all over the world by bringing about newspapers receiving on the web innovations keeping in mind the end goal to remain important to current patterns of news consumption.

Thomas (2013) posits that online news consumption is based on the functions of interactivity, rapidity and selectivity. He further asserts that these three functions of online news enable readers to choose their most loved stories through the guide of hyperlinks or newsletters. He argues further that this opens an ongoing communication channel between news producers and newsreaders, which permits a simultaneous flow in conversations and the opportunities for readers to give feedback to stories. Rosenstiel (2005) states that news consumers are presently free and have the chance to produce their own news and get the other side of the story by getting news from the Internet which supposedly is giving news nearly for free.

Maier (2010) discloses that online news administrators do not just mirror the news stories in customary media. However, for example, the online media could be refreshed quickly as news happens. Online news sources likewise offered interactive videos, sound, and more photographs. Newsreaders that swing to online news destinations discovered overwhelming every day stories, and

news that offered viewpoints on occasions identified with the country and the world (Maier, 2010).

### ***Websites Effects on Newspaper Readership***

Several researchers (Pavlik, 2000; Dimmick, 2003; Lundèn, 2009; Barclay, 2012; Kamrck & Gabriele, 2015) have demonstrated through rigorous research that the newspaper industry is struggling in many countries around the world essentially as a result of the web travelling into the newsroom.

For example, Barclay (2012) argues that the internet has influenced the way journalists do their work and that the internet has characterised new limits of the news business and provided floods of information to the newsreader. Pavlik (2000:229) also noted how “technological advancement affects the way journalists do their job”. He emphasized the continuous changing “nature of news content, the structure and organization of the newsroom and the news industry” at large due to advancement in technology. Pavlik (2000) observed the dynamic “nature of the relationships between and among news organizations, journalists and their many publics, including audiences, competitors, news sources, sponsors and those who seek to regulate or control the press”. Subsequently Dimmick (2003) applied the “medium-driven approach” to the investigation of online media and the conventional or legacy media and noted that there is a dislodging impact due to the emergence of the internet depicting a danger to legacy media.

Strikingly, the vast majority of newsreaders are among the youthful population who are raised with web and favoured the web condition to the legacy media (Howe, 2006). With the habitations of news on the web, Sternvik et al (2008) expressed that newsreaders, above all the adolescents, need to have quicker updates and brief news that are effectively available and in addition allowed to them. The newspaper consumers also need an offering of news online journals, text-based notifications, news refreshes, unit throws and client produced content at a quick pace, in more open configurations (Freer, 2007 as in Nnagbo 2011:11). He additionally argued that, the newspaper industry knows that newsreaders have gone over the everyday newspaper because instead of reading the hardcopy news version, they often overlooked it knowing very well that they can get the news online to read. As the buyers read the news online, they forsake reading the printed newspaper, which has brought about declining flow of printed newspapers.

### ***How the Internet Affects the Newspaper Business***

According to Teece (2010) as in Barclay (2012:36) as “traditional information providers, newspapers have relied on circulation and advertising revenue for decades in which the paper is sold quite inexpensively” (usually at a nominal level, insufficient to cover costs), while publishers looked to advertising revenue to cover remaining costs and profit. Newspapers typically in Kimmo’s (2009) view, generate income from; subscription, newspaper stands, and advertising (selling space). And also, newspapers serve two distinctive groups, readers and advertisers, where newspapers act as an intermediary between these two groups.

However, in recent years, this business model has been undermined by social media sites like eBay and Craigslist that have siphoned off advertising revenues from job and real estate listings and classified adverts: many newspapers have gone out of business (Teece, 2010: 178). Mahmud, (2009) also revealed that, newspapers, especially in the West and the US in particular, have lost the lion’s share of classified advertisement to the internet. And many readers have cancelled their newspaper subscriptions, leading business firms to cut their advertising budget as part of the overall cost-cutting measures. According to the annual report on U.S. journalism undertaken by the Pew Research Center’s project for excellence in journalism (2011), total advertising revenues to the newspaper industry had fallen drastically.

Newspaper circulation is in decline and fewer papers are now serving a much bigger population (Kamarck and Gabriele, 2015). As more people have access to a fast Internet, the consumption patterns of information and entertainment change dramatically, especially among the younger segments of the population. Instead of watching their favorite show on television or buying an album in the local record store, many choose to stream or download TV shows and music from the web instead.

In terms of competition, the printed newspapers enjoy regional or local monopolies in the provision of news and information, but when entering the digital world, the same newspapers are faced with competition from a vast number of news outlets, websites and bloggers.

Reduction of employment in the industry, Kamarck and Gabriele (2015) observed that many journalists who once worked for general audience newspapers now find themselves working in specialty presses due to the fact that the dramatic drop in advertising revenues for general readership papers have had its

most severe impact in the newsroom. This happens because, news has become easily available on online news outlets, news aggregators, and bloggers, and an increasing share of the population get their news from online outlets instead of from a printed newspaper. Although the future of printed newspapers may be dim, it certainly does not mean the end of the traditional newspaper (Obijiofor and Green, 2001).

### ***Theoretical Framework: Uses and Gratification Theory***

The uses and gratification theory (Katz, et.al 1973-1974) suggests that audiences are responsible for selecting the media organization that would best serve their needs and that media outlets are used by the audiences to fulfil specific gratifications. The theory further asserts that media usage is motivated by needs and goals that are defined by the media audience themselves. For instance, newsreaders may choose to read news from newspapers or news websites because of the satisfaction and reward they drive from reading news from any of the sources so preferred.

Katz (1959) used this approach to clarify why and how individuals effectively search out particular media to fulfil particular needs. For him, the concentration is the thing that individuals do with media instead of what the media does to individuals. Uses and gratification assume likewise posture except that, media audiences are active and not passive in incorporating and translating media into their lives, consequently it is in the place of the audience to pick or select media which best serves their requirements. This implies that, the media go up against other sources of information for viewers' satisfaction. (Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1973-1974). This theory is therefore used essentially in this study to examine how respondents source their news.

Related to uses and gratification theory is media dependency theory as developed by Sandra Ball-Rokeach and Melvin Defleur (1976). The theory has its grounds in classical sociological literature postulating that, media and its audiences should be studied in the context of larger social systems. The theory also provides an explanation for media effects by blending the interrelations of broad social systems, mass media and the individual. A conceptualist philosophy is as well incorporated into the theory and it features traditional concerns with the content of media messages and their effects on audiences.

Syallow (2012) posits that, dependency theory is a mass communication theory that seeks to explain

the long-term effects of media on the audiences and society. This theory expresses that, the more reliant an individual is on the media for having his or her needs satisfied, the more essential the media will be to that individual.

One core assumption of this theory as espoused by Defleur and Ball-Rokeach according to Syallow, (2012:50) is that the level of media dependency is directly proportional to the limit of the medium to fulfil the necessities the individual (news consumer) however much as could be expected. This means that an individual will be highly dependent on a medium if it meets a greater percentage of his/her needs than if it meets a smaller percentage. Thus, in trying to understand the motivation for using a particular medium the uses and gratification theory, augmented with media dependency theory will be used as the framework. LaRose and Easting (2004) have used the uses and gratification theory to develop a new media attendance model of the use of multiple uses of the internet. Quan-Haase and Young (2010) and Whiting and Williams (2013) have all used the theory to study the use of social media. With an increasing proliferation of mix media habits, the framework of uses and gratification theory is becoming pertinent.

### **Research Methodology**

This study is based on mixed methods research design and largely used exploratory survey in its approach in gathering data for the purposes of understanding how Internet mediated news websites impact on the print newspaper readership in the Tamale metropolis. This study was conducted between March, 2017 and September, 2017. Data was collected and analysed from 292 respondents out of a total sample size of 300 newsreaders from the Metropolis, achieving a 97% response rate.

Four of the leading print newspapers in terms of circulation, reach and readership in Ghana; the *Daily Graphic*, the *Daily Guide*, the *Ghanaian Times*, and the *Business and Financial Times* (Tsikata, 2015 and Geopoll, 2017) were purposively sampled and served as the major reference point to interrogate newsreaders in the metropolis. These four newspapers according to the Media Ownership Monitor Ghana report by the Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA, 2017), have a combined national print newspaper readership reach of 95.83%. One representative each from these four print newspapers were sampled as key informants to enable the researchers get insightful information on the subject matter.

There is currently no daily newspaper published locally in Tamale. The monthly *Northern Advocate* publication is generally unknown due to its irregular frequency.

The simple random sampling procedure was used in selecting four news vendors from a sample frame of six newsvendors. The news vendors are key distribution agents for the print newspapers whose offices are headquartered in Accra, the national capital. Interestingly, apart from the newspaper vendors in Tamale, there are no newspaper vendors in the remaining 25 districts and municipalities in the Northern region. This confirms the long held belief that print newspaper readers are predominant in urban areas than rural areas.

Respondents for the survey aspect of this study were sampled using a non-probability method. Specifically, the convenience sampling was used in recruiting 292 respondents who responded to a semi-structured questionnaire prepared for this study. A prospective respondent however, first had to meet the terms of qualification before he/she was recruited. For instance, a respondent should be able to read, be a newsreader, have access to both printed newspapers and internet powered news websites.

This study used both quantitative and qualitative tools and techniques in analysing data gathered from the field for easy presentation of research results. Data collected through questionnaires from readers of news and newspaper vendors were quantified numerically and those in textual form were coded. Coded data were entered into a spreadsheet, and directly into SPSS and excel for analysis. Descriptive statistical techniques including percentage distribution and frequencies were used to analyse the results. Tables and graphs were employed for data presentation. This enabled us to describe the consumption pattern and preferences of news, and how this affects newspaper readership and circulation in the study area. Qualitative data on the other hand were reduced into themes and patterns. Items of interest were sorted into proto-themes and defined. Qualitative data were prepared for analysis by transcribing the interviews into text format. Items of interest were grouped and defined. It essentially involved re-contextualization whereby data were considered in terms of the categories developed through the analysis. Each theme was reported by description and in some instances, illustrating it with few quotations from the original text to help bring clarity to the issues.

## Findings and Discussions

### *Bio-Data of Respondents*

**Table 1: Cross tabulation of age range of respondents and educational level of respondents**

Age Range of Respondents	Educational Level of Respondents				Total
	JHS	SHS	Post-Sec	Others	
18-30	10	54	102	0	166
31-42	0	0	89	8	97
43+	0	0	0	29	29
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>292</b>

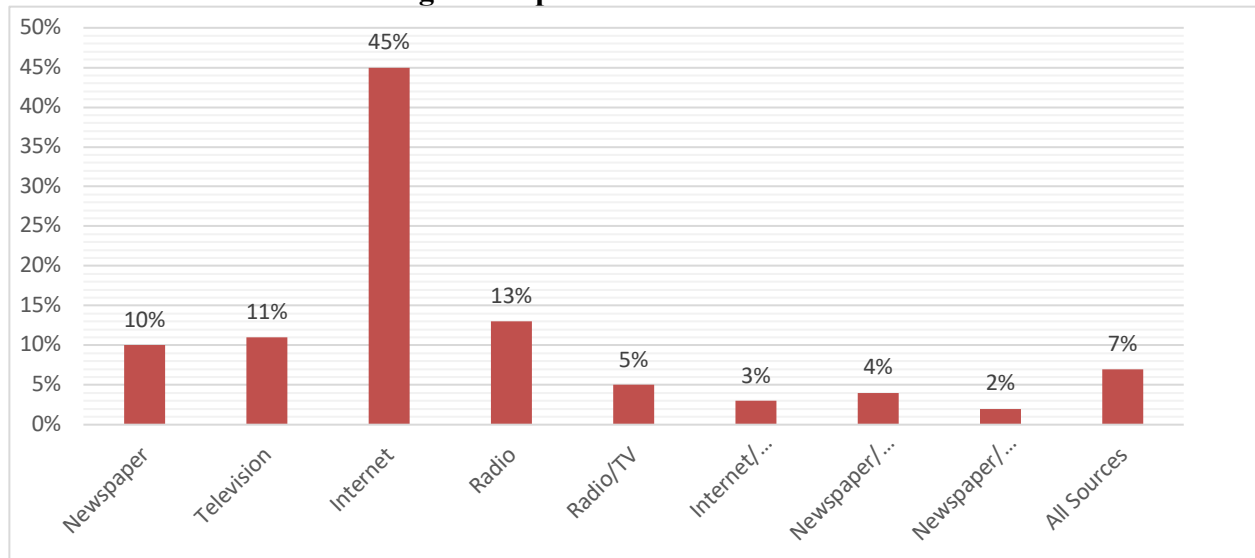
*Source: Field survey, (2017)*

From table 1, majority of respondents for this study are within the ages of 18-30 representing 57% of the 292 respondents sampled for this study while 33% of the 292 respondents falls within the age range 31-42. Clearly, majority of the respondents for this study are the young people who constitute the majority of the Ghanaian population. The table also depicts that majority of the respondents, representing 65% have a post-secondary education that include a *teacher training diploma, nursing training diploma, higher national diploma,*

*university diplomas and degrees* whilst 13% of the respondents have other forms of education that enables them to read such as Arabic instructors and non-formal education beneficiaries. It is refreshing to note that all respondents within this category of educational attainment are aged 43 and above reflecting the state of education in Northern Ghana in recent times.

### Identifying Preferred News Sources among Newsreaders

**Fig. 1: Respondents sources of news**



**Source:** Field survey, (2017)

As a cardinal objective of this study, respondents preferred sources of news were identified and illustrated in figure 1 and table 3. In figure 1, while respondents' sources of news were identified to include the internet, radio, television and the newspaper, the majority of respondents representing 45% of 292 respondents under this study, source their news from only the internet. Also, the findings indicate that 13%, 11% and 10% of respondents source their news from Radio, Television and Newspaper respectively. The results depicted in figure 1 aptly reflects the National Commission on Civic Education (2015) and Geopoll (2017) reports that radio remains the most popular news source to Ghanaian news consumers with 62.9% and the Internet having the most reached. This finding also supports Thorson, Vraga, & Ekdale's (2010) assertion that the Internet offers a multimedia platform where video, audio,

and text-based news are all on one single website and making it more appealing to source news from especially among young newsreaders.

Similarly, in table 3, the findings show clearly that the majority of newsreaders prefer sourcing their news from the Internet to all other news media forms. While 46% of respondents revealed that the Internet is their most preferred news source, only 9% prefer the newspaper. These findings support the view of Salman and Hashim (2011) that news consumption habits are changing because consumers now turn to the Internet for free news and information. However, some respondents maintained that while they source their news from the internet, they still find news from the traditional media especially newspapers most reliable, credible, accurate and ethically balanced than news emanating from the internet.

**Table 3: Respondents most preferred sources of news**

News Sources	Score	Percentage (%)
Internet	130	46%
Radio	80	27%
Television	53	18%
Newspaper	29	9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>292</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** Field survey, (2017)

## Determining the Consumption Pattern of Newspapers in Northern Ghana

**Table 4: Daily Comparative consumption record of newsvendors**

Year/ Quantity	Vendor 1		Vendor 2		Vendor 3		Vendor 4		Total	
	Received	Sold	Received	Sold	Received	Sold	Received	Sold		
2012	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	400	400
2013	100	97	100	100	100	93	100	90	400	380
2014	80	60	100	65	80	60	70	60	310	245
2015	80	55	80	40	60	40	70	40	290	175
2016	60	40	60	35	60	40	50	30	230	145
2017	50	45	40	30	30	30	30	25	150	145
<b>Total</b>	<b>470</b>	<b>397</b>	<b>480</b>	<b>370</b>	<b>430</b>	<b>363</b>	<b>420</b>	<b>345</b>		

Source: Field survey (2017)

Table 4 illustrates the declining quantities of newspapers received and sold by sampled news vendors over a period of 6 years spanning from 2012 to 2017. The statistics show a steady decline in the quantities of newspaper that news vendors receive from the printing presses and the quantities that newsreaders buy from the vendors. These statistics however exclude newspaper served directly to governmental offices and subscriber organizations. From an average of 400 newspapers received daily in 2012, only an average of 150 newspapers were received and vended in 2017. This represents about a 40% decrease in newspapers received between 2012 and 2017. A more worrying trend is seen in the consumption pattern when comparison is made between sales for 2012 and 2017.

From table 4, an average of 145 newspapers were sold per day in 2017 as compared to an average of 400 newspapers sold in 2012. These statistics depict clearly the preference of newsreaders major

source of news as presented in table 3 above. This also reflects the prediction of the International Federation of Audit Bureaux of Circulation (IFABC, 2011) that print newspaper readership will slump in many countries by the end of 2011. The Bureau attributed the fall in print newspaper readership to newsreaders turning more to mobile devices and online sources. The IFABC (2011) report revealed a 1.6% decline in print newspaper circulation in 23 of its member countries between 2010 and 2011 alone. According to the statistics from IFABC, the 1.6% decline represents some 2 million copies decline in monthly circulation. It further argues that it was the first decline observed since 2008 and was observed across its member countries.

A key informant who is an editor to one of the newspapers sampled for this study argued that the proliferation of online news sources provides on the go news for newsreaders especially the youth and for him, that has resulted in low sales record since 2012. Read his statement below:

*“Because online news is readily available and comes on time, people especially the youth hardly buy the print newspaper. Just a handful of the elderly who are not technological conversant with these online stuff do purchase our services in its current form”.* (Source: Field Interview, 2017).

The editor’s response suggests that, young readers resort to news websites because it has the capacity to provide them with news much quicker than the traditional print newspaper.

Clearly, it is a difficult enterprise to draw a conclusion as to whether the Internet is performing a complementing or opposing role to the traditional media. While researchers like Chyi and Lasorsa

(2002), Dutta-Bergman (2004) and Chan-Olmsted et al (2012) are of the opinion that the Internet is complementing the traditional media in providing news, other researchers including Nguyen (2003), Bird (2009) and Patel (2010) hold an opposing view.



## **Challenges of Newspaper Agencies in Northern Ghana**

The emerging trends of new communication technologies in today's globalized world has no doubt put undue pressure on the print newspaper right from its production style through to its circulation methods and readership. Given that almost 50% of respondents prefer reading news online, advancement in technology has become a disruptive innovation for many print media entrepreneurs in Ghana. This is confirmed by the gradual decline in the number of print newspapers from over 300 in 2008 to less than 135 as at the end of year 2015. (Gadzekpo, 2008; Geopoll, 2017). As Internet penetration increases in the country, so is the presence of online news websites, magazines and journals more felt. With over 80% Internet reach and daily usage in Ghana, online news media sites stand at 3000 (Geopoll, 2017 and NCA, 2017).

*“While I drive to the office every morning, I tune in to my favorite radio station Fiila 89.3fm to listen to Peace FM 104.3 early morning breakfast show which reviews a lot of newspapers. Hence I get all the information I need and I do not find it necessary to buy the newspaper again”. (Source: Field Interviews, 2017).*

The cost of production vis-à-vis the dwindling fortunes of advertising profits for print newspapers are also major challenges to the print media industry in Ghana. Key informants bemoaned the increasing cost of electricity, transportation of materials and products and the fluctuating currency. They explained that these factors impact on their print media businesses negatively. An informant from one of the print media houses under this study puts it this way;

*“Print newspapers are now seen to be expensive as compared to online news websites. Most materials needed for production of a print newspaper are imported, hence, pushing up the price of the newspaper especially when advertising in the print newspaper has recorded steady decline”. (Source: Field Interview, 2017)*

Another informant in an interview maintained that the newspaper industry cannot survive without advertising and that to attract a good advertising budget, the print newspaper should have a high reach in terms of not only circulation but also readership. He concluded that since print newspaper reach has declined over the years in favour of the Internet mediated news websites and social media advertising platforms, it has become increasingly difficult for the print newspaper industry to attract the needed advertising client to support production.

## **Conclusion**

The emergence of the Internet has changed the print media landscape not only in Ghana but the world over. The proliferation of the Internet appears to

According to Kammer (2013), news websites have features of news affordances, which possibly impact on the print newspaper industry in particular and journalism in general.

All four representatives of the sampled newspapers under this study were unanimous in expressing their worry about the perceived negative impact that TV and radio newspaper review segments had on their circulation. This is in line with Nyarko's (2016) findings in an exploratory qualitative study on newspaper review show in the broadcast media space in Ghana, that newspaper review segments impact negatively on newspaper circulation and readership. He revealed through series of anonymous respondent disclosures that most print media houses do not support newspaper review shows in Ghana since it affects their daily sales. Advancing reasons for not buying a printed newspaper, a newsreader related the following;

have caused a disruptive innovation in the print industry as that has led to the collapse of many newspaper enterprises across the globe. The Internet offers newsreaders a variety of news sources that are quite inexpensive as compared to the traditional print newspaper in Ghana. The situation has led to a gradual decline in print newspaper readership in favour of the Internet mediated news websites. The migration of newsreaders from 'analogue' news sources to 'digital' news sources has also led to a cut in advertising revenue that hitherto guaranteed profits in the print newspaper production business in Ghana. While the effects of such migration is obvious on the operations of the print enterprise, most Ghanaian consumers still rate the print newspaper as most credible and reliable news

source. It is critical and essential that the print newspaper industry rebrands and innovates to attract newsreaders to their brands and to also embrace productive sales and distribution strategies to enhance the long-term sustainability of the industry.

### Recommendations

It is a universally recognisable fact that the Internet present vast and unlimited opportunities to not only news media entrepreneurs but also all businesses. The print newspaper industry should therefore see the proliferation of the Internet as a breakthrough innovation and harness its vast potentials to rebrand, create an online presence and improve upon their services such that they can attract newsreaders to their brands. Presently, the traditional newspaper industry enjoys a good amount of consumer goodwill in terms of credible and reliability and should take advantage of that in their innovation to continue to operate in a digital society. Clearly, news readership continues to increase but the print newspaper is seeing a decline in circulation, readership and advertising profits. An indication that the traditional print newspaper will soon become obsolete especially among younger generations.

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