

ONLINE NEWS CHANNELS SELECTION AND USES AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS OF UNIVERSITY OF JOS

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Abstract: This study focused on examining the use, gratifications and dependence on online news channels by undergraduate students of the University of Jos. This study investigated their usage pattern of online news channels; news categories or media repertoire of interest to them and their reasons or motivations for such use and dependence. Media dependency theory and Uses and Gratifications theory were the theoretical foundation of this research. The study used survey as the research design; questionnaire as instrument for data collection and stratified purposive sampling method on a sample of three hundred and fifty (350) undergraduate students who were taken purposively and proportionately from each faculty in the Institution. Data retrieved were analysed using frequency count, cross tabulation and simple percentage. The study found out that undergraduate students of the University of Jos used online news channels for various reasons such as inexpensiveness and convenience of use of such channels; ability to comment, share, post and get feedbacks but most importantly to stay updated and informed on various issues. The study therefore recommended that media content producers, University of Jos management, government and service producers all have roles to play in effective and efficient use of online news channels.

Keywords: Online news channels, Gratifications, Dependency and Media repertoire.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Internet is seen as a network that links computers and devices together throughout the whole world. The Internet has continued to evolve into a major news source (Aina, 2003).

The Internet with all its capabilities have changed the way we live, learn and work. It permits us to communicate more with people around the world, regardless of location and distance, thus making it a global village...the Internet has changed the face of the printing industry and newspapers have taken the lead (Hanson cited in Olley and Chile, 2015 p.1).

This implies that people do not have to wait 24 hours for newspapers to update them of happenings around the world as newspapers now have 'breaking news' online which was an exclusive of the broadcast industry. In essence, Olley and Chile (2015) noted that people do not have to wait until the vendor(s) deliver the newspaper(s) before knowing what is happening around the world. Clearly, Information Technology has completely changed from a network of oral and print mechanisms to one that is largely visual and computer-generated, "and the speed with which one can get information has been reduced from months and days to nano-seconds" (Adeya cited in Okonofua 2015, p.2). One important reason for this phenomenon is the growth of Internet availability to consumers, both at work and at home.

Researchers have argued that, in recent times, technological developments within the media have contributed to an increased flow of information in different ways and is considered to strengthen citizens' partaking possibilities (Limonard and Esmeijer, 2007; Madden and Fox, 2006; and OECD, 2006). Supplementing this, Bergstrom (2008) noted that during the first years of the new millennium, a new generation of web applications was developed such as Web 2.0 which is an

umbrella term for new interactive web services and possibilities; characterized by the freedom to share media content and to participate in its production, giving the audience the ability to participate in content production as well as to publish content.

Similarly, there are two significant technological trends that influence news consumption behavior. They include, the advent of social media platforms such as social networking sites and blogs which have helped news become a social experience in fresh ways for consumers to the extent that people now use their social networks and social networking technology to filter, assess, and react to news. Also, the ascent of mobile connectivity via smart phones has turned news gathering and news awareness into an anytime, anywhere affair for a segment of avid news watchers (Kristen, Lee, Amy, Tom and Kenny, 2010). Yet, the way news is consumed is radically different online. Online news readers get variety of news from different sources or channels instantly, news alerts via their mobile phones, over various online news channels at work, and while surfing the Internet in the evening. Their Internet access to news is increasing daily and for those working in offices or owning a Smartphone, the access to news can be continual throughout the day, rather than just in the morning. Online news readers access news via search engines, via e-mail newsletters or mail forwards, or aggregation tools and sometimes they spend only a few seconds or minutes on a particular article (or headline, video or picture) before leaving that particular news site to find similar articles elsewhere (Althaus and Tewksbury, 2001). In terms of capturing the whole news spectrum rather than focusing on individual stories, some online readers might never get an overview of all news through the home page of a particular news site. Others however will use news aggregators, newspaper home pages or the mail or mobile phone service of online news sites to get such overviews. In any case, this more fragmented way of reading the news allows them to mix different channels and compile their own personalised information (Althaus and Tewksbury, 2001). Bergstrom (2008) also noted that 'News' could be used in two ways in everyday discourse. It could refer to what has happened to individuals, as in the conversational opening, 'Any news?' It could also refer to information about significant events on the public stage. On the Internet, in newsgroups, these two meanings intersected. News of both kinds became the mortar of online "virtual" communities, many of them brought together and sustained by a sense of social solidarity for which the traditional media were not considered suitable or available channels. In relation to convergence, technology has led newspapers all over the world restructuring themselves and becoming more user-friendly, more casual, more lifestyle-oriented, and more in touch with youths (Baran, 2004). Similarly, this new multi-platform media environment has made people's relationship to news become portable, personalized, and participatory (Kristen, et al. 2010). This implies that users owing to the portability, personalization and participatory features of the new multi-platform environment could now access news on their cell phones; customize their home page to include news from sources and on topics that particularly interest them; contribute to the creation of news, comment about it, or disseminate it via postings on social media sites like Facebook or Twitter.

Another factor to promise a bright future for online news is the potential adoption of broadband. Nguyen (2003) sees broadband characteristically, not only as a permanent means of connection but also as high speed of data transfer which saves much surfing time and makes the web truly accessible at any time so that the need to dial up through a telephone modem is eliminated. This high speed also facilitates downloading big files (such as video clips), making web content much more enjoyable and compelling to users, who might quickly embrace the multimedia advantage of the web as a result of the gratifications derived from its use. What this holds for the future according to Nguyen (2003) is a potentially huge impact on the use frequency and time budget of online activities in general and online news in particular. Growing up in the "DotNet" generation, with news made accessible through an array of offline and online media platforms, young people have become news grazers, combining different platforms; multiple online news channels and selecting the bits of news they deemed necessary to gratify their needs (Zukin, Keeter, Andolina, Jenkins and Della, 2006; and Pew Research Center, 2015). Such increased use of digital news platforms illustrates the demand for self-selected, custom-made information, with each individual deciding what news or information should be made available at what moment in time (Althaus and Tewksbury, 2002; Costera Meijer, 2007; Huang, 2009). This new orientation towards news reflects the hasty lifestyle of the young, combining education, jobs, social networking, hobbies, etc. within a limited time frame (Costera Meijer, 2007; Huang, 2009).

However, some unanswered questions arise. Have people adopted news on the web because they enjoy using its exclusive technological features? Or is it simply because it is largely offered without charge and/or is convenient to integrate into Internet usage, which is multi-purposeful in nature? If the power of online news is a strong driver, how strong is 'strong'? Even more provocatively, could some early adopters of Internet news abandon it for some unknown reasons – as

happened to videotex news services (the precursor of the web) which were hailed as the coming revolution of the 1980s (Fidler 1997; Boczkowski 2004)? If yes, how many would and what are the reasons? If no, why do people keep on with the news online? To what extent are they satisfied with it and do they really consider it a powerful medium? Without knowing the answers to these questions and the like, it is almost impossible to know whether the web as a news medium is going to continue its impressive uptake in the years ahead (and then possibly dominate the future news environment) or whether it is soon going to reach a saturation point. Consequently, without these answers, the popular technology-determinist belief of the possible displacement and replacement effect of online news on traditional sources would remain open to question.

Unfortunately, inadequate academic attention has been paid to issues relating to the important questions. This is not because online news consumption has been ignored in research but many studies have intensively and extensively investigated the effect of information presentation on computer screens, including its efficiency and effectiveness (Wearden 1998; Wearden et al 1999; Schierhorn et al. 1999; Wearden and Fidler 2001; Vargo et al. 2000) and its influence on cognitive aspects of online news consumption (Oostendorf and Nimwegen 1998; Sundar 1998; Sundar 2000; Tewksbury and Althaus 2000; Tewksbury, Weaver and Maddex 2001; D'Haenens, Jankowski and Heuvelman 2004). Others have compared the web with other traditional news sources in terms of preferences (Mueller and Kamerer 1995; Chyi and Larosa 1999), pattern of use and gratification of online use (Nguyen, Ferrier, Western and McKay, N.d) and credibility (Johnson and Kaye 1998; Schweiger 2000; Abdulla et al 2002; Nozato 2002). Substantial research has also been devoted to the relationship between Internet; Internet news adoption and traditional news usage (Bromley and Bowles 1995; Stempel III, Hardrove and Bernt 2000; Dutta-Bergman 2004; Dimmick, Chen and Li 2004). In essence, most researches have been tilted towards comparison of online news link which is the Internet and traditional news platforms or channels but they haven't looked at it from various online avenues or channels used such as downloaded news apps, emails through subscription to newsletters, search engines, links to news websites pages, social media among others which is the focus of this research. Also, Terragon Insight (2013) noted that in Nigeria, the Internet penetration rate is 28.4% while mobile penetration is 69.01%. Nigeria is also considered to have the largest internet population in Africa taking the 11th position in the world. This is in line with the fact that the average Nigeria Netizen spends not less than three (3) hours on the internet daily; 67% of this population are males while 78 % of the Nigeria Netizen are between the ages of 19 and 35 and 45 % are students while the remaining fall in 55 % (Terragon Insight, 2013).

Several valid questions have been raised about the usage of online news. Attempts have also been made to answer them, in the face of insufficient academic focus on what may be considered important aspect of these question. This study therefore took cognizance of the unanswered questions mentioned above and focused on examining the use, gratification and dependence of online news channels by undergraduate students of the University of Jos. Similarly, as emerging technologies provide users with a wider range of source selection and channels of information, individuals are now selecting media repertoire in their areas of most interest (Ruggerio, 2000). This implies that audience depend, use and select media repertoire based on their interest. It is suggested that 'active selectors' use of the media to achieve audience goals will result in being dependent on the media (DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach, 1989); people will also become more dependent on media that meet a number of their needs than on media that provide only a few ones (Littlejohn, 2002). If a person finds a medium that provides them with several functions that are central to their desires, they will be more inclined to continue to use that particular medium in the future (Kristen et al, 2010).

Moreover, the advancement in electronic communication technology may sufficiently alter the context of media use that current mass communication theories do not yet address. This study therefore examines the pattern of usage of online news channels by undergraduate students of the University of Jos; their media repertoire and goals that guide their selection and dependence on such channels.

Research Objectives

The following research objectives guided this book:

- (i) To examine the pattern of online news channels use by Undergraduate students of the University of Jos.
- (ii) To identify the media repertoire interest of Undergraduate students of the University of Jos in selection and use of online news channels.
- (iii) To find out the goals of Undergraduate students of the University of Jos that guide their selection, use and dependence of online news channels.

Research questions

The following served as questions to the study:

1. What are the usage pattern of online news channels used by Undergraduate students of the University of Jos?
2. What kind of media repertoire are of interest to Undergraduate students of the University of Jos that guide their selection and use of online news channels?
3. What are the goals of Undergraduate students of the University of Jos that guide their selection, use and dependence of online news channels?

Significance of the study

This study is of significance in many ways as it exposes the reason why students use online news channels; their usage pattern and benefits or gratification derived from its use. What users do with news content, could significantly influence the economics of the news industry. Understanding not only what content users will want to consume but also what content they are likely to pass along may be a key to how stories are put together and even what stories get covered in the first place. It is also hoped that findings of this study will serve as reliable resource materials for further researchers as it will provide a guide for further studies in the field of online journalism. This study will contribute to the growth of existing literature on assessment of online new channels uses and gratifications by its audience as this will help media producers, journalist to be aware of what the audience really desire or want from the medium used. Theoretically, Uses and Gratifications Approach and Media Dependency Theory are the best theories to help study the relationship between the new communication tools and its users, and why they use or prefer certain media outlets than other and how they use it. Media dependency theory on its own helps to understand why people depend on the mass media and its messages.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The digital world has fragmented the locations where the public access news and public affair information. Today, with all these online news sources or channels and a growing number of digital devices, people now access news and information not only on their digital websites and apps but also access news through search engines linked to with other online content aggregator and also social media(Oliver and Ohlbaum Associated Ltd, 2004). Ruggenberg (2007) views News as information about political, historical, social or cultural events that recently happened in the world considered interesting enough to be distributed to the public via different news media. Knowledge about news can contribute to the strive for a well-informed society. According to Rocho cited in Ruggenberg (2007, p. 4) “news is continually sought and offered in the course of social communication because it is necessary and therefore a valuable commodity of social exchange”. Similarly, Ruggenberg (2007) also noted that the medium of preference of younger people have changed alongside with the technological development of mobile phones and the internet. Similarly, Insight Express (2004) found out that American youngersters prefer online news sources above televised news. Oliver and Ohlbaum Associated ltd (2004) in their study noted that consumers use multiple sources across multiple media and they embrace this choice and are actively pursuing information from variety of sources based on different view point, confirmation, and specialization or for many other reasons. According to them, understanding the behaviour and forces that shapes this is very important. This implies that the need to know whether users use this multiple channels or sources because of consumer plurality or for specific needs such as for sport, international news among others is paramount.

Media Dependency

Media dependency, which was developed by Sandra Ball-Rokeach and Melvin Defleur in 1976 is grounded in classical sociological literature and posit that media and their audience should be studied in the context of larger social system (Habib, 2012). Media dependency as a concept ties together the interrelation of broad social system, mass media and the individual into a comprehensive explanation of media effect. At its core, the basic dependency hypothesis states that the more a person depends on media to meet needs, the more important the media will be in a person’s life and therefore the more effects media will have on a person (Nikolaus, 2010). Similarly, the key idea behind media dependency is that audiences depend on media information to meet needs and reach goals. Therefore, social institution and media system interact with audience to create needs, interest and motives in individuals (Yarosan and Asemah, 2008). Dependency degree on online news channels is therefore influenced by the number of information functions of such channels and its

social stability while Habib (2012) on the other hand pointed out that dependency emerge from three relationship which are the relationship between the society and the media, relationship between the media and the audience and the relationship between the society and the audience.

Habib (2012) explained that within the relationship between the society and the media, media access and availability are regarded as important antecedent to individual's experience within the media. The nature of media dependency on societal systems varies across political, economic and cultural system. This implies that for users of online news channels to be dependent on such channels, they must have constant access to such channel which is made available to them at any time they need its services. Secondly, the relationship between the media and the audience. This relationship is the key variable in this theory because it affects how people might use a mass medium. This relationship also varies across media systems. This also implies that the more salient the information need, the stronger are the motivation to seek mediated information and the dependency on the medium. In results, the likelihood for the media to affect audience becomes greater. Thirdly, the relationship between the society and the audience. The society influences consumers' needs and motives for the media use and provide norms, values, knowledge and laws for their members. Social system, can function as an alternative to the media by offering similar services of the media. When these needs for media are high, the more people turn to media to meet these needs and therefore the media have a greater opportunity to affect them. None of these media needs are constant over long period of time. They change based on aspect of our social environment(Habib, 2012). Yaroson and Asemah (2008) further stated that these questions need to be raised to know the degree of dependency level of users of the mass media which are; do media create need?; do people turn to media to achieve gratification and satisfy needs?, are media needs personal, social, cultural, political or all of these and are media our friends? (Yaroson and Asemah 2008, p.95). In addition, Defleur and Ball-Rokeach, 1976 cited in Ball-Rokeach (1998, p. 15) noted that there are conditions that can heighten media needs, these may be when the number of media function in a society are high and when a society is undergoing social change and conflict.

News Gratification

Media gratifications was categorized into two namely; Process Gratifications and Content Gratifications. Where process gratifications are what people gain from using the media, content gratifications are gratifications that arise from information gotten from the media message (Cutler and Danowski, 1980; Kayahara and Wellman 2007 as cited in Chen 2011). In a study on *Online news information seeking: An analysis of usage of search engines vs social networks in Egypt*, findings indicated that social gratification is obtained from reading news online(Aref, 2013).This implies the need for users to stay current with what is happening around them and high levels of agreement regarding the personal satisfaction people gain in sharing news on social networks and the reasons for doing so which include receiving friend's opinions on posts they share and preference in reading news that have a personalized point of view. Therefore, the extent to which news gratifications sought are obtained depends on a complementary role of the media which must supply details to news and that of the news consumers who must be ready to access the news details (Saleeman and Budiman 2015, p.10).

Another study on *Readership of online newspaper by users of selected cyber café in Uyo Urban* revealed that in general researchers have found four kinds of gratifications which include information where users would want to find out about their society and the world in order to satisfy their curiosity; Personal Identity which may entail users try to look out for models for their behavior; integration and social interaction captures media use in order to find out more about the circumstances of other people and entertainment in which online media users sometimes use the media for enjoyment, relaxation or just to fill time (Okonofua, 2010; Yaroson and Asemah, 2008). A study on *emerging consumption pattern among young people of traditional and internet news platforms in the Low Countries* however pointed out five gratifications for using the media and they are entertainment, information/surveillance, social utility, pastime and escape. Their findings also indicated the relevance of information/surveillance gratification for consuming news, as individuals perceived it as the most important motive driving their consumption of television news, newspaper and online news sites although their findings similarly, demonstrated that other diversion gratifications also played an explanatory role in young people's news consumption (Cauwenberge, d'Haenens, and Beentjes, 2010). Consequently, the findings of their study indicated that news consumption across the different platforms was partly driven by the same needs, some platform specific gratifications were found. More specifically, the results from their regression analysis showed that the social utility gratification was only statistically significant and positively related to time spent with online news sites. (Cauwenberge, d'Haenens, and Beentjes 2010, p.12).

Online News Channels

We live in a twenty-four seven world of journalism, a world of news about news that exist providing people with near-instant and ever-present news information. In this fast-paced technology driven society we live in, it has been proven within the last few years that one of the most sought-after channels in finding information is no other than the Internet (Aref, 2013). Similarly, online and digital news consumption, continues to increase, with many more people now getting news on cell phones, tablets or other mobile platforms. And perhaps the most dramatic change in the news environment has been the rise of social networking sites (Pew research center, 2012). Supporting this view, Newman, Levy, and Nielsen (2015) noted in their study that within online, there have been a sharp rise in the growth of social media in the past year as a source of news. Some of the biggest increases have come in the US, UK, Brazil, and Denmark (Newman, et al 2015).

Initially online users would log on to specific websites or use a search engine such as Google or Yahoo! to find relevant news about a topic of interest. However, recently, social networks such as Facebook and Twitter have been playing an instrumental role in the 'search' scene where individuals are relying on them further as online news sources (Newman, 2011). People have started to use social networks frequently to learn, send and share news about affairs within the country and the region (Arslan et al, 2012). Augmenting this, a study carried out by Pew research center however noted that in the shifting online landscape, the use of mobile devices and social networking sites have replaced a traditional tool — search engines — as the driver of growth in finding news online. Search engines like Google, Bing or Yahoo continue to be the largest single tool in finding news online, but the substantial growth in their use between 2008 and 2010 has leveled off (Pew Research Center, 2012).

Use and Consumption of News on Online News Channels

Attitudes and interest do not automatically lead to use, but media use in general often depends on interest in certain topics or facilities and could be a condition for use. Consequentially, since the news practice on the Internet more or less equals quick checking and a short glance at the headlines, it might be the case that frequent news users simply do not consider news sites as places you are interacting or commenting on and it is striking that there are no gender effects, despite the fact that findings from studies about general Internet use show that men spend more time online than women (Bergstrom, 2008). News audience studies also show that men are more frequent online news users.

Research in Africa and beyond suggested that students constitute the main consumers of Internet services in developing countries (Furuholt, et al., 2008; Omotayo, 2006; Kwansah-Aidoo and Obijiofor, 2006). Sparks (2003) as cited in O'Neill (2005) noted that: Patterns of media consumption are altered and renegotiated in Internet-based forms of delivery. In contrast to the relatively fixed patterns of existing media, online consumption is not bound by the same time patterns and daily routines they are consumed according to patterns of social behaviour that are embedded in daily routines. Consumption of the Internet is less structured and not as well established (Dunu, Ugbo and Ezepue, 2015). Audiences of the mass media today are enveloped in what McLuhan (1962) referred to as 'new uncertainties' owing to changes in patterns of production, distribution, and consumption of media messages. It is then imperative to increase focus towards the audience to appraise the effect of these new alterations in their media consumption pattern.

3. METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of this study, survey method was used as the research design. Survey is a method that is used to study both large and small populations by selecting and studying samples chosen from the populations to discover relative incidence, distribution and interrelations of sociological and psychological variables (Osuala, 2005). Survey research is also "one in which a group of people or items are studied by collecting and analyzing data from a few people or items considered to be representative of the entire group" Nworgu (1991) cited in Leman (2014, p. 82). Hence survey research method which focuses on people, the vital facts of people, and their beliefs, opinions, attitudes, motivations and behaviours was used for the purpose of this study. The area to be studied is University of Jos, Nigeria. The faculties of the University are Agriculture, Arts, Education, Engineering, Environmental Sciences, Law, Management Sciences, Medical Sciences, Natural Sciences, Pharmaceutical Sciences, Social Sciences, and Veterinary Medicine. Stratified-purposive sampling technique was employed. The researcher divided the entire population into different sub groups or strata then purposively and proportionally selected the final subjects from the different strata.

According to the ICT Directorate of the University of Jos, the Undergraduate students' population of University for 2014/2015 session is 22,449 comprising of 12,825 males and 9624 females across 87 Departments of the University. For the purpose of this study, the sample size was Three hundred and seventy-eight (378) drawn from the total population of 22,449 of which questionnaires were distributed to users of online news channels proportionately and purposively. For the purpose of this research work, questionnaires were used as the instrument for data collection to assess the respondents' uses, dependency and gratification of online news source. The questions in the instruments were constructed in simple language in order to elicit responses the researcher intended to learn from respondents. The questions were both close-ended and open-ended. For the close ended questions, the aim was to elicit specific responses from the respondents, while the open-ended questions were targeted at allowing the respondents the freedom to express their personal opinions which the former may not have given the chance to. The data gotten from the field exercise was analysed and interpreted based on the type of data gotten that is quantitative and qualitative in form of open ended and close ended questions. Simple percentage distribution, count frequency was used to determine the frequency of occurrence of particular responses in relation to the salient questions raised in the research. While for qualitative analysis, a summary of the data was presented based on the response of the respondents.

In an attempt to ensure the validity of the instrument, the researcher took various steps. First and foremost, the items of the instruments were drawn after the researcher had gone through the various existing and related literature. Secondly, a pilot study was carried out to give the researcher insight to the items used in this instrument. This was done so as to be sure that the items were from the variables of study. Thirdly, the items were also discussed with lecturers who vetted them and in turn submitted to the supervisor for the main purpose ascertaining their validity.

4. SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS OF DATA COLLECTED

The researcher drew these findings based on the data retrieved. Majority of the Respondents that fall within the age of 21-25 use online news channels. This was reflected when 54.6% attested to this fact. Similarly, majority of Respondents use online news channels always while few use it occasionally. This is reflected when 70% and 30% of the respondents attested to this. Most of the respondents very often access online news channels via Smartphone as compared to other devices such as desktop, laptops and tablets. 54.9% and 26.3% of the respondents attested to this. Moreover, majority of the Respondents spend at least less than one hour when they access online news channels while 32.9% spend 1-3 hours. This was revealed when the percentage of both (less than one hour and 1 to 3 hours) outweighs those of 4-6 hours and above 6 hours.

It was concluded that majority of Respondents access news directly via news sites. This was revealed when 72.3% attested to this while 44.6% and 36% attested to using search engines like Google search and yahoo news very often and often. Also, majority agreed to use downloaded news App often. This was also revealed when 38.3% attested to this. Also, Facebook is the social media platform mostly used by the Respondents while Instagram is the least used followed by twitter. Also, more males use Facebook as a social media platform and online news channels to access online news. This was reflected in when a cross tabulation was carried out to ascertain the difference in gender use of such platform for online news access. Among all the online news channels, news via email through subscription to newsletter is the least used by the Respondents. This is reflected when one hundred and six (116) respondents replied to never use it as news channels. In response to news categories or media repertoire that are of most interest to Respondents and which in turn guide their selection of online news channels, majority read national news followed by entertainment news, political, sport news, local news, international news, science technology news, advertisements, business, features and opinion column while majority do not read health news, lifestyles among others as reflected.

Similarly, majority of the respondents use online news channels because they wanted to be informed and updated while others use it because they want to follow links to specific news stories; share news, videos that raised awareness and promote a cause they believed in. Some said it was because they wanted to follow links to specific news stories from email and search engines; look at sequence of pictures of stories that supported their view and because online news channels usage is inexpensive and easily accessible while others rejected the idea that they used online news channels because they wanted to forget work, study and escape daily problems.

Furthermore, when the respondents were asked to explain in their own words why they used or do not use online news channels, as this could serve as complementary effort to discern their dependence level, it was revealed that majority of the respondents were dependent on online news channels because it is easily accessible and affordable; its convenience of

use; ability to follow current and specific news of interest, comment, share, post views and get feedbacks from friends. They are also dependent on online news channels because they wanted to be informed and updated on issues; reliability of the channels and its ability to serve as supplement to news gotten via traditional news outlets. They could also get variety of perspectives of current issues in the society via multiple links.

Moreover, the respondents were of the view that they use online news channels only occasionally because of their busy schedules; poor electricity supply; network issues. They also complained of post on these channels that were horrifying such as pictures and pornographic materials or content that are detrimental to users. Few of them were of the view that advertisement pop up when they try to access these channels making the process boring.

The findings above correlate with other researchers who had also studied usage of online news and reasons for its use. This is in view of the fact that people use online news channels because of technological evolution in today's high-tech environment and youngster changing lifestyle. Young people use online news channels because they want to find ways in which is more appealing (Costera Meijer, 2007; Raeymaker, 2007; Beekhoven and Van Wel, 1998 and Huang, 2009). This study agrees with the findings of Costera Meijer (2007) and Huang (2009) that News was a means by which people experience the world around them; monitor their environment; gave meaning to their lives; identified personal values for truth and got a sense of belonging. This study however disagrees with the finding of Newman and Dutton (2011) that search engines are being partly replaced by social media as portals to news and other information. Nevertheless, this study agrees with Cauwenberge, d'Haenens and Beentjes (2010) that online news sites are the online news channels with the highest increase in use. This study also aligns with Akoh et al (2012) that Facebook is the most used social media platform by internet users. This study also agree with Oyero (2013) that majority of the students use social networks as their primary sources of news information due to convenience and portability of devices for accessing it such as smart phones. This study also agrees with Dunu, et al (2015) that each medium or channel serves its audience in different manner within different context and students who are active users usually select the particular online news channel that best gratify their needs. Moreover, this study agrees with the findings of Saleeman, et al (2015) that the relative advantage of online news channels or sources is the quick update which makes them faster news sources. Also, their findings indicated that online news websites were the most online news channels used which this study findings also correlate with.

Undergraduate students of the University of Jos were discovered to be choosy in terms of devices as majority were found to use Smartphones more in accessing online news probably because of the fact that such devices were portable and affordable compared to others. Time also was of essence in online news access owing to the academic environment in which they found themselves as undergraduate students of the University of Jos only access online news when it was convenient for them and majority spent at least between less than 1 hour and 1-3 hours online doing so. It was also concluded that usage pattern differs in terms of gender, age and marital status as more males tend to access online news via online news channels as compared to their female counterparts. Also, majority of undergraduate students of the University of Jos were single and tend to use online news channel regularly compared to their married counterparts who used online news channels occasionally. Undergraduate students within the age range of 21- 25 mostly accessed online news via online channels followed by those within the age of 26-30. Furthermore, it was concluded that undergraduate students of the University of Jos used Facebook as a social media platform in accessing online news followed by Google+ and WhatsApp. Instagram, Twitter and Blogs were the least used. It was also concluded that of all the online news channels studied, news via email through subscription to newsletter was the least used by undergraduate students of the University of Jos. Similarly, undergraduate students of the University of Jos tend to read more of national news compared to others and they used online news channels because they wanted to stay informed and updated on issues around them.

5. CONCLUSION

The increased use of digital news platforms or channels illustrate the demand for selected, customized information with each individual deciding what news or information should be made available and at what moment (Althaus and Tewksbury 2002; CosteraMeijera, 2007 and Huang, 2009). Media content producer and practitioners should therefore take cognizance of this and try to better know this millennial generation and what they desire and the online channels used in order to repackage and re-strategize to accommodate them. Government and other stake holders in the power sector have a crucial role to play and it is high time all their empty promises are brought to reality.

Overall, as online news channels experiment go on, a better understanding of consumer behavior should rely more on rational analysis as opposed to guess work or wishful thinking. Service providers should also strive to improve their network so as to reduce the frustration experienced by online users in trying to access online news channels. Online news use and consumption is still a relatively new area of research especially in relation to online news channels and the proposed models for this study are by no means definitive.

Nevertheless, the proposed theories can serve as starting point for future reassessment or exploration in online news channels use and online news consumption studies. Future research could also focus on platform or channels specific features, functions and other population. Similarly, other factors such as trust in media, education could be placed in the study to see if there is a significant relationship between trust in media and the use of online news channels.

Also, future research agenda could consider using mixed approaches and methods preferably aiming for cross-cultural comparison. Furthermore, future studies could also do a comparison in terms of understanding the usage of online news channels and its uniqueness to its users.

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