

THE VIABILITY OF THE PRINT NEWSPAPER IN THE DIGITAL ERA IN ZIMBABWE: A DIGITAL STRATEGY PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT: *An exploratory study aiming at assessing the migration trends from printed newspapers to online sources of news was undertaken. The goal was to assess factors influencing this migration and the impact of this migration on advertising revenue. Four hundred (400) respondents were selected randomly and a questionnaire was administered to them. In depth interviews were held with four key advertising agencies because these agencies channel the bulk of advertising revenue to newspapers. Findings indicate that the migration to online sources of news is inevitable although the availability of online newspapers has not put printed newspapers out of business. The main drivers include: (1) age, (2) gender, (3) level of education measured in terms of computer literacy, (4) cost, (5) Real-time reporting and interactivity, (6) Broadband availability and cost, (7) Adoption of Online payment methods, (8) levels of smart mobile telephones use. This study noted that there is no significant change in advertising revenues of printed newspapers although a significant part of the readership has migrated from printed newspapers to online news. Most printed newspapers have adopted survival strategies such as pursuing a dedicated on-line publishing strategy, newspaper organisational restructuring, and diversification from print to other media platforms. Future research can look at the future of other forms of publications such as magazines, textbooks, educational, entertainment, business and religious materials.*

KEYWORDS: Digital Strategy, Digital Era, Online Readership Trend, Online Migration Impact, Circulation Revenue

INTRODUCTION

According to Bresinger et al. (2014) the newspaper has long been seen as a critical point of connection within one's community. However, in an increasingly electronic and global age, the grasp of this traditional news medium is weakening (Bresinger et al. 2014). This view is corroborated by the Pew Research Center (2014)'s report that since the fall of 2013, there has been a dramatic and conspicuous migration of high-profile journalists to digital news ventures.

Domingo & Heinonen (2008) have earlier noted that the presence of new media and the Internet in particular, has posed a challenge to conventional media, especially the printed newspaper. Views on the extent and the implications of this migration different. Ahlers (2006) studied the hypothesized mass migration from printed newspapers to other sources of news especially the electronic ones. He found that this migration is not supported by the facts. For Ahlers (2006) some migration from offline to online news consumption has occurred, but this number (12 percent direct substitution) is less than many believe. Ahlers (2006) adds that another 22 percent of U.S. adults have substituted some online news for offline news, but for a substantial portion of this group, the online news media acts as a complement rather than as a substitute. Furthermore, most significant is the fact that two-thirds of the U.S. adult population have not shifted to online news consumption and appear unlikely to do so (Ahlers 2006). Ahlers (2006) also studied the advertising markets for the traditional news media and for the online media and found that online advertising is an imperfect substitute for advertisers. However, Ahlers (2006) findings are in contrast with those of other researchers in that area. Nguyen (2003) for instance has pointed out that the Internet, already a very important source of news, will become a major news medium in the years ahead. In another study, Nguyen (2008) noted that threatened by the penetration of the Internet, traditional media hastily established their online presence in the 1990s but then, under the many uncertainties resulting from this rush online and the urge to defend rather than expand markets, have been reluctant to and/or unable to invest resources into developing an online news artefact which achieves its full potential. For Nguyen (2008) online news has been “shoe horned” into the same professional and business model that is at odds with its remarkable potential. Amid such a debate it is imperative to look for empirical data which shows (1) the extent of migrations from printed newspapers to online sources of news, (2) factors enhancing or hindering this migration, and (3) the impact of this migration on advertising revenue.

LITERATURE

Ahlers (2006) upholds that the mass migration from printed newspapers to online sources of news is not supported by the facts. For Ahlers (2006) some migration from offline to online news consumption has occurred, but the change is not as dramatic as some sources claim and the impact on the printed newspapers is not as apocalyptic to the extent of implying the “death” (Lunden 2009) of the printed newspaper. In Ahlers (2006)’s view the online news media acts as a complement rather than as a substitute and online advertising is an imperfect substitute for advertisers. Bresinger et al. (2014) balance their early view that the printed newspaper as a traditional news medium is weakening by arguing that consumers have not turned away from all news media, but have instead migrated to different avenues for receiving it. However, other researchers have pointed to a far reaching and unprecedented change. The Pew Research Center (2014) report suggests that this movement is merely the tip of the iceberg for a digital native news universe that includes not only dozens of highly publicized national and international organizations, but also hundreds of smaller digital news entities, mainly filling targeted news.

According to The Pew Research Center (2014) many digital outlets are working to fill reporting gaps created by the strain on resources at traditional outlets—from niche topic areas like education to international coverage to local community news to investigative journalism. Moreover, other digital news producers, especially those that have emerged most recently at the national level, are aimed at cultivating new forms of storytelling—from video to crowdsourcing to new documentary styles—and new ways to connect with audiences, often younger ones (Pew Research Center, 2014). A number of legacy outlets are also experimenting with new storytelling and data visualization techniques. But much of the innovation is coming from the digital native sector, with many outlets focused on hiring people with skills and voices “being nurtured online,” (Pew Research Center, 2014).

Other authors such as Nguyen (2008) support the view that a possible replacement of the printed newspaper by online sources of news is coming. According to Nguyen (2008) industrial developments in 2005 and 2006 suggest that as the Internet has established itself as a major news medium, traditional media—now even more threatened and urged to take actions to make up lost time—are on the verge of a new, more vigorous and rigorous development stage of online news. Nguyen (2008)’s view seems to have changed from her consensual view in a 2006 article where Nguyen and Western (2006) have noted a relation of complementarity between traditional media and online medias. Nevertheless, there are authors who give an apocalyptic view of the future of the printed newspaper in the digital age. While Lunden (2009) used the imagery of “death”, Jarvis (2008) is of the view that “the print media are dommed” while Alves (2001) had predicted a “mediacide” or at least a “mediamorphosis”. SALTZIS and Dickson (2008) noted that multimedia news is becoming well established and that news production processes that are operating in British national media organisations are radically changing. Moreover, journalists are adapting to, and are likely to continue to adapt to, changes in production technologies and changed systems of working (SALTZIS and Dickson 2008). In this process of adaptation non-formal learning plays a crucial role (Morten & Eide 2015). Jarvis (2008) predicted that “surpassed in convenience and economy by online content, printed magazines and newspapers will dry up in the next decade.” Westlund & Färdigh (2015) and Kitamura (2015) have identified two possible relationships between traditional print media and online sources of news namely displacement or complementarity. According to Kitamura (2013) Internet use via mobile phone has complementary effects on information acquisition from traditional media, while Internet use via personal computers does not. Moreover, Internet use via personal computers has a displacement effect on information acquisition from radio (Kitamura 2013). The same pattern of displacement has been observed by de Waal and Schoenbach (2011).

Jarvis (2008)’s argument is that it is not that print is bad. It is that digital is better. While printing has the advantage of assuring permanence over the spoken word following the Latin proverb *verba volant, scripta manent* (literally "spoken words fly away, written words remain", an phrase attributed to Caius Titus of the Roman Senate (Bois 2004) suggesting that written documents can always be conclusive in public matters while spoken words might easily be forgotten, digital media

have many advantages over printed media such as (and there'll only be more): ubiquity, speed, permanence, searchability, the ability to update, the ability to remix, targeting, interaction, marketing via links, data feedback. Digital media transcend the limitations of—and incorporates the best of—printed media (Jarvis 2008) Furthermore, there is the issue of cost because according to Jarvis (2008) digital media reduce the incremental cost of production and distribution of content to zero and it's impossible to compete with free. However, some authors do not have Jarvis (2008) enthusiasm. Maier (2010), for instance, contends that newspapers offer more news than do major online sites. However, Boczkowski (1999) identified four issues of concern in online sources of news, namely: (1) the social consequences of the increased anonymity of interlocutors; (2) the reconfiguration of territorially- and interest-based associations; (3) the processes that mediate between the introduction of new artifacts and their social outcomes; and (4) the mutual shaping of consumers and technologies. Santana (2011) instead focus on the quality of comments on online news forums and pointed out that many are troubled by their content and express dismay over their newspaper's providing a forum for anonymous discussion where emotions can run high. Maier (2010b) also found no great difference in coverage between newspapers, network television, cable television, radio, and websites. According to Maier (2010b) 60% of the top stories on news Web sites covered the same topics as covered by legacy media. Moreover, fewer than a third of news stories hyperlinked by blogs and social media corresponded with mainstream media top stories (Maier 2010b). For Maier (2010b) these results indicate that journalism's agenda-setting role, though dissipating, remains viable in the fragmenting media universe and audiences turning to news Web sites will find the dominant stories of the day plus fresh perspectives on national and world events.

Despite the similarity in coverage and the leading role of traditional media outlets, the migration to online ways of media delivery is real and the media landscape is changing in both its demographics and psychodynamics. According to the Pew Research Center (2014) at a time when print newsrooms continue to shed jobs, thousands of journalists are now working in the growing world of native digital news. The Pew Research Center (2014) has identified the following as the main characteristics of online news outlets: (1) the rate of hiring has been explosive; (2) many of the native digital news organizations are small, non-profit and young; (3) many of the smaller digital organizations focus on filling reporting gaps in local news and investigative journalism; (4) among the larger digital outlets, a number are investing substantially in global coverage; (5) digital news organizations are hiring a mix of legacy and non-legacy journalists, with a clear emphasis on new storytelling skills; (6) for all the expansion, it is far from clear there is a digital news business model to sustain these outlets. All in all, online news brought competition for the printed newspaper and some newspapers opted for Less Than Daily Print Editions (The Newspaper Association of America, 2013). Chung (2007) had observed that journalists are undergoing an uncomfortable transition migrating online and are unlikely to fully adopt interpersonal interactive features onto their websites. Saarelma & Oittinen (2006) suggest the idea of a ubiquitous newspaper through the convergence of media.

Although the migration from printed newspapers to online sources of news is a fact, patterns of migration vary from country to country. Hollander (2008) has noted that less partisan individuals turn to more entertainment-oriented fare. Bucy (2003) had earlier observed that there is a synergy

between on-air and online news. Graham and Greenhill (2013) also observed a similar synergy between print and online media. In Australia, the first national survey of the current state of play of online news consumption in Australia indicate that (1) the Internet as a news medium has reached a mainstream status in terms of audience sizes, although its penetration is still within a higher socio-economic segment of the society; (2) many distinctive features of online news have been substantially used and appreciated; and (3) from the perspective of innovation diffusion theory, online news has a notable potential to foster further adoption in the years ahead (Nguyen et al. 2005). In Africa, especially in Zimbabwe, Chari (2011) has pointed out that the internet has fundamentally transformed the media landscape. However, unlike other authors who are either enthusiastic or pessimistic Chari (2011) has noted that the technology has spawned new practices whose impact on the printed newspaper could be described as contradictory. For Chari (2011) the internet is a boon for small African publications that are now able to assert their presence globally through online editions thus, improving their readership. However, the same technology portends the demise of the printed newspaper due to competition presented by these online editions (Chari 2011). In other words, the internet has been to the printed newspaper a “terrible beauty”. (Chari 2011). Chari (2011) concludes that while considerable interest is shown for the internet newspaper the print newspaper is far from extinction. Chari (2011) has observed a complementary relationship between the two. This relationship of complementarity observed by Chari (2011) in Zimbabwe has been also observed by Salman et al. (2011) in Malaysia. According to Salman et al. (2011) in Malaysia, the effect of the new media on conventional media is still manageable. Moreover, even though the conventional media have their own online versions, they have not fully embraced the new technology (Salman et al. 2011).

Another area affected by migration is advertising revenue. Pattabhiramaiah et al. (2014) pointed out that increasing availability of alternative sources of news, especially free content provided on newspaper websites and by news aggregators such as Yahoo has made paying for the print newspaper less attractive to readers (Pattabhiramaiah et al. 2014). As a result, between 2006 and 2011, daily print newspapers in the U.S. lost 20% of their paid subscribers. However, contrary to the expectation that firms respond to softening demand by lowering prices, newspapers increased subscription prices by 40-60% during this period (Pattabhiramaiah et al. 2014). Furthermore, the increasing prices might accelerate the decline in circulation, in turn adversely affecting advertising revenue, which has typically contributed 80% of newspaper revenues (Pattabhiramaiah et al. 2014). Kirchhoff (2009) had earlier given an apocalyptic view of printed newspapers advertising revenues in the presence of online sources of news. According to Kirchhoff (2009) advertising revenues of printed newspapers are tumbling due to the severe economic downturn, while readership habits are changing as consumers turn to the Internet for free news and information. Some major newspaper chains are burdened by heavy debt loads. As in the past, major newspapers have declared bankruptcy as several big city papers shut down, lay off reporters and editors, impose pay reductions, cut the size of the physical newspaper, or turn to Web-only publication (Kirchhoff, 2009). Barthelemy et al. (2011) did not hesitate to claim that the financial crises faced by print newspapers following the presence of online sources of news could be its worst since the Great Depression (Barthelemy et al., 2011). Graham and Smart (2010) have noted that the internet has led to falling advertising revenues and dwindling circulations. The companies reacted to this by developing online news services, which do not have the distribution costs of a physical product, enable the customisation of editorial and advertising content, and facilitate the co-creation of news

content with consumers (Graham and Smart 2010). Moving online has, however, not fully compensated for the losses in revenues. Readers were reluctant to pay for online content, the income from the sale of web-based advertising space was significantly lower than for the printed form, and journalists resisted co-creation (Graham and Smart 2010)

However, this pessimism about the future of the printed newspaper by researchers from the United States are not supported by evidence from other parts of the world. In Malaysia, Salman et al. (2011) noted that Malaysian newspapers still attract advertising dollars even with the presence of online newspapers. Even in the United States, Ahlers (2006) had noted earlier that despite declining television viewership and newspaper circulation, advertising revenues are not only staying with the traditional news media but are also increasing, albeit slowly. In Ahlers (2006)'s view there is no major impact on the economics of the news industry due to the online news media. The possibility of the print newspapers advertising revenue surviving the coming of online sources of news has been also observed in Zimbabwe by Chari (2011).

Reasons for migrating from printed newspapers to online sources of news range from technical ones, such as low diffusion of the internet and a host of economic and socio-cultural factors (Chari 2011). Among the economic and socio-cultural factors influencing migration to online sources of news Chari (2011) has identified (1) an increase in internet users, migration, stringent media laws, and media polarization. According to Chari (2011) despite an economic melt-down lasting close to a decade, Zimbabwe has witnessed a phenomenal increase in the number of Internet users over the past few years. About three million Zimbabweans are believed to have migrated to neighbouring countries, mainly South Africa, Botswana and some European countries, particularly the United Kingdom, United States of America, New Zealand and Australia. This has created an extraordinarily large pool of citizens desiring to stay connected with relatives and friends back home through various channels of communication, chief among them e-mail and Internet. Likewise in Kenya, Nyabuga and Cooper (2013) have noted that Kenyans in the diaspora are especially reliant on such platforms. In addition, the availability of user-controlled facilities such as Facebook and Twitter combined with news websites has increased the amount of information and the number of digital platforms accessible to Kenyans. The link of migration with the international trade of media goods has been also

Moreover, there demographic and psychodynamic factors linked with (1) age (2) gender, (3) educational level, (3) real-time reporting, (4) interaction, (5) demand and (6) Availability of Broadband Services (The Newspaper Association of America, 2013). Concerning age, Salman et al. (2011) have noted in Malaysia that even if there is a drop in circulation [of print newspapers], it would be because the younger generation prefer the new media as they are more interactive compared to the online version of mainstream. Chari (2011) made a similar observation in Zimbabwe when he pointed out that respondents below 20 years were likely to be either unemployed, or students, who are hungry for information, particularly job opportunities and entertainment. Bachmann et al. (2010) are of the view that young adults are disproportionately more intensive users of the Internet. However, these findings are in contrast with what Lewis (2008) found in the United States of America. According to Lewis (2008) a survey of students at two universities found that young adults expect that five years from "now" they will get less of

their news and information from social networking sites and more from older media, including print newspapers. Chari (2011) pointed out that the low preference for online newspapers among the 46–60 age group might be an indication of a tendency among the mature and elderly people to stick to tradition. Thorson (2015) noted that older respondents use mobile devices less for all functions, including following news, tend to be loyal print subscribers, and highly agree that it is important for news to be produced by professional news sources. In Hong Kong, Chan (2015) noted that those in the 18–34 and 35–54 cohorts were mostly multiplatform users of news, yet subgroup analyses reveal different patterns of complementary uses and displacement. In Sweden Westlund & Färdigh (2015) noted that the public generally engage in single-media rather than cross-media news consumption, whereas age cohorts have developed divergent forms of single-media use: (a) the 1930s and 1940s age cohort are primarily single-media users in print, (b) the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s age cohorts are computer-oriented single-media users; and (c) the 1980s and 1990s age cohorts are mainly single-media users via mobile devices, but also cross-media users. However, the trends seem to have changed after 2012 where the uptake of mobile news and cross-media news consumption reached new records, whereas the single-media use of printed newspapers reached a new low (Westlund & Färdigh 2015).

Chari (2011) also found out that gender affects patterns of internet use and henceforth access to online sources of news. Chari (2011) found that 31 per cent of the female respondents reported that they prefer the Internet newspaper to the printed newspaper compared with 50 per cent male respondents, who prefer online to print. However, Chari (2011) is conscious and points out that the gender factor should not be taken in isolation. According to Chari (2011) because of their low economic status, women have less access to the Internet and are likely to choose printed newspapers because this is what they are likely to have ready access to. Chari (2011) argues that although newspapers are expensive, they are relatively available through relatives, friends or acquaintances. Chari (2011) also points out that this also reflects the lopsided educational opportunities and literacy rates, which are in favour of men. Men do not only command higher literacy rates than their female counterparts, but they also have an edge over women in terms of computer skills, which are mandatory for the use of the Internet. Furthermore, a visit to some Internet cafes in the capital Harare also showed that there were more men than women demanding Internet services (Chari 2011). Thorson et al. (2015) noted that when the effect of age is controlled, higher levels of education, and to a lesser extent, income, still significantly predict agreement about the importance of professional news sources.

Ahlers (2006) found no major impact on the economics of the news industry due to the online news media. However, from the reader's point of view the cost of the printed newspaper may be the reason why some readers have migrated to online sources (Chari 2011). Chari (2011) quoted verbatim a respondent saying "the cost of newspapers is beyond the reach of many of us. I cannot pay one US dollar everyday for a newspaper. I would rather buy two loaves of bread than buy a newspaper." Chari (2011) noted that this high cost of printed newspapers is mitigated in terms of access by the fact that newspapers can be borrowed from friends and relatives and can take time to be disposed. According to Chari (2011) Evidence from the interviews reveals that the soaring prices of newspapers, averaging USD 1, and the low salaries (whereby the average worker earns USD 140 per month) discouraged people from purchasing newspapers regularly. One respondent

reported that he relied on borrowing newspapers from relatives and friends since he could not afford to buy a newspaper every day. One newspaper could be read by as many as fifteen people and the disposal time of newspapers could be about a month after the date of issue. Some respondents said they read newspapers that were two or three weeks old since it was becoming more difficult to access news because of the high price of newspapers. Thorson (2015) noted that income predicts sources of professional news to a certain extent. Cost, however, limit the access to the internet as well delaying the migration from printed newspapers to online sources of news. One of the respondents in Chari (2011)'s research stated "I cannot afford to surf the internet because I am unemployed. The internet requires a lot of money. I usually read *The Herald* which my brother brings from work because it is the only newspaper available. If you are looking for a job *The Herald* and *The Sunday Mail* classifieds are the best."

Other factors affecting the migration from printed newspapers to printed news are legislation and political polarization. For instance in Zimbabwe, Chari (2011) has noted that stringent media laws, particularly the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA), have resulted in shrinkage of media space due to closure of some privately owned newspapers. Some of the closed newspapers have resurfaced on the Internet while others are operating from outside the country, catering for a news-hungry readership back home. Salman et al. (2011) made similar observations in Malaysia. For Salman et al. (2011) laws that govern mainstream media, namely the Printing Presses and Publications Act for the press and the Communications and Multimedia Act for the broadcasting industry and the Internet. They invariably empowered the ministers concerned to determine who can or cannot own and run the mainstream press and broadcasting stations. Corollary to legislation political polarization affects the migration from printed newspapers to online sources of news. Chari (2011) noted in Zimbabwe that media polarization along political lines has resulted in mainstream newspapers being discredited as sources of news and information. Alienated readers have resorted to 'alternative' sources of information, in order to counterbalance what they read in both the state and privately owned media. Similarly, in Malaysia, the parameters of freedom and space found in the mainstream media are directly or indirectly prescribed by the government (Salman et al. 2011) Such a media environment also brought about a worrying culture of self-censorship within the journalistic community (Hasim, 2002). It is, therefore, not surprising that many Malaysians have turned to alternative media for new sources of information, news and views (Salman et al. 2011).

Corollary to educational levels is that availability of computer skills and computer services. In Zimbabwe, Chari (2011) noted that a number of colleges in the capital, Harare and other smaller towns offer training in computers, thus exposing the youth to computer skills. Moreover, the government also has a programme of distributing computers to schools, thus helping promote computer literacy skills requisite for Internet use (Chari 2011). Thorson (2015) have noted that The desire by young people to access educational and entertainment information has also contributed to the growth of Internet use in the country hence the correlation of internet use with age. Furthermore, Internet and e-mail have also become key tools for staying in touch with relatives and friends who have emigrated abroad.(Chari 2011). In Kenya, the government has also pledged to enhance Kenya's technological infrastructure. It is working on "digital villages" to enable people even in remote parts of the country to access broadband internet. It has invested in the roll-

out of fiber-optic cable throughout the country. The process started in 2009 when the cable connecting the country to the rest of the world reached the coastal city of Mombasa, promising faster internet connection at reduced costs (Nyabuga & Cooper 2013).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This is an exploratory study. As Shields and Rangarjan (2013) have pointed out, exploratory research is conducted for a problem that has not been clearly defined. It often occurs before we know enough to make conceptual distinctions or posit an explanatory relationship. Information and communication technologies (ICTs) are a new area of research and they are actually referred as “new” technologies. Their business and societal implications are far reaching and current research is not conclusive.

Research Methods

The data collected was both quantitative and qualitative because some aspects such as the degree of migration of the readership from printed newspapers to online sources of news are statistical hence quantitative while the reasons for this migration may include opinions of both the migrants and migrants. Data on changes in advertising review is also quantitative.

Population and Sampling Techniques

The population used for this study was the population of Zimbabwe as provided by the last Census in 2012 i.e. 12,973,808 people (Zimbabwe Statistics Agency 2012 National Population Census). The sample size was determined by using Slovin’s Formula with a 95% confidence. Slovin’s Formula is used to compute the sample size working from populations and is computed as follows:

$$n = N(1 + N \cdot e^2); \text{ where,}$$

n = sample size,
N = population size
e = error

This was accomplished by selecting a sample of 400 for telephone interviews. Convenience sampling was used to focus the main advertising agencies in the country as this would cover almost 98% of the total agencies that facilitate advertisement placement in newspapers.

Data Collection Techniques and Instruments

Telephone interviews were conducted for the randomly selected 400 respondents while in depth interviews were conducted with managers of advertising agencies.

Data Presentation and Analysis

The data collected was triangulated and analysed following thematic analysis given the qualitative nature of the data. Quantitative data was summarized in tables and graphs for clarity.

FINDINGS

Demographic Data

Age Distribution of the Respondents

Table 1: Age Distribution of the Respondents

	<13	13 to 20	21 to 30	31 to 40	41 to 50	>50
Number	20	96	72	64	88	60
Percentage	5%	24%	18	16	22	15

Gender

The demographics of the respondents to the research with regards to gender was 54% male (216 respondents) and 46% female (184 respondents).

Migration trends from printed newspapers to online sources of news

The migration trend from printed newspapers to online sources of news was measured by comparing the evolution of the readership of daily, weekly and online newspapers over a period of three years.

Readership Trends of Printed Daily Newspapers

The table shows that daily readership has been on the decline from three years ago to date, falling from 65% in 2011 to 56% in 2014. This is an average rate of 2.25% per annum. Six days readership, which is the second most common readership frequency in this category declined from 15% to 12% at present. Readership for six days was mainly readership for weekdays plus Sunday (88%). The Sunday newspaper was cited as popular by reason of having a section for job vacancies.

Readership for five days was centered on readership for Monday to Friday (98%) and this declined from 12% to 8% over the four year period. It is crucial to note that non-readership has risen significantly from 1% in 2011 to 10% in 2014. Reasons stated for non-readership included harsh economic conditions where competition for disposable income was at its peak and the migration to online readership. Table 2 below shows the results of the questions asked relating to readership for daily newspapers.

Table 2: Mass Market Readership Trends: Daily Newspapers

	Daily	6 days	5 days	4 days	3 days	2 days	1 day	0 days
Current	56%	12%	8%	5%	5%	3%	1%	10%
A year ago	58%	13%	10%	5%	4%	0%	2%	8%
Two years ago	61%	13%	12%	5%	4%	0%	2%	3%
Three years ago	65%	15%	12%	2%	2%	0%	3%	1%

Readership Trends of Printed Weekly Newspapers

From the data, weekly readership has declined from 28% to 24%, an average of 1% per annum. Non-readership has risen from 32% to 50%, an average of 4.5% per annum. Readership is concentrated on weekly readers and non-readers whom between the two categories account for more than 60% of total readership statistics. This indicates that readership of the weekly papers is habitual and there are people who are consistent purchasers of the newspapers and those that are habitual non-purchasers of the newspapers. Table 3 below shows the results of the questions asked relating to readership for weekly newspapers.

Table 3: Mass Market Readership Trends: Weekly Newspapers

	Weekly	Every two weeks	Every three weeks	Every four weeks	Never
Current	24%	12%	7%	7%	50%
A year ago	25%	12%	12%	8%	43%
Two years ago	25%	15%	12%	7%	41%
Three years ago	28%	19%	12%	9%	32%

Readership Trend of Online Daily Newspapers

Daily readership on online currently stands at 23%, having grown from 10% in 2011, indicating growth of 130% over the four year period. The year-on-year growth rate was significantly higher between 2011 and 2012, at 90% but decelerated sharply from thereon, indicating possible barriers to further exponential growth. There was a 2% growth rate between 2013 and 2014 for daily readership.

Non-readership reduced from 67% in 2011 to 40% in 2014, indicating a migration towards online readership. The rate of migration was highest between 2011 and 2012 (21%) and slowed thereon from 2012 to 2013 (2%) and from 2013 to 2014 (4%). The deceleration in non-readership also indicates the existence of a barrier that is hindering further accelerated reduction in non-readership. The responses obtained from respondents for this were the slow network speed and dependence on other sources of information such as radio and television. The trend towards online growth is shown in Table 4 below:

Table 4: Mass Market Readership Trends: Daily Newspapers.

	Daily	6 days	5 days	4 days	3 days	2 days	1 day	0 days
Current	23%	12%	8%	2%	2%	2%	1%	40%
A year ago	21%	13%	10%	5%	4%	1%	2%	44%
Two years ago	19%	13%	12%	5%	4%	1%	2%	46%
Three years ago	10%	8%	5%	2%	2%	3%	3%	67%

Readership Trends of Weekly Online Newspapers

It was not possible to establish the readership of weekly online newspapers because most Online newspapers accessed prefer real-time reporting rather than periodical production. It was also noted that even online newspapers that we initially consider as daily sometimes skip days without reporting when there no issues that meet their editorial line.

Factors Influencing the Migration from Printed Newspapers to Online Sources of News

Age

From the data collected, there was a decreasing trend for all age groups in terms of readership with time, from 2011 to 2014. The more than 50 year old age group remains the highest readership age although its readership declined from 45% to 40% during the period. The less than 13 years old age group had consistently the least readership throughout the period. The older generation tend to be more traditional and stock to the print version whereas the younger generations trend to migrate to online earlier and faster. Figure 16 below shows the relationship between age and readership.

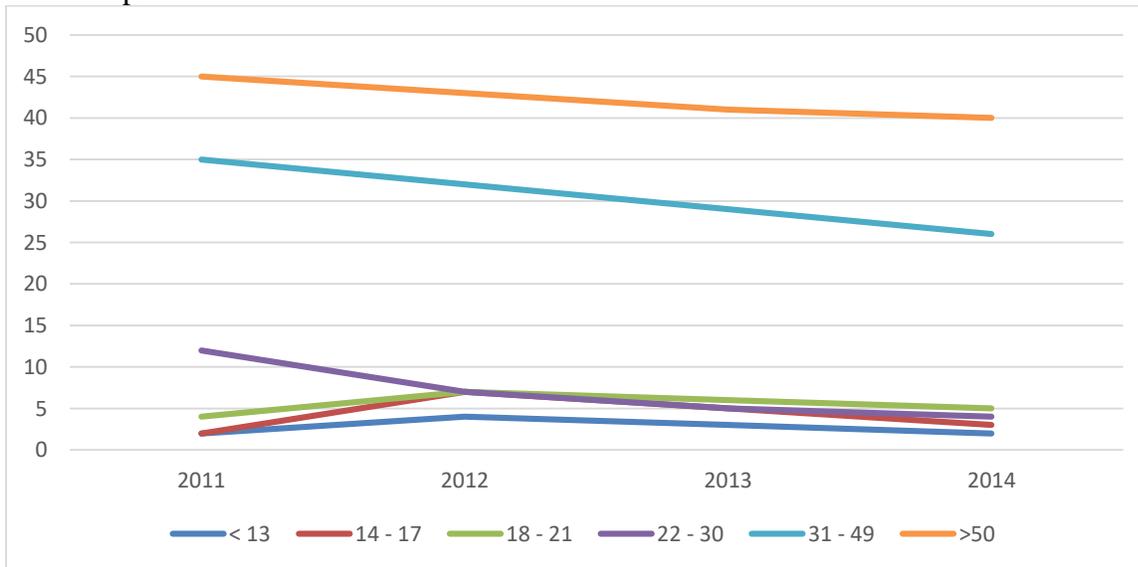


Figure 1: Relationship between Age and Print Newspaper Readership

Gender

Gender also played a role in the migration from printed newspaper to online sources of news. Although the number of male respondents to this study was almost equal to their female counterparts (54% males and 46% females) gender patterns were different in terms of migration from printed newspapers to online sources of news.

Education Level

Readership of print newspapers shows a bias towards A' Level and degreed individuals, although readership has been on the decline even for these categories over the past four years. For degreed individuals the readership has declined from a high of 32% in 2011 to 23% in 2014.

The category of people below O'Level are largely unemployed and are either students or people who have not successfully completed their O'Levels. Students are largely in the age category that has been shown to have a higher propensity to read news online that on traditional print as outlined in the survey results earlier. People who have O'Levels are also likely to be studying for their A'levels or not gainfully employed hence tend to read news online or not to be able to afford print newspapers. For those people who tend to use online sources who are not gainfully employed, these are likely to be parent or guardian sponsored. The relationship between education level and readership was investigated and the results are as tabulated below in Figure 2.

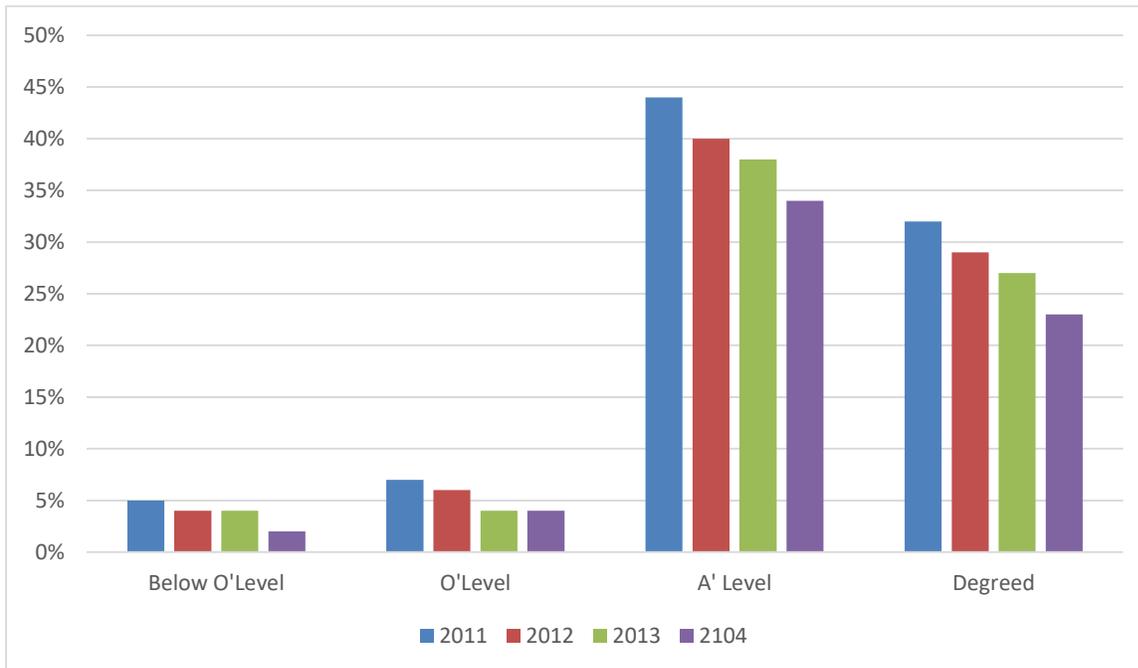


Figure 2: Relationship between Education Level and Print Newspaper Readership

Cost

Although our respondents did not tackle the issue of the cost of printed newspapers as compared to the price on online sources of news, fifty two percent of respondents strongly agreed that broadband pricing was a deterrent to their use of the internet for newspaper reading online. Figure 3 below shows the full results.

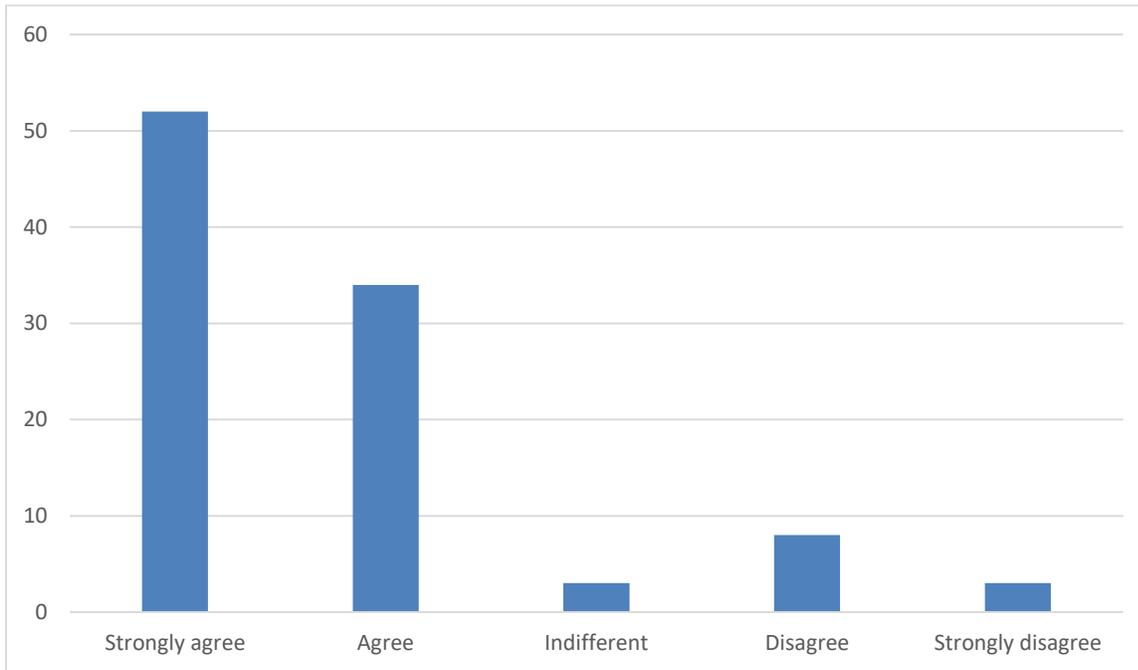


Figure 3: Responses to Relationship between Cost of Broadband and Online News

Readership

Thirty four percent of respondents agreed that current broadband pricing was deterring their migration to online for news, 3% of respondents were indifferent, 8% disagreed and 3% strongly disagreed. The large (86%) number of people who agreed that broadband pricing was a deterrent to their extensive use of online news indicates that the current broadband pricing is not affordable to many people and indicates that the lowering of tariffs could result in the growth of online news readers. At present, the tariff structure is therefore serving as an inhibitor to the growth of online.

Real Time Reporting and Interaction Demand

One hundred percent of respondents indicated that real time reporting was the single most important reason for migrating to online readership. Comments such as “Anything older than 2 minutes old is stale news these days” and “Why buy stale news” were some of the comments individuals put forward to explain their responses. It is evident from the results that the inherent limitation of print newspapers, of periodic updating at intervals of 24hrs or longer, is no longer satisfactory and the audience wants updates to news and the ability to follow stories as they develop in real time.

Eighty six percent (86%) of respondents cited the ability to interact and share as a major drawcard of online news. This indicates that readers want to be able to engage in two-way communication with the author or other readers and discuss and debate about a story, getting different opinions and comparing view-points. Readers also want to be able to share interesting stories with friends so as to start dialogue on current events.

Availability of Broadband Services

Eighty nine percent of respondents indicated that they had access to the internet on at least one data capable device. Of this figure, 67% of the respondents felt that the internet speed was satisfactory and they had easy access to the internet. Thirty three percent felt that the internet speed was too slow and acted as a deterrent to them engaging in sustained news reading on the internet. Comments elicited from respondents included, "At the processing speed that those thieves Econet, NetOne and Telecel are offering broadband, it's cheaper to read the print version as I can read and re-read it at no extra cost and take my time in the process with no extra costs". This notwithstanding, the 67% who are on broadband who are generally satisfied with the internet speed indicates that this is an accelerant, particularly if the remaining 33% can go online as well.

Low Adoption of Online Payment Technology & Paywall Strategy Adoption

One hundred percent of the respondents to the mass questionnaire indicated that they do not have any credit cards. This means that they are unable to make online payments for goods on the internet. Twenty two percent of respondents indicated that they would consider making online payments for online news while 78% indicated that they would not consider this. The main reasons cited by those that indicated that they would not be interested in making online payments for news were that alternative sources of news were available for free and that friends, colleagues or associates would share news with them via social media such as facebook and twitter so they had no need to purchase any news.

Low Smartphone Mobile Phone Usage

From the research, only 44% of respondents had phones capable of going onto the internet. This means that this is the only percentage of people who could browse online news from their phones. This indicates that the majority of people do not have data capable phones are therefore out of reach for online news.

The impact of migration on advertising and circulation revenue?

The results show that advertising agencies currently give 33% of business, by value to newspapers as print advertising, as shown in Figure 4 below. Television gets 30% of aggregate business, radio is at 22% and outdoor advertising is at 15%. Eighty five percent (85 %) of the respondents indicated that loss of circulation reach (and not competition from online news platforms) was the main factor for loss of print advertising revenues. The cost of placing adverts was cited by 9% of respondents. Publications that have the lowest cost of placing adverts gets more space. For instance, the rate card of almost all publishing houses has grown by between 21% and 27% between January and April 2014. Fifty seven percent (57%) of advertisers indicated that they would be reducing print advertising by between 7 - 10% per year, by value, and replace it by online advertising to pursue less complex and lower cost advertising as the liquidity crunch persists and as they follow audiences online. Again, it is the liquidity crunch and not completion from online platforms that is at the origin of the migration and not possible increased revenue generated from online advertising. 23% of respondents expect to maintain print advertising at current levels for the coming two years while no agency expected to grow their print advertising level in the coming five years. Revenue losses to newspapers is therefore expected to be between 7 – 10 percent per

annum for the coming five years. Circulation losses will be driven by mass market migration and are expected to slow down by 2.25% for daily newspapers and 1% for weekly newspapers for the coming years.

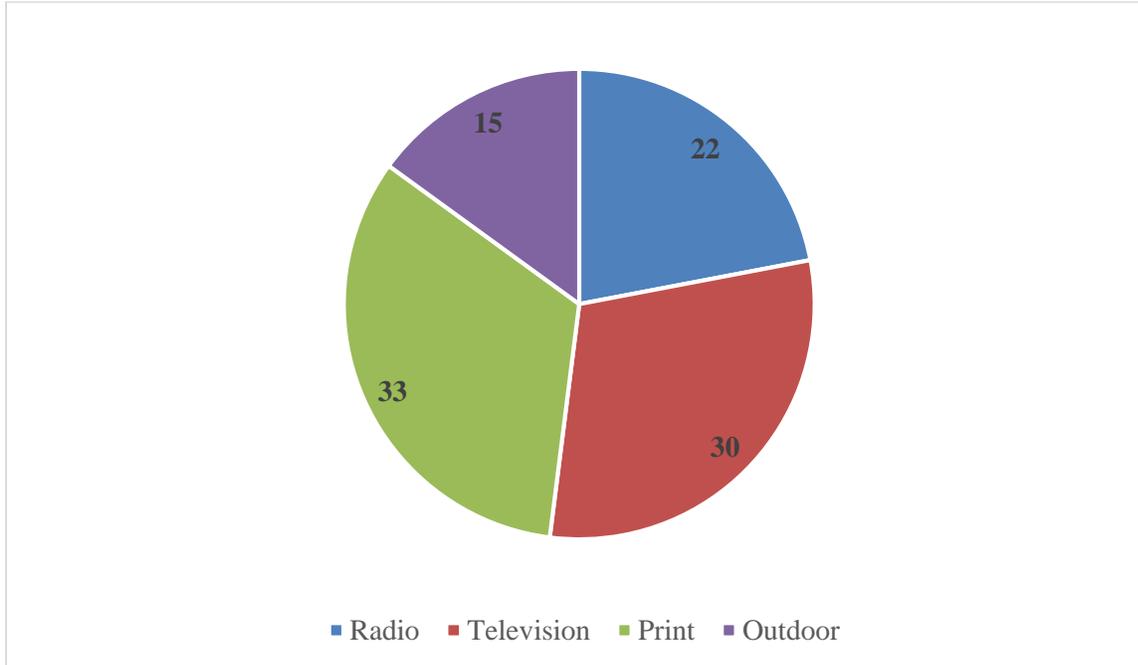


Figure 4: Share of Advertising Market-share (2013)

Advertisers indicate that the following would be the push factors for them to reduce print advertising: (1) loss of circulation reach, (2) cost of placing adverts and (3) poor print quality. Again, there is no indication that the reduction in print adverts revenue will be caused by competition from online sources of news.

DISCUSSION

This research found that the migration from the printed newspaper to the online sources of news is an irreversible process. This confirms views by Bresinger et al. (2014), The Pew Research Center (2014) and Domingo & Heinonen (2008). These findings go against the pessimism of Ahlers (2006). Ahlers (2006) remains adamant on the ability of online sources of news to replace printed newspapers completely. A more radical view on the irreversibility of the migration from the printed newspaper to the online sources of news is from Nguyen (2008). However, Nguyen (2008) still calls for a change in business model because in her view online news has been “shoe horned” into the same professional and business model that is at odds with its remarkable potential.

Age

The findings in this research concur with Chan et al. (2015), Buchanan et al. (2010), Salman et al. (2011), Chari (2011) and Westlund & Färdigh (2015) that age plays a crucial role in the migration

of the readership from printed newspapers to online sources of news. This role of age may be due to a generational gap in computer literacy or the rise of globalised generations which finds electronic devices fashionable and which keeps in touch with global event. The impact of age has also been noted in India. Bamezai et al. (2011) have noted that reading of news online was more popular among the educated, urban male youth in the bigger cities, who were the primary users of the Internet.

Gender

This study pointed to gender discrepancies in the migration from printed newspapers to online sources of news. These findings concur with The Newspaper Association of America (2013) which also pointed to gender discrepancies in the use of online sources of news. Chari (2011) linked the gender discrepancy in the migration to online sources of news to an underlying gender discrepancy in internet use and the financial dependence of women in developing countries. Bamezai et al. (2011) have noted that reading online news is biased towards the educated male youth in bigger cities.

Level of Education

There was no literature in the link between migration from printed newspapers to online sources of news with the level of education. However, from the sharp increase in readership between age 13 and age 17 may indicate an increase in literacy because that is the normal ages where people in Zimbabwe finish primary school and enroll into the first cycle of secondary school (O'levels). That period is normally characterised by physical and mental growth and increased awareness of events that take place outside the immediate environment of the person. People become aware on events at the national and international level but also it is at that time where most youth own a mobile telephone for the first time and open a facebook account.

This research's own findings, furthermore, indicate, a great increase in readership for people who have continued their education up to A'level and at university degree level. This can be explained by the fact that this is the category that makes up the formally employed in present day Zimbabwe. Most people in this category would read a newspaper purchased on their behalf by the organisation they work for. The decline in readership within this category – despite its superiority to other categories - can also be attributed to the ongoing economic challenges that have resulted in organisations reducing expenditure on items such as newspapers which are sometimes considered as luxuries. Yang and Grabe (2011) in an experimental study that tested the knowledge gap hypothesis at the intersection of audience education levels and news formats (newspaper versus online) found that the high education group comprehended news with the same level of efficiency across online and newspaper formats while low education participants gained more knowledge from reading a newspaper than using an online news source.

Cost

Although Jarvis (2008) has noted that digital media reduce the incremental cost of production and distribution of content to zero and Graham and Smart (2010) indicated that online news services do not have the distribution costs of a physical product in addition to the customisation of editorial

and advertising content and the co-creation of news content with consumers (Graham and Smart 2010), cost remains a limiting factor in accessing online news for readers in developing countries. Paradoxically, the high cost of printed newspapers did not lead to a massive migration to online sources of news. This partly confirms Ahlers (2006) predication that there was no major impact on the economics of the news industry due to the online news media. This finding also goes against Chari (2011)'s hypothesis that from the reader's point of view the cost of the printed newspaper may be the reason why some readers have migrated to online sources (Chari 2011).

This paradox is explained by Chari (2011)'s finding that in developing countries readers can access newspapers without buying them. As pointed out earlier, people with a level of education beyond O'levels can access newspapers through the organisations they work for. Moreover, in Chari (2011)'s research one respondent reported that he relied on borrowing newspapers from relatives and friends since he could not afford to buy a newspaper every day. This leads to a situation where one newspaper could be read by as many as fifteen people and the disposal time of newspapers can be delayed up to about a month after the date of issue. Some respondents said they read newspapers that were two or three weeks old since it was becoming more difficult to access news because of the high price of newspapers. This research's findings concur with Thorson (2015)'s conclusion that income predicts sources of professional news to a certain extent.

Real Time Reporting and Interaction Demand

Although in the low income sections of the society people don't mind reading newspapers several days after they have been published, all respondents to our research agree that real time reporting gives an upper hand to online sources of news over printed newspapers. This may have to do with the general enthusiasm people have with novelty. Nguyen (2010) has pointed to the fact that most remarkably, online news users seem to expect immediacy at the same time as depth and diversity of news and views. Interaction demand was another factor that influenced the migration from printed newspapers to online sources of news. Perceived interactivity opens a possibility alternative platforms for dialogue and democratic expression in a context where major titles are perceived as peddling government propaganda (Salman 2011, Chari 2011). Actually, Broekhuizen and Hoffmann (2012) have confirmed that perceived interactivity positively influences online newspaper readers' flow experiences and quality of information processing, but only the latter consequence enhances online newspaper preference. Nguyen (2010) also points out that apart from the ability to 'have my say to the news media', all the other attributes — no cost, multitasking, more news choices, in-depth and background information, 24/7 updates, customization, ability to discuss news with peers, and the existence of different viewpoints — have a more or less marked effect on the way people adopt, use and integrate online news into daily life.

Availability of Broadband Services

Findings in this research indicate that broadband is available in Zimbabwe through expensive. Given the high cost of broadband some readers may prefer printed newspapers given the possibility of reading the news more than once without additional cost. However, this attitude may not be taking account of the cost of digital exclusion (Horrihan 2011). According to Horrihan (2011), the evolution of the Internet has made access more valuable, and disconnection more consequential, for individuals. This evolution means that stakeholders should embrace a different framing of the digital divide, focusing on the costs of digital exclusion (Horrihan 2011). These costs can fall on

an individual, if the Internet is the only way to carry out some tasks, and on society, if expensive and less-efficient legacy systems must be maintained to serve a shrinking minority without access (Horrigan 2011) Whereas the digital divide debate concerns technology scarcity for certain population segments, addressing the costs of digital exclusion is about developing people's capacity to manage today's abundance of digital resources. (Horrigan 2011). This impact of availability of broadband services has also been noted in India. Bamezai et al. (2011) have noted that Availability of Internet services at home and cyber cafés is a significant factor in Internet usage in metros than in other cities that have limited and low broadband services and facilities. There is limited coverage countrywide through. For Bamezai et al. (2011) mainly accessed for personal communication and general surfing, few Internet users read news online across all cities in the country. Although cost limits access to online newspapers, this limitation does not lead to a massive migration from printed newspapers to online sources of news. Cost limits the access to the internet as well. In Zimbabwe, for instance, the usual cost of internet access at an internet café is 1 US \$ an hour (which corresponds to the cost of a meal). delaying the migration from printed newspapers to online sources of news. In brief, the low cost of production and distribution of online news did not lead to a massive migration from printed newspapers to online news because the cost of using the internet remains beyond the reach of ordinary people in developing countries and newspapers – albeit sometimes old copies – can be borrowed from friends and relatives.

Low Adoption of Online Payment Technology & Paywall Strategy Adoption

There was no literature indicating a direct relationship between access to online payment platforms and preference for online news. However, the fact that 100% of our respondents indicated that they have no credit card may indicate a certain degree of technophobia when it comes to financial matters. Observations by Bigirimana (2004) indicated that despite the availability of infrastructure such as barcode scanners at Points of Sale (POS) at supermarkets, most customers prefer cash transactions. Although all the three mobile telephone services providers in Zimbabwe offer Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) platforms such as Ecocash, Telcash and Netcash, and that several local municipalities have offered the possibility of paying for services and amenities electronically, most customers prefer to pay in cash and to get printed receipts. There is mistrust in electronic proof of payments both at the individual and corporate levels. Even high technological services such as pay per view television (DSTV) and prepaid electricity meters, customers prefer paying cash and get printed tokens although electronic versions are available. Therefore, it becomes difficult to subscribe for online news especially if payment is requested electronically.

Low Smartphone Mobile Phone Usage

According to Wang et al. (2016) The smartphone penetrates many facets of everyday life. This creates in the culture what Oulasvirta (2012) calls the *check-habit*. The *check-habit* is a great enhancer of access to online news and other forms of electronic communication. Wang et al. (2014) also pointed out that mobile systems have become important tools enabling tourists to navigate an uncertain world. Mobility, in other words, is part of contemporary lifestyles and therefore, as Wang et al. (2014) have suggested there is a need to develop a holistic understanding on the smartphone use for because the use of smartphones for travel is shaped by complex interactions between contextual factors, cognitive beliefs, previous experiences and everyday use, and that smartphone use has the potential to substantially transform the tourist [and other people's experience]

experience. However, Perceived technological barriers negatively affect behavioural control, reflecting people's assessment of themselves being capable of using the services without trouble (Verkasalo et al. 2010). Hence the risk of technophobia affecting access to online news in some parts of the world. Adoption of smartphones may be hindered by physical, cognitive, security and economic barriers [especially in low income communities] while benefits such as perceived entertainment value and perceived flexibility of mobile services as well as the role that functional differences of mobile service bundles play in the process of actual and future use of these bundles may enhance adoption ([Bouwman](#) et al. 2007). This research with a smart phone penetration of only 40% among the respondents may explain (partially) the delay in the migration from printed newspapers to online sources of news.

IMPLICATION FOR RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

The migration from printed newspapers to online sources news is an inevitable phenomenon. However, in Zimbabwe, the printed newspaper is far from extinction. Although several factors that may enhance or delay the migration to online sources of news have been identified, this study has focused on the reader's point of view. More research needs to be carried from the point of view of news companies and their viability. Furthermore, although several strategies have been preventively or proactively adopted, the impact of these strategies still need to be studied. Moreover, business model that underlie printed media in general, especially the need for permanence, should be questioned and other models explored and tested especially in a context where real-time reporting and interaction through multimedia platforms are sought for sources of education, entertainment and news. In practice, owing to the fact that the readership is currently scattered all over the world, newspapers should have hybrid platforms (printed and online) in order to reach both local and diaspora audiences.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed at questioning the viability of the printed newspaper in the digital age in Zimbabwe and concluded that despite increased mobile use penetration and online versions of existing newspapers and other online sources of the news, the printed newspaper is still viable. The paradox of increasing prices under declining preferences that would theoretically force printed newspapers out of business in the United States of America seems not to apply to Zimbabwe (Pattabhiramaiah et al. 2014). Factors influencing the migration from printed newspapers to online sources of news include age, gender, level of education, cost. Real-time broadcasting and interaction, cost and availability of broadband and smart telephones penetration. There is no evidence whether there is a direct relation between migration from printed newspapers to online sources of news with the adoption of online payment platforms. There is, paradoxically, no significant change in the advertisement revenue of printed newspapers although some newspapers have online versions and are competing with purely online newspapers. This shows that the migration of readers from the hard copy to online is inevitable and newspaper companies should therefore develop strong on-line presence to remain relevant. Henceforth, printed newspapers have various strategies in face of challenges brought by online sources of news. These strategy include: pursuit of a dedicated on-line publishing strategy; (2) newspaper organizational restructuring, (3) localization of news, (4) diversification to other media platforms. To the best of the researchers'

knowledge, no study has been undertaken to assess the success or failure of these strategies. Most of these strategies have been adopted in a preventive way given the fashionable nature of electronic devices and the enthusiasm that they generate across the generational divide. However, the print newspaper is far from extinguished given the high cost of broadband against the fact that newspapers can sometimes be accessed without being bought and that stories can be read repetitively without additional costs.

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