



Online Versus Offline Newspaper Readership among Lecturers of Dennis Osadebay University, Asaba, Delta State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Background: The proliferation of online news platforms has significantly altered how people consume news, including among the most educated demographics, such as lecturers. Despite the growing body of research on online news consumption patterns, there remains a dearth of studies on the specific influence of online newspapers on traditional newspapers' readership among academics in Nigerian universities, particularly in Dennis Osadebay University, Asaba, Delta State, Nigeria.

Objectives: The objectives of the study were to ascertain the number of Lecturers in Dennis Osadebay University, Asaba, that read newspapers, determine the type of newspapers the Lecturers read, and find out the extent electronic newspaper readership is replacing print newspapers readership in Dennis Osadebay University, Asaba, Delta State.

Method: The study adopted descriptive survey research design, the study's population was five hundred and forty-two (542) Lecturers. The population is such that the researchers can conveniently cover thus, a census was adopted. Data were gathered through a questionnaire titled "Influence of online newspapers on traditional newspapers' readership Questionnaire (IONTRQ)." Data collected were analysed with the use of frequency counts and percentages.

Results: The findings show that while many Lecturers regularly engage with newspapers, there is a clear preference for electronic newspapers due to their convenience and accessibility. However, a portion of Lecturers still values printed newspapers for their credibility and detailed content. Despite the growing trend toward digital news, concerns about the reliability of online sources indicate that print newspapers continue to hold importance in academic settings.

Conclusion: The study concluded that there is a clear trend among Lecturers at Dennis Osadebay University, Asaba, towards preferring online newspapers, largely due to factors such as accessibility, convenience, and the availability of up-to-date information.

Unique Contribution: This study has offered new insight into the type of Newspapers University Lecturers read, especially Dennis Osadebay University, Asaba, Delta State, and the extent electronic newspaper readership is replacing print newspapers readership in

Key Recommendation: The study recommends that the university promotes both print and online newspaper access by providing subscriptions to reliable online platforms and maintaining print newspapers in the library to ensure Lecturers stay informed and benefit from diverse news sources.

Keywords: Influence, Lecturers, Newspapers, Online, Readership, Traditional



INTRODUCTION

The rise of online news websites and the Internet has brought big changes to the media world. The growing spread of digital media and how people use the content has created a lot of competition for traditional newspapers, which used to be the main source of news and information. It bugs the mind whether traditional newspapers can be sustained as readers tend to shift to the online. In the last ten years, the way people read news online has grown a lot. Pew Research Center (2019) found that more people are using online newspapers as their main source for daily news, and this trend has been growing steadily over time.

This trend is due to a number of reasons. Firstly, online news platforms make it easy and quick to get the latest information. With just a few clicks, readers can view news articles, videos, and other multimedia content from different sources around the world" (Pew Research Center, 2019). Unlike traditional newspapers, which need to be physically delivered and are usually limited to coverage in specific regions or countries.

The way online newspapers let people interact is another big reason why they are becoming more popular. As Singer (2018) pointed out, online newspaper platforms allow readers to interact with the content, express their views, and take part in conversations through comments and social media. This level of interaction helps create a feeling of togetherness and involvement that regular newspapers find hard to match.

Another benefit of online newspaper platforms is that they allow users to tailor their news experience according to their personal preferences and interests (Haim, Graefe, & Brosius, 2018). Readers can personalize their news feeds, get suggestions that match their interests, and choose to ignore the information they don't care about. Because smartphones and mobile devices are so common, it's easier for more people to read online newspapers. According to the Pew Research Center's 2021 report, almost nine out of ten Americans get their news through digital devices, and smartphones are the most popular way people access online newspapers. Due to how easy and convenient it is to use mobile devices, people can now get the latest news anytime and anywhere, which has made traditional newspapers less popular over time (Newman, Fletcher & Kalogeropoulos, 2020).

The drop-in people supporting traditional newspapers is a problem not just for the newspaper business, but also affects society as a whole. Traditional newspapers have always been seen as important parts of democracy. They help people learn about what's happening, start discussions in society, and make sure those in power are responsible (McChesney, 2013). Their investigative journalism and detailed reporting have played a key role in uncovering corruption, increasing awareness about social problems, and influencing public opinion. As traditional newspaper readership may be falling, people are worried about how this might affect the quality of news, the variety of stories being covered, and the well-being of democratic societies (Tambini, 2015).

In addition, the quick rise of online news websites and changing reader habits are creating big difficulties for the traditional newspaper business. Online newspapers are popular because they are easy to use, engaging, and tailored to individual preferences, which makes them especially appealing to younger people. Because of this, traditional newspapers are finding it harder to keep



their readers, and they have to change how they operate to fit the new media environment. So, this study was done to look at how online newspapers are affecting the readership of traditional newspapers among lecturers at the Dennis Osadebay University (DOU), Asaba, Delta State, Nigeria.

The quick growth of online news websites in Nigeria has raised worries about how it is affecting the readership of regular newspapers. More Nigerians are now getting their news from digital sources, which is making it harder for traditional print newspapers to keep their readers and stay relevant in a media world that's becoming more focused on digital platforms.

This change in how people consume media has raised important questions about whether traditional newspapers can stay around, and what steps they need to take to keep up in the digital age. Okafor (2019) states that "there is a clear trend showing that the number of people reading printed newspapers in Nigeria is decreasing." He says this drop is because more readers are choosing to get news online. Online platforms make it easier, give updates as they happen, and offer more types of content like videos and pictures. Smartphones, social media sites, and news apps are now widely available, making it easier and more convenient for people to access online newspaper content (Yakubu & Mohammed, 2020). This change in technology has completely changed how people get and engage with news.

However, there seems to be the paucity of literature that analysis this trend robustly. Albeit there have been some comparative studies on online and offline newspaper readership, yet, none of the existing studies had looked at it from the perspective of this study that is focused on how the advent of online newspapers affects the newspaper readership patterns of university lecturers.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objective of this study is to investigate the influence of online newspapers on traditional newspapers` readership among lecturers in Dennis Osadebay University, Delta State, Nigeria. The specific objectives are:

1. To ascertain the number of lecturers in Dennis Osadebay University, Asaba that read newspapers.
2. To determine the type of newspapers, either electronic or hardcopy, the lecturers read.
3. To find out extent electronic newspaper readership is replacing print newspapers readership in Dennis Osadebay University, Asaba, Delta State.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study used the Technological Determinism Theory as the main idea to build its foundation. The idea was developed by Marshall McLuhan in 1964. The main ideas of the Technological Determinism Theory say that all communication technology is like an extension of humans, helping them reach farther in time or space. These tools are like parts of the human body. Also, you can't really understand a medium until it's not the main one anymore. The idea says that the



media don't just change their surroundings, but also the messages they share (Asemah, 2011). The media introduce new ways of seeing things, and their technologies create new kinds of environments. The medium determines the content of communication. The medium can change how people see the world, and mass communication is now the main way people interact with each other.

In addition, McQuail (2010) mentioned that technological determinism is the idea that technology is the main force driving changes in society. Social changes are shaped by technology, technological progress, communication tools, and media. The modern information society comes about because of the growth of new inventions, technologies, and how they affect society and politics. The growth of computers, networks, and the Internet has greatly transformed many areas of not just how people communicate, but also how life is lived across all of society. More people are starting to use electronic newspapers, which is changing how society and individuals get and use information for various purposes. So, using technology in making newspapers focuses on communication aspects, like getting feedback during the sharing of information, using communication tools, audio and visual devices, videos, and computers. Technological Determinism Theory suggests that new technologies are the main force behind changes in society, influencing how people act and how societies are organized.

The theory is connected to this study about how online newspapers affect the readership of traditional newspapers among lecturers at Dennis Osadebay University, Asaba, Delta State, Nigeria in multiple ways. Moving from old newspapers to online news websites shows how technology shapes the way things develop. In this study, technological determinism shows how the rise of online newspaper platforms is changing the way lecturers at Dennis Osadebay University, Asaba, read and get news.

Secondly, lecturers, just like many others, are drawn to the convenience, immediacy, and interactive features provided by online newspaper platforms. People need quick access to different news sources and the chance to interact with content as it happens, which are important technology needs that influence how they choose what to read. Moreover, technological determinism shows how traditional newspapers struggle in a time when digital media is everywhere. As more people turn to online news websites, regular newspapers find it harder to keep their audience and stay up-to-date. Also, the Technological Determinism Theory helps explain the changes happening as traditional newspapers move towards online newspaper platforms. This theory helps explain how lecturers at Dennis Osadebay University, Asaba, are changing the way they read, and it shows the wider impact this is having on the traditional newspaper industry in Nigeria.

Concept of Online Newspapers

Online newspapers in Nigeria have changed a lot over time, similar to how digital journalism has developed around the world, as noted by Ogunleye (2020). Online newspapers, sometimes called digital newspapers or e-newspapers, mark a big change in how news is shared, using digital formats that can be accessed over the Internet. These platforms have changed the way news is made, read, and spread, affecting how traditional media works and how people interact with news (Adeyemi, 2019).



It is important to understand that online newspapers have many different aspects. They include different digital formats like news websites, mobile apps, and e-paper versions, giving users a lively and engaging experience (Adeyemi, 2019).

The development of online newspapers in Nigeria follows the country's progress in technology, showing how more people are becoming skilled in using digital tools and staying connected online. Online newspapers in Nigeria are known for features like real-time updates, use of multimedia, ability to reach people worldwide, interactive content, and having searchable archives (Yusuf, 2021). These platforms offer up-to-date news coverage, instant alerts for breaking stories, and live updates about events, making sure information is timely and relevant in today's fast-moving information environment (Odusote, 2018). Using videos, pictures, and interactive graphics helps tell stories better and keeps people interested, which work for different types of content people like.

Online newspapers in Nigeria have a big effect on traditional media. These platforms have caused audience fragmentation because readers are moving more towards consuming news digitally, according to Ogunleye (2020). This change affects how ads are funded, who watches the content, and how different media types come together. Traditional media companies have to come up with new ways to share their content, use different types of media to tell stories, and find new ways to make money so they can stay relevant in today's digital world. Even though there are issues like spread of false information, illegal copying of digital content, security risks, and difficulties in making money, online newspapers are still important in the Nigerian media scene (Adewale, 2022). They give people different viewpoints, help spread important information quickly during emergencies, connect with younger people, and make Nigeria more known around the world. Online newspapers help support a variety of media, democracy, and active participation in society by giving more people a chance to share their views and making it easier for the public to see clear and honest discussions.

The Evolution of Online newspapers in Nigeria

The development of online newspapers in Nigeria shows a big change in how news is shared and consumed, driven by new technology and how people now want to get their information. Moving from traditional print media to digital platforms has changed the way news is made, shared, and read. Online newspapers started appearing in Nigeria during the late 1990s and early 2000s, as the Internet became more popular among people in the country. Early adopters were well-known print media companies that wanted to increase their audience by making online versions of their newspapers. Some important early leaders in this area were *The Guardian*, *Vanguard*, and *Punch*. They started their websites to meet the needs of the increasing number of people using the Internet (Okorie & Salawu, 2016).

The rise of online newspapers in Nigeria was greatly supported by improvements in Internet technology and higher levels of Internet access. The spread of cheap smartphones and the growth of mobile broadband networks made it simpler for Nigerians to get news online. By the mid-2000s, the number of people using the Internet in Nigeria increased a lot, which made it easier for online newspaper websites to start growing quickly (Nwabueze, 2017).



In the late 2000s and early 2010s, there was a growth in independent online news websites that only existed in digital form and didn't have printed versions. Websites like *Sahara Reporters*, *Premium Times*, and *The Cable* became well-known for their in-depth investigations and up-to-date news stories. These platforms took advantage of the Internet's quick access and ease of use to offer different news sources, usually covering topics that traditional media often ignores (Omenugha & Opara, 2018).

The use of social media in online newspapers brought about a major change in how digital news is presented and shared. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp became essential for sharing news and connecting with audiences. Online newspapers used social media to spread news, interact with readers, and bring more visitors to their websites. This interaction encouraged a more involved style of journalism, allowing readers to comment, share, and discuss news articles (Ekeanyanwu & Kalyango, 2013).

Even though online newspapers have grown quickly and become widely used, the industry still had to deal with many difficulties. Problems like the gap in access to technology, weak Internet in rural places, and the sharing of false information were big challenges. Traditional newspapers also faced a drop in readers who read printed papers and fewer ads being sold, which led many of them to create mixed approaches that used both print and digital methods (Uche & Umukoro, 2017). Today, online newspapers play a key role in Nigeria's media landscape. The COVID-19 pandemic sped up the move to digital media because more people started using online platforms for news and information while staying at home during lockdowns. The future of online newspapers in Nigeria seems bright, as new technologies continue to develop and more people are becoming familiar with using the Internet. However, the industry still needs to deal with issues like making sure news is reliable, fighting false information, and finding ways to make money that last (Oboh, 2020).

Traditional Newspaper

French word called "nouvelles," which means news. The French word for "paper" comes from the Latin word "papyrus," which refers to the material people used to write and print on. The name "newspaper" comes from the words "news" and "paper." It simply means a paper that has news as its main content. However, a more inclusive definition of a newspaper can be described as a publication that is released on a regular schedule and includes news, features, opinion pieces, images, and other types of information along with advertisements (Okon, Obukoadata & Ekwok, 2022, pp.49). Newspapers are types of publications that come out regularly, often every day, and they share news, facts, interesting stories, and cultural information to inform, teach, amuse, and promote culture, as mentioned by Okon, Obukoadata & Ekwok, (2022).

A newspaper is usually known as a group of folded printed paper sheets that are made public. It is a printed publication that comes out regularly, often on a daily or weekly basis, made up of folded pages that are not stapled together, and typically includes up-to-date news, opinions, special features, advertisements, and letters from readers (Odorume, 2012).



The first printing press in Nigeria was set up in Calabar in 1846 by Rev Hope Waddell from the Presbyterian Church of Scotland Mission. Then, in 1854, Rev Henry Townsend started another press that was used to print the first newspaper in Nigeria (Odorume, 2012).

Today, there are many newspapers in Nigeria that are owned by private people or by the government. More newspapers are now available on newsstands, which has led to more competition. Because of this, newspapers are trying to offer a wider variety of content and include a broader range of opinions in what they publish. Newspapers are now seeking new and less-covered areas to gain an edge over other publications and take a bigger share of the market, and the Internet has given them this opportunity (Okonofua, 2014).

Until about a decade or two ago, newspapers, magazines, radio, television, and professional journalists in Nigeria controlled and dominated the news and airwaves. That is no longer the case. The reason they were so successful and dependable had a lot to do with the ways news and information were collected and shared. These methods relied heavily on the responsibility of journalists and editors to ensure the accuracy and integrity of the news coming from their media organizations (Nwafor Apeh, Onu, & Nsude, 2023). They could rely on and guarantee the truth of their sources, so they felt sure about what they printed or aired.

If a journalist shares information without checking where it came from, it can lead to serious problems for them and the news organization they work for. For them, following the rules of fairness, objectivity, and balance was standard practice. So, Orr (1990, as cited in Anyanwu, Aghogho & Chikodi, 2024) says that you should always listen to the other side before you publish something, even if they just say 'no comment.' This shows that the fairness doctrine applies to both print and broadcast media, helping to protect different viewpoints from being silenced.

The public's right to know was a major reason why journalists took risks and challenged those in power; that time seems to be gone (Nwafor, Nwasum, & Nkwuda, 2017). But the current situation caused by digital media has made ordinary people act like journalists, and the rules about how news should be collected and shared have been ignored to get stories out faster. It looks like everyone is eager to verify the information. All the news is treated like it's just happened, and regular news outlets are now seen as trustworthy and genuine sources. Odoemelam, Christian, Morgan, and Daniel (2018) stated that "technology is controlling the present media activities in Nigeria, especially through the Internet and social media." The authors also mention other sources that say the new media are used to change the broadcast environment.

Overview of newspaper market in Nigeria

Newspapers have played a big role in helping people communicate at local, national, and global levels, and they have been important in bringing about change and spreading globalization, as stated by Ezuilo, Okon, and Okugo (2020). According to McQuail (2010), newspapers come in many different forms. These forms include 'free newspaper' funded by advertisements, and more recently, the 'electronic newspaper available online, which removes the time and location restrictions of the traditional newspaper.' In Nigeria, both traditional newspapers and online newspapers are available, but there is no such thing as a free newspaper. Traditional newspapers in Nigeria include both hard news and soft news stories, which are written in very different styles and



have different structures. The hard news covers specific events, statements, and reports on politics, government activities, and major disasters. Recently, the main topic has been about terrorism, kidnapping, and banditry, while the softer news stories have focused on romance, religion, and human interests. The newspaper heavily includes tribal and ethnic aspects in how it presents and shapes its stories. According to Okon (2018) and Sunday (2017) most Nigerian newspapers are controlled by private business owners, with more than 95 percent owned by private entrepreneurs,

Governments at various levels used to have a majority share, but this is happening less and less every day. This might be the reason why most newspapers found it simple to move from print to online publishing. The news content has also leaned heavily towards catering to the local audience, featuring snippets of some national and international trends that have been officially classified, which has reclassified the newspapers as national. Newspapers often highlight stories like photo news, famous people's activities and personal lives, political events, and crimes.

Readers come from all walks of life, but people from higher and middle-class backgrounds are less likely to read physical newspapers unless the topics discussed are relevant to them. Low-income people spend more time reading newspapers at local shop vendors through the 'free-reader club' (FRC). This same tradition has been moved into the online space where people can read newspapers for free, so even before new technologies really started to affect the industry, the number of readers and copies being sold had already begun to decrease. This caused a lot of worry back then, just like it does now.

At a forum held by the Advertising Agencies' Association of Nigeria (AAAN) in Lagos in 2010, there was a discussion about the future of newspapers in Nigeria. Many people at the event said that unless the print media made changes to deal with the challenges from new digital media, they could disappear soon. This job came about because of a report that showed a serious drop in newspaper readership. The report said that the daily sales of all newspapers were below 300,000, which meant that at that time, only one out of every 410 Nigerians bought a newspaper every day (Ekeng, 2010).

The decline has continued steadily over the years, with circulation and subscriptions dropping, even though e-copies of the newspapers are available. The argument has always been that the simple ability to share and store information easily, which is a big part of new media, has made it hard for traditional newspapers to compete, even in Nigeria (Uduma & Obukoadata, 2016).

Popoola (2010) had previously argued that the total number of newspapers sold daily in Nigeria now is much lower than the 500,000 copies sold each day by the *Daily Times* in 1980, even though the country's population has since doubled. Right now, the piles of unsold newspapers and magazines in the circulation areas of most print media companies clearly show how big this problem is. Ekeng (2010) says that *The Punch*, which is the top selling newspaper among the top eight national dailies and ranked first, only had 34,264 copies in circulation. *The Sun* came in third place with 25,632 units sold. *Vanguard* had 25,241 sales, and *Guardian* and *This Day* placed fifth and sixth with 25,222 and 21,703 sales each. *Daily Trust*, the most popular newspaper in the North, sold 11,672 copies each day. *Tribune*, which is the oldest newspaper still around in Nigeria, was another unexpected result, with only 8,314 copies sold each day. On the lower end were



Compass, *Daily Independent*, *Leadership*, *National Life*, *New Nigeria*, *Mirror*, and *Westerner*, which managed to sell only about 1,600 copies each day.

Although some Nigerian newspaper owners have questioned these numbers, they are still the only published data on Nigerian newspaper circulation, as noted by Olaniyan (2019). The situation has stayed confusing because, as Ayankunbi (2020) pointed out, no Nigerian newspaper is a full member of the Audit Bureau of Circulation (ABC). This organization is meant to check and confirm accurate and reliable circulation numbers for newspapers and magazines. So, any numbers or ideas suggested by the newspaper owners are just guesses. This is why a federal government agency called the Nigerian Press Council (NPC), which was created to control print media in Nigeria, couldn't give the regular daily sales numbers of major Nigerian newspapers in its list of newspapers and magazines published in the country (NPC, 2013).

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Ayankunbi (2020) did a study to look at how electronic newspapers affect the number of people who read print newspapers in Lagos State, Nigeria. A multi-stage sampling method was used to choose 1,113 newspaper readers from four local government areas in Lagos State for the survey. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire. The study was based on Technological Determinism Theory, which suggests that all technology is a form of communication. The study found that electronic newspapers are harming print newspapers because people mainly use electronic newspapers for news since they get the information they need more quickly than with print newspapers.

There is also the slow change from printed newspapers to electronic newspapers. The study found that the Internet has changed the media industry, particularly in how newspapers are published, which has led to a decrease in readers who prefer printed newspapers. The paper suggested that publishers should think about printing evening newspapers to help the public get information more quickly, and to keep readers updated on the latest happenings or important news, which could help print newspapers keep their current readers and attract more people.

Okon, Obukoadata, and Ekwok (2022) looked at how digital media affects traditional newspapers in Nigeria, focusing on the views of both readers and people in charge of the media. The research looked at how things are changing in Nigeria from the viewpoints of both the people and those who manage the media. For this study, both applied and survey research methods are used. Roger Fidler's theory of Mediamorphosis, along with the Toronto School's Medium theory, formed the theoretical foundation. The study found that traditional print media are in danger because of low circulation numbers, falling ad income, and some newspaper companies closing down. So, it was decided that a big change has happened in the media world, and traditional media in Nigeria needs to adjust to this change if they want to stay important. The study suggested that Nigerian newspaper owners and managers should come up with fresh ideas, offer something new to their readers, and find better ways to connect with their audience. This will help them increase their income and stay in business.

Asemah and Gambo (2016) looked at how online newspapers affect the readership of traditional newspapers, and they focused on the staff members at Kogi State University in Anyigba. It tried to



find out how the online version affected the readership of the printed version. The study was based on the theories of media richness and uses and gratifications. A survey research design was used, and a questionnaire was the tool for collecting data. The results indicate that online newspapers are causing a decline in the sales of traditional newspapers because people now mostly read news online. The results also show that online newspapers have a significant impact on how many people read traditional newspapers. The study found that online newspapers are having a negative effect on the readership of traditional newspapers. According to the conclusion, the study suggests that print media companies should try their best to boost the distribution of their newspapers to the most distant areas of the country. This would help ensure that there are enough copies available for readers in those regions.

Ukonu et al (2013) conducted a study titled 'Influence of Online Newspaper Readership on Print Newspaper Purchases.' The research aimed to look at how important print newspapers were in terms of being bought, especially during a time when new media has led to the growth of online news platforms. The authors wanted to know if people are still buying and reading newspapers even though there are online newspapers available, and how this change has impacted the number of people reading traditional newspapers among staff and students at certain universities in the South-East. The study's results indicate that a higher percentage of Nigerian students, specifically 98%, have access to and read online newspapers compared to university staff in the South-East region.

According to Ukonu et al (2013), online newspapers offer important advantages compared to print newspapers. However, these advantages do not impact or change the decision to buy print newspapers. They also mentioned that the benefits of online newspapers are linked to other factors, such as the cost of print newspapers and how much people like the content, which are reasons why fewer people are buying print newspapers. Additionally, the use of social media plays a big role in influencing how much people buy print newspapers. Based on their findings, the authors, along with others, suggested that newspaper owners should aim to find a good balance between the cost of print newspapers and the value that readers get from them. They also recommended that reading print newspapers in universities and colleges should be promoted by regularly giving students challenging tasks that would encourage them to get newspapers on their own, as these can be helpful resources.

Each of the studies mentioned earlier offers different viewpoints that set them apart from this current study, which looks at how online newspapers affect the readership of traditional newspapers among lecturers at Dennis Osadebay University, Asaba, Delta State, Nigeria. Emmanuel and Taye's 2022 study is notable for its focus on how electronic newspapers affect the number of people who read print newspapers in Lagos State, Nigeria. This is different from the current study, which looks at how lecturers read in a university environment. Okon, Obukoadata, and Ekwok's research (2022) differs as it assesses the influence of digital media on traditional newspapers from the perspectives of both audiences and media managers. Unlike the previous study, this one focuses only on how lecturers read and use materials, and does not include the viewpoints of media managers. Asemah and Gambo's (2016) study looks at how online newspapers affect the reading habits of staff members at Kogi State University. This study has a regional focus, which is different from the current study that focuses on lecturers in Delta State. In



2013, Ukonu, Ani, and Ndubisi looked at how reading online newspapers affects the buying of print newspapers by students and staff at universities in the South-East region. This is different from the current study, which focuses on how lecturers in another part of Nigeria read online and traditional newspapers.

METHODOLOGY

The quantitative research method was used for this study, and questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection. The population of any research is made up of the individual units that the researchers studied. The target population for this study consisted of all lecturing staff of Dennis Osadebay University, Asaba. According to Registry Unit of the University (2025), there are 542 Lecturers in DOU.

Since the study's population is small and can be easily managed, a census was taken to adopt the entire population as sample size for the study. This decision is justified by scholars like Guanah (2022) and Ifeakor (2009) who opine that a population can be used as the sample size in a study if the population is not large. The accidental/convenience sampling was used to locate respondents in the study area.

Data collection was done through a self-structured questionnaire. The instrument comprised two sections A and B. Section A contained demography information about the respondents while section B contained items related to the research questions. Copies of the questionnaire were administered to the respondents through electronic and physical means. The researchers retrieved copies of the questionnaire immediately after the completion of the filling, and they were used for data analysis in the study.

In order to establish the validity of the instrument, the instrument was given to a Professor of Mass Communication for proper evaluation, and corrections were made for face-validation. Content reliability was assessed to see whether the instrument reflected the concepts it intended to measure.

The data collected were analysed with the use of tables, frequency counts and percentages. This process is justified since the study is description of respondents' perception on the subject under investigation. Again, use of tables, frequency counts and percentages facilitated a quick and better understanding of result.

A total of 542 copies of the questionnaire were administered on the respondents, out of this, 100 copies were retrieved. The 522 copies of the questionnaire that were retrieved represent 96.3% of the total distributed copies.



RESULT

Table 1: Distribution of respondents according to age

Age (in years)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Less than 25	3	3.00
25-34	35	35.00
35-44	40	40.00
45-54	12	12.00
55 and above	10	10.00
Total	100	100.00

Source: Survey data, 2024.

Table 1 presents the age distribution of respondents, revealing a diverse demographic composition. The data suggest that the majority of the respondents are within the productive age brackets of 25-44 years, accounting for a combined total of 75%. This indicates that the survey primarily captures the views of individuals who are likely to be actively engaged in both professional and academic settings, potentially influencing their media consumption habits, particularly in relation to online versus traditional newspapers. The lower representation of respondents below 25 years (3%) could reflect a smaller population of younger lecturers or early career academics in the university. This age profile may have significant implications for understanding the adoption of online newspapers among lecturers, as younger age groups are typically more inclined to embrace digital media, possibly at the expense of traditional print formats.

Table 2: Frequency of newspaper readership

Regular readership of newspaper	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	233	43.00
Agree	174	32.00
Neutral	81	15.00
Disagree	43	8.00
Strongly disagree	11	2.00
Total	542	100.00

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Table 2 reveals the frequency of newspaper readership among Lecturers at Dennis Osadebay University, Asaba, Delta State, Nigeria. The high level of regular readership suggests that newspapers remain a relevant source of information among the respondents. This indicates that



newspapers continue to play a vital role in informing the public and contributing to civic engagement.

Table 3: Preferred version of newspaper being read

Items	Frequency	Percentage
Electronic copy	325	60.00
Printed/hard copy	217	40.00
Total	542	100.00

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Table 3 indicates a strong shift towards digital news consumption, though a significant minority still values the traditional format of printed newspapers.

Table 4: Possibility of online newspapers eventually replacing print newspapers

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Highly Possible	173	32.00
Possible	130	24.00
Undecided	97	18.00
Impossible	92	17.00
Highly Impossible	49	9.00
Total	542	100.00

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Data presented in Table 4 suggest that while many see a future where online newspapers could dominate, there remains considerable uncertainty and skepticism.

DISCUSSION

The first objective of the study was to learn how many lecturers at DOU read newspapers. Many lecturers at DOU were found to read newspapers regularly. Most of the people surveyed, about 87%, either strongly agree or agree that they read newspapers often. This shows that newspapers are still seen as a reliable and dependable source of information by academic professionals. Both printed and online formats are important for helping lecturers learn more, grow in their careers, and take part in community activities. This finding matches other studies that show people who often read news, especially in newspapers, tend to know more and care more about what's happening in the world (Boulianne, 2009). Regular readers of news media also gain a better understanding of political, economic, and social changes, which are important for people in academic fields. Gunter (2010) also backs up the idea that regularly reading the news leads to more involvement in civic activities, showing that reading newspapers is a key part of academic life. Some lecturers did not agree or were neutral about newspaper readership. This means that although newspapers are still important to many people, some members of the academic staff might be starting to use other sources for news. The growth of digital platforms, social media, and mobile news apps might provide more convenience and variety, which is making them more



popular among some lecturers, according to Kovach and Rosenstiel (2014). Even though this is the case, most people still prefer traditional news formats, showing that they still have a lot of value.

The second objective of the study was to discover which type of newspaper the lecturers at DOU read. The study discovered that Lecturers at DOU tend to prefer electronic newspapers more than printed ones. About 60% of the people surveyed like reading news online, but around 40% still like getting news from printed newspapers. This result matches the worldwide movement toward more use of digital tools, which is happening because of better technology and more online information becoming available. Online newspapers provide convenience, easy access, and instant updates, which make them especially appealing to academics who need the latest information for their research (Gunter, 2010). Additionally, electronic news is accessible on many different devices, which makes it more popular.

Many lecturers still prefer reading printed newspapers even though there are other options available. This liking for physical books comes from seeing them as more trustworthy, having better editing, and providing a more concentrated way to read compared to digital versions, as noted in Nielsen's (2016) research. Printed newspapers are usually linked with detailed and thoughtfully selected content that attracts readers who want comprehensive analysis instead of brief news updates. This shows that although many people are enjoying the benefits of digital platforms, a large number still prefer the richness and quality of printed news.

The result shows that newspapers should offer both digital and traditional versions to better serve different groups of people. Digital platforms offer convenience and quick access, but keeping high-quality print editions can still draw readers who appreciate detailed and in-depth journalism (Edelman, 2020).

The third objective was to see if people are reading electronic newspapers instead of print newspapers in DOU. The results show that most lecturers at DOU think electronic newspapers might eventually take over printed newspapers, and more than half of the people who took part in the study believe this change is either very likely or quite possible. This shows that digital platforms are becoming more powerful in the media world, especially because online news is easy to get and happens quickly (Tandoc & Johnson, 2016).

However, some people think that electronic newspapers will not fully take the place of print newspapers. People are worried about whether online news sites are reliable and trustworthy, as Flanagin and Metzger (2000) have pointed out, which might explain this perspective. Although digital platforms are fast and easy to use, they are also commonly linked to false information, unfair views, and missing checks for accuracy. Lecturers, who need accurate and detailed information, might still rely on printed newspapers because they value their careful and dependable reporting (Newman, Fletcher, & Kalogeropoulos, 2020). Some respondents are still unsure, showing that they do not know if digital formats can really match the trustworthiness and thoroughness of regular newspapers. As Tandoc, Lim, and Ling (2018) pointed out, moving from print to digital news involves more than just technology, it also focuses on keeping trust and following journalistic standards. Print newspapers, known for being accurate for a long time, still



play an important role in academic settings where having trustworthy information is essential for teaching, research, and meaningful discussions.

Nevertheless, the truth remains that online newspapers are still preferred to the print version, the possible reasons may be because it is easier to get news on different devices, and digital news is usually cheaper than printed versions, which makes online platforms more attractive, especially for academics who need dependable and up-to-date information.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that there is a clear trend among Lecturers at Dennis Osadebay University, Asaba, towards preferring online newspapers, largely due to factors such as accessibility, convenience, and the availability of up-to-date information. While online newspapers are generally favoured for its ease of use, the study also revealed that concerns about their credibility remain, suggesting that traditional newspapers still maintain a level of trust among some readers. The shift from print to digital news consumption is evident, yet the study concluded that uncertainty persists regarding the complete replacement of print media by online newspapers. This indicates that both formats continue to coexist, reflecting the ongoing transition in news consumption habits.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study's objectives and findings, the following are recommended:

1. To sustain and encourage regular newspaper readership, DOU should promote access to both print and electronic newspapers by offering subscriptions to reliable online platforms and maintaining a collection of print newspapers in the library of the university as this will ensure that Lecturers continue to stay informed and benefit from diverse news sources.
2. Given the shift toward electronic newspapers, DOU should prioritise access to digital platforms while maintaining support for those who prefer print. A balanced approach ensures Lecturers can choose the format that best suits their needs.
3. To embrace the growing trend of online newspaper consumption, DOU should improve digital literacy among Lecturers, and provide training on using reliable online news platforms.

Ethical clearance

Ethical consent was sought and obtained from the participants used in this study. They were made to understand that the exercise was purely for academic purposes, and their participation was voluntary.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Authors' Contributions

Dr Jammy Seigha Guanah conceived the study, including the design; Precious Ophori collated the data, and Dr Lucky Edewor handled the analysis and interpretation, while Dr Paul Bebenimibo read through the initial manuscript. All authors have critically reviewed and approved the final draft, and are responsible for the content and similarity index of the manuscript.

Availability of data and materials

The datasets on which conclusions were made for this study are available on reasonable request.

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