WHAT IS KILLING NEWSPAPERS IN LAGOS STATE: THE INTERNET OR DWINDLING ECONOMY?

Sunday Ogbonna, Ph.D
Department of Mass Communication
Caleb University, Lagos.
Tel.: +234-08034025405
Email: oyesun@yahoo.com

Abstract

Newspapers in Switzerland and the Netherlands, have lost half of their classified adverts to the internet as reflected in an article titled: Who killed the Newspaper? in The Economist of April 24, 2006. However, in recent time, the Nigerian economy has faced a major decline that has affected the existence of newspapers. The marriage of newspapers to the web has not yet proved financially successful for the older medium (Baran, 2012). Thus, this paper examined the impact of economic recession and the internet on newspapers in Nigeria. Study adopted the survey research, sampling four hundred staff of selected newspapers and anchored on the political economy theory. Study found that seven out of ten staff of the four newspapers representing 77.4% said their daily activities are affected by the current economic recession; five out of ten staff of the four newspaper houses representing 47.3% strongly agreed that the internet has effect on the readership of printed newspaper, and four out of ten sampled representing 39.5% said that their management performed fairly during the period. It is therefore recommended that for newspaper houses to survive recession, they should relate with employees and motivate them to give their best.

KEYWORDS: Print media/ownership, Political economy theory, Economic recession, Internet (Online) newspaper.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

A study by Woweffect (2010) on circulation of newspapers in Nigeria showed that less than 30,000 were printed on a daily basis. Although newspaper publishers and proprietors in the industry has countered this figure. Whereas in the 1970’s, Daily Times alone sold half a million copies and six hundred on Sundays. As at 1982, National Concord newspaper was selling four hundred thousand copies a day. Several other newspapers like Vanguard, The Punch, Nigeria Tribune, The Guardian, The Sketch newspaper, The New Nigerian newspaper, and lots of evening newspapers
also made tremendous impact in terms of sales in the Nigerian media landscape (Ogbonna, 2012)

*The Punch* newspaper was selling as much, if not more than the *National Concord* newspapers. The *Nigerian Tribune* was selling close to *National Concord* newspapers. During the 80’s, the number of newspapers increased astronomically, so also was the readership. As at that period, some families bought an average of three different newspapers daily and readership and circulation figures were quite high. Newspaper houses recorded few unsold copies as against the quantity recorded presently. The newspaper industry then was viable and these encouraged investors. However, in the 90’s, the story changed dramatically, newspaper readership declined considerably. Many newspaper houses recorded large quantities of unsold newspaper copies daily, thereby resorting to advert as a source of revenue (Ogbonna, 2012).

By mid- 1990s publishing houses experienced a downward trend, which led to some media organizations scaling down the scope of their operation. While some resorted to down-sizing their workforce, the print media houses that could not stand up to it had to put their production on hold or simply shut down. Publishing became a struggle to survive. Investors began to try several experiments to keep afloat, including launching into the internet (Media Review, March/April, 1999). In the year 2000, several newspapers such as *National Concord, The Anchor, Post Express, Daily Times* etc, closed down. Many others could not meet their financial obligations to their staff and creditors and were on the verge of closing down too (Ogbonna, 2012).

The plight of the traditional ink-and-pulp newspaper industry has become something of a global phenomenon, explained largely in terms of technological revolution which has been sweeping the media landscape (Fitzgerad, 2009). Newspapers in Switzerland and the Netherlands, for instance, lost half of their classified advertising to the internet as reflected in an article titled: “Who killed the Newspaper?” published in *The Economist*, April 24, 2006.

Similarly, in recent time, the Nigerian economy is faced with decline as oil revenue dropped significantly and this has vastly affected the corporate existence of most print media. The atmosphere has become more challenging for publishers as they are faced with global financial crisis that is hitting both the media and its business environment.
It is apparent that one of the factors that determine the success of any private owned print medium is a booming economy. However, the recent economic downturn has adversely affected most print media. The print media is now experiencing a downward slide which has led to layoffs and cost cutting strategies to remain afloat. Even the advertisers are not left off by the dwindling economic; consequently, they have resorted to cost-cutting measures which has further reduced the revenue of the print media. The declining newspaper readership is world-wide, where global recession and online media have affected businesses. Thus, the survival of the print media has become difficult in a highly competitive and unique industry that requires quality content that would attract both readers and advertisers. The atmosphere has become more challenging for publishers as it is in the era of global financial crisis that is hitting both the media and its business environment. The readership and patronage of the private owned print media is therefore affected.

This paper therefore examined the effect of the economy and the internet on private owned print media in Nigeria. The study seeks to examine the effect of economic downturn on private owned newspaper; determine how the internet has affected their patronage, and to assess the role of management in newspaper production in Nigeria. In as much as it can be argued that economic factors have contributed to the collapse or otherwise of several newspaper houses, the question still remains: “why has there been a decline on the readership of newspapers in Lagos State where several others have failed (see table 1 on extinct newspapers from 1994-1997)? These and more questions have agitated researchers.

This study seeks to answer the following questions:

(i) What is the effect of poor economy on private owned print media in Lagos State?
(ii) How has the internet affected the patronage of newspapers in Lagos State?
(iii) What is the role of management in newspaper production in Lagos State?

2.0 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Online Newspaper
The movement of readers from newspapers to its online editions is not limited to the developed world but has also become a visible thing in Nigeria. Chukwu (2014) stated that:
Ever since the inception of the Internet and the proliferation of its services, there has been an unremitting decline in the use of other media. This has initiated and sustained a global trend of unrelenting resort to the internet as a means of news and information dissemination. A trend of this nature has consequently had a baneful effect on the traditional print media, and paradoxically, a positive one on online journalism and e-news.”

Many newspaper outfits all over the world have found a way to maintain visible presence in the Internet. The opportunities offered by the online media are utilized in two ways; they are either established as an autonomous and wholly online news service or an offline subsidiary of a parent publication, i.e., traditional newspapers distributing their editions on the Net, while they are still sustaining the printed copies (Onologueira, 2008), cited in (Odozi, 2013). The internet has increased competition for newspapers and revised the way news is distributed. (Hassan, Lattif & Afek, 2015). The efforts of newspapers in staying afloat in the digital age, is directed at two areas; cutting cost, and increasing revenue. (Dominick, 2013). The marriage of newspapers to the web has not yet proved financially successful for the older medium (Baran, 2012). According to Dominick (2013), online newspapers have certain advantages over traditional newspapers, thus:

1) Printed newspapers are limited by the *news hole*, the amount of news that can be printed in one edition. Online papers have no such limitations. The full text of lengthy speeches, transcripts of interviews, and extensive tables and graphs can be accommodated easily.

2) Online papers can be updated continuously; there are no edition deadlines.

3) Online papers are interactive. E-mail addresses, comment boards, and chat rooms allow readers to provide quick feedback to the paper. Many have searchable archives and links to other sites. Online papers can provide photos, video and audio clips to accompany news stories and advertisements. Some even offer social networking opportunities.

4) Online newspaper can feature user generated contents.

Nigerian online newspapers give their readers (home and abroad) the opportunity to access news stories feeds via their computers, laptops and even mobile phones. They give readers the chance to upload reports of news worthy issues around
them, make provision for search engines which enable their readers to easily retrieve information on topical issues or issues of choice. They also give room for opinion polls that help in getting feedback from readers. Chukwu (2014) argued that:

> The migration of newspapers to the web has been consequently accompanied with that of its readership. However, much as this poses a dilemma, it has jolted journalists and media organizations into the realization that being technologically savvy is the only sure means of remaining relevant in an increasingly changing and competitive journalism, and a good number of them are stepping up to the plate. The migration of major newspaper outfits in the country to the internet reaffirms this.

The internet has thus empowered many Nigerians to gain access to read newspapers on their mobile phones. Moreover, it gives the reader access to different sources for the same information all for free.

**Print Media Ownership**

The issues of media ownership and control can never be overstressed due to the dwindling situations surrounding media practice in the country. “He who pays the piper calls the tune” is a common statement in the media. Ownership has continued to play an influential role in the editorial policies of the mass media. The media is said to take the form of where the practice is being carried out i.e. the way the media operates in Nigeria cannot be the same as the way it will function in other countries such as Russia. Asemah (2009) describes the media as a channel or technological devices through which messages are conveyed to a large heterogeneous audience, they are the vehicles used for conveying message from a source to a large destination. Many media scholars and experts in Nigeria, Africa and indeed around the world agree that the media have some form of impact, influence and/or effect on its audiences. However, the direction, nature and extent of this influence, impact and/or effect remains a source of disagreement.

In his own view Edie (2001) noted that the mass media all over the world have established themselves as a new channel – a third channel for political, (social and economic) influence – and in many aspects also as an independent power broker. Thompson (1995) believes that the media have played a central role in the development of modern institutions. In contrast, Kupe (1999) claims that in the African scenario the media have always been minor to the lives of most people in the continent. The media also have functional roles in the political, social and cultural structures of society including surveillance by acting as society’s
watchdog and directing members of society to important societal issues. Olayiwola (1991) explained that the media provides news and sets the agenda for political, social and cultural discourse.

**Private Media Ownership**

Hynds (1972) defines newspapers as the society’s primary instrument of mass communication and till today the logbook of human affairs than any other means of communication. The *business dictionary* (2015) defines the print media as the industry associated with the printing and distribution of news through newspapers and magazines. *Oxford dictionary* defines it as the Means of mass communication in the form of printed publications, such as newspapers and magazines. Private ownership has the merit of giving the media the opportunity or freedom to criticize the ills noticed in the government unlike the ones owned by the government. In Nigeria, a significant number of intellectuals, journalists, and businesspeople believe that government should not interfere with ownership and control of the mass media. The important point implicit in this viewpoint is the assumption that the pattern of ownership of the mass media is crucial in determining the strength or weakness of the press in any clime. Kupe (1999) is of the view that in the African scenario the media have always been peripheral to the lives of most people in the continent. But Tettey (2001) argues that the media are among the forces that have shaped, and continues to define the establishment of democracy in Africa.

Studies on media ownership have focused on diverse perspectives. A study by Ohlsson (2012) titled: The Practice of Newspaper Ownership: Fifty Years of Control and Influence in the Swedish Local Press, examined the issue of newspaper ownership. The aim of the study is to analyse the long-term development of the role played by the boards of directors in the managing of newspaper companies and to determine how variations and changes of the board role are related to the internal and external contextual factors of the company. The study found that foundation ownership in the Swedish newspaper industry has lost many of its distinct traits in comparison to other ownership forms.

A study carried out by Udoinyang (2015) examined the effect of media ownership in Nigeria: the problems and prospects, using a qualitative research method. Study stated that the deregulation of the Nigerian media through, the Deregulation of Broadcasting Decree No.38 of 1992 by the administration of General Babangida made it possible for electronic media ownership to include private people thus opening up the media space. Thus, study concludes that a deregulated media allows the people to have greater access to information and also serves to protect the electoral process in a democracy.

Another study by Apuke (2016) titled: Media Ownership and Control: An Overview of the Marxist and Pluralist Theories, aimed at reviewing the various types of media ownership and how it is being controlled either privately or publicly and how the control affects the media operation linking it to the Marxist
and Pluralist theory, revealed among other things that although Nigerian private media flourishes but their continuity depends on not overstepping or overriding on the government power. Individuals own the media while government policies influence its operations.

A study by Dympna (1984), examined the ownership patterns of Nigerian newspapers. The paper observed that whatever the type of media ownership it can easily be observed that there is little difference in editorial coverage and slant of these newspaper organisations. Owners of the private media are often politically motivated. There slant is usually favourable to one political party while the rest is either ignored or vilified.

Nguevese (2014) examined the influence of ownership in radio news coverage (a study of Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria, Enugu). This study was undertaken to examine to influence of ownership in radio new coverage, concentrating more on government owned media. The result revealed that, radio news coverage is highly influenced by the owner’s (government) and the news that is covered is owner’s interest oriented instead of public interest oriented. The research also shows that the government has influence on radio news coverage.

Ali (2015) carried out a study on media ownership and control versus press freedom in a democratic Africa. The paper looks at how the ownership of media organizations across the continent has interfered with the standards of professionalism in journalism. The study concludes that in a developing continent like Africa, the mass media remain the best option for government to bring development to the public. A close partnership between governments in Africa and the mass media will help development in the continent.

In another related paper by Ezeah (2005) examined the media ownership control and democratic development in Nigeria. The paper adopted explorative analysis into the issue of media ownership control and democratic development in Nigeria. The onus of the paper is to examine the diverse patterns of media ownership control and democratic development using the Nigerian situation as a case in point. The paper concludes that private-owned mass media, at times, lack freedom and objectivity compared to their government counterparts. The private-owned mass media do not augur well in a developing country like Nigeria whose present political, economic, social, and cultural orientation is different from that of America and Britain, where media ownership is chiefly private control.

Yet, a related paper by Ukonu (2008) examined the patterns of media ownership in Nigeria. The paper analyzed the impacts of ownership patterns on media freedom and professionalism. It argues that the media ownership climate in Nigeria is very cloudy, and not conducive for optimum operations, especially for private media. Government uses its regulatory agencies to frustrate media freedom.

A similar study by Mordi, and Ogbu (2017) examined The Influence of Newspaper Ownership on the Objectivity of Coverage of Nigeria’s 2015
Presidential Election. The study objectives were to find out the impact of politician-business person-owned (PBO) newspapers on the objectivity of the reportage of the 2015 presidential election in Nigeria by some selected media organisations. The study used the historical approach in tracing the evolution of newspapers in Nigeria from the pre-independence to post-independence, and it submitted that the ideologies of the owners in the two ages are remarkably different. The study found that the media controlled by politicians and businessmen, raises some ethical issues, as demonstrated during electioneering in the 2015 presidential election in Nigeria.

Another study on newspaper ownership by Clark (2012) examined newspaper ownership structure and the quality of local political news coverage. The study sought to ascertain how newspaper ownership structures influence the quality of local political news coverage. The major findings of the study as pertains to ownership structure, is that political news constitutes a larger percentage of the news hole for independently owned newspapers than for corporately owned papers.

Apuke (2016) equally explored the issues in media ownership and control in Nigeria. The study was aimed at reviewing the various types of media ownership and how it is being controlled either privately or publicly and how the control affects the media operation linking it to the Marxist and Pluralist theory. The study concludes that both private and government media should be allowed to practice freely without any internal or external forces. The media should not be allowed to be left in the hands of the rich at the expense of the poor.

In another study by Akhavan-Majid, Rife & Gopinath (1991), examined “Chain Ownership and Editorial Independence: A Case Study of Gannett Newspapers. The study compared the editorial positions taken on three public issues in 1989 by fifty-six (56) newspapers in the Gannett group with a matched set of one hundred and fifty-five (155) other newspapers. Study found that Gannett newspapers were more likely to take positions but also less likely to vary in the positions taken.

Similarly, Maheshwari (2015) adopted the content analysis of two English news channels and examined the influence of media ownership on tone and quality of content. The researcher studied channel’s ownership pattern to establish the role of ownership on news content interviews conducted by journalists and media experts. Study findings show that it was evident from the interview of journalists and media also that management exerts pressure on editorial team and try to influence their view points. Management plays important role in content creation and delivery of news programmes.

A study by Adesoji, & Hahn, (2011), titled: When (Not) to be a Proprietor: Nigerian Newspaper in a Changing Polity raised issues on some fundamental questions as to why various parties venture into or desire to retain ownership when
it is risky or economically unwise to do so. Using historical analysis approaches, the authors argue that the glamour and self-fulfillment in newspaper proprietorship as well as the parochial interest which some newspapers have served allure their owners and even encourage the addition of new titles even when other dynamics point to the contrary.

In summary, empirical literature showed little or no relationship with present study. Studies reviewed mostly examined newspaper ownership as it affects the editorial and news content of the newspaper. Others focused on the pressure exerted by the publisher or proprietor of the newspaper. However, this study examined the effect of the dwindling economy and internet on newspaper publication in Lagos State.

**Growth and Decline in Nigerian Newspapering Industry**

Although the late 1980s and early 1990s witnessed a mushrooming of sorts in the newspaper and magazine industry, but by mid-1990s many of the titles had died, while the thriving ones were forced to scale down their operations, discontinue the publication of some of the titles in their stable, as well as, increase the cover prices of those left.

**Table 1: Extinct Publications 1994 – 1997**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Newspaper/Magazine</th>
<th>Name of Newspaper</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evening Times</td>
<td>The Republic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigerian Economics</td>
<td>Citizen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visa</td>
<td>Quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poise</td>
<td>Eko</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Times Week</td>
<td>City News</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports International</td>
<td>The Voice Razor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money Matters</td>
<td>Master Sports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Posts</td>
<td>Sports Star</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Champion</td>
<td>City Sports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mail</td>
<td>Nigerian Herald</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lagos Weekend</td>
<td>Sunray</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abuja Newsday</td>
<td>AM News</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate</td>
<td>Community Concord</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** *Newswatch* Nov. 6 1995

The bewildering rapidity with which newspapers emerged in quick succession and failed soon afterwards and the straining of existing ones continued right up to 1999. At the macro-economic level, the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) gave rise to a new millionaire class who took advantage of the harvest of speculative activities and dubious financial juggling of the so-called “wonder banks” at the time. Many of the emergent newspapers and magazines took
advantage of the financial wave, while the on-going transition programme to civil rule under Babangida’s regime provided the incentive. This short-lived financial boom ended up in a huge crash of several banks produced by SAP, with attendant inflationary spiral, low capacity utilisation, a heightened crisis of infrastructural decay and diminishing external reserves.

Effects of Economic Recession

The dwindling Nigerian economy is as a result of the significant drop in global crude oil price caused by the descending trend of Naira to Dollar. Issues in oil price instability and how it impacts on economic growth have continued to generate controversies among economic researchers and policy makers. The most significant effect of the declining economy is the current crash in the price of crude oil in the international market which portends negative implications for government revenue. Nigeria relies heavily on crude oil revenue to fund government spending. Oil accounts for about 15% of Nigeria’s GDP but it makes up about 80% of government revenue. Thus, the declining oil price has adversely affected governments’ revenue; increasing the requirement for borrowing and debt service (as debt servicing is expected to gulp about 26 percent of the 2015 aggregate revenue), thereby impacting the funds available for capital expenditure. While Akpan (2009), Aliyu (2009), and Olomola (2006) argued that it can promote growth or has the potential of doing so, others scholars like Darby (1982), Cerralo (2005) etc. are of the view that it can inhibit growth. The former argued that for net-oil exporting countries, a price increase directly increases real national income through higher export earnings, whereas, the latter cite the case of net-oil importing countries (which experience inflation, increased input costs, reduced non-oil demand, lower investment, fall in tax revenues and ultimately an increase in budget deficit which will further reduce welfare level) in advancing their argument. Nigeria has depended solely on one major source of revenue, which is the crude oil, and this is very risky for any economy and an unfavorable shift could disorganize the economic activity of a nation and course its collapse as is the case of Nigeria, since there will be no other source to fall back to. A decline in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth is a sign that a recession may be underway, but it is rarely a cause. Data released by the National Bureau of Statistics (2016) in the last two quarters of the year 2016 depicts a continuous decline of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), increasing inflation and unemployment rate. A series of effect of the dwindling economy in Nigeria is job loss, inability to pay workers, reduced purchasing power, inflation and a strident call for the devaluation of the naira by the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

2.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Political economy theory

Political economy theory is an approach to studying media with the focus on the way in which media is produced, distributed and consumed. Political economy theory can be traced to the works of Adam Smith and Dave Ricardo, whose
writings in the 18th and 19th Century outlined the Political and economic model which was broadly supportive of the developments of economic markets and free trade, and was based upon a labour theory of value, which suggested that the value of the goods and commodities produced is directly related to the amount of labour which goes into making that product. Smith and Ricardo’s work was taken up in the mid-19th century by Karl Marx who in 1867 published a book titled: ‘Capital’: Critique of Political Economy, which functioned as a critique of the emergent political economy of capitalism during the industrial revolution (n.d).

The political economy theory is an old label that has been revived to identify a socially critical approach which focuses primarily on the relation between the economic structure and underlying forces of media industries and the moral content of media. It directs research attention to the empirical analysis of the structure of ownership and control of media and the way media market forces operates. From this point of view, the media institution has to be considered as part of the economic system with close links to the political system (Theories of communication, n.d.). Looking at the political and economic system in Nigeria and the economic policies that drive the economy over the years, it can be argued that these policies have done more harm than good in the growth aspect of the Nigerian economy and it has adversely affected media businesses that strive in the country.

This theory is relevant to this research work with the topic in the sense that the media like other sectors of the economy is subject to the irregularities of the economy and as such, forces the print media to change or adjust its structure to suit the economy. The cost of production and distribution is greatly affected by the instability of the Nigerian economy especially now that it is in recession. Most media outlets will find it difficult to run its business smoothly and will want to stay afloat, as they are mostly privately owned and profit oriented

A previous study related to the one at hand, was done by Chukwu, Liman, Enudu and Ehiaghe (2015) its objective was to determine the Effect of Economic Recession in Textile Manufacturing Industries in Nigeria. Study found that the effect of economic recession in manufacturing industries were low capacity utilization and factory closure, horrendous nosedive in stock market prices, delisting of shares at the stock exchange, fall in commodity prices and low foreign direct Investment. This clearly gives an insight as to what economic recession can result to which often times destabilizes the work flow in organizations and create a sense of job insecurity.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

Present study adopted the survey research design. Campbell (1998), as cited in Tejumaiye (2003), defined research design as the framework or plan for a study that is used in collecting and analyzing a set of data. Four selected newspapers (New Telegraph, The Dependence, The Guardian, and Daily Champion) all based in Lagos State, Nigeria is the study population. Population is the entire group of
individuals or items from which a sample may be selected for statistical measurement (Microsoft Encarta, 2009). The purposive sampling technique was adopted by this study. Agrawala (2010) defined sampling as “the statistical process of selecting and studying the characteristics of a relatively small number of items from a relatively large population of such items, to draw statistically valid inferences about characteristics in the entire population”. Esiri and Onwubere (n.d) defined it as “a technique of drawing samples, i.e., collecting data from part of the population to reveal the characteristics of the entire population” and “as the scientific procedure of drawing samples from a given population. Four hundred copies of the questionnaires were administered indicating that 100 copies were administered to each of the selected newspaper house. Purposive sampling technique because the questionnaire was administered to all journalists, editors, sub-desk and related staff in the selected newspaper houses. Of the four hundred administered, only two hundred and ninety-six was retrieved which gives a return rate of 76%. Analysis was done based on the two hundred and ninety-six returned.

4.0 Data Presentation and Analysis

This study focused on the effect of poor economy and the internet on private owned newspaper in Lagos, Nigeria. In agreement with the sample size, a total of 400 copies of questionnaire were administered. Two hundred and ninety-six were retrieved (showing 74% retrieval rate). The data collected were presented in a pie chart form for easy interpretation.

Pie Chart 1: Frequency distribution of respondents on whether the current economy has any effect in the daily operation of newspaper in Nigeria

From the above table, it is apparent that 229 respondents representing 77.4% said that their daily activities are affected by the current economic downturn in Nigeria,
49 respondents representing 16.5% said that their daily activities are not affected by the current economic situation, 18 respondents representing 6.1% are not sure about the effect of the economy on the daily activities of newspapers. This table shows that most of the respondents are of the opinion that their daily activities have been affected by the current economic situation.

**Pie chart 2: Frequency distribution of respondents on the effect of the economy on their take home pay.**

From the above table, it is apparent that 189 respondents representing 63.9% said that the economy has effect on their take home pay. 107 respondent representing 36.1% shows that it have no effect on their take home salary. The table therefore shows that more of the respondent’s salary is affected by the economic downturn on the newspaper industry.

**Pie chart 3: Frequency distribution of respondents on management performance in the production of the newspaper**

From the above pie chart, it is apparent that 117 respondents representing 39.5% said that their management performed fairly during this period. 110
respondents representing 37.2% said management performed well. 54 respondents representing 18.2% said management performed very well, 12 respondents representing 4.1% said management performed poorly, 3 respondents representing 1% said that management performed very poorly. This table shows more representation of respondents who said management performed fairly during this economic downturn situation in Nigeria.

**Pie chart 4: Frequency distribution of respondent on whether the internet has any effect on the readership printed newspapers in Nigeria**

From the pie chart above, it is apparent that 140 respondent’s representing 47.3% strongly agreed that the internet has effect on the readership of printed newspaper in Nigeria. 102 respondents representing 34.5% agreed that the internet has effect on the readership of printed newspaper. 7 respondents representing 2.4% disagreed that the internet has effect on the readership of printed newspaper. While, 46 respondents representing 15.5% are not sure if the internet has effect on the readership of printed newspaper. This table shows that we have more respondents who agree that the internet has effect on the readership of printed newspaper.
Pie chart 5: Frequency distribution of respondents on whether the online presence is viable

The above table shows that 177 respondents representing 59.8% said yes that the online presence is not viable, 48 respondents representing 16.2% said that the online presence is viable, while, 71 respondents representing 24% are not sure if the online presence is viable or not. This representation shows that the online presence is viable.

4.0 DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

This section deals with the analysis of the above presented data and seeks to answer the research questions in the first chapter.

ANSWERS TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS

RQ1: What is the effect of poor economy on private owned newspaper in Lagos State?

From the data, it is apparent that seven out of ten staff of the four newspaper houses representing 77.4% said their daily activities are affected by the current economic recession, about two out of ten of same respondents representing 16.5% said their daily activities are not affected by the current economic recession. While about one out of ten respondents representing 6.1% are not sure about the effect of the economy on the operation newspapers in Lagos State. This shows that more of the respondent’s daily activities are affected by the current economic situation. Similarly, six out of ten respondents representing 63.9% said that the economy has affected their take home pay; four out of ten respondents representing 36.1% say that the economy have no effect on their take home salary. The table therefore shows that more of the respondents’ salaries are affected by the economic downturn in the industry.
RQ2: How has the internet affected the patronage of printed newspapers in Lagos State?

From the pie chart above it is apparent that five out of ten staff of the four newspaper houses representing 47.3% strongly agreed that the internet has effect on the readership of printed newspaper; four out of ten of the respondents representing 34.5% agreed that the internet has affected the readership of printed copies of the newspaper; less than one out ten of the staff representing 2.4% disagreed that the internet has affected the readership of printed copies of the newspaper. While about one out ten respondents representing 15.5% are not sure if the internet has any effect on the readership of printed copies of the newspaper. This shows that we have more respondents who agree that the internet has affected the readership of printed copies of the newspaper. Likewise, the pie chart shows that six out ten staff of the four newspaper houses sampled, representing 59.8% said that the online presence is not viable, about two out ten staff of the four representing 16.2% said that the online presence is viable, while about two out of ten of the sampled staff representing 24% are not sure if the online presence is viable or not. This representation shows that the online presence is not viable.

RQ3: How has the management of newspaper production in Nigeria performed?

From data above, it is apparent that four out of ten staff of the four newspaper houses sampled representing 39.5% said that their management performed fairly during this period; also, about four out of ten of the staff representing 37.2% sampled said management performed well; about two out of the ten respondents representing 18.2% said management performed very well, less than one out of ten of the staff representing 4.1% said management performed poorly, while an insignificant number of the staff representing 1% said that management performed very poorly. The data thus show that more of the staff said management performed fairly during this economic downturn in the print media houses.

4.1 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study investigated the effect of the economy and the internet on private owned newspaper houses. The media, by extension the newspaper, is an important part of every nation as it is seen as one of the major factors of economic growth and advancement and also serve as a check and balance of government policies, hence its importance cannot be over emphasized.

The data gathered from this research, showed that as would be expected following the dwindling economy, the print media will gradually wind up and eventually collapse. Due to the economic recession as expressed in the findings, data showed that seven out of ten staff of the four newspaper houses representing 77.4% said their daily activities are affected by the current economic recession, about two out of ten of same respondents representing 16.5% said their daily activities are not
affected by the current economic recession. While about one out of ten respondents representing 6.1% are not sure about the effect of the economy on the operation newspapers in Lagos State. The finding shows that majority of the staff sampled were affected by the current economic situation. Similarly, six out of ten respondents representing 63.9% said that the economy has affected their take home pay; four out of ten respondents representing 36.1% say that the economy have no effect on their take home salary. The table therefore shows that more of the respondents’ salaries are affected by the economic downturn in the industry.

However, the newspapers have continued to strive to have a more positive outlook towards achieving the set goals of the respective newspaper outlets as the internet equally posed a threat to the survival of newspaper publications. From the data, it is observed that five out of ten staff of the four newspaper houses representing 47.3% strongly agreed that the internet has affected the readership of printed copies of the newspaper; four out of ten of the respondents representing 34.5% agreed that the internet has affected the readership of printed copies of the newspaper; less than one out ten of the staff representing 2.4% disagreed that the internet has affected the readership of printed copies of the newspaper. While about one out ten respondents representing 15.5% are not sure if the internet has any effect on the readership of printed copies of the newspaper. This shows that we have more respondents who agree that the internet has affected the readership of printed copies of the newspaper. Likewise, the pie chart shows that six out ten staff of the four newspaper houses sampled, representing 59.8% said that the online presence is not viable, about two out ten staff of the four representing 16.2% said that the online presence is viable, while about two out of ten of the sampled staff representing 24% are not sure if the online presence is viable or not. This representation shows that the online presence is not viable.

In terms of the management of the newspapers in the face of the economic downturn and internet challenge, data shows that four out of ten staff of the four newspaper houses sampled representing 39.5% said that their management performed fairly during this period; also, about four out of ten of the staff representing 37.2% sampled said management performed well; about two out of the ten respondents representing 18.2% said management performed very well, less than one out of ten of the staff representing 4.1% said management performed poorly, while an insignificant number of the staff representing 1% said that management performed very poorly. The data thus show that more of the staff said management performed fairly during this economic downturn in the print media houses.

5.0 CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study reveals that although in recent times the Nigerian economy has faced and still continues to face a major declination, this has vastly affected the survival of most print media. Similarly, effect of the internet on published copies of the newspaper cannot be over emphasized. In view of this,
Woweffect (2010) finding that the circulation of newspapers in Nigeria showed that less than 30,000 were printed on a daily basis may be supported. This study finding is equally supported by Chukwu, Liman, Enudu and Ehiaghe (2015) on their insight as to what economic recession can result to which often times destabilizes the work flow in organizations and create a sense of job insecurity, as most newspaper houses are now experiencing a downturn which has led to layoffs and cost cutting strategies to remain afloat. Even the advertisers are not left out by the economic recession; consequently, they have resorted to cutting their advertising spending. This have further reduced the revenues of the print media, and it is apparent that one of the major factors that determine the success of any private owned print medium is a booming economy and the financial stability of a publisher. However, the data collected have shown that with proper management and prudence in expenditure by the newspaper houses coupled with the right motivation, a newspaper firm will not only survive, but also produce, circulate and influence its news consumption. Thus, for the print media to survive, they have to find ways to make their services competitive and unique by publishing quality content, which attracts both readers and advertisers.

5.1 RECOMMENDATIONS

Having analyzed and discussed the findings of this study, the following are the recommendations from the study:

(i) There should be a more aggressive approach to tackling economic situation on the part of the newspaper management, so as to effectively cater for the welfare of the employees and create a less tensed work environment.

(ii) Government in its responsibilities should provide policies and regulations to solve the problem of economic recession, so as to ease the plight of Nigerians.

(iii) The newspaper outlet in its effort to survive the recession should employ emotional intelligence that will help relate with employees and motivate them to offer their best in the work place.

(iv) Newspaper houses should diversify their business and shift from the traditional hardcopy newspapers to the internet outlet.

References


Gilens, M. & Hertzman, C. (2000), Corporate Ownership and News Bias:


ISSN 978-978-53693-8-9

136


