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TECHNOLOGICAL DETERMINISM: NEW MEDIA APPLICATIONS AND ADAPTATIONS WITHIN TRADITIONAL MEDIA IN GHANA

Caroline Aboagye Da-Costa*
Fausta Kilian Ganaa**
and
Ephraim Nana Apeakoran***

*Caroline Aboagye Da-Costa is currently a Research Officer at the Ghana Institute of Journalism. She is a doctoral student of the University of South Africa, with specialization in media brand management and competitive strategies. She had her First degree in Publishing Studies from the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) and furthered with a researched Master of Arts in Communication Science from the University of South Africa. Mrs. Aboagye Da-Costa has 13 years of experience as a University Administrator (2007-2019), having worked at the department and faculty levels as well as the School of Graduate Studies and Research. Her areas of research interest include: Broadcast Journalism, Languages of the Media; Media Regulation, Media Brand Management and Competitive Strategies as well as Media and Sustainability Development issues. She has three (3) publications in refereed journals to her credit. **E-mail**: carol_opong@yahoo.com **Phone No:** +233 207 654 043

Fausta Kilian Ganaa is currently a Public Relations practitioner who believes that the image and reputation of any organization are the most delicate part of its well-being. She specializes in Corporate Communications/ Marketing, Public Relations Management and Secretarial Services. She has spent over 15 years of her life opening communication between clients, customers, businesses and her employers through strategic partnership, client care delivery and consultancy. She knows the methods and approaches to reputation management are not carved in stone, so she continues to educate herself in emerging trends and methodology to provide excellent services to her clients. She received her education at the University of Ghana with a Master's in Communication Studies. She had her Bachelors in Arts (English & R.M.E) from the University of Cape Coast. In addition, she holds a Graduate Diploma in Communications from the University of Ghana. She is an ardent reader and loves to exploit the wealth of knowledge through research. Fausta is currently the Acting Director of the Public Affairs Directorate of Accra Technical University and also an accredited member of the Institute of Public Relations (IPR), Ghana. **E-mail: queenkilian@yahoo.com **Phone No.** +233 548 032 968

***Ephraim Nana Apeakoran is currently the Head of Security at the Ghana Institute of Journalism. He holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Sociology and the Study of Religions from the University of Ghana. He holds three researched Masters Degrees in African Studies, Information Studies and Peace and Development Studies. Currently, he is a doctoral student in African Studies at the University of Cape Coast. His research interest areas are in human security, library studies, sustainable development, physical security, information literacy and political communication . **E-mail**: ephraimwilhelm@yahoo.com **Phone No.** +233 242 565 115

Abstract
Globally, the emergence of digital media was anticipated to pose enormous threat to traditional media's existence and survival. This was due to the ease of entry of gatekeepers. However, to ensure their continued relevance and survival, traditional media harnessed the potential of digital media by converging their services into a hybrid system. By using qualitative design, this study analyses the strategic brand positioning of selected traditional media in Ghana. Findings show that the hybrid system has increased their audience base, increased their news dissemination and improved their audience-credibility rating. It concludes by calling for a malleable approach to media management.

Key Words: Hybrid, Media, System; Media; Technological, Determinism; Traditional, media.

Introduction
Globally, the rise of digital media has brought in its wake sets of opportunities and challenges for traditional media. The era of Covid-19 has made this impact more pronounced as a number of restrictions imposed in nations have curtailed the pronounced outdoorsy that media work is

supposed to be done. The advent of new media was anticipated to herald the end of traditional media (Bullard, S. B. (2013) by sending "a signal to the world that old media empires are modern-day dinosaurs headed for extinction". Thierer, A. D. (1995). While this is yet to materialise, similar to the prediction of the end of print books with the advent of e-books, (Heinderyckx, F. and Vos T (2016) traditional media remains steadfast and have rather diversified their operations to ensure their continued relevance and survival. (Ali, S. R. and Fahmy, S. (2013), (Thurman, N. (2015). New media has opened up the gatekeeping function to everybody who has access to the internet and a network device, (Welbers, K. and Opgenhaffen, M. (2018) resulting in a multiplicity of news streams that has seen traditional news media losing its monopoly of news creation and distribution. (Shoemaker P. J., and Vos, T. (2009). This multiplicity of channels has fostered the argument that traditional news sources have lost the domination as major information sources in the digital era and are fading out. Traditional media and journalism as an occupation has evolved and survived in spite of technological innovations due to "its credibility, which is gained through the collective behaviour of its practitioners". Singer J.B. (2014).

Through the lens of technological determinism, this paper aims at a critical philosophical and empirical analysis of the evolution of traditional media in Ghana, at the emergence of the digital media. It carries out a typical threats and opportunities analysis to identify how traditional media outlets in Ghana have harnessed the advantages offered by new media to impact positively on their activities and increase their relevance.

Literature Review

The emergence of new media and the internet in particular was undoubtedly thought to pose a great challenge to conventional media, the world over (Domingo, D. and Heinonen, A. (2008).

Not only did it open up the news business to anyone who had access to a network device and internet connectivity, but it also increased the content creators and also saw to traditional media losing its monopoly as sole news and information creators and distributors. The digital era presents an age when the use of digital products, networks and devices are prevalent over traditional media and known methods, (IGI Global. (2019) projecting a catalytic effect in media proliferation that has altered the practice of journalism. Today, the gatekeeping hegemonic role of journalism and media practice is threatened by digital technology and competitors, as well as media audiences who are active participants, thanks to the internet (Chukwu, O. C.(2014).

Globally, traditional media is experiencing a decrease in circulation for print and time spent listening and watching for radio and television respectively, due to people's alternative ways of getting information. Although radio continues to remain the most widespread medium across Africa and Ghana in particular (Ghana Statistical Service (2012), the listening population continues to dwindle especially among urban population and the youth. It has been argued that radio, for instance, proved to be a resilient mass communication tool in the face of technological changes in the past (Oliveira. M., Stachyra, G. and Starkey, G. (eds) (2014), however, it has now seen massive drop in time spent listening (TSL), especially among the millennials (Miller, L. S.(2017), (Mathilda, L. (2004), Stein, P.and Burnett (2006). A study by Amadu, Mohammed, Alhassan, and Mohammed Amadu, M. F., Mohammed A. M., Alhassan, A. and Mohammed, F.(2018), who assessed the circulation and readership of printed newspapers in Tamale, the northern regional capital of Ghana found a sharp decline in circulation and readership of printed newspaper in the metropolis in favour of internet powered news websites. However, audiences still found traditional printed media as the most credible and reliable sources for news. Largely, people

tend to believe stories they hear or read in the traditional media than online sources and this credibility is one of the reasons that has rooted traditional media's existence in the face of digital transformations.

In the digital space, the old media processes have not proven sustainable to meet the news needs of the different segments of audiences and "peoples' relationship to news is becoming portable and participatory" (Pew Research Centre. (2010). About 87% of internet users have smart phones (McGrath, F. (2016), and the common-use of smartphones have also served as a catalyst for the engagement on media platforms by audiences. As of the third quarter of 2019, there were about 16.7 million unique mobile subscribers, 15.1 million smartphone devices and 10.7 million mobile internet users in Ghana, ensuring that the nation out-paced regional peers in internet applicability (Omondi G. (2020). The breadth of information available online and the opportunity to personalize news consumption according to individual interests, coupled with being able to get news updates several times a day have pushed audiences online for their news unlike the newspapers whose stories are daily or in some cases weekly. As well, advertising revenues keep declining. This is attributed to the fact that media audiences and advertisers are turning attention to digital alternatives due to the immediacy and interactivity of the internet (Chandra A and Kaiser U (2011), Picard RG (2002). Digital information and news is published every few minutes online, and it is much appreciated in this information age than the print newspaper that is only provided once in a day or week or radio news that is provided hourly. The quandaries of traditional media in their original form have been enumerated to include high and expensive production costs. For example, the print media must be printed and transported to the doorstep of the public before it can be enjoyed by the audiences (Saragih, M. Y. and Harahap, A. I. (2020). Operational challenges such as low levels of advertising revenue and income from sales; distribution problems (such as reliance on street vendors who demand a large share of the profits); and a lack of basic technology, expensive materials and equipment (including printing presses, tape recorders and cameras). Additionally, the issue of electricity shortages; lack of requisite skilled labour; and low salaries among journalists (Wahl-Jorgensen K and Cole B (2008), low accessibility and ineffective marketing strategies; limited reach– print media does not have a global reach, usually restricted to a particular region, area or city. Radio and television are also limited by the frequency and bandwidth.

The rapidly changing consumer patterns and the corresponding shift towards digital content brought the new media to create its impact on the society at a faster pace.[25]The move to the digital platform has changed the way in which people consume information. People easily access news online free and that makes it difficult for them to pay any subscriptions to a newspaper (Simutanyi, N., Fraser, A. and Milapo, N. (2015). As people become busier by the day, the need for information is growing and they want it by the click of a finger (Mpolokoso, A. & Phiri, J. (2018), Mwiya, M., Phiri, J. &Lyoko, G. (2015). According to Mpolokoso and Phiri, People want to interact and communicate quicker and digital platforms are offering them this opportunity. This trend has made traditional media explore the opportunities of new media as a way of changing their woes and reconnoitre the advantages to complement their activities. In the face of new media and technological developments, old media (broadcast/cable television, radio, newspapers, magazines and the majority of print publications) were facing stiff competition from the ever-expanding new types of media (the internet and other online sources). With the associated opportunities and challenges of new media, however, what is of prime importance, as identified by Nielsen (Nielsen, R. K. (2014) is not so much on whether the traditional media and journalism would survive, but rather, how traditional media and journalism could remain in the work of online digital media.

The revolution happening in the information sector brings excitement as

well as challenges in journalism practice (Preethi, T. (2014). Embracing technology, and indeed change itself is not always pleasant. This is because not only does it require new conceptualisation, but also financial and structural implications because of innovative technological resources and personnel to manage it. (Ganiyu and Akinreti (Ganiyu, M. & Akinreti, Q. (2011) have recounted the challenges of how Nigerian journalists within the traditional media landscape initially were reluctant in embracing new digital technologies within the media fraternity. These challenges included funding, infrastructural deficit and a dearth of qualified personnel to man the specialised areas.

Arguably, new media technologies have been perceived as compressing time and space (Williams, C. (2011) and their application have compelled some traditional media forms to totally abandon their old formats, while others, as is prevalent in Ghana, have converged their old media forms with digital media. Newsweek Magazine, a US based magazine, which was founded in 1933 by Thomas J.C Martyn, for instance, ended its almost eighty (80) years publication in print with its last issue dated December 31 2012, as it transited to a total online only format from January 2012 (Isidore, C. (2012). The print version was only relaunched under a new management (IBT Media) (Singh, P. P. (2014). Most traditional media in Ghana have adopted a hybrid system by adapting their services to new media to ensure their continued relevance and survival, and in consonance with new media influenced behaviour, thoughts and guided decisions through the education, information and entertaining roles they perform. New media has shown that the media industry needs to evolve in order to remain competitive in the information provision sector.[27]A virtue of the new media is its ability to archive large media content and the ability to instantly access the information when needed, providing some sense of security. Today, traditional media in Ghana is strongly represented on digital media, making in-roles by providing choice in channels and providing quality and verified information as well, to the population in Ghana and beyond.

These gains notwithstanding, online and digital media sets its own defining criteria for access and use. Ability to read and write, access to a network device and internet as well as electricity are the basic defining conditions essential for effective communication in the digital era. In Ghana, digital media is highly prevalent in urban areas. This is because electricity and internet accessibility in rural communities is limited. Furthermore, online media forms are fast, up-to-date and continuous, and its news can only be accessed using sophisticated tools, and not all people can afford the tools or understand the technology.[23]Until recently, and with the introduction of the flagship Free Senior High School Education Policy by the government of Ghana, the percentage of adult population who are literate was low. The 2010 Population and Housing Census in Ghana revealed that a substantial percentage (23.4%) of the population is illiterate. Additionally, as a developing nation, the economic situation does not provide opportunity for all levels of the population to be able to own smartphones.

Digital media application in spite of the positives has its own downside. The credibility of information circulating on digital media leaves much to be desired, especially because it is difficult to trace the source in this era of fake news. This leads to a loss of public confidence and reduces the legitimacy of the media in holding governments and other public institutions to account. However, digital media has facilitated and augmented the credibility of traditional media's existence on these digital platforms because they are existing news outlets whose trustworthiness has been tested overtime. Providing verified and credible news updates periodically on their digital platforms like the websites and social media handles often provide opportunity for traditional media outlets to

serve as avenues for viral news verification and the reliable alternative amidst the many news channels available to digital news media users (Bosch T (2014), Brandtzæg P, Lüders M, Spangenberg J, Rath-Wiggins L and Følstad A (2015), Bruns A (2003).

The Media in Ghana
The evolution of the media in Ghana started with print newspapers. The first newspaper The Gold Coast Gazette and Commercial Intelligencer was published between 1822 and 1825 by Sir Charles MacCarthy (Hasty, J.(2003), Handwrittennews.com. (n.d.), the then governor of the British Gold Coast settlements. The first African produced newspaper in West Africa, however, was Charles Bannerman's Accra Herald in the Gold Coast in 1858. These newspapers were, however, published in the English language, marginalising a greater percentage of the Ghanaian population. Subsequently, indigenous language newspapers were developed with time and circulated until the first transmission of radio in the Gold Coast in 1935 and Television in 1965. Ghana has had a long tradition of state ownership and control of the media, since pre-independence to post-independence. From the introduction of television until the media airwaves were liberalized in 1996, the colonial and then the post-colonial state monopolized and controlled radio and television. Private media participation was almost absent from the Ghanaian media landscape until 1992, when the current constitution was enforced to institute private participation. From humble beginnings in 1996 with just a few private English language-use radio stations, the National Communications Authority (NCA) had issued broadcast licenses to 412 FM stations by the end of 2015, out of which 313 were on air (National Communications Authority (2018), with most of them operating in the local languages prevalent in their communities of operation.There are now over 50 newspapers in Ghana and 100 television stations.

Theoretical Framework - Technological Determination Theory
This study is anchored and grounded in the Technological Determination Theory. The theory postulates that technology is the principal initiator of the society's transformation and so it shapes how society operates, thereby informing how individuals in the society think, feel and act with the transition from one technology age to another (Burnett, R. & Marshall, P. D. (2003), Rogers, E. (2000). The proponents of technological determinism argue that the society is influenced and shaped by technological development, thus, it has to adjust and adapt to new technologies and innovations. They further argue that any negative consequence of technological development are the resultant effect of poor use by the people, not of the very nature of technology. Haven been revisited at the emergence of the internet, scholars have determined two approaches to technological determinism as hard and soft determinism, where "hard determinism makes technology the sufficient or necessary condition for social change, while soft determinism understands technology to be a key factor that may facilitatechange (Lehman-Wilzig, S. & Cohen-Avigdor, N. (2004), Gunkel, D. (2003).

The development of this theory is usually attributed to the American sociologist Thorstein Veblen (Hauer, T. (2017), who theorised the linkage between technology and the society within which the technology is applied. He observed that, any social changes are attributed to the technology, technological development, communications technology and media. Today's modern information societies and systems, which have impacted the way the media produce and distribute content, started in the early 20th Century. With the rapid development of technology in the internet era (innovations, new technologies and their associated social and political implications), journalists and the profession of journalism has explored the potential of new media affordances to reach their audiences. Subsequently, it has been conceptualised that the medium is ultimately the message, since the medium

determines the message to use in reaching audiences (McLuhan, M. (1962). Internet and the nature of new media is fundamentally changing the structure of the society.The role of the media has sparked tremendous and unexpected changes in the life of a greater number of people in the society since the massive change in how communication is being carried out and delivered brought about a massive change in the way people think and behave in their respective areas.

Methodology
The exploratory nature of this study in seeking in-depth insights on how traditional media in Ghana is coping with information dissemination in the new media era required the use of a research method that will help unearth information. To this end, the study was approached qualitatively. Qualitative research utilises an inductive approach that is purposefully centred on in-depth describing, explaining and interpreting of collected data. This was relevant for the exploratory process since exploratory design approached qualitatively helps the researcher build an understanding of the problem. Qualitative analysis seeks to measure, make comparisons, examine relationships, make forecasts, and test hypothesis. The characteristic of exploratory studies which makes it a valuable means of understanding what is happening, to seek new insights, to ask questions and to assess phenomenon in a new light (Yin, R. K. (1994) was the basis for its deployment in this study. Exploratory research has the goal of clarifying concepts more precisely, gathering explanations, gaining insight, eliminating impractical ideas and forming hypothesis.

Using the qualitative research method involves the use of both primary and secondary qualitative data, such as interview, documents and observation, to understand and explain a social phenomenon. Secondary analysis involves the analysis of data collected by other researchers for other purposes than the current research (Bryman, A. & Bell, E.

(2007). The main secondary data used in this study was information displayed on the websites and social media pages of the outlets sampled for this study. Primary data, on the other hand is information that is gathered purposely for the study in question. Such information is purposive and so very relevant to achieve the objectives of the study. The main primary data source for this study was semi-structured interviews. News editors, social media managers and social media curators of the various news outlets were interviewed for in-depth insights. The researchers used thematic analysis to identify patterns for themes. Thematic analysis is a form of pattern recognition within data, which makes use of emerging themes as categories for analysis (Bowen, G. A. (2009). Semi-structured interview sessions begun with the preparation of an interview schedule to guide the sessions. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. The transcripts were sent to the interviewees to ensure factual accuracy. After careful reading and re-reading of the transcripts, there was a general skimming through the pages to familiarize with the contents. After a second reading, general ideas and patterns that emerged helped to code initial themes. After coding, six themes emerged. These will be discussed in the findings and discussions.

Sampling of media outlets
The process of selection of media outlets for this study was purposive. Purposive sampling is often applied in situations where the choice is necessary for "substantive significance or theoretical relevance" (Dubé, L. & Paré, G. (2003) and also where the selection of cases will best enable the researcher to answer research questions and to meet set objectives (Saunders, M., Lewis, P.& Thornhill, A. (2009). The study involved three traditional media outlets – The Graphic Communication Group Company Limited and Multimedia Company Limited, and Citi Group. They were selected because they started operations as solely traditional

media outlets at different stages of the media evolution cycle, and converged their services with new media when the circumstances dictated the need. They were also chosen based on the information power they wield, considering the number of years they have been in operation and the experience they possess.

Overview of Graphic Communications Group Company Limited (GCGCL)

The Graphic Communications Group Company Limited (GCGCL), formerly the West African Graphic Company has been in existence since the 1950. It is the leading and largest state owned newspaper publishing company in Ghana, with dominance in the print media. Its online platform – graphic.com.gh is a relatively a new addition to the group's line of production. The Daily Graphic is the flagship newspaper of the company and commands the largest readership base in the country with an audience share of 36.25% (2,290,000 readers) in the first quarter of 2017 (Geopoll. (2018). The GCGCL runs a chain of newspapers under the group including Daily Graphic, Junior Graphic, The Mirror, Graphic Business, Graphic Sports, Graphic Showbiz, and Graphic Youth World. Aside its publication and distribution of newspapers, it undertakes commercial printing of calendars, brochures and newsletters. It also specializes in the printing of packaging materials and operates a courier services as well.

Overview of Multimedia Group

Multimedia Group started its operation with Joy FM, an English language FM station, as one of the first commercial FM stations after the liberalisation of the media airwaves in Ghana in the 1990s. It was first licenced by the NCA on 13th January, 1995. From an initial station, the group now operates a number of radio stations like Joy FM, Adom FM, Hitz FM, Luv FM and Nhyira FM, with diversification in both the English and Akan languages mainly in the Greater Accra and Ashanti Regions of Ghana. It has a television station, Joy News TV and two online brand extensions, myjoyonline.com and adomonline.com,

with a host of social media presence. In successive Geopoll audience ratings, Multimedia with its parent brand Joy FM continues to chalk great successes. For the period between May and July 2015, as well as the second quarter of 2017, *Joy FM* took the third position with 9.5% and 10.4% respectively of audience share in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana (Geopoll. (2017), Geopoll. (2015). Additionally, *Joy FM* were placed third and fourth with 5.2% and 4.9% national audience listenership respectively in the same polls (Geopoll. (n.d). In 2017, *Joy FM* maintained the third position with an estimated 83,000 audiences in Ghana.

Overview of Omni Media Limited

Omni Media Limited operatesCiti FM as the main media enterprise and other media outlets like Citi TV and citifmonline.com. Citi FM was authorised by the National Communications Authority on 28th February, 2002, but on-air operations started in 2004 on the frequency 97.3. Although Citi FM is not as old as the GCGCL and Joy FM, *Citi FM* has been recognised for its reliable information, making it a house-hold name in Ghana. It was, for instance, adjudged the best English-speaking Radio Station in Ghana at the 24th Ghana Journalists Associations' (GJA) Awards ceremony.

Based on the Geopoll audience ratings for the period between May and July 2015, and the second quarter of 2017, *Citi FM* was placed third with 5.2% national audience listenership. In the summarised 2017 radio consumption rankings rated by audiences, *Citi FM* was second with an audience consumption number of 84,000 making the station one of the preferred in Ghana. Its inclusion in this study makes it not one of the pioneers in the radio industry, but one that stared in the internet era as a radio station but has managed to grow, rubbing shoulders with giants in the media industry in Ghana.

Findings and discussions

This section presents a narrative discussion of the findings of the study with intermittent

injection of interview extracts from the transcript to enrich the discussion.

Diversity with purpose: digital media is a must for traditional media in the digital era

Richard Bawden of KPMG has noted that, for traditional media to survive and remain sustainable in the digital era, there is an immediate need to practice 'diversification' (Freedman, D. (2010), which is the immediate embrace of digital revolution and the internet. Traditional media forms in Ghana seems to have heeded this call by embracing digital media forms and converged it to their known traditional formats into a hybrid system. This indispensable addition was a must for traditional media to remain relevant in the digital space. Haven done that, traditional media has been strengthen and achieved a better grounding in the industry than those that operate solely onlineor traditional outlets. Experiences obtained in the traditional media environment has given them a leverage for adaptation in the digital space. In effect, digital media has increased the opportunities of traditional media rather than posing as a threat. Arguably, digital and online additions to traditional media formats have increased their audience-base since they maintain their traditional outlet audiences and have now gained online audiences. This is observed in the interview with the Social Media Managers, Social Media Curators and News Editors of the sampled news outlets:

> You do not really have a choice, unless you want to go out of business. We don't really have a choice but to plug into these new changes, so we, especially at the management level have had to do that and adapt. We've had to learn, unlearn and relearn some of these new ways of communicating with our audiences. You know, we are coming from a technical radio

background. New media might seem very huge, confusing and complex but with the little knowledge we have gained, we have been able to adapt. The new media terrain has made it so, so if you do not want to adapt, the system will adapt and leave you. You have to reorient yourself, there is a lot of reorientation that has gone on for members of staff to get them ready for the new system. It's been a pretty interesting journey, I must confess. It's been a good journey *[Social Media Manager, Citifmonline.com]*.

We have had to be proactive because we realised everyone was going digital and traditional media was no longer the point of call when there was "breaking news" or when people search for news. They often went online first, because it was found to be easily accessible. We therefore had to make a conscious effort to have it and also push for it. You also realise that it is very interactive so anytime audiences needed a response, we could provide it. So it made more sense to invest in it*[Social Media Curator, Myjoyonline.com]*.

Social media never came as a threat to Multimedia. This is because our traditional formats, i.e., radio and television are still operational. While we have audiences to these channels, our online channel has also served as alternative media to attract the millennials who mainly seek their news needs online*[Social Media Manager, Myjoyonline.com]*.

As the first national newspaper with nationwide coverage, we realised our circulation rate was going down so we strategized to operate both the online and offline services, while we intensified our packing wing. This has considerably improved our finances, compensating for our declining circulation and advertising

rates. Again, we realised that with this online service, we are able to reach audiences within and outside Ghana, whom we will never have reached with our hardcopies, and we are never too late with our distributions are well *[News Editor, GCGCL]*.

The media landscape has changed so everybody wants to move along with the change and traditional media is no exception. That is the reason why media outlets like Citi now have the radio, TV and digital brands with the social media platforms *[Social Media Manager, Citifmonline.com]*.

New media affordances have afforded traditional media outlets an opportunity to publish news as and when it breaks, and also update their audiences whenever it is necessary. Unlike traditional radio and TV where news is broadcast hourly or the Daily Graphic which is issued daily, the digital outlet helps to keep in touch with audiences and also engage with them through commenting and other feedbacks provided. Another striking feature is that, unlike the typical cumbersome processes involved in storing information in the main traditional media setting, more news content spanning years canbe stored digitally and easily retrieve by just the click of a button or searching with a keyword. This is evidenced below:

> With our traditional media news, we have to wait until it is news time to broadcast news for our listeners, unless it is breaking news. And also because radio and television news is transient, audiences must be alert during the news time to receive the news we broadcast. However, with our digital presence, we always have news on our website and social media which audiences can refer to hours, days or even years after publication *[Online News Editor, Myjoyonline.com]*

Before the digital era, storing and retrieval of news information was cumbersome. We had to store information on tapes, diskettes, CDs and pen drives for retrieval at a later date. But with our digital system, it automatically archives our news and it is easy to retrieve news for whichever day, right when it is needed *[News Editor, GCGCL]*.

Financially, traditional media outlets with digital brand extensions have had their finances improved by diversifying their income sources to include the digital sources. Income from advertisements have increased proportionately since people who place adverts in the traditional media also request for digital placements as well. The following interview extracts emphasise this position:

> New media has also strengthened our finances. This is because as a Multimedia group, the survival of each component of the group depends on the joint finances of the group. No unit is autonomous of itself and so though we work to improve our finances every day, we never think of financial survival*[Online News Editor, Myjoyonline.com]*.

Previously, we used to give out our newspapers to some organisations on credit. With our online service, our revenue has increased because the newspapers distributed on credit have reduced. Our subscription services for instance are pre-paid, relieving us of debt and follow-up for debt payments *[News Editor, GCGCL]*.

Brand Credibility is a hallmark that has ensured survival of traditional media in the digital era
Traditional media, especially print newspapers commanded enormous credibility before the advent of the internet and digital media. This was because information seen in the dailies was perceived to have beenverified and so

audiences could trust the content. The advent of digital media presents an open media environment with no limits on who publishes and what can be published. The multiplicity of news sources seems to have only increased news sources, as well as brought in its wake an era of fake news circulation where people fail to confirm news stories before publication, largely because they want to be the first to share it (Endert, J. (2018). The array of news sources have not replaced the important role that traditional media played in terms of providing verified and credible news. The online presence of traditional media has increased their relevance to their audiences, with an appreciation in their credibility rating among the audiences they reach.It has been observed that, even on digital media platforms, traditional media outlets serve as sources of credible news stories, avenues for viral news verification and the reliable alternative amidst the many news channels available to digital news media users. These interview extracts are evidential:

> In this era of fake news, we have realized that the traffic on our websites have been increasing by the day and our followings on social media has also been increasing. When there is breaking news, like the death of former President Rawlings, visitors to our website skyrocketed. Everybody wanted to confirm from our source whether it is true. I believe the audiences trust the information we put on our website and social media handles*[Online News Editor, Citifmonline.com]*.

Graphic treats all social media sources as unverified, and so it has to be taken through the process of verification and authentication before publishing. Social media stories are considered as social not empirical or true stories and must be taken

through verification, we need to find out about its authenticity before stories from social media are used *[News Editor, GCGCL]*.

The increase in the number of visitors to the online websites of traditional media, as revealed by the analytic plug-ins of their systems has paralleled the increase in adverts and sponsored posts on these digital and social media outlets. Multimedia, Omni Media Limited and the Graphic Communication Group Company Limited appear to be benefiting from their years of experiences and their credibility in providing quality and reliable news to their audiences.

Interactivity: the game of the business
Unlike the old format of traditional media which was not very interactive, except for Letters to the Editor for print newspaper and phone-ins for radio and television programmes, new media technologies deployed in the digital era has changed the game. Largely, online news consumption is based on the functions of interactivity, rapidity and selectivity. These three functions of online news enable readers to choose their most loved stories through the guide of hyperlinks to engage with. Audiences are now able to interact with their programme hosts and favourite media outlets, sometimes contributing to the way a programme should be handled or the selection of themes and song lists. Audiences send messages, phone into programmes, send comments on stories and even repost stories, headlines and links sent by media outlets to their friends in other networks. Not only is it possible to do this, but it is also done in real-time. This is as observed below:

> At first, we did not have opportunity to engage and interact with our audiences. We only produce content and gave it to them. The era of digital technology has made our audiences very active members of our business. We interact

with them on our individual programmes. Sometimes they send us feedback on our programmes and we incorporate their suggestions in our programming. We sometimes make them select songs for our playlists or they choose the themes for discussion on our programmes. We are happy to engage with them because it gives us assurance that someone out there is listening to us*[Online News Editor, Citifmonline.com]*.

Yes, we engage with our audiences a lot. That is like the core of how we are able to stay up in the trend. For this year, the Super Morning Show on Joy FM and multimedia is always fun... There is a lot of engagement. We run promotions and surveys to find out people's opinions on issues. We do a lot to engage with our audiences. Sometimes in music selection for our shows, we engage with our audiences to sometimes vote to select artistes whose music they would like to hear on our shows. We just do these to ensure that we make the audiences a part of what we are doing *[Social Media Manager, myjoyonline.com]*.

We make our audiences interact with our programmes, events, personalities and segments. This interaction happens all day, as long as our radio, TV, online and social media programmes run. There are different units for different points of interaction. So we sometimes use has htags like#JoySMS to interact depending on the programing running. Night Street Jam, also uses #Night Street Jam. *[Social Media Manager, myjoyonline.com]*.

Specialized skills for specialized roles
Initial cost of converging the traditional media with the digital may require huge investment in capital and human resources. In the long run however, it is cost effective because you have staff multi-tasking for both the traditional and digital media concurrently, especially when they are trained in that regard. This is because, you

could have reporters or curators reporting and writing respectively for both the traditional and digital media, which then lowers production cost.It was found out that this situation seems to be effective in reducing the cost of production for the traditional media and also improving their capacity. Training cost for staff of a hybrid outlet, for instance, is not as expensive as training staff of a media house with clusters of different outlets within amedia group. Olugbenda and Owolabi (Olugbenda, & Owolabi, T. O. S. (2021), for instance, have advocated for indigenous language media houses in Nigeria to consider such practices, noting that, it boosts advertiser-confidence and you have a larger audience base. This activity by news media outlets in Ghana is confirmed below:

When the digital revolution started, we were challenged to get qualified and experienced staff for our new media section. What we did was to employ some few qualified staff who then trained some of our people in the traditional media on-the-job. We therefore have staff who can handle both the traditional and digital setting concurrently. This has helped reduce cost in the long run because now all our staff can almost work both in the traditional and digital setting. We do not have to employ for both sections. For instance, we have a converged editorial unit for Citi FM, Citi TV and citionline.com. Our reporters and editorial staff work on stories for all our media outlets *[Online News Editor, Citifmonline.com]*.

We work in synergy so what happens on TV and radio, social media is there is amplify it. Almost nothing happens on air without it also going online or digital *[Social Media Curator, myjoyoline.com]*.

Hybrid media system: avenue for outsmarting challenged infrastructural system in Ghana

Ghana, like many developing countries lacks a uniform infrastructural development from the length and breadth of the country. While some areas and even regions are well-resourced, others are highly challenged to the extent that some lack basic social amenities like electricity, portable water and motorable road networks. This has ensured that although new media seems to be changing the media landscape, not all spheres will be impacted equally. For instance, though the listening population of radio in Africa and Ghana in particular seems to be diminishing among the youth, it still remains the most widespread medium across African countries including Ghana. People in areas without electricity supply can still access information in newspapers, provided the road networks are accessible or they can still power their radio sets with dry cell batteries. The hybrid system of converging traditional and new media helps to equally reach people with varying social and technological characteristics to still access information, regardless of their circumstances. The following quotations give substance to this position:

> The hybrid nature of print media in Ghana is a huge advantage because, whereas people who are economically able and have the needed infrastructure like electricity can access the online version of traditional media and even other online news sources, rural areas and where electricity and internet access (fibre optic cables) is lacking will still meet their reliable information needs with the newspaper*[Online Editor, GCGCL].*

Challenges of the hybrid system

One opportunity of the digital era is the interactivity that it brings with it, where media outlets can engage with their audiences on programmes. This comes with an attendant challenge where media managers have had to work beyond their work shifts and schedules to engage with their audiences, thus blurring the work-personal life jinx. Sellas and Bonini (Sellas, T & Bonini, T. (2014) for instance have noted that

> Working as a producer for a radio programme before the era of social media meant going to the radio station, producing the recorded or live programme, then going home, like a worker finishing a shift at a factory. Working as a producer in the era of social media means working constantly, even from home, confusing the boundaries between work and life.

This makes being a media professional in the digital era very challenging. However, hybrid traditional media outlets find a way around it. One advantage that converged traditional media outlets have over this situation is that they often work in groups and in shifts so others can be stand-ins for others on other assignments.

Conclusions

The media shapes thoughts and behaviours and help audiences make informed decisions through the information they churn out.Traditional media were the touch-bearers in this regard but the story changed with the introduction of the internet and new media. Additionally, media audiences are evolving with their information consumption patterns, hence, media managers must be prepared to modify their technology to accommodate or adapt to new application that comes along with technological advancement or risk losing their audiences. The study has revealed that though new media was initially conceived as a threat to traditional media's existence in Ghana and the world over, its advantages have been harnessed to convert the threat into opportunities. This has ensured the

renewed relevance and survival of traditional media, increasing their credibility rating amidst the numerous digital news sources, channels and content producers.

Media managers must be prepared maintain a malleable state of adapting to technology to stay relevant. Much as technology is evolving, media consumption and adaptation is also evolving and there is a need to remain flexible to stay in competition.

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