

# Newspaper Industry in the Sekondi/Takoradi Metropolis and the Digital Era: Exploring Their Coexistence

Benjamin Lamptey<sup>1</sup>, Abraham Boakye-Amponsah<sup>1</sup>, Ebenezer Kofi Enninful<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Graphic Design Technology, Takoradi Technical University, Ghana

Correspondence: Ebenezer Kofi Enninful, Department of Graphic Design Technology, Takoradi Technical University, Ghana.

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## Abstract

Digital technology in the 21st century has significantly impacted almost every aspect of commerce, education, health, economy, tourism, aviation, etc. The newspaper industry in Ghana has also had its fair share of digital evolution in terms of readership and sales from the Sekondi/Takoradi metropolis. A cursory survey revealed that the selected newspapers (Ghanaian Chronicles, Ghanaian Times, New Crusading Guide, The Finder) experienced low sales and readership among clients in the twin city for several years. The study's main aim was to assess the impact of public sales and readership on the selected newspapers in the Sekondi/Takoradi metropolis and the digital era. A qualitative approach was adopted to gain a fuller understanding of how print and digital media coexist in the metropolis. In terms of the research techniques, the interview and questionnaire were used to acquire the essential data for the study. A total of 56 respondents participated in the questionnaire, while 5 main industry stakeholders participated in the interview session. The results emerged with a significant shift towards digital media consumption by participants. Among others, some recommendations have been made to industry players to stay in business.

**Keywords:** newspapers, digital era, industry, impact, sales, readership

## 1. Introduction

Newspaper publications are one of the most effective means by which information is disseminated to the general public and via which products and services are advertised on a daily or weekly basis. Newspaper publications are varied and serve as a means of educating, informing, advertising, and persuading the public, while also reaching a targeted audience. Newspapers are widely regarded as being essential tools for the social, political, and economic development of many nations. In the words of Babalola (2002), newspapers are widely read by both young and older generations because of their crucial role in bridging the gap between governments and their citizens. Newspapers serve as textbooks that supply up-to-date knowledge on every area of human society as well as local and global issues, according to Wakefield and Elliott (2003).

Since yesteryears, newspapers have always experienced change as newer forms of mass media emerged. Newspapers thus coexist with various media like radio, television, magazines, and the Internet. Based on their unique properties, these media serve comparable and different purposes (Boamah, 2018). In a broader sense, newspapers can be seen as unbound products published regularly, aiming to educate, analyse, impact, and engage their audience (Academic American Encyclopaedia 1994:171).

Compared to other media, newspapers have both advantages and downsides. In contrast to different media, newspapers offer information in hard copy that may be saved for later use (Everett, 2011). Newspapers have the additional benefit of being portable, making it more straightforward for readers to read at their convenience. Despite this, newspapers have several drawbacks that lead people to prefer digital media. Language barrier is one of these drawbacks, as is the lack of music and video to accompany texts, a benefit that television, radio, and the Internet have.

Due to its easy access, some people increasingly turn to the Internet for their media demands (Boamah, 2018). News has undergone a significant transformation due to newspaper output and technological advancements. Due to advertisers' desire for increased visibility and reach for their messages on the Internet, newspaper advertising income has decreased globally (Hassan et al., 2018). Some newspaper organisations have laid off staff members or transitioned from print to digital to re-establish the newspaper's identity. For example, Graphic Group Communication in the last couple of years laid off some staff due to the dwindling financial resources in the industry.

Recently, newspapers have faced challenges due to the advent of the Internet and the digital age (Bresinger et al., 2014). As a result of access to "free news" online and a reduction in newspaper sales, newspapers seem to be on the verge of extinction (Ahiabenu, 2015). Managers, editors, and academics are increasingly concerned about the newspaper industry's future. Over 50 percent of the world's population are mobile phone users, sending over 8.7 trillion text messages annually, with a chunk of the messages being news stories (Ahiabenu, 2015).

According to Doyle (2013), digital technologies and Internet usage rapidly spread throughout the United Kingdom. The newspaper industry has undergone significant change as a result of these new technologies, giving rise to the phrase "creative destruction" that Austrian economist Joseph Schumpeter coined.

Local print titles or newspapers have suffered extensive losses in readership and revenues to the point where some have undergone or faced the prospect of closure (Hume, 2012). However, academics like Fenez and Van der (2009) contend that the transition from print or hardcopy newspapers to electronic media is a constructive step that has the potential to be sustainable.

The newspaper industry has been an essential avenue for news consumption in Ghana. In the past, people turned to it as the only valid news source (Abbey, 2019). In recent times, digital news bulletins have overshadowed the print version, buyers' preferences, and various adverts that run in them daily or weekly. This is gradually posing severe challenges ranging from changing trends in advertising to a decline in circulation and economic constraints facing newspapers (Kumornu, 2014). Currently, over 16 different daily and weekend newspapers are operating in the country.

Several studies have been conducted on newspapers and digitisation in developed countries. However, more empirical research needs to be performed on how newspaper organisations in African countries such as Ghana confront news media, their challenges, and their associated opportunities. The few studies also focused on the audiences' perspectives of newspaper operations in the face of digitisation. Therefore, to maintain the sustainability and importance of local journalism in the face of digital insurgency, it is imperative to investigate how the newspaper industry and the digital age coexist in the Sekondi/Takoradi Metropolis.

### *1.1 Statement of the Problem*

For the last two decades, the local newspaper industry has faced significant challenges with the advent of varied and rising digital media. The development threatens local newspapers' sustainability in the Sekondi/Takoradi metropolis. Albeit it is widely perceived that global trends favour digital platforms, little research has been conducted on how local print and digital media coexist in metropolitan areas like Sekondi/Takoradi. The research gap exists with strategies adopted by the industry stakeholders to sustain clients' readership, remain relevant, and improve their daily revenue streams. Thus, this research examines the coexistence of print and digital media in this unique setting and focuses on how the newspaper industry's stakeholders survive or transform amidst digital innovations.

### *1.2 Research Objectives*

1. To find out the effect of the Digital Era on selected local Newspapers in the Sekondi/Takoradi Metropolis.
2. To examine the challenges selected newspaper companies face in terms of business operations concerning production, sales and readership in the Sekondi/Takoradi Metropolis.

## **2. Literature Review**

For this research, as established by the research topic, the applicable theoretical underpinning framework is the Media Industry Theory. The theory considers the impact of technological advancements on the local media industry and how they affect media organisations' operations, strategies, and business models in many varied environments. However, the disruption theory can be used to examine the coexistence of the newspaper industry and the digital era in Ghana in this context. According to the concept, local business models have been upended by digital technologies, which have given media companies, including the selected ones in the spotlight, new chances to adjust to shifting market dynamics and competition from digital media. These theories, as mentioned earlier, will examine whether the industry needs to diversify its portfolio to bridge the gap between print and digital media.

### *2.1 The Ghanaian Newspaper Industry*

Before Dr. Kwame Nkrumah's ascension to the position of Prime Minister of Ghana in 1958, the early newspapers in the country were predominantly privately owned. Nkrumah subsequently established the first state-operated daily, the Ghanaian Times, leading to a situation where the state came to dominate the newspaper industry. However, the private press experienced a resurgence in the early 1990s after Rawlings repealed the newspaper licensing requirement in 1992. Publications such as The Independent, The Ghanaian Chronicle, The Free Press, and The Statesman provided a platform for the previously silenced opposition, prompting Rawlings to frequently denounce the private media as politically irresponsible and primarily motivated by profit.

Ghana is home to 106 newspapers, as reported by the National Media Commission (NMC), which includes 11 daily publications, 67 weeklies, 23 bi-weeklies, and 5 tri-weeklies. The four daily newspapers currently in circulation are the Daily Graphic, Daily Guide, Ghanaian Times, and The Ghanaian Chronicles. Newspapers released on a weekly or biweekly basis to augment the daily ones include: The Finder, Daily Statesman, Graphic Sports, The Anchor News, Crusading Guide, The Herald, and The Spectator. Just like the daily newspapers, the content of these publications covers various topics such as business, sports, politics, education, lifestyle, culture, and religion. Evidence suggests that some of these newspapers are struggling to sustain their businesses in the face of the proliferation of digital channels by some industry players, who are reaching out to the masses via various platforms. The trend of innovations in the newspaper industry in the metropolis is said to be continuing in the coming years.

It is important to note that some newspapers have been criticised for disseminating false information to promote specific political ideologies and may have political affiliations. According to a media measurement survey conducted in 2018, the Daily Graphic, Daily Guide, and Ghanaian Times are recognised as the leading newspapers in the country, with the Daily Graphic and Daily Guide collectively achieving a daily circulation of approximately 2.2 million copies. However, in the last couple of years, evidence indicates that the number has declined significantly every year. The trend has been projected to have affected the financial muscles of these newspapers.

### *2.2 Online News Consumption*

In the words of Amadu, Mohammed, Alhassan, and Mohammed (2018), "the internet has transformed how readers obtain and interact with news." Traditionally, audiences depended on local news outlets such as television, newspapers, and radio for their news consumption. However, contemporary news consumers now explore a broader array of sources than ever before, utilising these diverse platforms in various ways. Additionally, Obijiofor and Hanusch (2013) contend that the emergence of online news has significantly impacted journalistic practices globally, compelling newspapers to implement web-based innovations to remain pertinent in the evolving landscape of news consumption.

As stated by Thomas (2013), the consumption of online news is influenced by the functions of interaction, speed, and selectivity. He asserts that these three characteristics enable users to curate their preferred content through newsletters or links. Furthermore, he notes that this establishes a continuous connection between news producers and readers, facilitating a simultaneous exchange of discourse and providing readers with the opportunity to offer feedback on articles.

Rosenstiel (2005) asserts that news consumers possess the autonomy and capability to curate their news and explore alternative perspectives through the Internet, which claims to deliver news at minimal cost. Furthermore, Russmann and Hess (2020) indicate that online news administrators engage in activities beyond merely reproducing local media reports. In contrast, "digital media can be updated in real-time as events unfold. Online news platforms also offer interactive videos, audio content, and a greater variety of images. Readers who transitioned to online news sources encountered coverage that included diverse opinions on national and global events, along with an abundance of daily articles" (Russmann & Hess, 2020).

### *2.3 Digital Era and the Newspaper Business*

Angelucci and Cagé (2019) indicate that the main revenue streams for newspapers consist of subscriptions, sales, and advertising, particularly through the sale of advertising space. Newspapers play an essential role as intermediaries, connecting two distinct groups: readers and advertisers. For example, the Daily Graphic and Weekly Mirror of Ghana impose significant fees for advertisements placed in the Centre spread of these prominent national publications. Nevertheless, in recent years, social media platforms such as Craigslist and eBay have disrupted this traditional business model by diverting advertising revenue away from classified ads and job listings. The case of DDP, a famous advertising firm in Ghana, is no exception, as it has had its fair share in the industry's diminished affluence over the past few years.

As noted by Mahmud (2009), newspapers, particularly in the United States and Western countries, have experienced a significant decline in their classified advertising revenue due to the rise of the Internet. Additionally, a substantial number of newspaper subscribers have discontinued their subscriptions, compelling companies to reduce their advertising expenditures as part of broader cost-reduction strategies.

How individuals consume information and entertainment is undergoing substantial changes, particularly among younger audiences, as access to high-speed Internet becomes more prevalent. Many individuals now opt to stream or download music and television shows online rather than watching their preferred programs on traditional television or purchasing albums from local record stores.

In terms of competition, printed newspapers often hold local or regional monopolies in the dissemination of news and information. Nevertheless, these newspapers face significant competition from numerous blogs, websites, and alternative news sources as they adapt to the digital landscape. This shift has led to a decrease in employment within the newspaper sector. The case in the Sekondi/Takoradi metropolis is no different. Many newspaper outlets that previously attracted

many readers have either folded up or have had their stands occupied by other business models. Meyer (2009) notes that the newsroom has experienced the most drastic impact due to the considerable drop in advertising revenues for widely circulated newspapers, resulting in many journalists transitioning to specialty publications.

#### *2.4 Newspapers and the Digital Media*

The trend and connection of newspapers and digital space in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are inseparable. It is seen in the manner in which literate and semi-literate prefer reading and reaching out to information via varied digital channels. In the words of Boamah (2018), "The rivalry between traditional newspapers and the Internet, particularly since the advent of the 'World Wide Web' or Web 2.0, has significantly transformed how news is disseminated." The author adds that, "In response to the pressures exerted by online platforms, approximately 80 percent of newspaper publishers in Ghana have integrated their print and digital operations with their radio and television services." "Furthermore, the rise of online news outlets has hindered the expansion of several newspapers, contributing to the overall growth of the newspaper industry in Ghana" (Boamah, 2018).

"The increasing importance of the Internet and associated technologies has led to a substantial rise in the volume of information available to audiences, while the time that readers can dedicate to consuming this information has remained constant" (Holm et al., 2013). Consequently, every prominent newspaper in Ghana has established a website and commenced the publication of articles online.

Data suggests digital platforms send news quickly than newspapers. "Furthermore, there has been a decline in newspaper sales across various global regions," (Ahiabenu, 2015). "The Daily Express, a British tabloid, reported an average daily circulation of 391,626 copies in December 2016, as noted in an article by The Guardian. The statistic represents a 2.3% decrease compared to the same month in the previous year. Similarly, The Daily Mirror experienced an 11.7% drop in sales in 2017, averaging 716,923 copies sold daily. Evidence suggests several factors contribute to the downturn in newspaper sales, including diminished advertising revenue, intense competition from online platforms, increasing production costs, and the growing appeal of digital media (Ahiabenu, 2015).

Newspapers have lost their status as "cash cows" for owners and investors, as readers now have access to various options on the internet (Soloski, 2013). In response, newspaper companies are increasingly adopting multimedia diversification as a strategy for growth (Soloski, 2013). Media organisations are forming partnerships with what media economists term multimedia groups, which encompass a newspaper, its online edition, a local radio station, a local television station, and an advertising sales entity (Kuwornu, 2014). A notable example of a multimedia organisation in Ghana is the Daily Guide Network. Research conducted by international digital agencies in 2018 indicated that over 10 million Ghanaians utilise the Internet for information on local, national, and global events, a trend that is expected to persist. "Millions of individuals turn to newspaper-affiliated websites for news," (Jesdanun, 2009).

The Internet has significantly altered how information is gathered and shared. As noted by Talabi (2011), it is reshaping communication practices. Consequently, journalists are adopting innovative techniques for delivering and distributing news to the public. Traditionally, newspapers would provide headlines and information to readers the day following an event. However, the current presence of the Internet enables online newspaper platforms to publish headlines and articles on the same day as the event unfolds, often accompanied by videos and audio clips by bloggers or newspaper correspondents. The development of digital media has intensified competition among news outlets, creating greater pressure to distinguish one publication from another regularly. The trend is believed to continue as innovations in the digital space continue to evolve.

It is against this background that the digital world and newspaper publications continue to battle for supremacy in the dissemination of information and readership. A study conducted by Pew Research (2010) revealed that the Internet has become the second most appealing source of news for newspapers, following television. The Pew Internet survey also indicated that the ability to access information on mobile devices and engage in discussions about news stories is transforming the nature of news consumption into more portable and interactive formats. According to the findings, 33% of mobile phone users read newspapers on their devices, while 37% of Internet users share news through social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. An increasing number of individuals are opting to utilise mobile technology for online news consumption rather than purchasing printed newspapers (Pew Research, 2010).

#### *2.5 Influence of Electronic Media on the Print Media*

Just like the former, the electronic media and the print media have one major thing in common: they both serve as platforms for information dissemination and public engagement, though the speed, interactivity, and reach differ in the digital age. The impact of electronic media on print media has garnered considerable attention from researchers. Investigations have been conducted into how electronic media affects news consumption behaviours, the business strategies of local print media organisations, and the methods by which journalists and editors create and share content.

One particular study indicated that the growth of electronic media has resulted in a decrease in the readership of local print publications (Arifa, 2015). Additionally, this research highlighted that electronic media have enabled the rise of alternative news distribution methods, notably social media, which has become a primary news source for numerous individuals.

Research has been conducted into the influence of electronic media on the print media. Another investigation examined the repercussions of electronic media on the advertising revenues of print media companies (Domingo, 2017). The study revealed that the introduction of electronic media has significantly diminished the advertising income of local print outlets. Furthermore, it observed that many print media organisations have sought to adapt to these changes by investing in digital platforms. Some researchers have also analysed how electronic media influences the journalistic practices of print media professionals. For example, a study conducted by Meel and Vishwakarma (2020) found that electronic media have heightened the focus on breaking news and the real-time dissemination of information.

Additionally, research by Adomako and Ntiamoah (2018) explored the effects of electronic media on print media content in Ghana. While electronic media has introduced numerous advantages in terms of convenience and speed, it has also presented challenges regarding the sustainability and credibility of local print media outlets. The relationship between electronic media and print media is intricate and multifaceted. Although electronic media has undeniably influenced news consumption trends and the business models of local print media, it has simultaneously opened new avenues for journalists and editors to engage with audiences in innovative ways. Ultimately, despite their diverse formats, both media serve to inform, educate, persuade public opinion, advertise, and reach out to targeted audiences.

### *2.6 Challenges Faced by the News Industry in Ghana*

In recent times, many people, especially the youth, prefer to read news via digital channels, which are more convenient to them than any other platforms. The new trend with its cosiness allows many readers to explore digital avenues rather than the known newspaper space. A developing country like Ghana has witnessed many developments in the newspaper industry in the last two decades. Presently, the news sector in Ghana is grappling with significant financial difficulties, characterised by decreasing sales and revenue. The setback complicates the operational viability of news organisations within the twin city. A report from the Ghana Independent Broadcasters Association indicates that numerous media outlets are struggling to compensate their employees, maintain equipment and sustain their worth in the industry (GIBA, 2020). Consequently, this financial strain has resulted in a deterioration of news quality, adversely affecting readership and circulation figures across the region and beyond.

The proliferation of radio and TV stations in the last decade came with pros and cons amongst many challenges to amateur/professional businesses, readers and residents. In addition, the Ghanaian news industry has encountered political interference, with specific media organisations facing government scrutiny due to their critical coverage and preserved reportage. A report by the Committee to Protect Journalists highlights that several journalists in Ghana have experienced harassment and intimidation from government entities (CPJ, 2020). The environment of fear has significantly hindered journalists' capacity to cover sensitive topics effectively. The emergence of online news platforms has posed a significant challenge to the news segment in Ghana. A growing number of Ghanaians are now obtaining news through social media and various online channels, which has adversely affected the sales, readership, and circulation of local news organisations. A report from the International Press Institute indicates that the rising competition from these online sources has compelled local news outlets to evolve and implement innovative strategies (IPI, 2020).

### *2.7 Sales, Readership and Circulation of News Contents in Ghana*

In the last couple of years, data suggest the passion to buy and read newspaper publications has declined significantly. Research conducted by Seibu (2020) examined the impact of online media on traditional media like newspapers in Ghana. The author accentuates, "findings revealed a decline in print media readership over the years, primarily attributed to the rise of electronic media, especially the Internet. Additionally, the study indicated that readers increasingly favour online news sources over print media due to the ease of accessing news from any location at any time, irrespective of internet connectivity being sporadic or frequent. In a separate investigation, Adusei and Adu (2019) discovered that newspaper readership in Ghana is more prevalent among individuals with higher income and educational attainment. Regardless, sales by the newspapers are below par. Perhaps, some form of innovative means is needed by the expert to turn fortunes around and to compete very well with their counterparts in the industry.

Ghana's population exceeds 35 million, and there is a significant demand for news content within the country. However, newspaper sales in Ghana have experienced a downturn in recent years, primarily due to the growing preference for online news platforms. By and large, the digital world has come to stay and is threatening the existence of the famous media spaces. A report from the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) highlighted a decrease in newspaper sales from 1.5 million in 2016 to 1.2 million in 2019 (GSS, 2019). Nevertheless, certain newspapers have successfully sustained their readership and circulation by enhancing their online presence and utilising social media channels. Despite the total decline in

newspaper sales, the consumption of news content in Ghana remains robust. The GSS report noted an increase in the percentage of the population reading newspapers, rising from 14.8% in 2016 to 17.6% in 2019 (GSS, 2019). This trend can be linked to the continued preference among many Ghanaians for the local format of print newspapers, which are often available for free in public venues such as hotels and airports.

The newspaper industry in Ghana has experienced a downturn in sales over the past few years; nevertheless, the demand for news content remains robust. The emergence of online news platforms has significantly affected newspaper circulation. Despite this challenge, certain newspapers have successfully preserved their readership and circulation by leveraging their online presence and utilising social media channels. As the media environment in Ghana progresses, it will be intriguing to observe how local news organisations adjust to maintain their relevance and connect with their audience, as is the case in the Sekondi/Takoradi metropolis.

### 3. Methodology

A qualitative approach was adopted for this study, which sought to know the effect of the digital era on the sales and readership of newspapers in the Sekondi/Takoradi metropolis. Creswell (2014) noted that qualitative researchers collect various forms of data, including interviews, observations, and documents, rather than relying on a single source. They then review all the data, providing meaning and organising it into several categories or themes that span all data sources. The data gathered is then built via patterns, categorised, and themes in a "bottom-up" manner. Profound interviews are typically done to critically assess how one key component in newspapers' growth or decline contributes to the newspaper business's maintenance and expansion (Kuwornu, 2014). A justification for the use of qualitative research approach in the study was that the researchers consistently built a complex and holistic picture, analysed words, reported participants' views via interviews and restricted the study to its natural setting. Correspondingly, Lincoln and Guba (2018) believe that qualitative research helps to gain an insider's view of the field. It has the advantage of generating awareness in terms of history, the capability of understanding trends in examining the challenges selected Newspaper companies face and an approach to enquire about the course of occurrences in the digital era.

It enabled the researchers to gain new insights, fathom new trends in the digital era, and discover problems within the phenomenon as aligned with the objectives of the study. It also involves directly observing, notifying participants when necessary and using recording devices at times to supplement and enhance data collection and analysis.

The qualitative method (interviews) was used to reconnoitre newspaper editors, professional journalists and readers' perceptions, adaptations and strategies in connection with the coexistence of print and digital media. The survey tool (open ended questions), on the other hand, was employed to measure participants' preferences and digital engagement within the Sekondi/Takoradi metropolis. The qualitative data was established with thematic analysis, while the survey data was treated with descriptive statistics, including percentages.

According to Kelly (2010), "purposeful sampling is used to pick respondents most likely to produce suitable and valuable information." It is a method for discovering and choosing cases to efficiently use the limited research resources available (Palinkas et al., 2015). A total of 56 respondents were drawn from the respective respondents. These respondents were chosen using the purposive sampling technique of data collection. All ethical issues, including informed consent, anonymity of respondents and data confidentiality involving participants, were addressed accordingly.

### 4. Results and Discussion of Findings

The thoughts and views offered by the chosen respondents are carefully analysed and interpreted in light of the study's objectives. Besides, it analyses and in-depth examines the data findings. Additionally, in certain situations, the opinions underscored by the theoretical framework underpinning the topic in the literature study are cited to back the views expressed by the participants.

#### 4.1 Presentation of Findings

The study involved stakeholders of the Newspaper Industry between the ages of 22 and 70 years who have been in the business for two to four decades and have acquired varied educational levels (junior high to the tertiary level). The study's findings were based on participant-as-observer, structured interviews, and a survey questionnaire for key stakeholders. The study's findings as regards the set objectives have been presented accordingly.

##### 4.1.1 Objective 1: To find out the effect of the Digital Era on selected local Newspapers in the Sekondi/Takoradi Metropolis

Industry players' data was gathered through a mixed-methods approach to assess the Impact of the Digital Era on selected local Newspapers in Sekondi/Takoradi. They included a survey distributed to a diverse sample of industry professionals, readers and interviews with key stakeholders. These methods provided varied perspectives on the assessment of the impact of the digital era on the selected local newspapers in the Sekondi/Takoradi metropolis, forming a solid foundation for the

study's exploration of the Newspaper Industry in the Sekondi/Takoradi metropolis and the Digital Era: Exploring their Coexistence. The selected newspapers for the objective included Daily Graphic, Ghanaian Times, Daily Guide, The Finder, The New Crusading Guide, 90 Minutes, The Mirror, The Statesman and Graphic Sports.

A total of 56 industry players were contacted via a face-to-face survey questionnaire (open and closed-ended types of questions) to gather the needed data for the said objective. They included Readers, Journalists, Advertisers, Distributors, Outlets/Vendors and Printing Press Operators. As regards readership, 22 (39%) participants admitted reading local newspapers, whereas 34 (61%) admitted reading from digital platforms. Furthermore, 40 (71%) of the respondents indicated that they prefer reading from online platforms over newspapers, citing the convenience of online reading. In contrast, the remaining 16(29%) thought reading from print newspapers is better than online. Table 1 indicates various perspectives from the main stakeholders on the impacts of the digital era on the newspaper industry. The above data highlights a significant shift towards digital newspaper consumption, and the impact is severe on the local newspaper industry. The data supports the Media Industry Theory, which suggests that technological advancements and digital innovations significantly influence newspaper consumption patterns, leading to a decline in local media forms. The theory suggests that newspaper firms must adjust to these changes by embracing digital strategies to meet evolving consumer preferences and maintain relevance in a rapidly transforming space in the twin city.

Table 1. Selected interview excerpts assessing the effect of the Digital Era on local Newspapers in Ghana

Industry Players	Illustrative Quotes from Editor, Senior Journalist, Printing Press Operator, Reader and Distributor in the Sekondi/Takoradi Metropolis
<b>Chief Editor</b>	"As an Editor, very often I am responsible for overseeing the content and editorial direction. In the past decade, I have had to adjust to the digital era by integrating digital tools and platforms into my workflow. I recognise the necessity of balancing print and digital content to meet readers' changing preferences. Currently, most editors see the digital era as an opportunity to expand their work and engage with a broader audience through online platforms. However, our biggest obstacle is sustaining the quality and integrity of high journalistic standards in an expeditious digital environment for our newspaper."
<b>Snr. Journo</b>	"With years of rich experience as a journalist, I have observed the rapid shift from primitive reporting to modernised journalism, which requires adequate competencies in new technologies and social media. Among my setbacks, I often feel pressured to produce content quickly, sometimes at the expense of in-depth reporting. Some Journalists face challenges in adjusting to recent multimedia storytelling, requiring skills in video, audio, and interactive content."
<b>P. Press Operator</b>	"As an operator of a Printing press, I have been directly affected by the decline in demand for printed newspapers. In my view, the impact of the digital era has been a threat to our jobs and the local printing industry. However, the biggest impact is that some operators might see potential in diversifying their services to include digital printing solutions or integrating digital technologies to improve efficiency and reduce costs in the printing process."
<b>Reader</b>	"As an avid reader, I have gained a lot from digital news. It brings breaking and real news to me. Despite these accessibilities and conveniences associated with interactive features and multimedia content, I still read a printed newspaper occasionally to check for credibility and professional journalism. Indeed, the digital era offers me varied choices, hence presents challenges in discerning credible sources from misinformation."
<b>Distributor</b>	"As a distributor, the new wave of the digital era in my job is nothing to write home about. For years now, I have faced reduced demand for physical distribution due to the rise of digital news. They may need to adapt by exploring new business models, such as digital distribution partnerships or offering additional delivery services. The digital era has forced them to rethink their role in the newspaper supply chain. It has potentially led to a shift towards logistics and distribution for e-commerce and other products."

Source: Authors' fieldwork (2024)

From Table 1, it is evident that respondents have varied views regarding the Impact of the Digital Era on selected local newspapers in Ghana. The statement from the 1st respondent (editor) replicates a key diversion in the metropolis, aligned with Media Industry Theory. In recent times, editors are developing innovative means to merge print and digital, reaching a broader audience. The merger of these two formats is an indication that technological change and space cannot be underrated in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The adaptation is seen as a necessity and an opportunity to enhance audience/readers' reach and engagement via vibrant available online channels. The assertion suggests that some editors in the industry are taking all necessary steps to stay competitive. However, amidst these opportunities lies a significant challenge—preserving journalistic quality and ethics vis-à-vis digital news cycles in the metropolis and beyond. The editor's role becomes critical in mediating these dynamics and ensuring that while embracing digital opportunities, the integrity and credibility of journalistic content remain paramount in sustaining readers' trust and relevance in the digital age.

The statement from the experienced professional journalist (2nd respondent) underscores the transformative impact of digital technology on professional journalism, which aligns with the Media Industry Theory (MIT) concept. The shift from local reporting methods to digital journalism signifies a broader advancement within the media space, where juxtaposition and extensive audience reach via coexisting digital platforms are valued. The statement by the respondent is a reflection of the media industry theory, which stipulates its operations, how content is produced and distributed and how economic, political

and technological factors form media systems. Due to these factors, the speaker admits that technological advancements have had a significant impact on the industry, which needs to diversify its portfolio to salvage its dwindling business. Accordingly, to diversify services and integrate digital printing solutions, press operators can creatively ease the negative impacts of digital disruption. This adaptation approach is consistent with the Media Industry Theory, which emphasises using new technologies to improve operational effectiveness, cut expenses, and investigate new sources of income in the face of changing customer tastes and technical breakthroughs. Therefore, the statement shows a progressive approach to embracing the digital revolution within the printing industry, even if it acknowledges the hurdles.

The 4th respondent's (reader) statement reflects the convergence and challenges brought by the digital era in newspaper consumption, which aligns with aspects of Media Industry Theory. The reader acknowledges the profound benefits of digital news, including real-time updates, multimedia content, and social media engagement, which enhance convenience and accessibility. These aspects signify the industry's shift towards digital platforms. More so, it caters for diverse consumer preferences and improves user engagement through interactive technologies. Nonetheless, the inclination to occasionally read a printed newspaper highlights the timeless attraction of physical encounters and the apparent legitimacy linked to the breadth of conventional print journalism. This dual preference draws attention to the difficulties readers in the metropolis have with digital news. Consequently, a surge of information makes distinguishing reliable sources from false ones difficult. According to Media Industry Theory, this is a paradigm shift in media toward digitalisation, where consumer behaviour and technological innovations combine to transform how modern audiences view and consume news in the metropolis. In addition, commuting to news vendors' outlets has also been curtailed with the advent of digital news.

The 5th respondent's (distributor) statement emphasises a critical shift in the newspaper distribution sector brought about by the digital era, reflecting key concepts from Media Industry Theory. Locally tasked with physical newspaper delivery, the distributor now faces dwindling demand as readers increasingly consume news digitally.

The digital revolution has resulted in significant changes for all parties involved in the local newspaper sector. It can be challenging for editors and journalists to integrate digital tools while they maintain journalistic standards. The market for printed newspapers is contracting, and distributors and printing press operators need to adapt. Nonetheless, many clients, especially older adults, still prefer print news even though digital news is faster and more convenient. This can be attributed to the fact that most of these adults are not digitally compliant yet unable to comply with the digital 'route'. Advertisers can benefit from targeted digital advertising, and newspapers must adapt to stay relevant. Each group examines the digital shift through the lens of their roles and responsibilities, emphasising both the pros and cons of the fast-evolving media landscape within the metropolis and perhaps beyond.

#### 4.1.2 Objective 2: Data to Examine the Challenges Faced by the Selected Newspaper Companies in Terms of Business Operations Concerning Production, Sales and Readership in the Sekondi/Takoradi Metropolis

In a survey question distributed to 16 selected participants (newspaper outlets/vendors) within the metropolis, the following were their perspectives and opinions on the various items. The newspaper outlets/vendors included all those who sell daily papers, including Daily Graphic, Daily Guide, Ghanaian Times, 90 Minutes, the New Crusading Guide, The Chronicle, The Punch and others. The participants identified several challenges, grappling with the industry in its present state and needing innovative strategies to sustain themselves in the industry. They contend that unless the significant industry players take some drastic measures to curb the menace, their dominance and fortunes will continue to decline further and soar. When the trends persist, it will only exacerbate the already dwindling dreams they are presently battling with. Response from Ghanaian Times newspaper outlet/vendor – Sekondi/Takoradi Metropolis.

Key Industry players, comprising 4 representatives each from the Ghanaian Times, Daily Graphic, the new Crusading Guide, and Daily Guide (in no particular order), contributed to the survey aimed at achieving the set objective. Their opinions, as explicated below, indicated that the industry faces severe challenges in its operations concerning production, sales, and readership in the Sekondi/Takoradi Metropolis daily.

The first item on the survey question sought how often the newspaper outlets/vendors in the metropolis receive newspapers for sale. In response, 10(63%) received 420 papers, while the remaining 6(37%) admitted receiving 450 daily.

The second item sought to know how many newspapers respondents receive has decreased with the influx of online news and social media. The response from all was in the affirmative, with reasons attributed to the decline in the number of respondents, which is mainly due to technology and the rise of online news reading, which seems more convincing to the youth and some elderly individuals.

The third item sought the current circulation compared to some years back. In response, all 16 (100%) admitted receiving circulation between 300 and 400 newspapers daily. Moreover, the number of vendors who travel to their offices to buy and resell has declined drastically; hence, they find it challenging to sell to clients/individuals except government and private offices. To the state's own offices, the story is not different.



The fourth item sought whether the newspaper industry is struggling to sustain itself. Yes. The world itself is dynamic. This can be seen in the reduced numbers we print and the laying off of staff whose services may not be needed. Although these challenges exist, newspaper-producing companies will experience a decline in printing compared to the circulation on online platforms.

The fifth item also explored whether the electronic media impact the newsprint industry. 14(86%) admitted Yes while the remaining 2(14%) were adamant. They backed their claims. It has helped simplify information for the masses, even those who do not buy newspapers. The effect may be that people will not need hardcopy newspapers once they can listen to them on the radio and watch television.

The sixth item sought to identify some of the newspaper industry's challenges. All the respondents, 12 (75%), explained that they currently have to contend with costly materials (paper and inks) for printing. In addition, servicing their machines is also tricky, and buying new ones is necessary. The remaining 4(25%) attributed it to their staff moving online as content creators since it is easy to work with and at the convenience of their home.

The last item sought to gather suggestions on ways to improve the newspaper print industry. I believe we should produce content quickly enough to reach our readers early and on time, given that the online space is always active and breaking news happens every minute.

The perspectives from the vendors are interesting. The current situation of the newspaper business in the twin cities is quite challenging and needs to catch up to expectations. A lot more needs to be done to position the industry to compete with the prevailing phenomenon. The feedback from the newspaper outlets/vendors suggests that the newspaper industry could be doing better. The current state of the industry is not something to write home about. Key industry stakeholders need to up their game to save the once-vibrant sector that serves the masses in many diverse ways in the metropolis.

Correspondingly, seven key stakeholders were identified to pinpoint the challenges facing the newspaper industry in the digital era. The results were as follows. The participants identified and enumerated 7 major concerns/challenges they are grappling with in the industry. They contend that unless significant industry players take drastic measures to curb the menace, their dominance and fortunes will continue to deteriorate. When the trends persist, they will only aggravate the dwindling dreams they are presently battling. The participants asserted that digital disruption, decline in advertising revenue, high cost of printing and distribution costs, severe competition from online news platforms, severe economic hardships, changes in clients' preferences, and newspaper headlines by radio and TV stations are the chief challenges affecting their business operations currently. The Table below indicates the various opinions of the participants on the subject. The critical industry stakeholders include publishers, advertisers, distributors, newspaper outlets/vendors, printing presses, readers, editors and journalists.

Table 2. Quotes relating to the challenges faced by the selected Newspaper companies in their business operations, with respect to production, sales and readership in the Sekondi/Takoradi Metropolis

Participants	Illustrative Quotes from Key Industry Stakeholders
Participant - 1	"In the current dispensation, the passion to read local newspapers has switched to online news sources due to the rapid growth of digital media platforms. Thus, print circulation and advertising revenue streams have slashed significantly."
Participant - 2	"Advertisers, due to their wide visibility, are investing heavily in digital platforms. The move by the advertisers has, however, affected many newspaper firms, including ours."
Participant-3	"The current economic turmoil has had a negative impact on transportation, printing materials such as paper and ink. They are expensive and keep getting more expensive daily. So, newspaper firms find it difficult to remain profitable, particularly in light of dwindling readership by clients."
Participant-4	"Recently, the passion to read online news by clients is incredible. Local newspaper firms are faced with the evolution of online news websites, blogs and social media handles. These platforms provide instant breaking news. It poses intense competition to our newspapers, hence impeding the growth of the industry. "
Participant-5	"The economic hardship conditions in Ghana recently have affected consumer spending, including the purchase of newspapers. Economic downturns have led to dwindling sales and subscription rates, particularly in the effective distribution of newspapers to both urban and rural areas. The phenomenon usually happens based on current high transportation costs due to unfavourable economic conditions"
Participant-6	"In some towns, villages or suburbs, lower literacy rates have impacted the readership base for newspapers, which limits their reach and influence. In most radio and TV stations in the metropolis, the host reads headlines and captivating stories from daily newspapers on air to listeners and viewers, respectively. Thereafter, some clients decline to purchase after listening, and this affects our daily sales."
Participant-7	The youthful exuberance and curiosity that exists among young adults tend to prefer digital news consumption through mobile devices, tablets, and social media handles, leading to a generational shift away from print newspapers in recent times.

Source: Authors' fieldwork (2024)

The statement by the 1st respondent is stimulating. She recounts that the desire to read local newspapers has dwindled compared to digital online news. She attributed that to the proliferation and expansion of various digital social handles. The move is caused by the increased accessibility and convenience of digital news via mobile phones everywhere. The Media Industry Theory buttresses the assertion. The theory states that media production, distribution, and consumption dynamics are within the context of technical improvements and market forces. In recent times, due to inadequate and limited supply of newspapers, most advertising firms are losing huge revenues frequently. An indication that industry players must innovate and integrate digital tactics to survive and thrive in the digital age.

The statement by the 2nd respondent highlights a key shift in advertising trends as advertisers increasingly prefer digital platforms over print newspapers due to their wide visibility coverage within the metropolis. The shift aligns with the Media Industry Theory. It advances media consumption patterns, and technological progressions drive changes in media industry structures and revenue streams. As digital platforms offer more robust, efficient, and data-driven advertising options to clients in the industry, advertisers and marketers are cashing in on their investments daily. Consequently, local print newspapers face a significant shortfall of revenues, impacting their financial sustainability within the industry. The new trend in the print industry underscores the importance of adjusting to digital innovations to remain competitive.

The 3rd respondent's statement highlights the financial strain faced by newspaper firms due to the rising costs of transportation and printing materials, including paper and ink, on a regular basis. Ghana's economy is in shambles, and as such, it has impacted many businesses, including newspaper firms. These rising expenses exacerbate the already challenging environment of dwindling readership in the metropolis, which affects profit margins. The theory posits that industry players must be fine-tuned to changing economic realities and consumer preferences to stay in business. The respondent's claim aligns with the Media Industry's Theory. It emphasised the need for strategic realignment amid economic turmoil and technological disruptions.

The 4th respondent's avowal highlights the intense demand for digital news. It is primarily driven by the prevalent availability of online news websites and social media handles that offer daily free and instant access to breaking news and trends. The emergence of digital proliferation poses significant competition to local newspapers, which currently hampers their growth. To remain competitive in the industry, key players must adopt innovative means of disseminating information to readers, as the industry is characterised by rapid development. It is an indication that for the industry to thrive, rapid innovation must be adopted by the key industry players to remain relevant with technological advancements. It aligns with the Media Industry's Theory.

The 5th respondent's avowal blames Ghana's recent economic woes and hardships. It is an indication that the country's economic setbacks have impacted clients' spending, leading to decreased purchases of daily newspapers. In an economic downturn, as is currently being experienced, readers tend to cut back on non-essential expenses, including newspaper patronage. It has resulted in declining newspaper distribution, particularly in urban and rural areas, as high production and transportation costs further strain the industry. In the current circumstances, newspaper vendors are grappling with distribution and sales due to rising production costs on a daily basis.

The 6th respondent's statement highlights the low literacy rates among newspaper readers in certain metropolitan areas, which limits newspapers' reach and influence. Radio and TV stations in the metropolis often read newspaper headlines. The practice has hampered potential clients from purchasing newspapers, as they may feel sufficiently informed by the varied air broadcasts. According to Media Industry Theory, the phenomenon illustrates a shift in media consumption patterns where local newspapers face competition from more accessible broadcast media. The theory suggests that media industries must adjust to changing consumer behaviours and technological advancements.

The 7th respondent's account highlights a significant generational shift in news consumption habits, driven by young adults' youthful exuberance and curiosity who prefer digital news accessed via mobile devices and social media over local print newspapers. The new trend aligns with Media Industry Theory, which suggests that technological innovations and clients' desires affect already established media practices. Young adults' preference for digital information cannot be overemphasised for quick interactivity and expediency. It is an indication that print newspapers, until recent times, have lost their dominance in the media space. It could also mean that the phenomenon is a global issue.

## 5. Conclusion

Based on the findings related to the set objectives, the following conclusions are drawn. The digital era has significantly impacted local newspapers in the Sekondi/Takoradi Metropolis, reducing print circulation and advertising revenue. This trend in the print media space calls for a shift towards digital platforms to maintain sustainability, relevance and reach. The second objective, however, indicates that Newspaper companies in the Sekondi/Takoradi Metropolis face numerous challenges, including high production costs, declining sales, and shifting readership preferences towards digital media. This indicates that newspaper firms in the metropolis should adjust to these challenges, which require skilful and inventive strategies and investment in digital transformation to meet the new trends and client preferences.

Nonetheless, it should be emphasised that addressing these challenges or tasks requires newspaper firms in the metropolis to be innovative and adjust accordingly to the current trends. The creativity could include embracing digital transformation, improving content quality, and exploring new revenue models to sustain their operations in the evolving media environment in the metropolis and beyond.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study objectives, the following are recommended:

- As Daily Graphic Online is championing the media landscape, other newspaper firms should be innovative in adopting a model that combines both print and digital platforms. This will enable them to meet diverse readers' preferences and ensure they reach out to local readers and the growing digital audience to maintain their relevance in the industry.
- Managers of newspaper firms should adopt digital tools and multimedia styles - including online editions, mobile apps, and social media integration - to reduce printing costs and expand their reach to meet the rising preferences of audiences in the Sekondi-Takoradi metropolis.

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