

MEDIA CONVERGENCE AND PUBLISHING IN NIGERIA: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

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Abstract

This review explores the influence of media convergence on the publishing industry in Nigeria, focusing on the challenges and prospects. Media convergence, driven by digital technologies, has revolutionized traditional publishing, leading to the integration of various media formats and platforms. This transformation has altered how content is created, distributed, and consumed, presenting both opportunities and obstacles for Nigerian publishers. The theoretical foundation for this study is the Technological Determinism Theory. The review discusses the historical evolution of publishing, the concept of media convergence, and its influence on content creation, audience engagement, and business models. It also examines the challenges Nigerian publishers face, such as adapting to new technologies, increased competition, and economic pressures. Despite these challenges, the review highlights the potentials for innovation and growth in the Nigerian publishing industry, emphasizing the need for publishers to embrace digital technologies and explore new revenue streams.

Keywords: Media Convergence, Publishing, Challenges and Prospects

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Introduction

Media convergence is one of the significant changes brought about by the emergence of digital technology in the publishing industry (Jensen, 2022). Traditional publishing practices have been challenged by the convergence of media platforms, opening up new avenues for consumers and publishers to engage. It has significantly changed the way that content is produced, shared, and consumed in the publishing industry (Jensen, 2022). Publishing has its roots in ancient civilizations, when the advent of writing, ink, and papyrus (paper) made it possible to record and distribute information (Pandey, 2018). But Johannes Gutenberg's invention of the printing machine in the middle of the fifteenth century was what really transformed the field. During the Renaissance, Gutenberg's printing machine made it possible to produce books in large quantities, increasing public access to literature and information and promoting the dissemination of ideas and knowledge (Pandey, 2018).

Because of the increase in literacy and the need for written information throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, the publishing business saw substantial

growth (Murray, 2018). Novels, journals, and newspapers gained enormous popularity, and the introduction of steam-powered printing machines sped up output even further. Large publishing houses emerged in the 20th century and came to dominate the market by handling the printing, distribution, and promotion of books and periodicals. The emergence of digital technology and the Internet in the late 20th century marked the beginning of media convergence (Bottomley, 2020). Prior to this time, print, radio, television, and film all functioned as separate media platforms with little overlap. Every media had its own distinct ways for audience involvement, distribution networks, and production procedures. But as digital technology advanced in the 1980s and 1990s, these distinctions became increasingly hazy, setting the stage for the convergence of media. Because it offered a platform for various media to cohabit and interact, the Internet emerged as a potent force that pushed convergence. The blending of text, photos, and videos on webpages as well as the digitisation of conventional media forms were early instances of convergence. Media formats gradually began to merge together as a

result of media corporations' increased ability to diversify their content delivery strategies as the Internet evolved. Because of this convergence, readers are now able to produce and share material in addition to consuming it, completely changing the old publication value chain. Publishers may now contact readers on a variety of channels, including social media, mobile applications, e-books, and online articles, due to the widespread availability of the Internet and the digitisation of information (Have & Pedersen, 2020).

Although there have been difficulties along the way, media convergence has also given publishers new opportunities to interact with readers, try out other content formats, and create long-term revenue sources (Li & Mou, 2021). Publishers may secure a successful position in the ever-changing media ecosystem by seizing the opportunities presented by convergence. Publishers and consumers alike must comprehend the changing nature of media convergence as conventional barriers between various media formats continue to blur. This study made use of secondary data in exploring media convergence and publishing in Nigeria challenges and prospects

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are:

1. To find out the influence of media convergence on the publishing industry in Nigeria.
2. To identify the challenges faced by Nigerian publishers in adapting to media convergence.
3. To explore the prospects that media convergence presents for the Nigerian publishing industry.

Conceptual Clarification

Media Convergence

Nicholas Negroponte originally used the term "convergence" in 1978, stating that the fundamental framework of media convergence is comprised of contemporary devices, technology, social media, and the Internet (Duan, 2020). The term "media convergence" describes the blending of many mass media platforms, including digital media, with portable and highly interactive technology as well as traditional, print, broadcast, new, and online media. It is the process of combining various media technologies into a single computerised device. According to Reyna et al. (2018), it is the fusion of once different technologies, media formats, and distribution channels. For instance, smartphones may perform tasks that were previously performed independently by newspapers, magazines, televisions, GPS units, phones, and so forth. This

demonstrates how a smartphone combines different forms of media, such as print media (e-books, news apps), broadcast media (streaming websites, radio, music apps), and new media (the Internet), into a single device that can do everything from making calls and sending texts to taking pictures, recording videos, playing games, and much more.

Duan (2020) cites Smart TVs as more instances of media convergence, as they combine Internet functionality with traditional television. It enables web surfing, gaming, social networking access, and streaming video from websites like Netflix, Hulu, and YouTube. On-demand material is offered via streaming services like Netflix, Spotify, and Amazon Prime Video. By enabling users to stream TV series, films, and music via the Internet, it combines radio, television, and the Internet. Text, photos, videos, and live streaming can all be shared on social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Combine communication tools (messaging, commenting) with various media content formats (text, photos, and video). Tablets are little gadgets that combine the features of computers and cellphones. They are utilised for using productivity software, playing games, watching movies, reading e-books, and surfing the Internet. Online news content is provided via digital news platforms, which are websites and applications like Reuters, BBC News, and The New York Times. They offer articles, films, podcasts, and interactive material by fusing traditional print media with digital formats (Duan, 2020). Additional examples of media convergence listed by Duan (2020) include laptops, voice assistants, augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR), wearable technology, podcasts, YouTube, e-readers, video game consoles, and podcasts. These technologies are prime examples of how the convergence of media has changed the way we produce, distribute, and use information, resulting in more comprehensive and flexible media experiences. According to Turow (2019), the three Cs of media convergence are content, communications, and computing. Another name for this is technological convergence, which is what led to the development of the 3Cs. These three Cs, Computing, Communications, and Content, come together to form Media Convergence, which is a direct outcome of Internet promotion and digitisation. To put it even more simply, media convergence results from the convergence of content with computer networks and communication technologies (Turow, 2019).

Jensen (2022) posits that the origin of media convergence can be traced back to the late 20th century and the introduction of digital technology. The transition from analogue to digital technology in the 1980s and 1990s, which set the stage for media convergence, is one of the major turning points in its

evolution. Cross-platform compatibility was made possible by the seamless integration of text, graphics, audio, and video made possible by digital formats (Jensen, 2022). Convergence was further accelerated in the 1990s by the growth of the World Wide Web and the Internet. The Internet transformed into a global platform that allowed different media to interact and cohabit, dismantling boundaries between hitherto distinct industries. Convergent media's reach was widened in the 2000s by the widespread use of smartphones and other mobile devices (Turow, 2019). Mobile technology created new consumption patterns and business models by enabling on-the-go access to a variety of media material. In the mid-2000s, social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube came into being, enabling users to produce and distribute content. The distinction between professional and amateur content has become increasingly hazy as a result of the democratization of media production.

Santos (2023) lists one of the main benefits of media convergence between conventional and new media as the quick availability of news and moment-based information. By distributing tailored material, content creators can more precisely target the ideal audience or group they are going after. According to Salamzadeh et al. (2019), audience members are now also creators as a result of media convergence. Media convergence has really helped to integrate audiences globally, from memes to social media posts. By combining conventional and new media, it has expanded the boundaries of traditional media and made instantaneous and up-to-date content available globally. The cost of digital marketing has decreased as a result of the convergence of old and new media, making this process advantageous and inexpensive (Rosario & Cruz, 2019). It changes journalism, news reporting, and communication methods. The advent of portable gadgets has made a vast amount of content accessible, which has given rise to cross-media. For example, news organizations no longer only use print or broadcast media. News portals, podcasts, news feeds, blogs, websites, and mobile applications are just a few of the many new media formats that are emerging. The recently combined media platforms offer online access to the archives as well as countless chances for readers to leave comments on the article or send links to related content (Giannachi, 2023). One of the drawbacks of media convergence, according to Santos (2023), is the challenge of evaluating customer feedback that is dispersed across various converging channels. With many media platforms on a single device, there is more competition for consumers' time and attention. Massive information overloads frequently leaves the audience feeling completely overwhelmed. It is difficult for the elderly and the

disabled population to acquire the digital skills necessary to use various media. It is heavily reliant on technology and the Internet; hence, areas lacking in these resources may have trouble accessing online information. It is also prone to malfunctions and cyber attacks (Santos, 2023).

Publishing

Publishing is the process of creating and disseminating printed or digital information for public consumption (Clark & Philip, 2019). It refers to the act of providing information to the general population. Historically, this was primarily accomplished by distributing physical copies of papers. Currently, there is a wider range of choices available, including websites, print media, DVDs, e-publications, and applications. The publishing industry is a dynamic and intricate field that has undergone significant transformations throughout history. It includes a broad spectrum of activities, spanning from the production and circulation of literary and informative material to the commercial and technological tactics that guarantee its diffusion. At its essence, publishing serves as the conduit via which ideas, stories, and knowledge are disseminated to readers across the globe (Clark & Philip, 2019). The industry is a thorough blend of creativity and business, craftsmanship and technology, and tradition and innovation. Publishing encompasses more than just book printing or information distribution; it involves the skilful and systematic process of transforming ideas into tangible form and ensuring their availability to the general public. It functions as a crucial intermediary connecting producers and audiences.

Baverstock et al. (2020) distinguish between various forms of publishing. Trade Publishing refers to the publishing of books for wide consumption, spanning fiction, non-fiction, and genre-specific categories. Academic Publishing is the publishing of academic research, textbooks, and academic periodicals for educational and research objectives. Self-publishing is the process by which an author independently publishes their own works, frequently using digital platforms and services to reach readers. Professional and technical publishing is the publishing of information for certain professions or businesses, such as medical, legal, or technical domains. The publishing process involves numerous essential stages, each crucial to the successful creation and distribution of information. Baverstock et al. (2020) observed that the first step is the Acquisition and Development. The process starts with content acquisition, which usually includes authors submitting manuscripts. These manuscripts are assessed by publishers according to three criteria: quality,

marketability, and compatibility with the publisher's catalogue. Once a manuscript is approved, it undergoes development, where editors collaborate with authors to enhance the content, ensuring clarity, coherence, and engagement. Production and Design comprise the second step. The design and production phase starts after the manuscript is completed. This involves formatting the text, generating cover designs, and choosing acceptable fonts and layouts. Advances in digital technology have accelerated this process, enabling for more effective and affordable production. After this, follows the stage of Printing and Distribution. Printing and distribution entail the actual creation and dissemination of the printed materials like books, magazines and newspapers to readers and consumers. The introduction of digital publishing has made publication easier and better. Distribution channels have also changed, with traditional bookstores being augmented by online retailers and digital platforms. E-books and audio books have significantly broadened the reach of published information. Marketing and sales constitute the last phase. In order to reach specific audiences and make money, marketing and sales are essential functions that concentrate on distributing and promoting publications. In particular, marketing entails actions intended to raise awareness, spark interest, and eventually propel sales of books and other publications, whereas sales is the process of providing customers with books, magazines, or other published materials via a variety of channels in exchange for money (Baverstock et al., 2020).

Influence of Media Convergence on Publishing

The publishing industry has been greatly impacted by media convergence, which has an effect on content creation and consumption. Salamzadeh et al. (2019) cite content creation and distribution as key areas of effect. The move from print to digital material has been one of the biggest consequences of media convergence on publishing. Publishers may now incorporate interactive elements, music, video, and text into their content to give users better, more interesting reading experiences. E-books, for instance, may have interactive visuals, hyperlinks, and integrated films. Content can be shared on a variety of channels, such as social media, digital markets, mobile applications, and websites. The accessibility and reach of published content are enhanced by this multi-channel strategy. Real-time content updates and modifications on digital platforms guarantee that the information is up to date and valuable. This is especially critical for scholarly and journalism publications, where timeliness and accuracy are essential.

According to Salamzadeh et al. (2019),

convergent media facilitates more interaction between publishers and viewers in the field of audience engagement and participation. By leaving comments, giving content ratings, and sharing it on social media, readers may interact with the material and create a more dynamic and interactive media environment. Publishers may now customize content to each user's unique interests and behaviors due to sophisticated algorithms and data analytics. Targeted advertising and tailored suggestions improve user experience and increase interaction. Online forums and social media make it easier to establish communities centered around particular subjects, writers, or genres. Through direct interactions and user-generated content, publishers may use these communities to increase sales and foster customer loyalty. According to Salamzadeh et al. (2019), media convergence has resulted in the expansion of revenue streams for publishers in the area of business models and revenue streams. Publishers have additional revenue streams for their material than normal sales and subscriptions, such as affiliate marketing, sponsored content, and advertising. New business models like membership programs and subscription services are made possible by digital platforms. These business concepts generate a consistent flow of income and cultivate enduring connections with readers. It is possible for publishers to incorporate e-commerce features into their platforms so that customers can buy relevant products and services straight from the content. This improves user convenience and opens up new revenue streams.

Challenges of Media Convergence in Publishing

Despite all of the advantages that media convergence brings, the publishing industry faces both opportunities and challenges. Teece (2018) asserts that publishers need to develop their content and distribution strategies while continuously adapting to new technology. This necessitates the acquisition of new competencies and the investment in digital infrastructure. According to Teece (2018), there is more competition and market saturation as a result of the ease of entrance into the digital publishing industry. In a congested market, publishers need to discover ways to set their material apart and draw readers in. The emergence of digital media has revolutionised the way people consume content. The rising popularity of e-books and audiobooks is posing a threat to traditional print media. In order to keep up with these changes, publishers need to invest in new technology and create digital strategies (Teece, 2018). Clark and Phillips (2019) assert that the publishing industry's profitability is influenced by economic factors, including swings in consumer spending and rising costs for paper and printing. He pointed out that

in order to overcome these obstacles, publishers need to streamline their processes and look into new sources of income. The digital era has also raised awareness of concerns about piracy and intellectual property (Clark & Phillips, 2019). The unapproved dissemination of digital content can have a noteworthy effect on sales and earnings, leading publishers to allocate resources towards counter-piracy initiatives and promote more robust copyright safeguards.

Ate and Onuwaiku, (2009, p23) also capture some challenges of media convergence:

The rise of digital technology has raised concerns about the traditional roles of Journalists Vis-à-vis the quality of information they produce. A number of concerns revolve around the decline of traditional journalist in favor of the blogger or the untrained journalist, the concentration of ownership structure in few hands which could lead to move avenues of information Dissemination but less information provided.

All the above challenges can be subsumed into the resounding benefits of convergence in the publishing industry.

Prospects of Publishing in the Era of Media Convergence

Despite these obstacles, the publishing sector keeps innovating and changing. Teece (2018) identifies several trends that will influence publishing in the future. Artificial intelligence and machine learning are two examples of how technological innovations are being used to improve content discovery, expedite publishing, and customize reading experiences. AI-powered solutions can help with content production, translation, and editing. Publishers are exploring new horizons, including interactive e-books, enhanced audio books, and immersive narrative experiences, in response to the growing need for a variety of content types. These formats give new avenues for reader engagement and adapt to shifting customer preferences. International markets can be accessed by publishers owing to the worldwide reach of digital platforms. In an attempt to reach a wider audience and profit from the increasing demand for various voices and perspectives, publishers are placing an increasing emphasis on translation and localization initiatives.

According to Li et al. (2021), the publishing industry is adopting more sustainable methods as a result of environmental concerns. This entails cutting waste, utilizing environmentally friendly materials, and looking into digital print alternatives to conventional

print formats. Creating online communities centered around books and writers is becoming more and more crucial. Online forums and social media are being used by publishers to engage with readers, create conversations, and give their audience a feeling of community. Co-publishing and alliances with various media businesses are two examples of the growing collaborative initiatives.

Theoretical Framework

In 1962, Marshall McLuhan developed the Technological Determinism theory, which asserts that as we transition from one technological period to the next, media technologies influence how people think, feel, behave, and function within a society (Yaday & Yaday, 2022). It is an idea that contends that changes in social relationships, cultural traditions, and economic systems are all primarily caused by advances in technology. According to this theory, technology exerts a significant influence on the process of human development, impacting various aspects of people's lives, work, communication, and interaction with their surroundings. According to Hallstrom (2022), technological determinism, at its most potent, asserts that technology is the primary driving force behind historical transformations, sometimes diminishing the influence of human agency or social variables in defining the history of societies.

Technology is frequently seen by proponents of technological determinism as an independent force that advances without the assistance of humans (Phillips, 2023). This suggests that the development of a technology will necessarily result in specific societal changes, regardless of the social, cultural, or political circumstances. The theory posits that technical breakthroughs have a direct impact on social structures, economic systems, and cultural standards (Svensson & Nikoleris, 2018). For instance, the introduction of the printing press is frequently mentioned as a pivotal element in the dissemination of literacy and the democratization of information. In the context of media convergence and publishing in Nigeria, technological determinism can be used to understand how digital technologies are driving changes in the publishing industry. The advent of the Internet, mobile devices, and digital publishing platforms has revolutionized the way content is produced, distributed, and consumed. According to technological determinism, these advancements are not just tools that publishers can choose to adopt or ignore; rather, they are forces that fundamentally reshape the publishing landscape in Nigeria. Traditional print media, for example, has been compelled to adapt to the digital age by transitioning to online platforms, a change driven by the widespread

adoption of digital technology.

Technological determinism suggests that the rise of digital technology has dictated new methods of content creation and distribution. In Nigeria, this means that publishers must produce content that is compatible with various digital platforms, such as websites, social media, and mobile applications. The shift from print to digital is seen as inevitable, driven by the availability and capabilities of new technologies. As a result, publishers must embrace multimedia content, interactive features, and real-time updates to stay relevant in the converged media environment. While technological determinism emphasizes the transformative power of technology, it can also highlight the challenges faced by the Nigerian publishing industry. The assumption that technology will drive progress overlooks the fact that not all regions or populations have equal access to digital tools and platforms. In Nigeria, issues such as limited Internet penetration, high costs of digital infrastructure and disparities in digital literacy create significant barriers to the widespread adoption of new publishing technologies. These challenges complicate the deterministic view that technology alone will drive the future of publishing in Nigeria. Despite the challenges, technological determinism also highlights the prospects for innovation and growth in the Nigerian publishing industry. As digital technologies continue to evolve, they offer new opportunities for content creators and publishers to experiment with formats, distribution channels, and audience engagement strategies. For instance, the growing popularity of e-books, podcasts, and online video content presents new avenues for Nigerian publishers to reach both local and global audiences. Moreover, the ability to collect and analyze data on audience behavior through digital platforms can help publishers tailor content to meet the specific needs and preferences of their readers.

Technological Determinism Theory provides a lens through which to understand the profound impact of digital technologies on media convergence and publishing in Nigeria. The theory suggests that technological advancements are not merely tools but are powerful forces that shape the structure, practices, and future of the publishing industry. While this perspective emphasizes the transformative potential of technology, it also highlights the challenges and limitations faced by the Nigerian publishing industry as it navigates the digital age. By recognizing both the deterministic and contextual factors at play, Nigerian publishers can better position themselves to overcome challenges and seize the opportunities presented by media convergence.

Conclusion

Media convergence has significantly reshaped the publishing landscape, merging traditional and digital media to create new avenues for content creation, distribution, and consumption. Although this shift has introduced challenges, such as the need for technological adaptation and competition in a saturated market, it has also opened up opportunities for innovation, audience engagement, and diversified revenue streams. As the publishing industry in Nigeria and globally continues to navigate this digital transformation, the ability to embrace and leverage media convergence will be essential for sustaining growth and relevance in the ever-evolving media environment.

Recommendations

Based on this review, the following recommendations are made:

1. Nigerian publishers should upgrade their digital infrastructure and focus on enhancing the digital skills of their workforce to effectively manage and innovate in a converged media landscape.
2. To stay competitive, publishers should adopt various content formats like e-books and podcasts, and distribute them across multiple platforms to reach a wider audience and enhance reader engagement.
3. Publishers should work on improving digital access and literacy in Nigeria by supporting initiatives that enhance Internet penetration, reduce digital device costs, and provide literacy training.
4. Nigerian publishers should explore new revenue streams like subscriptions and partnerships, and consider collaborations to expand their reach and leverage emerging technologies.

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