

Impact of online media on print media newspaper sales: A case of Zambia daily mail limited

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Abstract

The main aim of the study was to establish the impact of online media (e-Paper) on print media (hard copy) newspaper sales. The Zambia Daily Mail Limited Company was chosen as a case study. Descriptive research design was employed with a sample population of 76 participants consisting of 18 Zambia Daily Mail staff, 52 newspaper readers, 4 newspaper vendors and 2 advertising agents. Data were collected using questionnaires and in-depth interviews. Quantitative data was analyzed using a statistical application called SPSS while content and thematic techniques were applied to analyze qualitative data. The study findings revealed that online media had minimal impact on print media newspaper sales as the two versions of the newspapers were still running side by side. However, these research findings were based on a small sample hence the need to conduct related studies in future with a larger sample in order to ascertain the consistence of such outcomes. The study further established that adoption of ICTs are gaining popularity in Zambia and the literacy levels are slowly increasing, thereby creating an enabling environment for the electronic newspaper to thrive. However, high costs of internet remained a major challenge in the implementation of e-paper both from the company and newspaper readers. Based on the findings of the study, the following among many other recommendations emerged: 1. Zambia Daily Mail Limited should increase their ePaper sensitization and utilize other forms of advertising media such as TV, Radio, Online, street shows, face to face and other available media. 2. Zambia Daily Mail Limited should form partnerships with internet service providers (ISP's) for possible special rates on online subscribers in order to increase the e-Paper subscriptions. 3. The company should continue providing the hard copy version of the newspaper because both versions of the newspaper are still needed and command equal share of market.

Keywords: e-paper, hard copy, online, ICT and impacts

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

The print media in Zambia has a history of doing street newspaper sales, with very little online concentration. For example, the printed copies of the newspapers at the Zambia Daily Mail Limited (ZDML) which are distributed and sold across the country has a limited circulation number of printed copies ranging 18,000 to 25,000 copies per day on average (ZDML, 2015) ^[11]. According to the Zambia-Advisor (2016) ^[10], Zambian Media has undergone a lot of changes since colonial times. One of the biggest changes is the shift from private owned, to state owned and finally to a liberalized media. Zambian print media came on the scene earlier than the electronic media. Journalistic activities started thriving in colonial times and were initially privately owned. It was introduced in the early 1950's when it was known as "The African mail." It was not until the early 1960's that it changed its name to the Central African Mail. In 1965 the Newspaper was bought by the government of Zambia. Then it was published weekly but by 1970 it became a daily edition, hence "The Daily Mail" and finally its current name called 'Zambia Daily Mail Limited' (ZDML). The company is currently being offered worldwide on a daily basis through the website. As a result the company introduced an online version of the newspaper (e-Paper). Reasons attributed to the introduction of e-paper included but not limited to high production costs involved in print media, newsprint prices, slumping advertising sales, loss of classified advertising, precipitous drops in circulation, product delivery time and transportation costs (ZDML, 2015) ^[11].

A study conducted by a committee on information and broadcasting services tasked by the National Assembly of Zambia (2016) ^[9], revealed that print public media organizations in Zambia were self-sustaining and allowed to run their entities as business organizations by coming up with innovations and diversified business solutions. However, despite newspaper sales and advertising being the major source of income to these organizations, the study acknowledged that print media in Zambia was facing a lot of operational challenges due to decreasing number of people buying the newspapers. For instance, the report cited the Zambia Daily Mail Limited as being owed K3, 102,123.50 by various Government ministries and departments in terms of sales and advertising" as at 12th February, 2015" (The National Assembly of Zambia, 2016) ^[9]. Other operational constraints facing the company are high cost of procuring raw materials for printing, reduction in the company's profit margin, poor fleet of transport, lack of equipment and sharp competition brought by emerging technologies. In view of the above challenges, ZDML decided to introduce the e-Paper as part of its strategic decision and diversification plan. However, the impact e-Paper on the hard copy newspaper sales remains unknown, hence this study.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The total population in Zambia is approximately 14.08 million people in Zambia, and out of that, at least 10.5 million are subscribed on at least one of our three mobile networks available in the country which translates into an approximate percentage of 77% owning mobile devices such as cell

phones, tablets etc (ZICTA, 2015) [12]. A joint survey conducted by ZICTA, Central statistics Office (CSO) and the Ministry of Transport and communications (2015) indicated that households using their computers to access internet in homes rose from 46.7 % in 2013 to 49.7 % in 2015. The implications of the statistics given above are that Zambia as a nation is experiencing a digital drift which has posed a challenge for the print media sales. In response to such problems, Zambia Daily Mail Limited introduced e-paper (ZDML, 2015) [11]. The study therefore sought to establish the impact of e-paper on the print media newspaper sales at Zambia Daily Mail Limited Company.

1.3 Research Objectives

The study was guided by the following objectives:

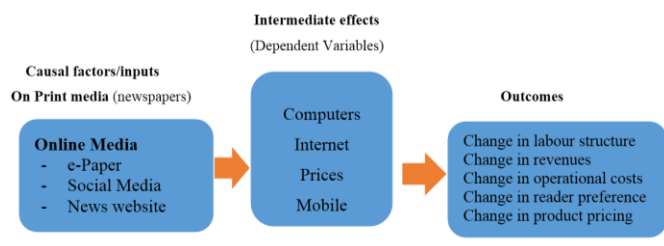
- To ascertain the information technology literacy levels amongst ZDML newspaper readers.
- To establish the preferred version of the ZDML newspaper (print or e-Paper).
- To assess the effects of online media on the sales of print media (hard copy newspaper).

1.4 Research Questions

- Do many ZDML newspaper readers know how to use computers, tablets, smart phones and the internet?
- What version of the ZDML newspaper is preferred by the readers?
- Are there any effects brought by online media on the sales of print media newspaper?

1.5 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework below explains how variables are interlinked with each other. The study focused on the conceptualization of the impact of online media on sales of print newspapers. Below is a figure depicting the impact of online media on print media?



As depicted in the figure above, there is direct relationship between online newspaper and print newspaper readership and sales. Due to cost implications, it may not be common for readers to have both versions of the newspapers at the same time. Even among those that can afford both versions, time to read both becomes an inhibiting factor because of time limitations coupled with social and economic challenges. Therefore, the impact of online media will be dependent on availability of computers, product pricing, mobile devices and internet connectivity among others.

2. Literature Review

Themes and subthemes were created based on research objectives. Therefore, literature review followed the created themes.

2.1 Preference on the utilization of the publication version of the daily newspaper

Barth, (2005) [2] conducted a research on the utilization of the three forms of publication of the daily newspaper in Germany. The study revealed that print media in Germany dominated for many years until in the 21st century when online publication was introduced. Thereafter, both versions were running parallel to each other. However electronic (e-Paper) had optimized functionalities that provided economic, time, speed and space advantages over the print newspaper. Later, the e-paper became a preferred version among readers (Lasica, 2003) [6]. The study did not however establish how e-paper impacted on print newspaper sales. Another study conducted by Kopano (2013) [5] on the effects of online newspapers on the printed version in South Africa. The research indicated that technology positively impacted on the e-paper and newspaper industry in general. However, the study did not statistically prove the impact of e-paper on the sales of hard copy newspaper. Further the study only focused on the local areas of South Africa; hence it may not have given a true reflection of the problem especially at regional and global level.

Kit and Teng (2014) [4] in Malaysia conducted a study on the print newspaper versus online news media which was a quantitative study on young generation preference. The research was focused on the preferences between the two types of newspapers. It became apparent that technological advancement in the media industry was on the increase in the recent past years. Additionally, the research also looked at the trend of readership for both online and printed newspapers as well as outlined a number of media houses using both versions of the news. Based on the findings, there was an increase in terms of readership accessibility of both versions of the newspaper in Malaysia. Finally, the research looked at different roles both versions of the newspaper play in news dissemination in Malaysia; there was high likelihood that online newspaper would eventually substitute the traditional newspaper (printed version). From this study conducted in Malaysia, although Kit and Teng (2014) [4] looked at the impacts that the introduction of online newspaper had on print newspaper, the findings did not bring to light the future expected impacts the two versions of the newspaper would exert on each other in terms of sales.

2.2 Impact of Online Media on the Print Media

According to academia, (2016) [1], a study was conducted in Sweden on the change from print to web to e-Paper presented some imminent scenarios of use and design of the e-Paper, specifically over the traditional version. Although the study might have appeared similar, it based its focus more on the challenges and future of the electronic newspaper designing considering the facts that the components and ideas of the e-Paper designs from the web and print versions. The findings indicated that, some media institutions had a lot of experience in designing the printed version of the newspaper. However, they had very limited knowledge and skill in designing the e-Paper. The study recommended newspaper designers to improve on their skills and adopt some modern technologies that would support the interactive age, as reading the digital and online versions was different from reading the printed version.

Ibid, (2016)^[1] indicated that two parallel methods were used in carrying out this study and this was done in order for the researchers to draw some empirical results. The first method was conducted through designing and evaluation of the e-Paper prototypes. This was done in association with some media houses. The second method was conducted through the use of questionnaires which were distributed to the management and online newspaper designers.

The research used fourteen (14) Swedish based newspapers organization seen to be interested in the development of the e-paper technology. op.cit, (2016)^[1] established two (2) diverse features of the e-Paper, firstly the business models and secondly the design aspect. The study was interested to understand the evolution of the media industry and how the newspaper industry had changed from the traditional newspaper to e-paper. Although this study was conducted successfully it however did not state the effects that online media brought on the printed version of the newspaper. For example, when the newspapers evolved from print to web based newspapers, what economic effects did it create on the printed version? Additionally, what effects would have been brought when it eventually changed to digital version? These and many other questions remain unanswered, hence the need for an inquiry of this nature.

On the local perspective, Zambia has four (4) main print media publications namely the Zambia Daily Mail Limited (ZDML), Times of Zambia (TOZ), the Post (defunct) and the Daily Nation (DN) Newspapers plus many other emerging publications being introduced now. Out of all these, two (2) of them are public organizations with three (3) quarters of the shares owned by the republic of Zambian Government while the rest are private owned. Out of the four (4) main newspapers named above, at least three (3) of them i.e. ZDML, TOZ and POST (defunct) newspapers recently introduced the electronic versions of the newspapers and are therefore publishing both versions of the papers. A study by Sandi (2014)^[8] examined the introduction of the e-Paper by the Times of Zambia Newspaper. The report indicated that the introduction came as a result of the media institution effort to adapt to the technological era citing innovativeness in order to enhance product delivery amidst tight competition in the media industry. It was further indicated that the company had since signed a Memorandum of understanding (MOU) with one of the mobile service providers to enable the subscribers make payments through Mobile Money system. However, the study did not enlighten how the introduction of e-paper impacted on print media news paper sales.

On the other hand ZDML (2015)^[11] indicated that the Zambia Daily Mail introduced its electronic version of the newspaper (e-Paper) in the year 2015 as a way of meeting all types of readership categories. The Managing Director at the time the e-Paper was being launched made the following emphasis.

...the company is in the process of carrying out a readership survey across the country for us to understand and have a more defined customer needs across gender, age and strata...Zambia Daily Mail recognizes that people in society including students, researchers and entrepreneurs have been wondering what the ZDML is all about and have not had an opportunity to see some of the innovations the company is working on to enable it reach a wider clientele... ZDML (2015)^[11]

Despite the Daily Mail Limited Company introducing e-paper,

the impact of this version of newspaper on print version (hard copy newspaper) sales remained un-researched. Further although some local media organizations producing both versions of the newspaper, the exact impact of e-paper on the sales of print newspaper has not been investigated. The study sought therefore to establish the impact that online media might have on the printed version of the newspaper sales.

3. Research Methodology

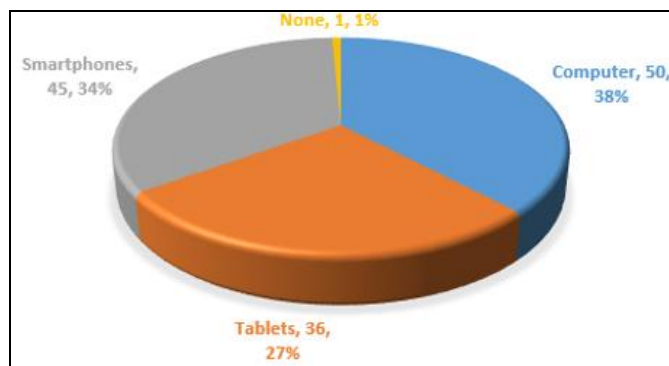
The study employed descriptive survey design to establish the impacts of online (ePaper) on the hard copy newspaper sales for the Zambia Daily Mail Limited. The target group comprised of newspaper readers of different age groups and status in society, the ZDML management team, support staff, newspaper vendors as well as the advertising agents. The total sample size was 76 of which out of that total 18 of them were ZDM staff, 52 were newspaper readers drawn from different types of readers such as students, full time employees, business people and those on retirement. 4 were newspaper vendors and the other 2 were advertising agents. Questionnaires and in-depth interviews were used to collect data in this study. The research employed in-depth interviews because of their flexibility in cases where follow up question were needed. On the other hand questionnaire was used because of the larger number of respondent (i.e. newspaper readers). Questionnaires were regarded suitable research instruments for attaining high levels of reliability and validity of the research outcome. The data collected was analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative methods. Quantitative data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) while qualitative was analyzed thematically and later excel to generate frequencies, tables, percentages and graphs.

4. Presentation of Research Findings

Research findings are presented according to themes and subthemes generated from research objectives.

4.1 ICT device knowledge

Participants were asked whether they are able to use one or more ICT devices.



Source: Field Data, (2016)

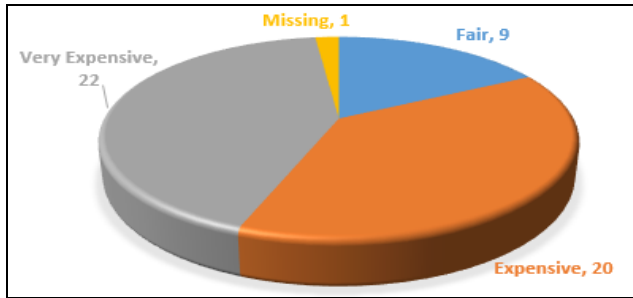
Fig 1: Respondents Knowledge of ICT

Figure 1 above 38%, 27% and 34% indicated they were able to use computers, tablets and smart phones respectively. Only 1% said they are not able to operate any of the devices.

4.2 Internet costs in Zambia

When asked about the cost of internet in Zambia, the

respondents gave the following views presented in figure 2 below:



Source: Field Data, (2016)

Fig 2: Respondents' views on the cost of internet in Zambia

The biggest number with 22 participants stated that the internet in Zambia is very expensive, 20 of them indicated that it is expensive, 9 said it is fair priced while 1 of them did not respond.

4.3 Newspaper version type preference

Respondents were asked on what newspaper version type they prefer between the e-paper and the hard copy versions.



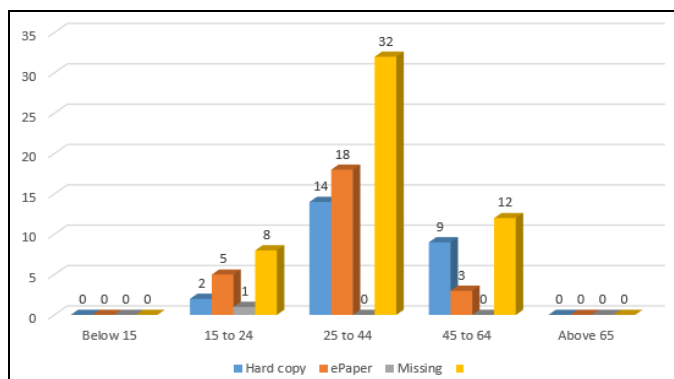
Source: Field Data, (2016)

Fig 3: Respondents newspaper version preference

26 participants representing 50% indicated that they prefer e-Paper over the hard copy while 25 of them representing 48% prefer the hard copy over e-Paper. The remaining 1 participant did not respond.

4.3.1 Age Factor in Newspaper Version Preference

In the past and until now, there have been perceptions that young people tend to use ICT facilities compared to older clientele. In order to obtain empirical data on this premise, views were solicited as shown below:



Source: Field Data (2016)

Fig 4: Age as a factor of newspaper version preference

The data distribution seemed to have adopted a normal distribution curve as regards to the association between age and use of ICT devices indicating very few respondents of ages below 15 years but the majority ranging from 15 years to 44 years. The figure indicates fewer respondents as they advanced in age.

4.3.2 Reasons for Newspaper version Preference

Participants gave different reasons to why they prefer a particular version of the newspaper. Some of the reasons given are summarized in the table below:

Table 1: Newspaper version preference factors

Reason	Number of participants
Health/Green campaign support	2
Availability	10
User Friendly	4
Portability	3
Lack of Knowledge	1
Easy Access	18
Convenient	5
Cheaper	1
Missing	8

Source: Field Data, (2016)

4.3.3 Pricing Factor in Newspaper Version Preference

To establish more factors that affects the readers' choice of newspaper version, participants were also tested on whether the two newspaper version pricing had effects on their choices, they were also tested on whether they would subscribe to the Zambia Daily mail newspaper if the product was to become e-paper exclusive. Out of 52 respondents, 23(44%) participants indicated that the pricing affects their choice and 27 (52%) said the pricing does not affect them in any ways while 2 (4%) participants did not respond. On whether they would subscribe to the Daily Mail e-paper or not, the responses were as follows: 36 (69%) participants indicated that they would still subscribe for the product if it became e-paper exclusive while 15(29%) of them said they wouldn't. Only 1(2%) participant did not respond.

4.3.4 Age Vs ICT Device Usage Cross Tabulation

To get more results from the study, some cross tabulation of age against ICT device usage were done as shown in the table below:

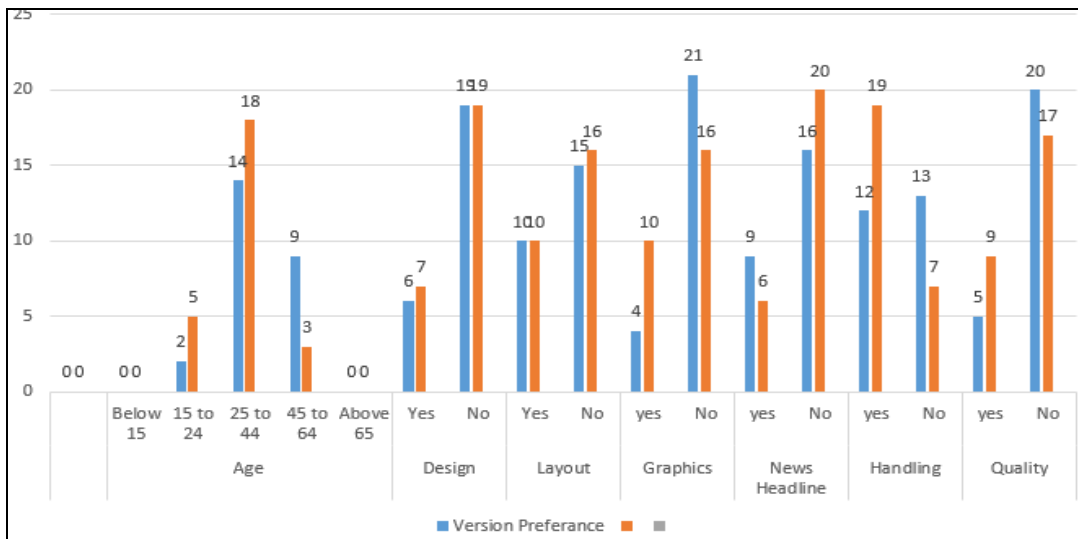
Table 2: Age and ICT device usage cross tabulation

Age and ICT device usage cross tabulation								
	Computer		Tablets		Smart phones		None	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Age Group								
Below 15	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
15 to 24	8	0	6	2	8	0	0	8
25 to 44	30	2	22	10	29	3	0	32
45 to 64	12	0	8	4	8	4	0	12
Above 65	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Source: Field Data, (2016)

Different age groups were cross tabulated and tested on the type of ICT devices they are conversant with and the biggest number of participants conversant with the three (03) devices namely Computer, Tablets and Smart phones indicated those falling between the 25 to 44 years age group. However, we had none in the below 15 and above 65 age groups. Others were from the 15 to 24 and 45 to 64 age groups.

4.4 Newspaper version, age and preference factors cross tabulation



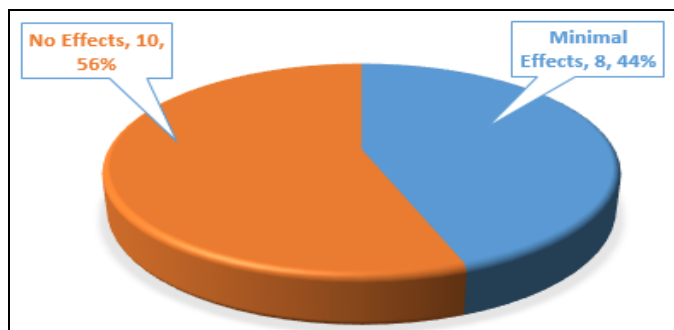
Source: Field Data, 2016

Fig 7: Newspaper version, age and factors that affects participant’s choice cross tabulation

The above cross tabulation shows possible relationship of the newspaper version against the age and preference factors of the participants who reads the Zambia daily Mail newspaper. The graph shows the 18 participants as the highest who are between the ages of 25 to 44 preferring the e-paper over the hard copy and gave handling or portability as the most affecting factor. 14 of them within the same age group who showed their preference as being the hard copy indicated that they choose that version because of handling as well as the layout.

4.5 Respondent’s Views on the level of Impact on the hard copy Sales

Views were solicited to show the impact of e-paper on the sales of printed newspaper. The findings are shown below:



Source: Field Data, 2016

Fig 8: Level of impact of e-paper on hardcopy newspaper sales

Out of the total 18 respondents, 10 of them representing 56% said there are no effects while 8 of them representing 44% indicated that there were minimal effects noticed on the hardcopy sales.

5. Discussion of Research Findings

The discussion of the findings followed research objectives and guided by the conceptual framework. Relevant literature reviewed is taken into consideration for comparison and establishing best practices seek.

5.1 ICT literacy levels amongst newspaper readers.

The study’s first objective was to ascertain the information technology literacy levels amongst Zambia Daily Mail Limited newspaper readers. Accordingly, the level of information & communication technology knowledge amongst participants were tested, this also included their proficiency of usage. The ICT literacy level and proficiency was tested based on some common devices used in accessing the e-paper such as computers, tablets, smart phones as well as the internet. Interestingly, 99% of the respondents said they were at least comfortable with the usage of these devices with only a percent not giving a response. Out of the total percentage who indicated that they are good with the usage of the ICT’s, the results obtained indicated a mixed knowhow of the devices, it was discovered that an individual is able to operate all the three devices tested on though the usage proficiency showed some variation. The percentage of usage obtained where as follows, those who said they are comfortable with computers, tablets and smart phones were 38, 27% and 34% respectively. And according to the findings on the proficiency of use, results indicated that at least a good number of participants are excellent users of all the three types of devices while the lowest number indicated those who are poor in using the devices. To further establish the ICT’s usage and literacy levels amongst the participants, the study carried out the age and ICT’s usage cross tabulation, this was done using the different age groups and the three devices used to access the e-paper. Findings showed that participants from the 24 to 44 age group category uses more ICT’s than any other age groups, the second were those from 45 to 64 age group category, the third best use of ICT’s indicates those from 15 to 24 age group category while the age groups from the categories below 15 and above 65 years had no responses.

5.2 Age, ICT usage and Newspaper Version Preference

Although almost all the age groups indicated that they are able to use the ICT devices, this study has however established that there is a correlation between the ICT’s usage and the ages. For instance, the findings revealed that as people grows out of their teen age, they develop the interest in using ICT’s and

when they get older, their interest in using these devices tend to decrease. The study therefore concluded that middle aged participants used more of any of the three devices tested on. It can be argued that the difference in ICT usage pattern can be attributed to many factors which include the employment status. This age bracket is in full time employment hence they were able to purchase the ICT devices as compared to those below 24 who are mostly students and those above 65 years and had reached retirement age. This study reviewed a research conducted in Sweden which was based on the change from print to web to e-paper, Although the study might have appeared similar, its focus was however more on the challenges and future of the electronic newspaper designing considering the facts that the components and ideas of the e-paper designs from the web and print versions (Academia 2016) ^[1] On the newspaper version preference, the findings revealed an almost equal preferences in the two versions of the newspaper although preference doesn't interpret into usage, a person can prefer a particular version when in the actual facts they decide to go for a different type. Preference of what version to get is dependent on many factors such as cost, accessibility of internet, pricing and individual ICT literacy levels. The detailed linkage and interaction of different variables are explained in the conceptual framework section that guided this study.

5.3 Impact of online media (e-Paper) on print media

The study established that online media do have an impact on print media. In establishing the impact of online media (e-paper) on print media, the study first solicited respondent's ICT literacy level, usage, internet costs and the market. The findings revealed a discrepancy between the above identified variables. Although literacy levels were appreciably high (with 51 respondents out of 52) saying they were able to use information and communication technologies (ICT)), the cost however was cited to be a principal impediment. For instance, 80.8% said the internet costs in Zambia have made internet usage, including e-paper, access difficult. The outcome of the study agrees with ZICTA (2015) ^[12] that established that at least 2.6 out of the 14.08 approximated populations have access to the internet.

It can be argued that 2.6 populations with access to the internet is a good number of which if the internet costs in Zambia were accommodative, we would have a situation where atleast a good number would manage subscribing to one or more internet service providers. The study further established that people highly depend on their workplace internet, this also make it difficult for organization in as far as cost control is concerned, as a result, they usually introduce policies that restrict usage of internet on personal activities. This may prevent people to go for the e-Version of the newspaper. Furthermore the joint survey conducted by ZICTA, Central statistics Office (CSO) and the Ministry of Transport and communications (2015) ^[12, 3], on the number of households owning and using the computers and internet indicated an improvement in the ICT segment showing a movement from 4.9 % recorded in the 2013 to 7.1 % for the year 2015. The proportion of households using their computers to access the internet in homes had risen from 46.7 % of those owning computers and also using the internet in 2013 to 49.7 % in 2015. The statistics given means that, the digital drifts such as the mobile revolution cannot be ignored

because the consumption of information is fast changing. The media hasn't been seen to be more active in sensitizing people on this issue despite having power to reach out to masses and be able to provide, inform and educate.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusion

The main aim of the study was to establishing the impact of online (e-Paper) on the print (hard copy) sales of the Zambia Daily Mail Newspaper. The conclusion from the study findings is that although the e-Paper showed some positive signs of growth in terms of sales, there are a lot of factors affecting its market penetration. The major challenge being that access to the e-Paper is directly linked to the knowledge of ICT devices and internet. Despite being the most preferred version of the newspaper, it is yet to create huge impact on the hard copy which eventually would affect its sales. The study therefore has provided a validation that most readers despite knowing how to use ICT devices as well as being good in internet usage, their interest to subscribe to the e-Paper version of the newspaper is greatly hindered by the high costs of the internet in Zambia. It is against such a background that this study submit in the impact of online (e-paper) on the print media can be seen only when the ICT infrastructure in the country is improved and also reduce the cost of internet. Hence there is need for future studies to employ a larger sample population from different media organizations in order to further enhance the validity and reliability of similar studies. Nevertheless, study projects that in the next few years, especially when the country's ICT literacy levels improves, there will be subsequent increase in the e-Paper subscriptions to a level where the hard copy sales would drastically drop.

6.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations emerged

1. Zambia Daily Mail Limited should increase their e-Paper sensitization and utilize other forms of advertising media such as TV, Radio, Online, street shows, face to face and other available media.
2. Zambia Daily Mail Limited should form partnerships with some internet service providers (ISP's) for possible special rates on online subscribers in order to increase the ePaper subscriptions.
3. The company should continue providing the hard copy version of the newspaper because both versions of the newspaper are enjoying equal share of market.

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