



Research Article

News Media Preference Among Students of National Open University of Nigeria, Ilorin Study Centre: Traditional or New Media?

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About Article

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ABSTRACT

News has been an indispensable component of human life, although the ways people access it have changed over time. Today, news is distributed through traditional mass media, including newspapers, magazines, radio, and television, as well as digital platforms such as news websites and social media. This shift is relevant to students at the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN), Ilorin Study Centre (ILSC), whose learning environment incorporates digital technologies. Although previous studies have examined students' media use and preferences, less attention has been paid to their preference for traditional or new media, especially for news consumption. This study examined media preference for news consumption among NOUN, ILSC students and investigated the relationship between age and preferred media. Guided by Uses and Gratifications Theory and Technological Determinism, the study adopted a quantitative survey design and obtained 270 valid responses through non-probability sampling. Respondents could use both media forms: 207 (76.7%) reported using traditional media for news, while 266 (98.5%) reported using new media. In terms of preference, however, 230 (85.2%) preferred new media and 40 (14.8%) preferred traditional media. New media was preferred across all age groups, and a chi-square test indicated a statistically significant association between age and preferred media, $\chi^2(3, N = 270) = 9.26, p = .026$. The study concludes that new media was the more preferred form of news media among the respondents, although traditional media remained in use.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The need to be informed about the affairs of people, events, and society has made news a vital element of human relationship with themselves and their environment. It's the timely information of occurrences and events that are not of public knowledge (Baiju, 2018). However, news does not only inform us about events that have happened but also future ones that are of consequence to the public. From reports of accidents that disrupt vehicular movement to weather forecasts of present and future conditions, news shapes our view of incidents and influences our daily decisions.

In Nigeria's pre-mass media era, news was disseminated through town criers, storytelling, village meetings, person to person, and other indigenous channels (Ogbemudia et al., 2021). This limited the range of news dissemination and consumption. However, with the emergence of traditional mass media; newspapers, magazines, radio, and television, a large, varied number of people have access to information simultaneously across wider regions. Subsequently, with the advancement of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), the patronage of traditional media has made a shift (Oladosu et al., 2021). The nascence of new media technologies has put traditional and new media in competition for students' time and engagement (Ibrahim et al., 2018). The proliferation of online services has set traditional media on a downtrend (Adekannbi & Agbolabori, 2018).

Data Reportal (2026) estimated that Nigeria had 109 million internet users at the end of

2025, representing 45.5% of the population. Internet access enables various forms of new media, including online news websites, blogs, streaming services, and social media platforms. The growth of these internet-based platforms has changed how news is produced, shared, and consumed (Gamage, 2023).

However, the trustworthiness and importance of traditional media have not disappeared as people still seek them out for news (Sanusi & Badiora, 2023). Russmann and Hess (2020) found that, while social media was widely used, traditional media channels remained the most trusted sources of youths among young adults aged 18-25.

Although several studies have examined students' use of traditional and social media in higher education, limited research has specifically examined students at the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN), Ilorin Study Centre (ILSC), to establish whether they prefer traditional or new media for news consumption in today's rapidly evolving media-rich environment. This study addresses that gap by examining the media forms preferred by NOUN, ILSC students and whether preference is associated with age.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Today, news is available through a range of traditional and digital platforms. Previous studies have reported growing use of new media for news consumption among students and young people (Ibrahim, 2023; Babatunde & Ayanwale, 2023; Kumar & Jayaraj, 2019). Other research has found that traditional media continue to be used by some groups, partly because of their perceived credibility and trustworthiness (Sbouy, 2025; Sanusi &

Badiora, 2023; Dunu et al., 2015). These differing patterns make it important to examine media preference within specific audiences rather than assume that findings from one population apply to another.

NOUN is a federal university established to provide open and distance learning. Its ILSC student population includes people of different ages and educational backgrounds, making it a relevant setting for examining news media preferences. The present study therefore investigates whether NOUN, ILSC students prefer traditional or new media for news consumption and whether age is significantly associated with that preference.

2.0 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this study are to:

1. Identify whether NOUN, ILSC students prefer traditional or new media for news consumption.
2. Determine whether there is a significant relationship between age and NOUN, ILSC students' preferred media for news consumption.

2.1 Research Questions

1. What form of media (traditional or new) do NOUN, ILSC students prefer for news consumption?
2. Is there a significant relationship between age and students' preferred form of media for news consumption?

2.1.1 Research Hypotheses

H₀: There is no significant relationship between age and preferred media among NOUN, ILSC students.

H₁: There is a significant relationship between age and preferred media among NOUN, ILSC students.

2.1.2 Scope of the Study

This study focused on students enrolled at

NOUN, ILSC, during the 2026 academic session, irrespective of their faculties and levels of study. It examined their preference for traditional media and new media for news consumption and the relationship between age and preferred media. Preferences for education, advertising, entertainment and social networking were outside the scope of the study.

3.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Conceptual Review

News refers to timely information about occurrences, developments, or issues that are relevant to the members of the public. Hiro (2024) emphasises that news reporting should be based on verified facts and reliable sources rather than speculation or personal opinions. The channels through which news is disseminated to large audiences are called mass media. Traditionally, these include newspapers, magazines, television, and radio. However, advances in computer-assisted communication have led to the emergence of new media.

New media refers to internet-based digital platforms used to share information and communicate with audiences (Fehér, 2024). For this study, it includes news websites, blogs, video-streaming services, and social media platforms such as Sahara Reporters, Daily Nigerian, Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, and X. However, immersive technologies are excluded from the study.

With the availability of both traditional and new media, audiences have different options for accessing news. Nevertheless, using a particular medium does not necessarily indicate a preference for it. Therefore, media

preference refers to the type of media a respondent prefers for accessing news.

Furthermore, news consumption refers to the process of accessing news content through activities such as reading, watching, or listening to news. Unlike media preference, which focuses on the medium a person favours, news consumption concerns how people access news across different media platforms.

4.0 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored on two theories: Uses and Gratifications Theory (U&G), introduced by Elihu Katz (1959), and Technological Determinism Theory associated with Marshall McLuhan (1964). U&G Theory, further developed by Elihu Katz, Jay G. Blumler, and Michael Gurevitch, views media audiences as active participants who choose and use media to satisfy their certain needs and achieve desired gratifications (Katz et al., 1974). The theory contrast with Hypodermic Needle Theory, which assumes that mass media messages have direct and powerful effects on passive audiences. However, the U&G perspective emphasises that audience have the ability to select the media and the content they want to consume based on their needs, interests, and preferences. Thus, media audience are not just passive recipient of information but active users who make choices about media consumption. The theory provides basis for investigating the motives behind students' media form preferences and understanding how their choice of platforms satisfies their needs for news consumption.

Likewise, Technological Determinism Theory associated with Marshall McLuhan (1964) posits that technology has a significant

impact on how society grow, relates and communicates. It emphasises that when a new communication technology emerges, it can substantially change people's media habits. This is relevant to present study because the development of internet-based tools, smartphones, social media, online news platforms has transformed the way students' access and consumed news. Technological Determinism Theory therefore provide theoretical perspective for explaining how the development of new media technologies may influence NOUN, ILSC students' preference for new media over traditional media for news consumption.

4.1 Empirical Review

Okunnu et al. (2021) investigated social media use among students at the National Open University of Nigeria, Abeokuta Study Centre, using a survey and questionnaire. All respondents accessed social media, and 71% did so daily. The main purposes included academic research (70%), interaction with friends (66.6%), access to news and other timely information (63%), and entertainment (34%). However, the study examined general social media use rather than preference between traditional and new media for news consumption.

Ibrahim et al. (2018) examined media preferences among students of Kaduna State Polytechnic and identified the internet as the most preferred medium, followed by radio, television and print media. Younger students aged 20–24 showed greater preference for the internet, whereas students aged 30 and above were more inclined towards radio and television. These findings suggest that age may be associated with students' media choices. However, the study examined general media preferences rather than preference specifically for traditional or new

media for news consumption.

Sanusi and Badiora (2023) reported that civil servants in Osun State relied primarily on traditional media, particularly newspapers, television and radio, although some also used digital sources such as news websites, social media and mobile applications. The study identified convenience, trustworthiness and interactivity as factors influencing platform choice. It used an online survey and analysed 361 completed responses.

Dunu et al. (2015) examined traditional and new media use among elites in South-East Nigeria. Their respondents predominantly used traditional media for information, while the internet was used for email, news, further education and research. Using a survey and questionnaires administered to 478 senior civil servants, the researchers concluded that new media complemented rather than displaced traditional media.

Anyanwu et al. (2024) observed that although Nigerian audiences increasingly rely on online media for news, traditional media continue to serve as sources for checking and authenticating information obtained online. The authors linked this role to concerns about the credibility and reliability of news shared on social media. Their study used a survey/opinion poll and street interviews, including material gathered through selected WhatsApp groups and interviews with train passengers. This suggests that traditional and online media may serve complementary functions. The study provides useful context for examining the preferences of NOUN, ILSC students, although its focus was broader Nigerian audiences rather than students at this study centre.

These findings suggest that although traditional media remain relevant among some Nigerian audiences, online platforms have also become important sources of news. This provides a useful basis for examining the media form preferences of NOUN, ILSC students, whose media-use patterns may differ from those of other Nigerian audiences because of differences in age, educational environment, and other demographic characteristics.

5.0 METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative research approach using a descriptive survey research design. The design was considered appropriate for obtaining and describing data on the media preferences of NOUN, ILSC students for news consumption.

The target population comprised all students enrolled at the NOUN, ILSC, during the 2026 academic session. According to NOUN's official institutional data, the university had 133,000 active undergraduate students and 52,138 active postgraduate students nationwide (National Open University of Nigeria [NOUN], n.d.). However, the specific number of students enrolled at ILSC was contained in internal administrative records that are not publicly accessible. Therefore, the national student population provides institutional context rather than the actual population of the study.

The sample size considered appropriate for this study was calculated using Cochran's formula for unknown population at a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error: $n = Z^2 pq / e^2$ (Cochran, 1977). This yielded a minimum sample size of 385 respondents. However, 270 valid responses were received,

which is 70.1% of the minimum needed sample size. The analysis was performed based on 270 responses received.

The study used non-probability purposive and convenience sampling. Purposive selection ensured that participants were current NOUN, ILSC students, while convenience sampling was used to recruit eligible students who were accessible through online and in-person channels. A total of 270 valid responses were included in the analysis.

A structured questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection. The questionnaire was developed in line with the objectives of the study. It was administered in both online and printed formats. The online version was administered using Google Forms through various student groups on

WhatsApp and Telegram, while the printed copies were distributed to NOUN, ILSC students physically in the centre. The questionnaire consisted of sections covering the respondents' demographic characteristics, use of traditional and new media, preference for media platforms for news consumption, reason for their preference and frequency of their media platforms utilisation.

5.1 Method of Data Analysis

Data collected through the questionnaire were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Frequencies and percentages were used to describe media form preferences, while chi-square test of independence was used to examine the relationship between age and media preference. Data were analysed using jamovi statistical software version 2.7.38.

Results

Demographic Characteristics of Students

Table 1

Gender Distribution of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Female	116	43.0
Male	154	57.0
Total	270	100

Table 1 shows that 154 respondents (57.0%) were male, while 116 (43.0%) were female. This indicates that male respondents constituted the larger proportion of the sample.

Table 2

Distribution of Respondents by Age

Age	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
16-20	25	9.3%	9.3%
21-25	43	15.9%	25.2%
26-30	82	30.4%	55.6%
31 and above	120	44.4%	100.0%

Of the respondents, 25 (9.3%) were aged 16–20, 43 (15.9%) were aged 21–25, 82 (30.4%) were aged 26–30, and 120 (44.4%) were aged 31 and above. The largest age group was 31 and above, followed by respondents aged 26–30.

Table 3

Distribution of the Respondents by Faculty

Faculty	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
Faculty of Agricultural Sciences	10	3.7%	3.7%
Faculty of Arts	39	14.4%	18.1%
Faculty of Computing	25	9.3%	27.4%
Faculty of Education	29	10.7%	38.1%
Faculty of Health Sciences	20	7.4%	45.6%
Faculty of Law	10	3.7%	49.3%
Faculty of Management Sciences	26	9.6%	58.9%
Faculty of Sciences	32	11.9%	70.7%
Faculty of Social Sciences	79	29.3%	100.0%

Table 3 shows that Faculty of Social Sciences had the highest representation, 79 (29.3%) respondents, while faculty of law had the lowest, 10 (3.7%) respondents. The remaining respondents were distributed across other faculties with varying levels of representation.

Table 4

Distribution of Respondents by Level of study

Level of Study	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
100 Level	34	12.6%	12.6%
200 Level	17	6.3%	18.9%
300 Level	48	17.8%	36.7%
400 Level	30	11.1%	47.8%
500 Level	10	3.7%	51.5%
Post-graduate	131	48.5%	100.0%

Table 4 presents distribution of respondents by level of study. Post-graduate students had the highest representation, 131 (48.5%), followed by 300 Level, 48 (17.8%), with 500 level recording the least, 10 (3.7%) respondents.

Media Form Usage for News Consumption

Table 5

Distribution of respondents by Traditional Media Usage for News Consumption
Do you use traditional media to access news? Traditional media includes newspapers, magazines, radio and television.

Response	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
No	63	23.3%	23.3%
Yes	207	76.7%	100.0%

A total of 207 respondents (76.7%) reported using traditional media to access news, while 63 (23.3%) did not.

Table 6

Distribution of respondents by New Media Usage for News Consumption
Do you use new media to access news? New media includes news websites, blogs, video-streaming platforms and social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, X, Instagram and YouTube.

Response	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
No	4	1.5%	1.5%
Yes	266	98.5%	100.0%

A total of 266 respondents (98.5%) reported using new media to access news, while 4 (1.5%) did not. Because respondents could use both traditional and new media, these figures describe overlapping use rather than mutually exclusive categories.

Reasons for Respondents Preferred Media

Table 7

Frequencies of Variety of News Content

Variety of news content	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
No	260	96.3%	96.3%
Yes	10	3.7%	100.0%

The result indicates that 260 (96.3%) respondents did not identify Variety of News Content as a reason for their news media preference, compared with 10 (3.7%) who did.

Table 8*Frequencies of Convenience/Ease of Access*

Convenience/ease of access	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
No	208	77.0%	77.0%
Yes	62	23.0%	100.0%

Convenience/ease of access was selected as a reason for media preference by 62 respondents (23.0%); 208 (77.0%) did not select it.

Table 9*Frequencies of Reliability/Trustworthiness*

Reliability/trustworthiness	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
No	265	98.1%	98.1%
Yes	5	1.9%	100.0%

Only 5 respondents (1.9%) identified Reliability/Trustworthiness as a reason for their news media preference, whereas 265 (98.1%) did not.

Table 10*Frequencies of Interactivity*

Interactivity	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
No	265	98.1%	98.1%
Yes	5	1.9%	100.0%

Regarding Interactivity, 5 respondents (1.9%) selected it as a reason for their preference, while the remaining 265 (98.1%) did not.

Table 11*Frequencies of Ability to Access News Anywhere/Anytime*

Ability to access news anywhere/anytime	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
No	218	80.7%	80.7%
Yes	52	19.3%	100.0%

The ability to access news anywhere and anytime was selected by 52 respondents (19.3%), while 218 (80.7%) did not select it.

Table 12*Frequencies of Accessibility*

Accessibility	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
No	260	96.3%	96.3%
Yes	10	3.7%	100.0%

The findings show that 10 respondents (3.7%) considered Accessibility a reason for their news media preference, while 260 (96.3%) did not.

Table 13*Frequencies of Speed of Receiving News*

Speed of receiving news	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
No	250	92.6%	92.6%
Yes	20	7.4%	100.0%

Speed of receiving news was selected as a reason for media preference by 20 respondents (7.4%); 250 (92.6%) did not select it.

Relationship Between Age and preferred Media Form**Table 14***Contingency Tables of Age and Preferred Media Form*

Age	New Media	Traditional Media	Total
16-20	20	5	25
21-25	38	5	43
26-30	77	5	82
31 and above	95	25	120
Total	230	40	270

New media was preferred more often than traditional media in every age group. The highest number of respondents preferring new media was in the 31-and-above group (n = 95).

Table 15
Chi-Square Test of Association Between Age and Preferred Media Form

χ^2 Tests			
	Value	df	p
χ^2	9.26	3	.026
N	270		

The chi-square test indicated a statistically significant association between age and preferred media form, $\chi^2(3, N = 270) = 9.26, p = .026$. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected. This result indicates an association, not that age caused respondents' preferences.

5.2 Discussion of Findings

The findings show that respondents used both traditional and new media for news, but new media was more widely used. Of the 270 respondents, 207 (76.7%) reported using traditional media and 266 (98.5%) reported using new media. These figures are not contradictory because respondents could use both forms of media. Preference was measured separately: 230 respondents (85.2%) preferred new media, while 40 (14.8%) preferred traditional media. The findings therefore suggest that, although traditional media remained in use, new media was the preferred form of news media for most respondents. This pattern is broadly consistent with studies reporting the use or preference of internet-based media among students (Ibrahim, 2023; Adekannbi & Agbolabori, 2018).

This finding can be interpreted through Uses and Gratifications Theory, which views audiences as active users who select media and content according to their needs and

preferences (Katz et al., 1974). The respondents' preference for new media suggests that internet-based platforms were the option favoured by most participants for news consumption. However, the survey did not directly test their motives, so the theory provides an interpretive framework rather than proof of why each respondent made that choice.

The study also found a statistically significant association between age and preferred media form, $\chi^2(3, N = 270) = 9.26, p = .026$. New media was preferred in every age group, including respondents aged 31 and above. This differs from Ibrahim et al. (2018), who reported greater preference for internet media among younger students and greater preference for radio and television among older students. The current finding does not mean that all age groups preferred new media to the same extent; rather, the distribution of preference differed significantly by age. Technological Determinism offers a broad perspective for considering how communication technologies shape media practices (McLuhan, 1964), but this survey cannot establish that technology alone caused the observed preferences.

Respondents identified several possible reasons for their preferences, including

convenience/ease of access and the ability to access news anywhere and anytime. However, relatively few respondents selected most of the listed reasons, including reliability/trustworthiness, interactivity, accessibility and speed. These results should be reported as recorded rather than assuming that the attributes were major reasons for the preference. The results also highlight the importance of ensuring that the questionnaire items and their coding reflect the responses obtained.

The findings have implications for journalists and news organisations. The high level of new-media use and preference suggests that internet-based platforms are important channels for reaching the students surveyed. News organisations should maintain a presence on digital platforms and ensure that online content is timely, accessible and credible. At the same time, the continued use of traditional media means that conventional channels should not be abandoned. A cross-platform approach can help news organisations reach audiences with different habits and preferences.

The findings should be interpreted considering the non-probability sampling method, the sample size falling below the calculated minimum, and the unequal representation of demographic groups. The results cannot be confidently generalised to all NOUN, ILSC students. For example, students from the Faculty of Social Sciences made up a larger share of the sample than students from several other faculties.

6.0 CONCLUSION

This study found that new media was preferred for news consumption by most of

the NOUN, ILSC students surveyed: 230 (85.2%) preferred new media, compared with 40 (14.8%) who preferred traditional media. Although most respondents also used new media, many continued to use traditional media. The analysis further showed a statistically significant association between age and preferred media form. Because the study used non-probability sampling and included 270 respondents, the findings should be interpreted as applying to the sample rather than assumed to represent the entire study-centre population. Overall, the findings suggest that new media was the more preferred form of news media among the respondents across all age groups examined, while traditional media continued to have a place in their news-consumption habits. The study highlights the importance of examining both media use and media preference: a person may use traditional and new media while favouring one for news consumption.

6.1 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the preference for new media among the respondents, news organisations and university administrations seeking to reach similar student audiences should maintain an active presence on internet-based platforms. Journalists should develop skills for producing accurate, accessible digital news and use clear headlines, relevant keywords, images and appropriate tagging to improve discoverability. These practices should support, rather than replace, accuracy and credibility.

Because new media was preferred even among respondents aged 31 and above, news organisations should not assume that older audiences rely exclusively on traditional media. Since some respondents preferred

traditional media and many reported using it, publishers and broadcasters should maintain a presence across both media forms and consider cross-platform distribution. Further research should use stronger sampling strategies and seek more balanced representation across age groups, faculties and levels of study. Researchers may also examine the specific reasons for media preference and compare findings across NOUN study centres.

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