

Comparative Study of Media Usage In News Consumption: A qualitative Approach

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ABSTRACT

Empirical studies have explored the relationship between news gratifications sought and news gratifications obtained in the online media and in the conventional media. Previous studies have rarely compared between the extent to which news gratifications sought are obtained in the conventional media and the extent to which the news gratifications are sought and obtained in the online media. Through a qualitative approach, this study employs a uses and gratifications approach to compare how news gratifications are sought and obtained in both the online and conventional media. In-depth interviews were conducted with 14 members of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) in Nigeria between January and April, 2014. Qualitative analysis was done on Nvivo 10 software for a thorough and transparent analysis. Investigation reveals why news gratifications are less sought but more obtained in the conventional media and why news gratifications are more sought but less obtained in the online media.

Keywords: News, Gratifications, Motivations, Gratifications Sought (GS), Gratifications Obtained (GO), Online Media, & Conventional Media.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Media behaviour has followed the changing pattern of human society brought about by development and evolution of technology. At the onset of the 21st century, a technological phenomenon described variously as new media, digital media or information communications technologies (ICTs) began to change the media landscape dramatically. Although changes have been occurring on the media landscape since the last forty years and even farther [1], the last one decade has seen dramatic and revolutionary changes brought about by the phenomenon of new media [2]. Broadly defined as new information and communication technologies (ICTs) or as computer-based artistic activities [3], internet, mobile phone and multimedia have commonly featured in the lists of what constitute new media in majority of media studies [4, 5, 3, 6, 7].

In some communication studies, the tendency has been to substitute 'new media' for 'online media' or 'digital media' [8, , 9]. The old conventional mass communication platforms, particularly television, radio and newspaper had remained the major news habitat for centuries. They remained so even up to the onset of the 21st century. This is because as at 1999, the computer/internet was still being likened to the telephone, prompting such assertion that even if every household were to have a personal computer with a modem, internet would never develop a character of mass communication[10]. But from the year 2000 to 2010, it

became evident that a new information age that would challenge the existing concept and thus extend the conventional boundary of mass communication had evolved. Within the last decade, findings from many media studies have indicated that the new media, particularly the internet and the mobile phone have become major news consumption outlet for both the adults and the young in the society [11, 9].

In fact, as at 2003, news was coming second from top in the list of online activities in 12 core European countries with 70 per cent reading news relating to business and world affairs [9]. The traditional mass media seem to have come to terms with this reality as most of them have moved their platforms into these new media in the name of media convergence or 360-degree [12]. With smartphones performing many functions ranging from programming a Digital Video Recorder (DVR) to surfing the internet and posting a status up-date to a social network which by 2010 was boasting of 500 million profiles [13], the fears of some newspaper and television executives about the future survival of their traditional news platforms can be contextually understood.

This is where the issue now lies at the global discourse of online news consumption. That the new media have become major outlets of news is no more a debate. The debate is what tolls has the movement to online news had on the old news platforms. The theoretical factions are between those scholars who opine that the new media have displaced the old platforms as news consumption outlets [14, 15, 16, 17, 18]

and the other camp comprising of those who believe that the relationship is supplementary and complementary as the old news platforms are still surviving in the news circle [19., 20, 21].

Even as at 2011, the debate was still raging. The lack of clear pattern on the relationship between the old and new news media as news sources was what prompted [19] to recommend that in the study of news consumption, there is need for a shift away from the traditional theoretical and methodological approaches which often treat media features and social practices separately. For instance, uses and gratifications approach to the study of news consumption in both the old and the new media can serve as a better theoretical approach in the effort to get a clearer pattern of the relationship between the old and new media as news outlets because media *'users goals and interests have more concern to them than the media attributes'* [22., p. 55].

Media scholars have responded to this challenge by exploring the uses and gratifications of news in the old and new media. [23] explored the motivations for using social media for news among university students and found information seeking, socialising and status seeking to be the motivations of the social media users for sharing news. In their own study of why people use the websites for political information [16] identified guidance, entertainment/social utility, convenience and information (seeking) as motives. While examining how college students get hooked to news, [24] found internet to be one of the media that surveillance gratification is positively correlated with. In their own study, [25] found YouTube users to seek leisure and entertainment gratifications when they watch comedy news video while they seek information gratification in traditional news video.

Empirical studies have also explored how old, conventional media are used for news. Information seeking/surveillance and Para-social gratifications have frequently been associated with conventional television news. In his study of media involvement and local news effects, [26] found local news to be primarily linked to information seeking and Para-social gratifications. Similarly, in [27], Taiwanese news consumers found TV news to be a good source of surveillance gratifications.

In some other studies, local TV news provides a mixture of information and entertainment gratifications to viewers. This is because its news reports on such core issues as politics; crime and disasters are often mixed with *'human and local interest stories and newscaster appeal to provide light-hearted respites from hard news'* [26, p20]. In their own study, [24] found television news to positively relate to only escapism gratifications. News in the printed Newspaper is commonly associated with cognitive needs of the readers (27; 28,) while [29] found information seeking and entertainment gratifications to predict the use of radio for news. The conclusion is that news gratifications, relative to the media, are not mutually inclusive. They seem to differ only in degrees.

Gratifications sought (GS) by media consumers and gratifications they eventually obtained (GO) are mutually exclusive. This is because there is absolute discrepancy between GS and GO [30]. In other words, the needs of media consumers when they visit the media are not always met [31]. Early researchers had sought to know whether at a point in the media usage, GS and GO can become equivalent with GS being obtained having known over a period of media usage how to receive such gratifications [32.]. But, as [33] quickly pointed out, *'while such equivalence may be established over the long run, initially the motivations which lead an individual to expose himself to a particular medium or type of content may not always match the gratifications derived from this exposure'* (p. 6) Previous studies have found both the online and conventional media to give varying degree of satisfaction to news seekers [34, 31, 35].

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Previous studies have explored the extent to which news gratifications sought in the online media and in the conventional media are obtained in the two media categories. [31] investigated how gratifications sought (GS) from television news are obtained from network evening news programs and found each GS correlated in varying degree with its corresponding GO. Similarly, in his examination of the role of gratifications sought (GS) and gratifications obtained (GO) in predicting dependency on network evening news programs and *60 Minutes*, [35] found GS to be most strongly correlated to corresponding GO. On the other hand, [34] found news in the internet to provide satisfaction to the news consumers. A comparison between the extent to which news gratifications sought are obtained in the conventional media and the extent to which the news gratifications sought are obtained in the online media is rare in previous studies.

The attempt by [34] to compare news satisfaction in the internet and traditional media from the dimension of niche breathe when internet was just beginning to provide alternative to traditional media as a source of news could still have left an empirical vacuum on the issue of the relative strength of online and conventional media as news outlets. This is because the traditional media have since resisted the force from the online to make them irrelevant in news consumption as relatively more recent studies have found the traditional and online media playing complementary role in news consumption. (see (Boczkowski and [19, 20, 21]. Further, since [19] recommended a shift in the methodological approach to the study of media usage for news consumption, there appears to be no fundamental shift from the dominance of quantitative method. This study attempts to fill this methodological vacuum through the use of qualitative approach to understand how the online and conventional media are used for news gratifications.

From the theoretical gap identified above, we sought to answer these research questions:

RQ1 To what extent are the news gratifications sought in the conventional media obtained?

RQ2 To what extent are the news gratifications sought in the online media obtained?

RQ3 Why are news gratifications more sought and more obtained in either the online or conventional media than in the other?

university or polytechnic graduate who is not above thirty years of age. With hindsight of the observation that the university undergraduates have become relevant to the study of news consumption [24], we purposively selected from the NYSC members with the assumption that their relative maturity and experience would make them more suited to a qualitative study which requires descriptive response. The study used a thematic qualitative data analysis technique. Data were transcribed and analysed on the QSR NVIVO 10 software. Themes relevant to the three research questions were identified from the coded data and interpreted.

3. METHOD

In-depth interviews were conducted with fourteen members of the National Youth Service Corps (N.Y.S.C) in Nigeria to gather data on how they use news to gratify their needs. NYSC is a one-year national service mandatory on any fresh

Table 1.1: Informants' demographic profiles

Informants	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Age	26-30	26-30	20-25	20-25	26-30	26-30	20-25	26-30	26-30	20-25	20-25	20-25	20-25	26-30
Gender	M	M	F	M	M	M	F	M	M	F	F	F	F	M

4. RESULTS

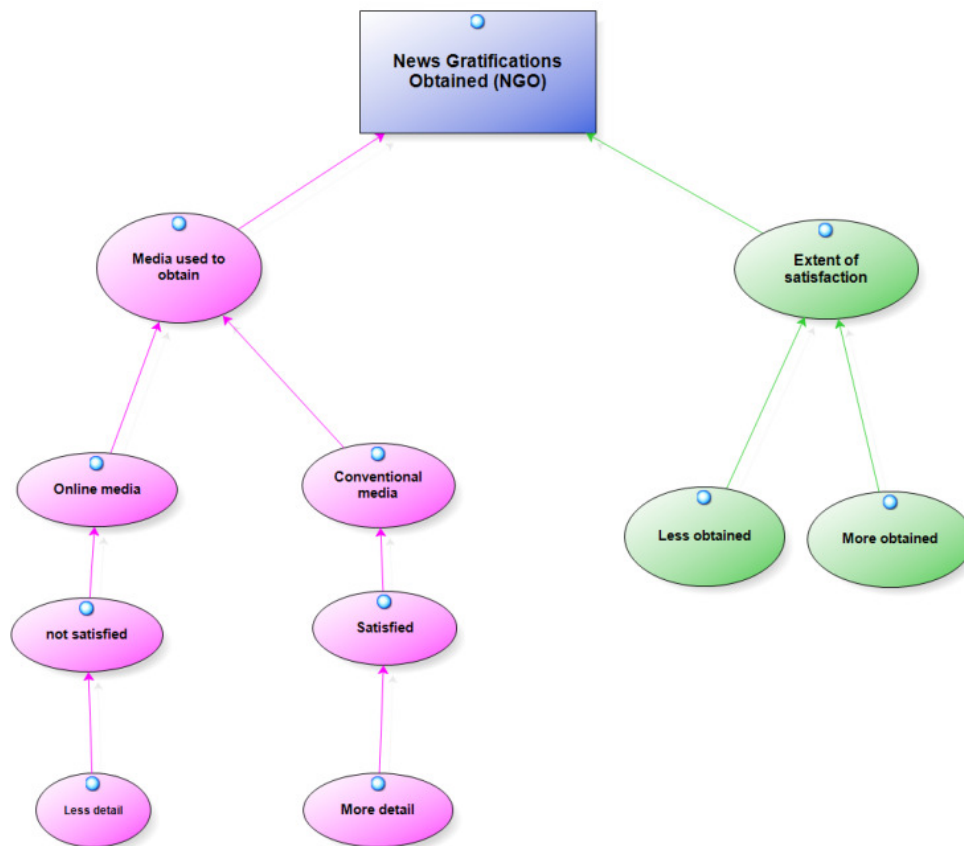


Figure 5.13: Model of NGO and its sub themes

RQ1 To what extent are news gratifications sought in the conventional media obtained?

Few informants use conventional media to seek news. However, there is a stronger expression of news gratifications being obtained by those who use conventional media mostly for news. Informant 5 seeks news primarily for personal interactive purpose, that is, human interest news that creates empathy and draws out emotions and feelings for others. The informant uses more of his transistor radio than any other medium

I do listen to radio and the reason behind that is as a result of the incessant epileptic power supply; so I do go for radio because 24/7 even if there is no electricity very easy you can get battery and insert. I do use radio a lot because apart from that power supply, the real news I really want to hear or that I need most comes from my local environment because when I listen to my transistor radio it will give me the news that primarily has to do with my local surrounding. I do incorporate the internet which sometimes I use simultaneously with radio because radio has to do with my listening skill while the other one has to do with my

reading skill. I do read and listen to radio sometimes but most importantly I do listen to radio

and to a large extent, he obtains this gratifications he seeks from the news:

I said earlier that my primary objective wherever I browse any of these media, the first thing that I look up to is any news that affects human; so the moment I read that news I picture that scenario and apply it to my life; if anything happens for instance, may be certain hazards, I study how that thing happened. Though I cannot protect myself but I will like to take caution on how to go about; sometimes what to say, where to say it and how to say it especially in the public, all this I learn from news because it must have affected somebody.

To a large extent, the need of informant 9 to confirm from the news media happenings reported to him by non mediated sources is met: 'to a large extent I obtain what I seek. For instance the insecurity in the north east, you hear a lot of things happening there from people and you confirm them from in the media.' The informant also uses more of conventional medium to gratify this news need

I use mostly radio and television. Most of the time on television, I spend like from 9-10. I go on NTA news; sometimes I go on CNN, but I love to go on NTA. And I am a sports fan. It was when there is no light like early in the morning that I use to use radio and late hours; so I will go on BBC Hausa service

Informant 1 seems to articulate better this issue of news gratifications sought being obtained when he reasons that from the news, 'you get the normal information definitely; information that directs me on what I need to know; sometimes you don't get what you want; but generally it is O.K., better than not being informed.' Although informant 1 uses both online and conventional media for news, his news needs appear more gratified in the conventional media. He says

if you are sourcing online you might not actually get the complete information. But when you are trying to get the major information on the highlights, then you can actually wait for the conventional media. So the online give me a tip of what has happened which I would pursue further in the newspapers

Informant 8, whose primary purpose of seeking news is to acquire knowledge, 'mostly used Radio Nigeria and sometimes online because I keep a sort of Facebook account which keeps me updated.' In order to justify his claim that he obtains his news gratifications of learning through news, he recounts an experience:

There was a time when I read Vanguard newspaper online; so before I don't like to travel to other state; so when I read that news I had a story of one person who travelled and on his travel he learnt a lot of other languages and these languages he learnt helped him a lot because that's what he used to get job because he was employed as an interpreter in an organization and that encourage me to be travelling around the countr

RQ2 To what extent are news gratifications sought in the online media obtained?

Contrastingly, majority of our informants seek news in the online media, mostly through their mobile phones. Among the specific online media used for news, news websites are the dominant sources. However, unlike those who use the conventional media primarily to seek news, most of the online users who claim to have obtained the news gratifications they seek could not justify their claim. For

example, informant 7 seeks news primarily to know about happenings around her environment. Although the informant casually remarks that 'on the average I mostly get what I went out to seek from the news', the countenance on her face and the tone in her voice seem to suggest more of disappointment with the news which she had alluded to while recounting an experience of her media visit for news: 'there was an instance when Mandela died and I was trying to find out what happened to him and I couldn't get much needed information.'

It is informants 10 and informant 9 who directly state the relative disadvantage of online media in providing news satisfaction. Informant 10 comes out of online news most of the times with her cognitive news needs ungratified because 'most of the time these online media don't give you most details about that information. So in most cases you come out of the news not well informed.' Whenever informant 9 also accesses news online, he only imagines the details surrounding the news because details are not just there:

but for online media not much of satisfaction because duration of time they give to news is not enough. They just give you highlights and all that; they don't give me the information as I want it. I will just imagine how it happens.

Instead of imagining how the details will be, informant 1 would rather pursue the details in the conventional media:

if you are sourcing online you might not actually get the complete information. But when you are trying to get the major information on the highlights, then you can actually wait for the conventional media. So the online give me a tip of what has happened which I would pursue further in the newspapers

RQ3 Why are news gratifications more sought and more obtained in either the online or conventional media than in the other?

1.4.1 Relative Advantages of Online Media

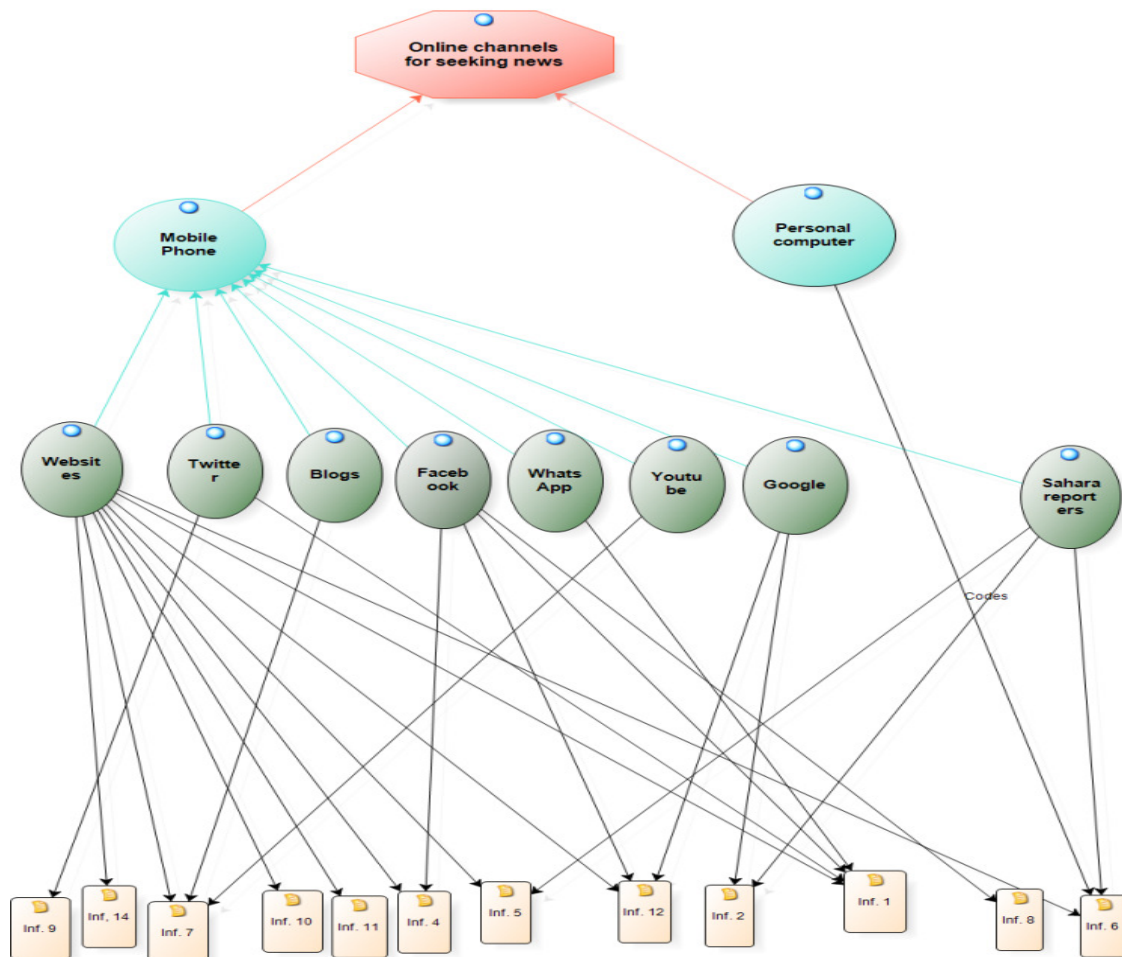


Figure 1.2: Model of online channels used for news

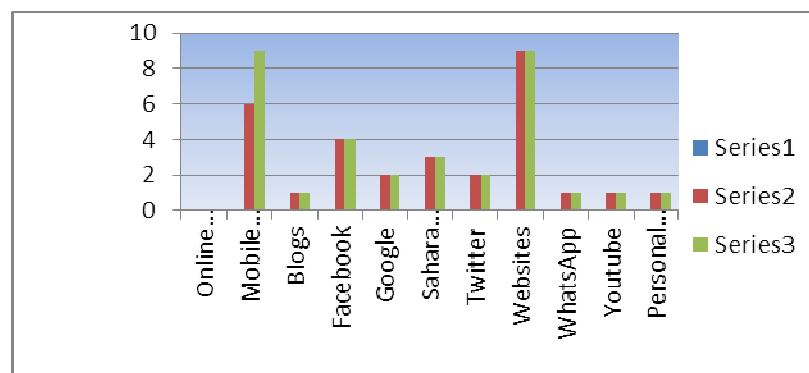


Figure 1.3: Chart showing the online media for news

Majority of those who go online for news use the news websites, followed by Facebook. Blogs and YouTube were the least sourced online for news. One of our informants accesses news through the What Sapp: ;*I use Facebook, what Sapp and twitter.* Informant 14 reads newspaper ‘mostly online’ which is the same with informant 10 who, most of the time reads ‘*soft copy (of newspaper online.*’ Informant 11 just goes to ‘websites of news,’ particularly those of *Vanguard* and *Sun* newspapers. Informant 6 also uses ‘*Vanguard website*’ while Informant 4 uses, majorly, ‘*Facebook and websites of radio stations.*’ Informant 7 goes to ‘*news websites.*’ But why do these informants prefer to seek news in the online media?

Informant 12 is always online for news ‘*because they keep updating me of current issue (which is why) I don’t want to use Facebook because sometimes when news are like out of date. I don’t want to see that something has happened an hour ago; I want to see them as they are happening.*’ The updates of news in the online media give informant 1 quick overview of the news he would pursue further in the conventional media: ‘*online is actually faster because it gives me update; it keeps me updated of events happening suddenly which I would pursue further in the newspapers.*’

Besides, online media quickly help to fill news vacuum where the conventional media cannot be accessed due to unavailability, linguistic barrier or poor signals. Away from her ethnic home, Informant 13 cannot access news in the conventional television media as she used to at home because of the language barrier and poor signals. So she had to abandon her urge for television news and concentrate on online news:

They don’t have many TV stations; they have just three; I think they have AIT, DITV, NTA and most of the times the stations are not clear. (Yet) I have more urge for news now that I am here because of the crisis situation (in the country...I (now) concentrate more on online.

Online media also reduce the risk of total news black-out in remote areas where the conventional media cannot be accessed. In her ethnic home, informant 7 feels cut off from the world. So, she could get access to news only through the online media: ‘*where I am at home is very remote; it’s like you are cut off from the world with no information; so I had to be constantly online.*’

Informant 3 points to the holistic nature of the online media as a relative advantage since she can ‘*still get news from those (conventional) channels on internet because I subscribe to their services online.*’ It’s the ease of use that constitutes the relative advantage of online media to informant 14 as he prefers ‘*to get news online because it’s easy for me to get unlike conventional and I use only search engine. I just type whatever I want.*’

1.4.2 Relative Advantage of Conventional Media

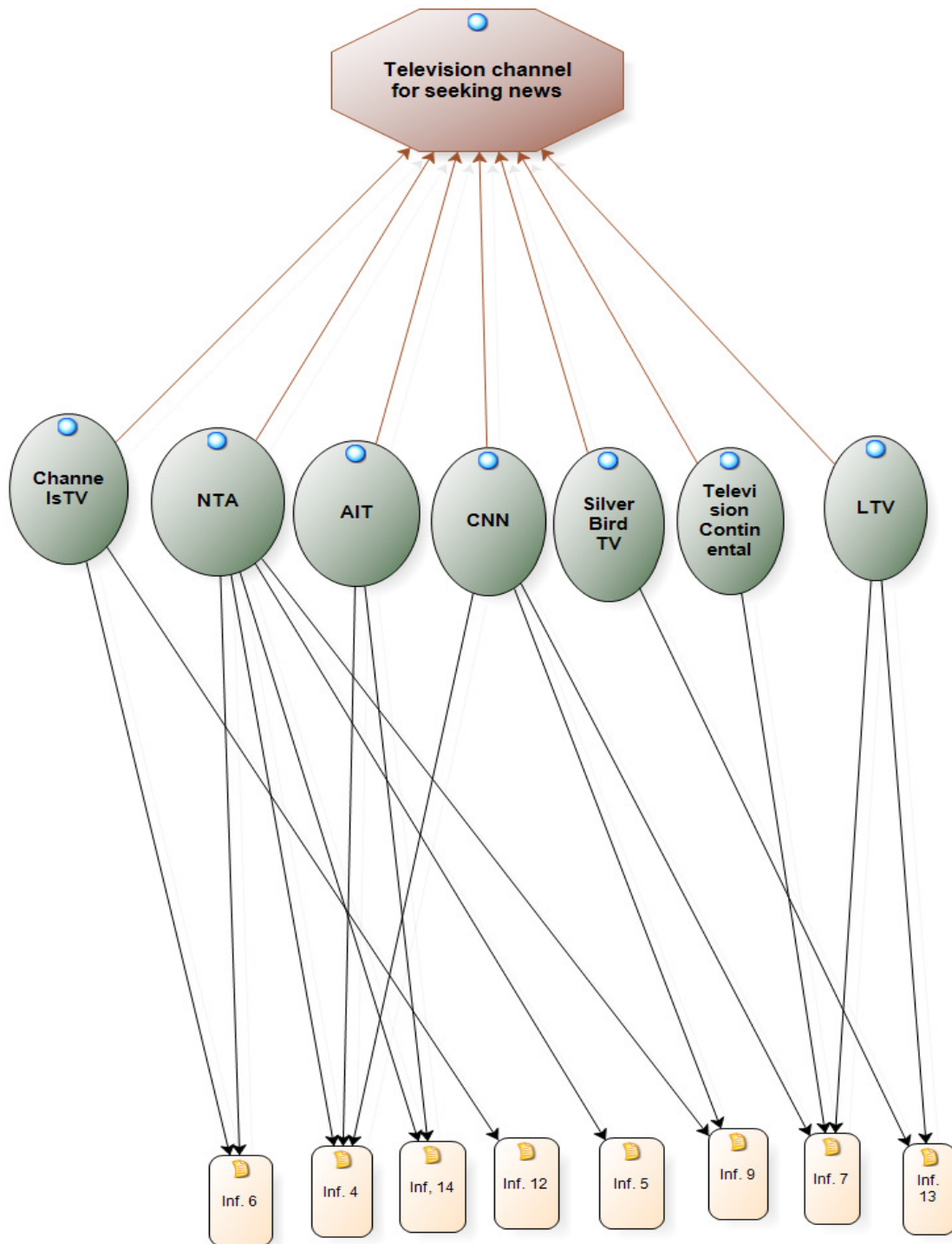


Figure 1.6 Model of TV media used foe news

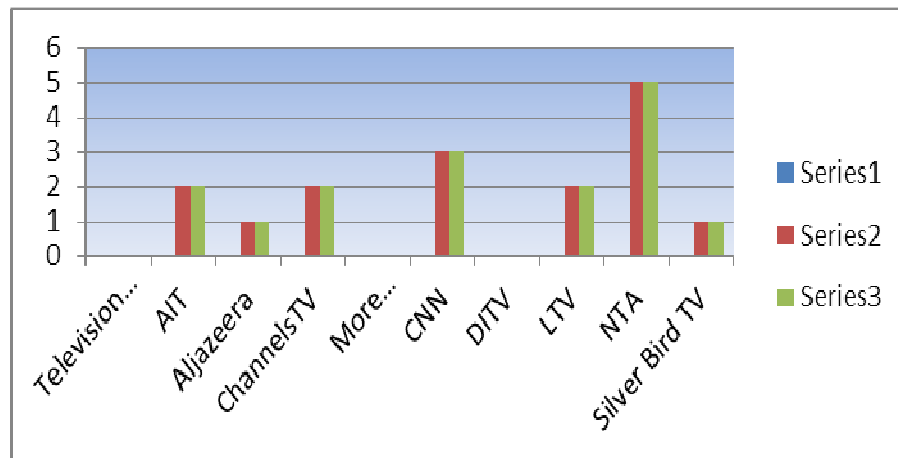


Figure 1.7: Chart showing TV media used for news

A couple of the informants prefer the conventional media for news. For the television channel, most of the respondents use the NTA for their news offline, followed by CNN. Channels TV, AIT and LTV are used equally.

If news gratifications are less obtained in the online media because the online media do not provide details, it could be inferred that news gratifications will be more obtained in the conventional media because of their advantage of detailed news. This inference is corroborated by informant 1 who says:

if you are sourcing online you might not actually get the complete information. But when you are trying to get the major information on the highlights, then you can actually wait for the conventional media happened sometimes through dramatic conversation newspaper gives you the narrative story of what has actually happened; so the online give me a tip of what has happened which I would pursue further in the newspapers

Similarly, informant 9 spends about the same time sourcing news from both the online and the conventional media. But his news gratifications are more obtained in the conventional media:

to a large extent I obtain what I seek. For instance the insecurity in the north east, you hear a lot of things happening there from people and you confirm them in the media. But for online media not much of satisfaction because duration of time they give to news is not enough. They just give you highlights and all that; they don't give me the information as I want it. I will just imagine how it happens.

The conclusion that news gratifications are more obtained in the conventional media is strengthened by informant 13 who reasons that to a large extent, she obtains news gratifications in her ethnic home where she used more of conventional media than in the ethnic setting she has migrated to where she has to concentrate on online media because the conventional media were relatively not available to her:

There (in Lagos) it's not all the time that I used my online (phone) to get news; I listened to radio, TV and newspapers to get news though I still use a bit of online but here in the north I concentrate more on online. (So) Its better over there than here because it's only once in a while that I get newspaper to read here; the one I get is even in my office

The conventional media could also present advantage of proximity which helps to localize news. Informant 5 is passionate about getting news on his transistor radio because 'apart from that power supply, the real news I really want to hear or that I need most comes from my local environment because when I listen to my transistor radio it will give me the news that primarily has to do with my local surrounding.' Informant 6 seems to get a sort of companionship from the newspaper since he 'hardly read (s) newspaper except when I am travelling.'

5. CONCLUSION

Findings show that news gratifications are sought more in the online media and less in the conventional media. The most relative advantage of the online media as news sources is the quick update which they give which makes them faster news sources. The most relative disadvantages of the conventional media are ownership interference and erratic signals

The extent to which what is sought in the news is obtained seems to depend on the amount of information in the news. This point can be inferred from the observation of informant 10 that *'most of the time (the) online media don't give you most details about that information. So in most cases you come out of the news not well informed.'* Informant 9 also makes similar inference when he notes that *'for online media, not much of satisfaction because duration of time they give to news is not enough. They just give you highlights and all that; they don't give me the information as I want it. I will just imagine how it happens.'*

But is it just about the media type or about how much time spent on the news? Majority of our informants access news from the websites of conventional media. The dominant use of news websites for news could indicate that for one reason or the other, the respondents prefer the conventional news media but, as indicated in their response on the use of mobile phone to access news, they need the news of those conventional media on-the-go. So, they get exposed to details without accessing the details. In other words, their being exposed to the news detail in the news websites must have enhanced their chances of obtaining gratifications from the news. Impliedly, detail or completeness of news is the crucial factor in obtaining gratifications sought from the news and not essentially the media type in the broad categories of online and conventional media.

Therefore, the extent to which news gratifications sought are obtained depends on a complementary role of the media which must supply details to news and that of the news consumers who must be ready to access the news details. Besides, findings indicate that both the online and conventional media have relative advantages over each other in news consumption. As such, each of them plays a given role in the news gratifications process. The online media are especially good for their speed of delivering news while the conventional media are especially desirable for details. This complementary role of the online media being more suited seeking news gratifications while conventional media ensure news satisfaction is well articulated for by informant 1

Online is actually faster because it gives me update; it keeps me updated of events happening suddenly. But if you are sourcing online you might not actually get the complete information. But when you are trying to get the major information on the highlights, then you can actually wait for the conventional media. Usually newspapers give you a better view of what has actually happened sometimes through dramatic conversation gives you the narrative story of what has actually happened; so the online give me a tip of what has happened which I would pursue further in the newspapers

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