Prospects of electronic publishing in Nigeria

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One of the biggest challenges facing publishing in Nigeria today is how to integrate or adopt “e-publishing” (electronic publishing). Across the world, the coming of computer has completely revolutionized the printing process from manuscript development through printing, marketing and distribution. The “destructive innovation” of e-publishing has worsened the fortunes of many news and academic publishers and major corporations have gone under as a result. Yet, stakeholders differ remarkably in their readiness to embrace the innovation. While some believe e-publishing should be approached and adopted with caution, many others believe it should be rapidly adopted. This study sought to find out the perception of electronic publishing by Nigerian publishers and end-users on: how beneficial do stakeholders consider e-publishing; how ready are end-users for electronically published products; and to what extent have stakeholders in the publishing sector deployed e-publishing. The design for the study was quantitative – cluster and stratified sampling was used to strategically select 39 publishers and 150 end-users. A focus group discussion was conducted among stakeholders to give perspectives to the findings. The study revealed that publishers were considered the main beneficiaries of e-publishing, while authors and marketers benefit the least. End-users of electronically publishers are however more prepared than publishers for e-products. The news publishing sector has deployed e-publishing more than other publishing sub-sectors in Nigeria.

Key words: Electronic-publishing, prospects, publishing, innovation adoption.

INTRODUCTION

One of the byproducts of Information Communication Technology (ICT) advances across the world is electronic publishing (e-publishing), also known as digital publishing. E-publishing is a broad term used to describe all forms of electronic aids to authors and publishers, from simple word processing capabilities to actually designing, publishing and selling printed matter in soft instead of hard format (Lancaster, 1995). The attitudes of library patrons tend towards use of electronic resources (soft copies) over printed resources (hard copies).

In many countries, therefore, electronic resources such as CD-ROMs, CDs, DVDs, PDFs are replacing the traditional paper copies of books, journals, newspapers and magazines (Lancaster, 1995; Adesina, 2016).

The key advantages of electronic publishing include: Rapid publishing of research results and integration of authors; more efficient publishing and marketing process; more convenient presentation of information with new forms of presentation such as innovative ways of presenting research results and other forms of data and...
information—such as hypertext, hypermedia linkages, motion, video and sound; wider reach of publications across the world; more convenient storage is provided through e-publishing; intellectual works are more protected when published online as plagiarism is easily tracked and exposed with such products; reduced production per capita; accuracy of information has been enhanced through e-publishing as validity, reliability and originality index can be more easily ascertained electronically; and electronically published works are more durable than paper prints.

The electronic publishing process differs remarkably from traditional printing because it does not use physical paper to produce the final products (such as books, newspapers, journals) but can be produced, sold and read online (through digital devises such laptops, tablet computers, smartphones or e-reader tablets) (www.zuora.com, 2018). Initially, it was thought that the digital publishing would only affect book marketing and that books would continue to be printed in hundreds of thousands and millions of copies, even though they could be ordered for and sold via the internet. At the turn of the 20th century, publishers in more advanced countries progressively began a radical shift to full e-publishing process. This development has left many publishing houses in advanced nations bankrupt, while many others barely manage to survive and yet many others are operating profitably (www.zuora.com, 2018). The present study attempts to analyze how books/journals publishers, newspaper and magazine publishers and consumers of published products (end-users) in Nigeria have responded in very recent times to the challenges of electronic products publishing. The research set out to specifically ascertain how publishers have been coping with the new technology and how beneficial they perceive digital publishing.

E-newspapers and e-magazines

According to Adesina (2016), leading news magazines in Nigeria such as Tell, Newswatch, The News, City People and Ovation have stopped producing hard copies and notable newspapers such The Punch, The Guardian, The Sun, Vanguard, Daily Trust and The Nation have been recording sharp drops in printed editions in the past decade. They have shifted to e-publishing to various degrees, as advertisements as hard copy sales decrease by between 30-50% (Adesina, 2016).

E-books and e-journals

In Nigeria’s book and journal publishing sector, e-publishing is gaining more ground but has not been fully adopted to cover all stages of publishing— manuscript assessment, production, sales and distribution. More hard copies are still being produced (Ifeduba, 2010; Abulude, 2014). Yet, most international academic ratings place priority on online products than hard copies (Ifeduba, 2010). Meier has noted that many leading international booksellers in the 1980s and 1990s have converted to online bookstores—one of the best-known being amazon.com. It is possible (and even convenient) for a publisher to print as few hard copies of books at commercial rates just as a reader can order a book first published decades earlier and get delivery in a matter of days—due to advances in ICT (Meier, 2014).

Kalejaiye had predicted that transiting to e-publishing in Nigeria could bring positive and negative consequences for stakeholders (authors, publishers and end-users), depending on how proactive they were. According to him, poor patronage of e-products could lead to low profits (or even losses) for publishers. He also estimated that economic fortunes of publishers would increase if end-users rapidly embrace electronic products (Kalejaiye, 2009). While several studies have been conducted on aspects of the digital migration in Nigeria (for example, Abulude, 2014 and Ifeduba, 2010), patterns of the transition and how different end-users embrace the new technology have not been sufficiently investigated scientifically in recent times. The outcome of the current investigation will, therefore, be of immense value to publishers especially, and other stakeholders such as librarians, academics, marketers and readers.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Theoretical Literature

The two theories used for the study were Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and Diffusion of Innovation (DOI) theory.

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) explains how users come to accept and use a technology. It posits that when users are presented with a new technology, their decision to accept and use that technology depends on how they perceive usefulness of the technology (PU) and how they perceive the ease-of-use of the technology. Perceived usefulness relates to the degree to which the user believes that the new technology would enhance his or her job performance. On the other hand, perceived ease-of-use (PEOU) deals with the degree to which the user believes that using the new technology would exert less difficulty. If the new technology is found easy to use, the user’s attitude towards it would be positive. In promulgating TAM, Davis posits that behavioral intention (BI) is a factor that makes people use or avoid new technology. However, a positive predisposition or attitude towards the technology usually influences behavioral intention (Davis et al., 1989).

TAM is actually an extension of the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRE) (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980). TRA defines the
According to Rogers, the majority of the general population tends to fall in the middle categories in the foregoing sub-groupings. Therefore, it is important for an innovator to understand the characteristics of the target population as it would require different methods to communicate the new idea for each sub-group. There are five main factors that influence adoption of an innovation: relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, triability, and observability of the new idea. This is very much similar to the AIDA PROCESS – Attention, Interest, Decision and Action. First prospective audience becomes aware of the need for the innovation and then takes a decision whether to adopt or reject the innovation. If he or she rejects the idea, the process of adoption ends at this point. However, if he or she decides to try the new idea out, then he or she becomes an initial user to test the innovation. Successful trial means the person would likely continue with the new idea but if trial experience is not satisfactory, he or she will discontinue with the new idea.

A critique of TAM and DOI

Both TAM and DOI have been extensively applied in studying adoption of new ICT (Korpelainen, 2011). Although Korpelainen (2011) ranks both theories as the second and third most frequently applied theory in investigating the usage and adoption of new ICT; nevertheless, several short-comings have been identified with their usage. For instance, the application of DOI has been faulted in that DOI assumes that adoption of innovation (in this case, e-publishing) is almost always depended on the user or potential user of that innovation. In an academic setting, a particular technology may be introduced compulsorily by the management of an institutional and the users (academic staff and students) may have no choice than to accept and adopt the technology. Further, TAM does not give much room for what the change is about in determining the adopter categories. If the change does not cost the adoptee "anything", he or she might more quickly give in than in situations when it would cost him or her huge money, time or position. Integrated models which expand the frameworks of TAM and DOI - for example Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (Venkatesh et al., 2003) – are readily applied in such context. Similarly, TAM has been criticized for paying too much emphasis on the adopter, for its low predictive value on how attitudes and intentions are formed and deployed towards change objects and for not being applicable in certain context. For example, perceived ease of use is less likely to be a determinant of attitude and usage intention than cost and accessibility in poor countries such as Nigeria. Nevertheless, DOI and TAM are useful in conceptualizing and understanding the development and acceptance of electronic publishing. As Hahn and Schoch have noted, "electronic publishing can..."
Figure 1. Categories of innovation adopters
Source: http://blog.leanmonitor.com/early-adopters-allies-launching-product/

best be understood as a cluster of related innovations which can be incorporated in different combinations. Cluster members individually and in combination influence adopter perceptions of the relative advantage, complexity, compatibility, visibility, and trialability of a particular implementation. Acceptance of electronic publishing is therefore shaped by the requirement of a contingent adoption decision by a community” (Hahn and Schoch, 1997:5).

Related studies

Meier, presenting a world perspective report on the impact of e-publishing noted that the phenomenon has transformed the publishing industry to one based on metadata, web semantics, content modernization, development of native app, more difficulty in building workflows, pricing challenges and stiffer competition (Meier, 2014).

At its evolutionary stage in Nigeria, e-publishing was not given much attention by scholars in Nigeria (Oloyede and Biobaku, 2011). Studies by Ojo and Akande (2005), Ifeduba (2010), and Abulude (2014) are representative of pioneer research on the phenomenon. Ojo and Akande surveyed 350 students to determine their access, usage and awareness of electronic information resources in the University College Hospital, Ibadan and reported poor acceptance and usage of e-publications (Ojo and Akande, 2005). The study by Ifeduba examined whether Nigeria’s publishing houses have adopted any digital innovations considering the importance of these innovation. He found that majority of the publishers made discernible shifts to the digital space as reflected on book covers, cover finishing, impression quality, production on books on CD-ROM, and audio books. He however noted that the challenge of electricity portended a bleak future for electronic publishing in the country (Ifeduba, 2010).

A study by Amobi dwelt on social media and online book publishing. The study revealed that the quickest growth rates in per capital internet retailing were in developing countries. She found, for example, that Indonesia achieved an annual growth of 63.6% and Nigeria 44.7% between 2005 and 2010 compared to 9.6% in the USA in real terms. She noted that students did not often use e-products (Amobi, 2013: 90).

Abulude (2014) investigated e-reader applications, software and social elements and their impacts on journal publications and media in Nigeria. He found that high cost of acquiring e-publishing infrastructure, power upsurge, piracy, plagiarism, and poor content quality control are some of the teething challenges of digital publishing (Abulude, 2014). In their study of the extent to which polytechnics in Nigeria had adopted new ICT in training mass communication students, Folayan et al. (2018) concluded that polytechnics in Nigeria offering mass communication programmes have not adequately integrated ICT into their training, which meant that they did not employ-publications meaningfully. A recent study elsewhere by Eldermann and Schößböck drew on a qualitative and quantitative data gained from workshops and a survey. Participants strongly perceived Open Access (OA) publishing as highly individualistic. The survey results, however, showed that institutional support for authors, visibility, reputation, and impact play the biggest role for the motivation to publish OA. The authors pointed to the potential of regularly addressing the users of the journal as well as communication with them (Edelmann and Schößböck, 2020). These studies suggest that adoption of e-publishing, though considered expedient, is fraught with challenges.

Research objectives

This investigation is predicated on the following objectives:
(i) To find out how beneficial stakeholders (book/journal publishers, newspaper and magazine publishers and end-users – students, scholars and the general public - perceive electronic publishing.
(ii) To determine how far publishers and end-users have embraced electronic publishing
(iii) To find out the challenges faced by publishers deployed the e-publishing technology
(iv) To proffer solutions to the challenges being faced in deploying e-publishing in Nigeria.

### Research questions

The three principal questions upon which the investigation was based were:

(i) What do stakeholders (book/journal publishers, newspaper and magazine publishers and end-users – students, scholars and the general public – perceive as benefits of electronic publishing?
(ii) To what extent have publishers and end-users embraced electronic publishing?
(iii) What are the challenges faced by publishers in deploying e-publishing technology?
(iv) What are the solutions to the challenges of e-publishing in Nigeria?

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research design used for the investigation was the ‘quantitative paradigm’. This was to enable the use of statistical procedures – mainly deductive logic - to determine whether the predictive generalizations of the working theory adopted hold true. The researchers adopted the ‘survey method’ – which involves the collection of data from South West, Nigeria - the major hub of all categories of publishing in Nigeria (Apeji, 1996; Adegoke, 2001).

Population of the study is multivariate (putting into consideration various sections, not just one section, of the population because of the diversity of the population) and consisted of the following clusters: news publishers, academic publishers, online publishers and end-users of published works.

A combination of **cluster sampling, stratified sampling and purposive sampling techniques** was used to select representatives from the above categories, because of the diversity of the population. Two types of questionnaires were therefore used to obtain information based on the research questions as shown in Table 1. The population of the news publishers in the South West is 105 (NPAN, 2017) while the total number of educational publishers in the sub-region is about 125 publishing companies in Nigeria according to the Nigerian Publishers Directory (2018). Two-thirds of the publishers listed in the director are based in the Southwest and about twice this number are not captured in the directory – especially online publishers and itinerant publishers in educational institutions (Nigerian Publishers Directory, 2018). The researcher picked the end-users from amongst students, academics and the general public in the sub-region through **purposive sampling**.

Ten percent of the total population for each sub-group was selected purposively based on the three main groups: News publishers, academic publishers and end-users. Furthermore, each of the foregoing three main groups was then stratified and representative samples picked purposively (Table 1).

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A total of 39 publishers completed and returned the

### Table 1. Instrumentation and sampling categories.

| Instruments                        | Category of population                  | Sample size |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|-------------|
| Questionnaire 1                    | News publishers                         | 11          |
|                                    | Academic publishers (primary education) | 4           |
|                                    | Academic publishers (secondary education)| 4          |
|                                    | Academic publishers (tertiary education)| 7          |
|                                    | General interest publishers             | 13          |
|                                    | **Subtotal**                            | **39**      |
| Questionnaire 2                    | End-users (polytechnic students)        | 20          |
|                                    | End-users (university students)         | 20          |
|                                    | End-users (college of education students)| 10          |
|                                    | End-users (polytechnic academics)      | 20          |
|                                    | End-users (university academics)        | 20          |
|                                    | End-users (college of education academics)| 10         |
|                                    | End-users (general public)              | 50          |
|                                    | **Subtotal**                            | **150**     |
| Focus group discussion             | Online Publishers                       | 3           |
|                                    | Authors                                | 3           |
|                                    | End-users                              | 3           |
|                                    | **Subtotal**                            | **9**       |
Table 2. Distribution of respondents according to fields of publishing.

| Sphere of publishing                      | Frequency (Percentage) |
|-------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| News publishing                           | 11 (28.2)              |
| Academic publishing (primary and secondary)| 8 (20.5)               |
| Academic publishing (Tertiary)            | 7 (17.9)               |
| General publishing                        | 13 (33.3)              |
| **Total**                                 | **39 (100)**           |

Questionnaire I, while 150 end-users completed and returned Questionnaire II. The returned questionnaires were computer-processed using the Scientific Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). One-third of the respondents among publishers were into general publishing (that is, they are not specialized into a particular field) while roughly one out of every four respondents was a news publisher. Almost 40% of the publishers were into academic publishing (Table 2). All the publishers sampled have been in existence for at least five years. However, nine of them have been publishing online for less than 5 years; eight publishers have done online publications for between 5-10 years and seven have done online publishing for over 10 years. Fourteen publishers have not started online publications at the time of the study.

**Perception of benefits of e-publishing by stakeholders**

As shown in Figure 2, the publishers were almost equally-divided in their perception of e-publishing as a "destructive innovation". Forty-one percent, "strongly disagreed" while 38.4% also "strongly agreed"; and 10.3% "disagreed" as another 10.3% "agreed" that e-publishing "is a destructive innovation." This suggests that the respondents more or less perceive e-publishing as an innovation that has both positive and negative benefits. While almost half of the end-users (45.3%, n= 68) replied that publishers benefit most from e-publishing, the publishers consider the end-users as major beneficiaries. As further shown in Table 3, academics considered "users" as the major beneficiaries of e-publishing while students considered "publishers" as the major beneficiaries of e-publishing.

**Extent to which publishers and end-users have embraced electronic publishing**

Data from the field reveal that in terms of e-publishing technology, end-users of published works were lagging in embracing digital publishing. Students and the general public were more active users of e-products (66.7 and 20% respectively) (Figure 3). Almost half of the academics sampled said they were not active users of e-
Table 3. End-user-perception of who benefits most in e-publishing.

| End-users       | Perception of who benefits most | Total |
|-----------------|---------------------------------|-------|
|                 | Publishers | Users | Authors | Marketers | Other |       |
| Academics       | 14         | 19    | 8       | 8         | 1     | 50    |
| Students        | 31         | 11    | 2       | 4         | 2     | 50    |
| General Public  | 23         | 12    | 10      | 5         | -     | 50    |
| Total           | 68 (45.3)  | 42 (28.0) | 20 (13.3) | 17 (11.3) | 3 (2.0) | 3 (100.0) |

Figure 3. Stakeholder usage of electronic publications (%).

Figure 4. Technological readiness of publishers for e-publishing.

Both publishers and end-users were still in “wait-and-see” attitudes in terms of how they have deployed e-publishing so far as presented in Figures 4 and 5 and Table 5 present these perspectives. “News publishers” and “general publishers” have started e-publishing in earnest (n=11 and n=17 respectively), while academic publishers are still lagging in the embrace.

The relative differences in extent of deployment could be due to how the publishers perceive e-publishing in terms of profitability. As shown in Table 5, almost all the news publishers sampled saw e-publishing as profitable, while academic and general publishers generally did not see the innovation as profitable. All the stakeholders, however, believed that hard-copy publishing would continue to exist side-by-side e-publishing. Table 5 shows that a good majority (85.6%, n=33) said hard copy publishing would not go extinct for many years to come.

Do you think your company has the necessary technology to go into e-publishing?

The researchers investigated the relationship between the years of experience of the publishers and the
Figure 5. Transition to digital publishing.

Table 4. Contributions of e-publishing to company’s total product volume.

| Years of publisher’s experience | Contributions of electronically-published products to company’s total product on the average in percentage |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                | Zero percent | Less than 10% | Between 10 and 29% | Between 30 and 49% | Above 49% | Total |
| Less than 5 years              | 0            | 0              | 2                  | 0                 | 0         | 2     |
| 6-10 years                     | 3            | 1              | 0                  | 4                 | 1         | 9     |
| 11-20 years                    | 6            | 1              | 0                  | 5                 | 0         | 12    |
| Over 20 years                  | 2            | 6              | 1                  | 3                 | 2         | 14    |
| Total                          | 11           | 8              | 3                  | 12                | 3         | 37    |

Pearson Chi-square value, 34.537, df = 12, Asymp. Sig (2-sided). .001 is less than 5, hence the difference is significant.

Table 5. Adequacy of e-resources of resource.

| End-users        | E-publishing resources are adequate |                  |
|------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------|
|                  | Yes (Percentage) | No (Percentage) | Total (Percentage) |
| Students         | 33 (66.7)         | 17 (22.3)       | 50 (100.0)         |
| Academics        | 10 (20.0)         | 40 (80.0)       | 50 (100.0)         |
| General Public   | 25 (50.0)         | 25 (50.0)       | 50 (100.0)         |
| Total            | 68 (45.3)         | 82 (54.6)       | 150 (100.0)        |

ccontributions of e-publishing to their gross products as a further clue to the extent to which they embraced electronic publishing. Results show that the older publishers have more e-products that the younger companies (Table 4). Those under ten years in publishing had 9% of e-products while those between 11 and 20 years had 12%. Publishers aged 20 years and above reported e-products constituting 14% of their gross publications. This outcome suggests that younger companies were in the “early majority” amongst publishers in the adoption of e-publishing. The “laggards” are the older publishers.
Challenges being faced by publishers in deploying e-publishing technology

The major challenges facing the embrace acceptance and adoption of e-publishing indicated by the respondents were: inadequacy of e-publishing resources such as high costs of acquiring the necessary ICT infrastructure (when related to profitability), inadequate skilled personnel and poor attitude of end-users to e-products. Table 3 shows the readiness of end-users (students, academics and the general public) in terms of having the necessary ICT infrastructure to use e-products. The students were more ready (66.7%), while the academics were least ready (20.0%). The slow embrace was attributed to the aforementioned challenges. For the publishers, ‘prospects for good profit’ was a major consideration in their willingness to accept and deploy e-publishing. Table 6 represents how they perceive profitability, using e-publishing. The tendency of publishers to see e-publishing as not profitable may be a strong factor in the perceived willingness to go into e-publishing (a major component of TAM).

Outcome of the focus group

The main reason the Focus Group Discussion was conducted was to suggest solutions to the challenges identified. The FGD participants corroborated the fore-stated findings from the survey amongst end-users and publishers. They opined that the adoption of e-publishing by Nigerian publishers – especially academic publishers – was “too slow” when compared with trends in more developed countries. They attributed this to low level of economic development in the country which inhibits end-users from being able to afford electronically-published materials.

Conclusions

The study reveals that the adoption of e-publishing by publishers in Nigeria is slow but steady. Interpretation of the Focus Group Discussion agree with analysis of field report, that stakeholder perceive electronically-published works more beneficial to academic and general publisher. In terms of readiness, end-users and news publishers are more proactive in developing electronic products. News publishers are the “early majority” while tertiary educational publishers could be described as “late majority”. The “laggards, (using Rogers’ Diffusion of Innovation) are the much older publishers. (Rogers, 2003). The study concludes further that:

(i) Publishers are sharply-divided in their perception of e-publishing as a positive or negative innovation;
(ii) Most publishers do not see venturing into e-publishing as profitable.
(iii) All stakeholders in the publishing industry in Nigeria have not rapidly embraced digital publishing.
(iv) The major reason challenges being faced by stakeholders in fully embracing e-publishing so far are: perceived low profit derivable; lack of enough ICT infrastructure; inadequate skilled personnel; lack of funds and the dynamic nature of e-technology generally.
(v) Solutions to the above-stated challenges are collaborative workshops among stakeholder associations such Newspaper Proprietors Association of Nigeria (NPAN), Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA), Nigeria Publishers Association (NPA), and so on. The Ministries of Education should also overhaul academic planning in secondary and tertiary institutions especially to integrate e-learning systematically, so that e-publishing can be engendered.

Recommendations

In view of the foregoing, the researchers recommends as follow:

(i) Comprehensive training in the merits, demerits and adoption of e-publishing should be undertaken for the respective stakeholders – publishers (by Publishers Association of Nigeria); end-users (by management of tertiary institutions) and policy makers (by Ministries of Education).
(ii) Special workshops in the development of software for e-publishing should be carried out by the Association of Nigerian Publishers (ANA).
(iii) The Ministries of Education should also overhaul academic planning in secondary and tertiary institutions to blend traditional learning methods with e-learning, because e-learning would engender e-publishing.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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