Characteristics of Online Newspapers:
Moving newspaper online “facilitates immense archival capabilites, and these archives, along with tools for quickly and conveniently searching and retrieving from them, are assumed to be attractive to the online audience.” (Mings n.d.) Some scholars insist that moving newspaper online reduces “the cost associated with newsprint and distribution” and “removes traditional space restrictions, allowing for greater in-depth coverage of items of reader interest.” (Hume n.d.) Online newspapers are edited in the cyberspace and stored in server computers. The space of server computers is almost unlimited. Millions of articles of several letter size pages can be stored in a small hard disk, and a server computer has much more capacity than a common hard disk. However, in spite of such impressive possibilities and benefits of online newspapers, there are difficulties to deal with. One of these is the financial problem. People do not usually intend to pay money for the articles on the Web (Caruso, 1997). They are accustomed to free information on the Internet. On the contrary, the developing and maintaining cost for an online newspaper is high if it is not filled with ‘shovelware’ of the print counterpart, i.e., print stories reproduced on
the Web pages. In addition to the financial burden attributed to audiences, moving online requires the extra cost to the media. Some online newspapers use audio and video clips to deliver issues more vividly than their print counterparts, and many of them provide online communities which are designed to attract online readers.

Since people do not need to wait for delivery of newsprints, the way people read online newspapers is different from that of print counterparts. Some readers visit online newspapers more often to update information. Moreover, many of them read more than one online newspaper because the access to online newspapers is easy and usually free of charge. The new reader group consists of young people who are familiar with the Internet and use it almost every day (Mings n.d.). The adoption of interactivity through the use of interactive features has affected journalism practice in numerous ways and is changing how news is being presented, delivered and perceived. The use of interactive features allows for immediacy of information, increased communication with and among readers, personalized journalism that is tailored to one’s liking, and non-linearity of information (Rich, 2003). The convergence of media online also allows audiences to experience news stories through multiple channels. However, while the potential of interactivity for journalism (Bowman & Willis, 2003; Deuze, 2003; Fogg et al., 2002; Outing, 1998) and online news publications’ incorporation of interactive features (Chan-Olmsted & Park, 2000; Chung, 2004; Deuze, 2003; Li, 1998; Massey & Levy, 1999; Schultz, 1999) have been independently examined, little has been done to shed light on the audience that is actually making use of the interactive features. Furthermore, research regarding online news audiences’ motivations for using interactive features is nearly absent in the literature.

Exploring news in the new mediascape:
Newspaper industry has made significant strides in understanding how users read and use their news products. Evidence suggests that readers (particularly young readers) both access and read news differently (Vahlberg et al., 2008) and expect news to be available 24 hours (Tapscott, 2008). The new media are influencing how news content is created, delivered and managed. An online newspaper, also known as a web newspaper, has been defined as a newspaper that exists in the World Wide Web or Internet, either separately or as an online version of the printed publication. Online newspaper has emerged as a very distinct and divergent source for millions of readers everyday. The online version offer diverse choices to the reader in accessing the newspaper of their choice. Customization, multimedia, hyperlinks, interactivity has enhanced the uniqueness of online newspapers. The impact of these features is evident in the news content. As people get news in real time, news is in a constant state of flux. Emerging fluid nature of news embraces broad spectrum of the capabilities of the new media. The potential of interactivity has motivated scholars from various disciplines to explicate the concept and has recently made its mark in the communication field. The use of interactive features on the Internet has the potential to trigger a shift in the communicative field. With the multidimensional flow of messages, the audience can now actively choose the information they want and even participate in the production of information.

Online media permit news reports to provide layers of content that can include text, audio and video as well as graphics and animations, permitting readers to access news content in considerably greater depth than traditional news stories can provide. (Albarran and Goff, 2000). The ‘contextualized’ journalism offers textual, multidimensional news reporting than stories told in print and broadcast media (Pavlík, 1997). Online newspapers have ushered in a transformation in the reading behavior and simultaneously necessitated a new paradigm for journalism. The rapid changes and development in technology have been dramatic and the changing audience has also necessitated the presence of large and medium newspapers to have an online presence.

The steady increase in Internet news consumption has let to worries about the demise of traditional mass media news in the near future. While traditional news media have been quick to move their content online in order to capture Internet audiences, media scholars are especially concerned about the self-selective nature of online news consumption, which could accelerate audience fragmentation. While the newspaper industry continues to be criticized, the Internet has become one of newspapers’ key strategies in regaining readership and circulation (Erlindson, 1995; Fulton, 1996).

The exponential growth of the Internet has expanded the applicability of the uses and gratification approach because this medium demands a higher level of interactivity from its users compared to other traditional media (Ruggiero, 2000). While individuals can attempt to gratify television needs through simply switching channels and clicking the remote control, the inherent interactive nature of the Internet technologies, such as e-mail, bulletin boards, chat rooms, and blogs, require audience members to become active users. Similarly, Internet users actively search for information by clicking on links or using search engines, suggesting the Internet is a more goal-oriented medium (Eighmey, 1997) than traditional media and that Internet users are aware of the needs they are attempting to gratify. Furthermore, due to the wide range of interactive features available on the Internet, those who use any of its functions should be able to satisfy a variety of needs (Eighmey, 1997).
