

SOUTH AFRICAN YOUNG ADULTS' DECLINING CULTURE OF NEWS CONSUMPTION: IS NEW MEDIA REALLY A SOLUTION?

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Résumé

Plusieurs facteurs expliquent le désintérêt des jeunes adultes pour les médias traditionnels : détachement, manque de temps, utilisation de nouveaux moyens, coût, manque d'intérêt dans les contenus, trop d'effort, et évolution des modes de vie. Cet article cherche à savoir si ces facteurs seront surmontés par de nouvelles technologies médiatiques. Nous avons utilisé la méthodologie de groupes de discussion pour savoir si les jeunes adultes identifient de manière spécifique les facteurs cités ci-dessus comme associés à la perte de leur intérêt pour les nouvelles dans le contexte sud-africain et pour savoir s'ils identifient les nouveaux médias comme capables de surmonter leur désintérêt pour l'information.

Mots-clés

Médias d'information, nouveaux médias, Afrique du Sud, jeunes adulte

Abstract

Several specific and main factors are associated with young adults' growing disinterest in various mainstream traditional news media. These factors are: news practitioners' detachment from everyday lives of young people, lack of time, use of another news medium, cost, lack of interest in the contents, too much effort, and changing lifestyles. Given that the cultural environment within which these factors are associated is being transformed by new media technologies acting equally as sources of news, this article explores if these factors that had led to young adults' declining interest in news in the first place will be overcome by new media technologies. Focus groups methodology is applied in this study for exploring mainly if young adults specifically identify the above factors as associated with their loss of interest in news in the South African context; and, to investigate if they equally identify new media as capable of overcoming their declining interest consumption of news. Grounding its conclusions in socialization theory, this study determines that a motivating and socializing environment that holds news in high esteem is as important as new media technologies in getting young adults to consume news regularly.

Keywords

News media, new media, South Africa, young adults

Introduction and rationale

South African citizens/audiences' levels of news consumption, from traditional news media and in the main, have progressively been on the decline, since the year of country's first ever democratic elections, in 1994 (Glenn and Mattes 2011). News consumption decline is mainly pronounced among young adults, particularly those in the categories 16-24 (Ndlovu 2014). To be specific, news audience decrease is largely conspicuous in the plummeting readership and circulation figures of mainstream newspapers that are in the English and Afrikaans languages. On the other hand, consumption of news from e.TV/ENCA (privately owned television), community, vernacular and tabloid newspapers, as well as from social/new media technologies, has either been stable or on the increase (Duncan et al 2013; Ndlovu 2014; Moodie 2013). Given the noted decline in newspaper consumption among some young adults and their consumption of some news media, this paper explores if new media technologies are necessarily a (long term) panacea to young adults declining culture of news consumption.

This is because the persistent growth of new media technologies, in SA, is transforming the manner in which news is produced, consumed and shared. New media technologies' novel methods of news diffusion are characteristically qualitatively distinct to the way traditional/old media technologies 'continue' to circulate current affairs. In as much as new media technologies complement- other than replace -traditional media, new media do provide citizens/audiences with new processes of experiencing and sharing political news.

What is noticeable is also that contemporaneous with the growth of new media technologies as sources of news is the radical decline in traditional media as sources of news for young adults in particular, mainly in advanced industrialized societies (Wattenberg 2012). It then becomes necessary to explore if SA young adults, as SA 'liberal' democracy matures, would follow news consumption trends of their counterparts in the advanced industrialized societies

Research about the relationship between youth, mainstream news media and liberal democratic politics in advanced industrial societies - United States, Western Europe, Japan, Canada, Australia and New Zealand- reach the following definitive conclusions. Young adults in these societies increasingly pay less attention to media-based news despite their comparatively better access to various technologies of political communication as compared to previous generations; they demonstrate lower levels of political, geographical and historical knowledge/information compared to previous generations despite their higher university and college enrolments and, are politically inactive as citizens in their respective countries' public spheres (Buckingham 1997a; Wattenberg 2012; Loader 2009; Patterson 2007). Scholarly works that arrive at these conclusions are products of numerous and sustained longitudinal surveys, interview-based and focus-groups studies that continue to discover that the number of young adults who say they frequently read newspapers, listen to radio news as a norm and regularly watch TV news, is radically declining (Buckingham 1997a; 1997b; Barnhurst and Wartella 1991; cf. Duncan et al. 2013; Patterson 2007). This has led Patterson (2007, 5) to observe that: "analysts agree on one thing: today's young people pay less attention to daily news than their counterparts of two or three decades ago".

The degree to which these conclusions uniformly apply to young adults in Latin America, Asia, Africa and the Middle East is indeed debatable. Recent studies, however, indicate that young adults -those persons who are between the ages of 16-24 and 25-35¹ -share particular

¹ The study of youth, news and politics is notorious for lack of standardization when comes to terms such youth, Generation X, Y, etc. (cf. Zerba 2009, 172).

global characteristics with respect to news and politics (Egan 1999; Stein 2013, 28; Zerba 2009). For this paper, some of the conclusions that are being reached about youth, news and politics in advanced industrialised societies are equally being reached about post-apartheid South African youth (Ndlovu and Mbenga 2013, 170-1). As such then, the study of youth, news politics (hereafter: YNP) largely carries with itself a tone and sense of disillusionment about young adults' sense of citizenship.

In advanced industrialised countries, news sources that are routinely being rejected by the majority of young adults are, in this order, newspapers, TV and radio. The Internet too, despite its immoderate promise in the 1990s, is not being overwhelmingly used by youth as a news source (Mindich 2005; Patterson 2007). In SA and among young adults, radio is still the most popular source of news after TV (Duncan et al 2013). Globally then and because of different socio-economic, cultural and political conditions, young people are oriented to various traditional sources of news differently.

What is emerging strongly and seems to be common among young adults in the global public sphere are types of news content they reject. Mainstream 'macro' political and economic stories, specifically, are news types they normally reject (Buckingham 1997a, 344). They are less inclined to follow events that fall within the categories of business, politics/ government, public and international affairs (Duncan et al. 2013). In journalistic discourse, they are less likely to follow hard news (Patterson 2007).

Youths' rejection of hard news is paralleled by increasing interest in soft news and popular cultural news (Duncan et al. 2013; Pepler 2003); they demonstrate growing interest in the happenings in the private and public lives of celebrities who are sport, film, music and TV stars (Patterson 2007, 16). Equally, human interest type of stories that are characterised by lower levels of public affairs information and more focus on drama and sensationalism (Baumgartner and Morris 2006) attract young adults. News and political satire shows like John Stewart's/ Trevor Noah's in the United States (and Late Night News in South Africa)² are increasingly cited as popular among young viewers (cf. Baumgartner and Morris 2006, 343).

In the view of this article, there are three aspects to the decline. First, there is a statistical or quantitative decline in the share of youth who report reading newspapers, surfing the Internet, listening to radio, and watching TV for political and economic news yesterday (see above). Second, whereas it used to be assumed that as young people grew older they would take news consumption seriously, they are not doing it as a generation born in a particular period (Watternberg 2012). As such, there is cohort decline. Third, there is a qualitative decline in the manner that youth read newspapers, surf the Internet, listen to radio, and watch TV. This aspect can be explained by referring to the way youth engage with TV news:

While their [young people] numbers expand the ratings of news programs, they hardly take the programs seriously [they] consider news just another programme in the flow- a reality-based variety show (Barnhurst 1998, 204).

The poor relationship between youth and news is a serious concern to societies at large. The concern is caused, arguably, by the social meaning of news and its implication in the creation of an informed public. News is a socially and culturally privileged form of information, communication and knowledge (Van Zyl 2006). The privileging of news among other all

² There is no research yet on e.tv's *Late Night News* e.tv in South Africa with the stand-up comedian Loyiso Gola.

other human forms of communication and the centrality of news media institutions in the (post/late)-modern era are what is behind the criticism of young adults' abandonment of news.

Why young adults' declining news interest matters?

It is, however, not just the abandonment of any other news that is the worry, for certainly young adults are not short of any news; it is particularly the desertion of a particular type of news content that 'qualifies' citizens to be culturally graded as 'informed' that is certainly the concern about young adults. It is because young adults are shying away from political and economic stories - events that fall within the categories of business, politics and government, public and international affairs- that they are being qualified as uninformed.

Being politically well-informed as a citizenship is a quality held in high-esteem by all in our modern democratic social systems: conservatives, liberals, the left, feminists, parents, journalists, teachers and just about everyone in any society. Furthermore, young adults' loss of interest in news matters profoundly because of the material impact their behaviour has on societies at large.

The consequence of youths' diminishing motivation to read newspapers, surf the Internet, listen to radio, and watch TV (for political and economic hard news), is the diminishing *knowledge* of public and current affairs matters (politics, history and geography). There is another impact on society. The study of YNP³ reasons that young adults' disinterest in news create indifference towards civic responsibilities such as being a member of a political party or trade union movement, and/or voting in local and national elections. This practice threatens survival of public democratic institutions (cf. Barnhurst and Wartella 1998; Barnhurst 1998; Buckingham 1997a; 1997b; Pepler 2003). The argument also goes in a reverse way; it reasons that that being indifferent to civic responsibilities leads to non-consumption of news. Conway, Wycoff, Feldbaum, and Ahern (1981), for example, argue that exposure to news and levels of political knowledge are mutually reinforcing variables which determine political attitudes and political participation to a great extent. If news is preeminent to human progress as noted above and young adults are equally concerned about the future, why would they then abandon it?

Reasons for young adults' declining Interest in news

One account of the decline point to one of the factors identified in this study: young adults would be interested in news if news was interested in them. Young adults' declining interest in news, the argument goes, is caused by mainstream news practitioners' detachment from, and their irrelevance to, everyday lives of young people (Buckingham 1997a; 1997b; Raeymaeckers 2004).

This is a position that says: had news practitioners taken care to know the nature of young adults' 'social worlds' and report (ed) on them 'accordingly', the statistical share of young adults who regularly consumed mainstream news media would be comparatively higher. Inferable from this position is the presupposition that conventional news practitioners operate

³ There are internal debates in the discourse in this regard (cf. Buckingham, 1997a)

under an inaccurate assumption that all social groupings received and consumed news information in the same way; or, they have the same orientation towards news (cf. Katz 1993). At the practical level, this presumption manifests itself through continued non-incorporation of those news aspects that would motivate young people to pay more attention to the news.

For Buckingham (2001, 01) “the big problem is that news producers do not make an effort to connect with young people”. It is therefore, according to Buckingham (1999, 124), “the failure of the established news media to connect with forms of ‘everyday politics’ which are most important to this generation that accounts for their declining audience”. Katz (in Buckingham 1997a, 347) “blames young people’s growing rejection of conventional journalism fairly and squarely on the journalist themselves”.

Young people themselves hold conventional news producers responsible for young adults’ declining interests in news. They blame them for not offering any material that adolescents and young adults would be interested in (Pepler 2003, 2). For young people television news’ political stories, in particular, do not seem to be relevant to their lives (Egan 1999, 136).

In addition to the above, at the heart of young adults’ declining levels of news consumption is the perception of news and news media. As much as research indicates that (consistent with historical perception of news) some young people equally perceive news to be a window to the world of events (cf. Gauntlett and Hill 1999), they do not regard it as an extension of their own ‘social world’, but rather the world of the adults. This orientation towards news is identifiable even among those young people who, unlike others, use news to increase their awareness of national and global issues; these young people only “use this [news] knowledge to situate themselves as part of an ‘adult’ social group” (cf. Gauntlett and Hill 1999, 69). Buckingham (2004, 1) observes this phenomenon in relation to teenagers. He notes that news consumption provides an incentive for those teenagers who wish to buy into adult status. Du Plooy-Cillier and Bezuidenhout (2003, 11) also conclude that young adults see news as an “adult discourse”.

There are other specific reasons that are advanced in the discourse regarding young adults’ disinterest particularly in relation to the conventional newspaper. Some of the factors presented immediately below can be applied to TV and radio as well in some other instances. Huang’s (2009) recent study sums up findings of global studies that have explored reasons for declining interest in newspapers:

Such Studies found that the most common reasons non-readers gave for not reading newspapers were: lack of time, use of another news medium, cost, and lack of interest in the contents or decline in reading interest, too much effort, and changing lifestyles (Huang 2009).

Given that the environment with which these factors are associated is being transformed by new media technologies acting equally as sources of news, this article explores if these factors that had led to young adults’ declining interest in news in the first place will be overcome by new media technologies? To explore this question the following methodology was followed.

Methodology

Interviews in Cape Town were conducted with young adults who made up South African racial categories: White, black African, Indian and Colored. These people were largely middle class. They lived either at home in various suburbs in Cape Town; they rented flats, lived in digs or university residences. The names of the students or any young adults, who participated in focus groups, including the universities they went to, are meant to remain anonymous. In the end, interviews with 35 young adults were conducted. This is not a national sample like the one with were conducted for a national baseline study on youth and news (Duncan et al. 2013). The aim here was to dig deeper into specific changing patterns in news consumption.

To allow for adequate discussions of the main and related topics, focus-group sessions lasted between ninety to ninety-five minutes. The researcher as the moderator introduced the purpose of the study and explained to the participants that they were free to speak without being prompted, but would need to identify themselves by assigned number as only the audiotape, as the recording device, was used both to capture interview processes and for purposes of transcription and interpretation. With participants' consent, responses were recorded and subsequently transcribed, this being the norm after conducting such interviews and for facilitation of accurate analysis.

Discussion (time)

Young adult participants specifically pointed to the time factor as responsible for their declining consumption of news from traditional media. The time factor related specifically to the incongruence between their unavailability to consume news at set and fixed standard times by which traditional news can only be accessed. One young adult participant indicated that:

Traditional methods of delivering news are either via the medium of television which is aired two to three times a day, radio news which is aired up to seven times a day but is on a set schedule, and via newspapers which are printed twice a day. This means that viewers, listeners and/or readers have to schedule a set time ...in which they be able to receive news.

Besides not having time, the general tone of the participants reflected a sense of discomfort that they needed or were socially required to make time to consume news at set times. For participants, the possibility to encounter TV news is far more available for people who are necessarily at home at a particular time and who generally have time. Indeed this bias could have been produced by the fact that some of the participants lived in university residences. Nonetheless, it could not be inferred by this researcher that serious motivation to consume news could essentially be subdued by the element of time. To the degree that young adults make 'time' for other social activities, that they do not discount consuming traditional media in general, and that traditional media in the SA urban space is highly saturated, it should be argued that young adults far more lack motivation to consume traditional news than they surely lack time.

Focusing on time as a factor that reduces young adults' probabilities for consuming traditional news media reveals that the set of factors in question here are not mutually exclusive. Not only that, time affects dissimilar traditional news media differently. TV is affected by time

differently to radio and newspaper. Participants wrote that they needed to be in a “home” space to access TV news.

At the same time, the analysis revealed that the degree to which time affected participants’ chances to consume radio news was negligible. It could be easily deduced that this is because radio news can be easily accessed via all communication technologies, old and new. Also, apart from radio just being ubiquitous and at young adults’ disposal at various times of the day, there are other radio elements that seem to shape the relationship it has with young adults.

Importantly, these elements (see below) make an old medium like radio appear to share certain characteristics with new media with respect to being aesthetically appreciated by young adults. Participants by far consumed commercial entertainment-oriented radio as opposed to talk radio (commercial or public service). Plausibly, they tune in to these radio stations for other programs, not expressly news. News is subsequently consumed by ‘accident’. In addition, radio news is very brief and easy to comprehend. This structure of radio news is something some young adults tend to prefer. These are not only two elements that make radio appreciated by this group and which radio share with new media: they do not make additional arrangements to consume radio news; nor, do they need to spend money. They do not have to change physical space from which to consume the medium.

In the analysis, the attractiveness of new media, like radio, lies in its accommodative-ness of youths’ time, lifestyle and culture; its appeal lies in the qualities innate in itself as a technological and aesthetical form. One participant pointed out:

The significance of radio news is that it fits my schedule as young adult, I already have numerous things to do therefore going out collecting news becomes a hassle. Radio news compresses my activities so I don’t have to pause whatever I am doing to pay attention; but rather I can consume news on the go.

In view of the foregoing and to the degree that radio news is far more popular with respondents than TV news, time cannot be the only factor that makes the difference. Even with changing lifestyles, personal and institutional responsibilities, respondents would always catch the evening and morning news. As much as both radio and TV news are offered at news producers’ ‘time’⁴, this factor cannot inescapably be enough rationale that when you have you missed radio or TV news at a particular time in multi broadcast media platform like SA, you have missed radio or TV news for the rest of the day.

If one continues to adopt this stance, one could argue that if participants were generally motivated and committed to consuming newspapers, they could buy one and simply read it later- when they have time. In relation to newspapers, however, this stance leads to another factor cited by respondents as accountable for declining levels of news consumption; that is, cost.

Cost

⁴ This does not take into consideration the new phenomenon in South Africa of national of twenty-four hour news channels.

Participants raised the issue of cost particularly in relation to the price of newspapers. Cost was not identified in relation to radio and TV news. The following respondent's view represents those of other young adults' respondents.

As a student, however, it is harder to maintain the same attitude towards news mainly because journalism is unnecessary cost when trying to juggle your financials, while audio-visual resources such as television are hard to come by when you do not live at home.

For young adults, it is not that newspapers are expensive per se; but they are expensive in relation to their respective budgets. They simply cannot afford to buy a newspaper, they wrote. Without undermining what respondents consider expensive and not, there is a problem with this justification. Young adults spend reasonably high amounts of money on other items. The argument could be that young adults do not have the motivation to prioritize buying a newspaper on the basis of the fact that the newspaper does not gratify certain needs. The answer could also be in the perception of newspaper itself.

In the qualitative analysis, of the traditional news media, the printed form of newspapers receive more negative reaction from youth than the audio-visual ones. Newspaper seems a stronger factor that pushes youth to new media than TV and radio. Said one student: "I also viewed newspapers as quite aesthetically unappealing. The ability to open, flatten and fold a broadsheet to ones' likes has always seemed a talent to me". Said another: "I really don't have time to page through a bunch of pages, so with TV and online news, you just relax and watch..."

Although, the narrative does not make mention of consuming TV news via mobile technological gadgets in South Africa, TV news is equally preferred because of its aesthetics. TV news is appealing to others because of its live visuals, instantaneity and lack of effort in consuming it.

With respect to new media technologies and cost, participants talked about free access to university Internet both on campus and in residences. As such, they could access any news website they wanted. The consumption of news via new media on the basis of cheap access raises one crucial question, however. What would happen if new media owners started charging for news online? Will young people return to TV and radio, comparatively cheaper media than buying a newspaper? Will young people abandon news consumption altogether? As much as young adults clearly identified cost of traditional news media, particularly the newspaper, as a factor that pushes them to new media, they were less clear about the relevance of news content they encounter across these news platforms.

Content relevance

Irrelevance of news content to young adults' everyday lives is often cited as reasons for their abandonment of mainstream news (see above). According to Barnhurst and Wartella (1998, 280) young adults:

Do not find newspapers compelling because the information they encounter there has little connection to their social worlds, and without that link they have a hard time using newspapers to make themselves into knowledgeable participants in civic dialogue.

Equally in the focus for this study, participants expressed a sense of disconnect with mainstream news media and this was largely in terms of both form and content, other than exclusively content. For example one participant said that:

Newspapers have not really changed in my mind; I still see them as relatively insignificant now that I have become a young adult. I believe that print media has become obsolete and the need for newspaper is not as essential...

At the same time, it is not only in relation to newspapers that participant pointed to both content and form, other than just content. One participant noted the following with respect to TV news.

Unless broadcasters change the way they deliver news to younger people, the world will have a generation of ignorant people. News media producers have tried to appeal to young audiences, but it is not working. I believe that they need to try something completely different from the way they present news now, before I would consider watching the news every day.

Interestingly, news content on new media is very much the same as the content on traditional offline forms of political communication. The difference is the method and technology of news content transmission. As much as this is the case, participants seemed to write less negatively specifically about content than they did about form. Besides form, the other factor that turns young adults away from mainstream news media is 'too much effort' to access this media form or type.

Too much effort

With respect to 'too much effort' factor, the initial negative reaction comes from the fact that in the university environment, for example, students have to make an effort to go a particular *space*, say, the library, to access the newspaper. Second, when in the library the student might have to wait in the queue for somebody else to finish reading the paper the student might be interested in. This is a factor that also has to do with *time*. Participants do not feel 'special' and prioritized as individuals. (News reading here exists outside of the norm of individualized internet banking, online shopping, online academic material, etc.). What is raised here is captured in the following narrative by one participant.

Newspapers are not as easily accessible. Unless you make a concerted effort to go to the library every day to read a newspaper that they provide, which is not always possible, it is harder to get the print version. Online newspapers are easier to access and many of them have social pages that they provide information on.

Accessing new media online is effortless. News is delivered directly to participants' new gadgets. The student feels prioritized and special. They do not want media that requires them to restructure their daily schedule. Things have to revolve around them. Media and its content have to come to them. One participant noted:

Online news media is engaging, [it has] a column that ask for my opinion as a reader. This makes me feel like I am somehow involved, whereas with other form of news mediums you are merely an object and all their opinions are thrown at you. You only consume traditional news media and then discuss it amongst just you and your pals at the end of the day, your opinion does not change the breaking news that has already been made.

The manner in which online media could be accessed for news fits in with other similar online practices of young adults' online lifestyle: online personal communication, shopping, academic life, job search, etc. New media is new culture and everyday practice.

Youths' online news consumption practice is co-consumption. That is, they are consuming other elements of the media at the same time. News posted onto online newspapers websites is preferred. Also preferred are news distributed via social networks, Twitter and watching news videos on Youtube. Youth is fascinated by the new technology. Young people are on their iPads, mobile phones, laptops, kindles, etc.

New media, as a pulling factor, was articulated by participants in positive language; traditional media, particularly the newspapers, are a pushing factor that is articulated in a negative language. The least preference of a newspaper by young adults because of what researchers call the decline in reading culture is an interesting phenomenon in SA with respect to young adults' preference for local newspapers.

Preference for local newspapers

The participants made distinct and regular reference to the consumption of community newspapers. Given that community newspapers, obviously and literally, have to be read, it may make less sense to highlight the 'decline in the culture of reading' as solely responsible for the decline of the mainstream newspaper. Equally, the notion of the declining reading culture among young adults seems to be contradicted in at least three more ways. There has been significant growth in the readership of IsiZulu newspapers equally among the young adults, particularly in the SA province of KwaZulu-Natal. Second, online newspapers still have to be literally read and watched. Third, the rise of tabloid newspapers in SA is another contradiction. What can be observed is that young adults have much more serious aversion to the newspaper if it is irrelevant and contains content that is abstracted to their everyday lives. They want newspapers that are relevant and community newspapers serve this need. This is captured by one participant who noted that:

The only print media I read are local newspapers like Gazette and The Herald, namely the North West Gazette and Potch herald, because they focus only on local issues, issues that affect the community.

The growth of South African tabloids, isiZulu and community newspapers can be equally attributed to their content that is local, relevant and has to do with immediate community issues. The mainstream newspapers are being rejected because they lack these qualities necessarily.

Conclusion

Declining levels of consumption of mainstream news is not a national phenomenon limited only to young adults in the broader SA population. News consumption is declining across various demographic groups in the population. SA citizens' reduced news consumption is an audience behaviour form proven by the rate of the decline in mainstream newspaper circulation and readership (Glenn and Mates 2011) as well as declining levels of TV news viewership over time across all age group categories: 16-24, 25-34, 35-49 and 50 plus (Ndlovu 2013). It is ironic then that in a cultural environment where news consumption is declining, even among older adults, young adults are socially expected to come across as heavy consumers of news; or, young adults are framed as if they are the only ones weary of mainstream news consumption.

In the SA news reception and consumption environment, new media on its own would not necessarily be the panacea for young adults' declining culture of news consumption. To contend that new media would bring young adults back to the gone- by golden era of heavy news consumption of previous generations is reductionist. It is to necessarily reduce the problem of 'non-news' consumption by young adults solely to the lack of appropriate, accessible and youth-friendly technologies.

This study does not reject the view that the sheer novelty of new media may increase young adults' (middle-class) levels of news consumption online as the above evidence shows that they are interested in online news. The study agrees that new media technologies provide new ways of experiencing news for young adults and they are partly responsible for young adults' reduced orientation towards traditional news media. What this study questions, however, is the sustainability of the young adult- new media relationship with respect to news consumption in the absence of high motivation to consume news. In short, what would happen when new media becomes "old" media, as the Internet is starting to show signs of doing now (Mindich 2005)? Arguably, youths' declining consumption of news is less an issue of technology as it is one of motivation, attitude and commitment. Motivation and commitment are, in part, products of socialization and the environment.

News consumption habits exist in particular cultural and lifestyle contexts. If contexts that encourage heavy consumption of news do not exist, it is implausible to expect any technology to cause young adults to pick up the habit of news consumption. Evidence contained in participants' responses show that young adults who are already motivated to consume news provided by new media technologies, as a particular form, consume it from new media. Those who are not motivated do not, despite overwhelming access to new media.

A socializing cultural context that disproportionately and intensely holds decent political news in high social esteem could motivate young adults to be ardent young news consumers. In respondents' responses the environments that seemed to encourage consumption of news are school (lower and high primary). It is common in the participants' narratives to come across references such as: "my earliest memories of newspapers are from when I was in the first or second grade". The other socializing agency that participants identified regularly was the institution of higher education, particularly media-related assignments. Said one participant:

I most discussed politics with them and school during language tasks, but now I would say it is with my seminar tutor and peers. I then came across a newspaper last year for Film and Media assignments here at school.

As much as the above is noted, the university environment seems rather contradictory as a space for news socialization of young adults. In the following quotation, the participant is not technology-deprived, but she is in an environment, like many other participants to this study, that does not make it necessary to consume news. *'The other fact is that I am at (university) residence. Nobody is forcing me to watch them and there (are) plenty of better things to do at the times they (news stories) are playing'.*

The above statement constructs the 'home' or 'peers' news environment as both the place that encourages consuming news and one that forces one to do so. So, the respondent, by suggesting that she has plenty of things to do at the time that news is playing, is articulating a sense of freedom from news as an extension of parental control. She is expressing here freedom of choice and sense of individuality and continuing discovery of identity. Both the university residence and staying away from news usher in a change in lifestyle in relation to news. The inference one gets from the analysis of narratives is that both change in lifestyle and home environment negatively affects news consumption. Where home seems to force people to consume news, student life tends to impose less of that responsibility.

Home is cited as the main motivator for news consumption and having influenced the beginnings of consumption of news. One respondent noted:

I last watched news or read any newspaper when I was at home because my parents like news. So, they are the ones buying newspapers and 7:30pm we are all forced to watch news.

News-consuming parents have motivations to pass news consumption culture on to their children and young adults. One young adult mentions that "I started consuming news when I was a teenager enough to sit still and listen to my mother read news to me or watch television with the whole family". It is then plausible to argue that parents who take time and have strong motivation to develop news culture among their children can also do this in a new news media environment. Young adults are most likely to pick up this form of socialization in view of studies that study this phenomenon.

Studies grounded in socialisation theory, in general, identify the manner in which social networks influence young people's relationship with media texts. In particular, they clearly indicate that children, teenagers and young adults emulate their parents' media consumption patterns (Gunter and McLeer 1990, 36). "This certainly seems to be the case in relation to the development of news consumption practices for young adults". (Guntlett and Hill 1999, 86) Furthermore, several studies have demonstrated that children and young adults' news behavior is influenced by their parents' news reading, watching and listening habits. "When children watch the news reading and viewing behavior of their parent(s), they are really

watching the behaviour being modelled, a process rooted in social learning theory” (Zerba 2009).

However, parental news consumption behavior that youth imitate and which the above-mentioned studies have observed is necessarily associated with traditional news media such as newspapers, radio and television as technological devices through which news content is communicated. It does not seem from the studies that parents consumed news in a particular way, in particular time and space, for the sole purpose of showing children “how it is done”. Their imparting of particular modes of behaviour seems an effortless process in the traditional media environment. This does not mean some parents would not consciously urge their children to consume news.

What is important is that in the new media environment, it does appear that parents would have to be more conscious in encouraging their children and young adults to consume news. This could be done through sharing stories, posting podcasts and blogs, etc. This means that as one form of news experiencing/ sharing between peers/parents dies, the other would have to emerge- soon. This too could continue the practice of post- news consumption informal discussions with their children. The same can be said of peers.

The reason socializing agencies need to work with new media technologies in nurturing the culture of news consumption among young adults is because new media technologies are a paradox. They do ‘meet’ (digital divide notwithstanding) the normative social requirement of expanding access to news and current affairs, on the one hand. On the other, they are a news source that leads to a culture of atomization and invisibility of news consumption, at least by contemporary parents and young adults. This point can be illustrated by comparing some of its features to that of traditional media, particularly in the realm of consumption.

In the realm of reception and consumption, traditional newspaper combines at least two elements: circulation and readership. Circulation refers to a number of papers sold in particular period. Readership refers to a situation where a singular newspaper can be passed around and be read by more one person, in the family, train, in the coffee shop, salon, staff room, etc. A radio could equally be consumed by several people at the same. A TV newscast could be watched by several people in a homestead or public bar/pub. It would appear then that traditional news media are oriented towards the individual as much as to the rest of the family or “community”. A sense of community is formed by communal reading and watching. It is the cultural environment that has historically encouraged young people to consumer news media.

At the same time the distinction to which one form of technology could be oriented either to the individual or family is matter of degrees, and could be superficial at best. It is not impossible to imagine a family watching a streamed news-broadcast from a laptop or PC, or even an Ipad for that matter. Equally, it is not to stretch to imagine a television set located within the confines of ones’ bathroom or bedroom, and news consumed from it away from family members. The same can be said of newspaper. New media technologies still are different.

New media technologies as sources of news, particularly newspapers, emphasize circulation in terms of their free availability online and subscription. New media technologies such as cellphones, tablets, iPads, Kindles, laptops, PCs, etc., as sources of news and from which news content is increasingly being consumed, are characteristically individualistic or are oriented towards an individual. Whereas a stranger can ask for the paper at train station or co-watch news with you at a bar, they are less likely to ask you if they can read/watch news from

your Ipad! The experience of consuming news or any other content from news technologies is necessarily invisible or anatomized. This nature of news consumption and reception from new media, if not intentionally overwhelmed with culture of news consumption, could impair young adults' culture of news consumption.

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