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# Analysis of Select Nigerian Traditional Print Media Posts and News Updates on X Between 2019 and 2024

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## ABSTRACT

*X is a microblogging social media site users use to communicate and inform themselves. Recently, it has become increasingly popular for traditional media to use X to inform and communicate with users. This study conducts an analysis of traditional print on X to decipher how they operate. It draws its strength from the Diffusion of Innovation, Media Diffusion and Niche theories of media. The traditional print media studied on X are Thisday, Punch and Vanguard newspapers. Using consecutive days approach of content analysis research method, for a seven-day period in year 2019 and 2024, the study finds out that traditional print media in Nigeria use X mostly to direct audiences to web content that the news organisation had produced and posted online. This research concludes that online media organisations on X need to improve how they use X to gather information, engage with users and followers to improve information reach and use of X as a source.*

## KEYWORDS

Audiences,  
Communication,  
Information,  
Social Media,  
Traditional Media

## INTRODUCTION

Social media platforms have become a key wellspring of data and serve as news sources in contemporary society. Social media platforms are innovations for journalism and the news media, which help journalists to advertise their content and information through new channels and support interactive contact with the user. These innovations get speedier access across to the people, they amplify the voice of the people, and they get to regions that are challenging to get to (von Nordheim, Boszek & Koppers, 2018). Ogundele (2013) maintained that the effect of social media in the communication world is important as traditional

media has undoubtedly taken an onward progressive turn in achieving its core assignments of educating, informing, and entertaining its end users. In addition, Ogundele (2013) asserts that the fundamental and solid utilisation of online interaction has moved past openings found in the traditional media in Nigeria and the world at large.

Consequently, the ability of social media to promote communication has led the audience to move from a passive state to a new way of interaction. This shift has unequivocally affected different areas of Nigeria's economy, particularly politics and education (Ogundele, 2013). Ogundele (2013) further highlighted that one of the most important aspects of social media in Nigeria is its ability to help traditional media in reclaiming their lost audience, particularly the Nigerian youth. With the continuous increase in social media usage, Nigerian youths who hardly use the print media have now suddenly developed a healthy habit of staying informed about events in the nation (Abraham, 2023). According to Ekwueme and Okoro (2018), focusing on globalisation, technological advancement, and the explosion of web-based, internet-powered communication has introduced radical changes to all spheres of life. They argued that the web has changed how people manage and push toward issues like revolution and how matters concerning human relationships, like security, agriculture, the economy, business, communication, politics, and health are perceived, influencing every facet of our collective existence (Abraham, 2023). This transformation is particularly evident in the advancements in information and communications technology, which has shrunk the world into a global village.

Additionally, X has evolved into a central platform for news and information, attracting traditional media, particularly print outlets, to disseminate all kinds of information. Its structure as an alternate news source has proved effective in establishing it as journalists' preferred platform for breaking news and covering live events (von Nordheim et al., 2018). Tandoc and Johnson (2016) stated that X has changed to a commonplace used by journalists for reporting and engaging media consumers, and both news organisations and journalists have adopted X use. Newsrooms now rely on X to stream news to far and wide audiences, ensuring information is accessed through technology by as many people as possible. The Pew Research Centre (2011) observed that media organisations use X to disperse information to audiences daily.

Besides, X, as a microblogging platform, has grown in popularity and usage over time by people with access to the internet. It is routinely used to share and receive messages, post individual updates on personal lives, and random thoughts due to its brief and quick-to-process posts. Zhao, Jiang, Weng, He, Lin, Yan, and Li (2011) opine that the popularity of this form of social media has attracted the attention of researchers. There are questions about how these news organisations use the social media platform, and that is what this research aims to analyse, with a focus on select print media. This research conducts an online survey of traditional print media (in Nigeria) on X to establish how they use X; that is, how they operate on X. This research conducts an analysis of traditional print media on X in a seven-day period in 2019 and 2024. The select traditional print media surveyed for this research include *Thisday*, *Vanguard* and *Punch* newspapers.

## STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The wave of social media use and the popularity of social media sites, including X, have made it a valuable tool for communicating and passing information in this age. The internet and social media sites have made it possible for information to be shared and accessed through print media and digital technology. There are many ways traditional print media can leverage the power of social media for their print media brand. Traditional print media use the social media platform X to reach new audiences and disseminate information because of its perceived popularity and reach. However, are they effectively using this platform? Are they maximising their potential? These are the questions that this research attempts to answer.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The research objectives of this study are to:

- I. Determine the frequency of posts posted by Nigerian traditional newspapers on X.
- II. Examine and categorise the news agenda disseminated by Nigerian traditional newspapers on X.
- III. Assess the extent to which X is used by Nigerian traditional newspapers as a tool for news reporting versus gathering insights and engaging with followers.

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

### X as a Microcosm of Society

Since its arrival in 2006, X has turned from a niche service to a mass phenomenon and in addition to its nature of interpersonal communication, X is increasingly used as a source of real-time information and a place for debate in news, politics, business and entertainment (Weller, Bruns, Burgess, Mahrt & Puschmann, 2014). X is providing a particular communicative space which is affording the development of a new type of publicness; this “personal publics” that can be described as a model type of communicative space, defined and placed in contrast to the traditional publics afforded by journalistic mass media and framed by the three structural dimensions of technological affordance, social and textual relationships, and shared rules and expectations (Weller et al., 2014, p. 3-7).

For instance, the “like” and “repost” taps have changed X into a strong platform where reporters and users come to gather, share, and separate information from various sources (von Nordheim et al., 2018). This offers users of the platform opportunities as well as exposes them to risks. On one hand, they get to break through the hindrances of traditional media when disseminating and receiving information, interface on a vibrant space, and expose users to a space where they can effectively engage themselves in important or mundane exchanges. The risk it poses is that there is a likelihood of the users depending on opaque algorithms powered by multinational corporations that push for a monopoly on how social communications are organised (von Nordheim et al., 2018).

According to Weller et al. (2014), X's continuous rise and improvement have made it an important site for researchers interested in learning online behaviours such as how information spreads, internet activism, and related subjects. With its considerable number of users, numerous posts and use of hashtags, X gives rich data for quantitative assessment. Besides forming a public sphere, posts on X help introduce users to different thoughts and experiences of different people across different countries on the space; it affords users an important opportunity for a learning experience (Weller et al., 2014).

Therefore, due to the content shared on X, its publicness and the discourse observed and shared on the platform, it makes it an important site for researchers who want a source for data on public debates on the internet. This shows that social media sites like X are not only used for distribution of content but can also be used for production of contents too (von Nordheim et al., 2018). On X, users can search for names, subjects, or hashtags to curate the information they want to access or the topics they want to follow (Pew Research Centre, 2011). Users can follow feeds they want in order to get all their news and information from those feeds. Additionally, if a user reposts a post on their own feed, the ensuing reach of the original post can increase to more users (Pew Research Centre, 2011).

### **Use of X by Traditional Print Media**

Zhao et al. (2011) compared X and traditional media using topic models and found out that X is a much-suited source for entity-oriented topics that are not usually covered by traditional media. Regardless of the way users on X show little interest in overall news, they help to spread important happenings around the world. According to von Nordheim et al. (2018) studies on the correlation between journalism and social media platforms like X have mostly focused on how journalists' source content on social media. They pointed out that the policies of the social media sites over time force journalists to rely on social media algorithms in how they source for contents on the platform. Traditional news media using the platforms would have to structure their contents with algorithms and data-centric intermediaries when putting out those contents.

Furthermore, the Pew Research Centre (2011) examined over 3,600 posts from 13 American news organisations for about a one-week time to study how they utilise X. The outcomes showed that these organisations according to an overall point of view utilise X in a controlled way, mostly to circulate their own content and direct audiences to their sites. It was observed that these media organisations were not using X in an interactive way or as a reporting tool. In any case, not much has been done to understand how major newspapers in Nigeria use X, which solidifies the importance of this study.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **The Diffusion of Innovation Theory**

Ekwueme and Okoro (2018) propose that technological innovations evolve through distinct stages before they gain widespread adoption. Rogers (2003, as cited in von Nordheim et al., 2018) defines diffusion as the process by which an innovation is communicated over time through various channels within a social system. Early communication science research concentrated on the spread of

news, but by the 1970s, attention shifted to the adoption of technologies such as cable television. Over time, diffusion of innovation theory has been applied to explore the integration of information technologies into newsrooms, focusing on organisational transformation. This process is generally divided into five stages: awareness (knowledge), interest, persuasion, decision/adoption, and confirmation.

Contemporary adaptations of the diffusion of innovation theory, particularly regarding the adoption of new technologies in journalism, offer a useful framework for analysis (von Nordheim et al., 2018). Ekdale et al. (2015, as cited in von Nordheim et al., 2018) build on this theory by identifying three stages of change linked to social media adoption: technological use, audience relationships, and professional culture.

The first stage, technological use, encounters minimal resistance as journalists come to understand the value and benefits of adopting new technological tools (Ekdale et al., 2015, as cited in von Nordheim et al., 2018). This stage is divided into two phases: initiation and implementation. In the initiation phase, innovations are adapted to meet the specific needs of the organisation, which aids in their acceptance and encourages their adoption. The implementation phase, also known as routinisation, occurs when these innovations are fully integrated into the organisation's daily operations (Rogers, 2003, as cited in von Nordheim et al., 2018).

The second stage, audience relationships, explores the changing dynamics between journalists and their audiences. Ekdale et al. (2015, as cited in von Nordheim et al., 2018) note that audiences now assume dual roles as both collaborators and critics in content creation. This shift opens new opportunities for engagement but also introduces challenges, such as ethical concerns about participatory practices and journalists' fears of losing control over their content (Holten & Lewis, 2011, as cited in von Nordheim et al., 2018).

The third stage, professional culture, addresses significant changes within newsrooms as organisations adopt new business models and operational strategies (Ekdale et al., 2015, as cited in von Nordheim et al., 2018). This stage marks the transition from traditional print media and offline distribution to a digital ecosystem, where modern technologies are used to engage a broader and more diverse audience.

## **Media Diffusion Theory**

The concept, which originates from the diffusion of innovation theory introduced in the early 20th century, evolved over time. By the 1960s, the focus shifted to media diffusion, exploring how media facilitates the spread of ideas through social networks (Allen, 2017). With the advent of new communication technologies, the concept expanded to include the spread of media technologies, influencing various academic fields (Allen, 2017). According to Rand, Raschid, and Joshi (2019), social influence plays a critical role in the dissemination of information, adoption of innovations, and sharing of recommendations. The rise of digital platforms such as blogs, X, and Facebook has further accelerated this process, allowing users to share ideas with a larger audience, often extending beyond their immediate social circles (Rand et al., 2019). As a result, traditional print media have had to adapt their strategies to engage a broader public.

## Niche Theory

Dimmick and Rothenbuhler (1984) highlight that the introduction of new technologies poses significant challenges for both research and theory in mass communication. A major concern for the public, media professionals, and researchers is understanding the effects of new media on traditional mass communication industries. This theory aims to explain the conditions under which entire media sectors, like newspapers or television, may either adapt and coexist or collapse due to competition. Tandoc and Johnson (2016) describe Niche theory as the idea that media organisations compete for limited resources in the media landscape. This concept is especially relevant to traditional media, which fear that online platforms could replace traditional formats, a concept known as the displacement hypothesis.

Tandoc and Johnson (2016) further explain that when a new medium enters the ecosystem, it competes with existing media for resources, with the level of competition depending on how much their niches overlap. If there is a significant overlap, three potential outcomes may arise: an increase in resources, the displacement of one competitor, or the complete removal of one. Research suggests that the internet has negatively affected television and newspaper consumption (Tandoc & Johnson, 2016) because it competes more effectively for the gratifications—user needs met by media—that traditional media provide. Gratifications refer to the benefits users seek from media, while gratification opportunities are factors like time and space that make these benefits possible. The internet offers the same gratifications as traditional media, but with the added advantage of being accessible at any time and from any location (Tandoc & Johnson, 2016). As a result, traditional print media must adapt by incorporating social media platforms to complement and coexist with their print formats.

## METHODOLOGY

This research makes use of content analysis and the probability sampling method. A consecutive day sampling (used to select a convenience sample of seven or more consecutive days) was used to produce a study sample. Posts of ThisDay, Vanguard and Punch newspapers on X pages from Monday 9<sup>th</sup> to Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> of September 2019 and Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> to Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> of June 2024 were selected and their contents analysed. The coding procedure, adapted from Kim, Jang, Kim and Wan (2018), throws more light on this process.

### Coding Procedure

This research will study the three selected traditional print media for:

- I. X activity: number of posts produced for one week.
- II. Number of followers: for the reach of posts.
- III. News Agenda on X using codes (politics, entertainment, security, health and education, sports, religion, business, and international news).
- IV. Use of X: information sharing/information gathering.
- V. X repost function (for sharing information).
- VI. Use of hashtag (for sharing information).

The research also coded posts and the X pages for topics and contents of the posts, information gathering use, information sharing use and the number of repeated posts. Two coders explored each post from the period given and identified the posts based on the objective of this study. The inter-coder reliability was calculated using Holst's formula for inter-coder reliability and  $r$  83%.

## RESULTS, DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

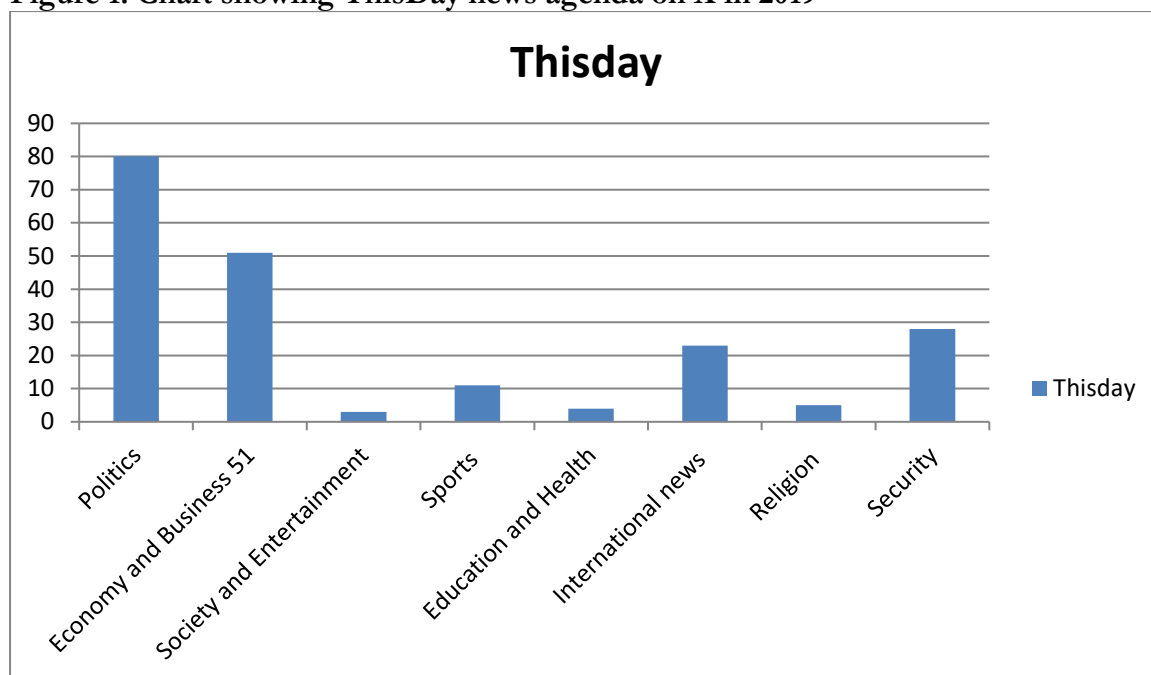
Results were presented using frequency and a bar chart, and then subsequently analysed.

### ThisDay newspaper

**Table 1: X contents selected and coded from Monday, 9th to Sunday, 15th September 2019.**

Number of posts for the period under consideration	186
Number of followers	1.1 million
Number of repeated posts	20
Use of page for advertisement	None
Repost function	None
Use of hashtags	None
Information gathering	None
Information sharing	Yes, information on the handle was shared via posts that redirect to the webpage of the newspaper

**Figure 1: Chart showing ThisDay news agenda on X in 2019**

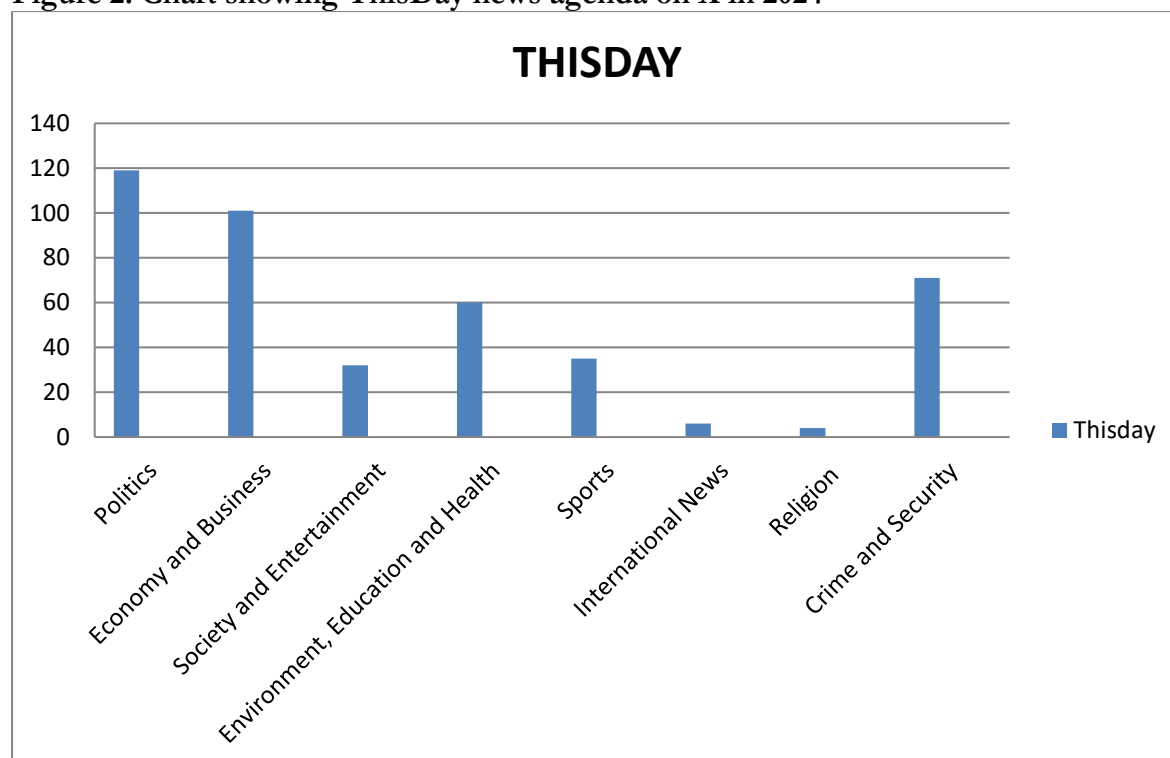


From Figure 1, it can be deduced that politics is the most popular topic that ThisDay newspapers post about on their X page, and society and entertainment are the least posted about topics.

**Table 2: Table showing X contents that were selected and coded from Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> to Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> June 2024**

Number of posts for the period under consideration	448
Number of followers	1.7 million
Use of hashtags	None
Repost function	None
Use of page for advertisement	None
Information gathering	None
Information sharing	Yes, information on the handle was shared via posts that redirect to the webpage of the newspaper
Number of repeated posts	30



**Figure 2: Chart showing ThisDay news agenda on X in 2024**

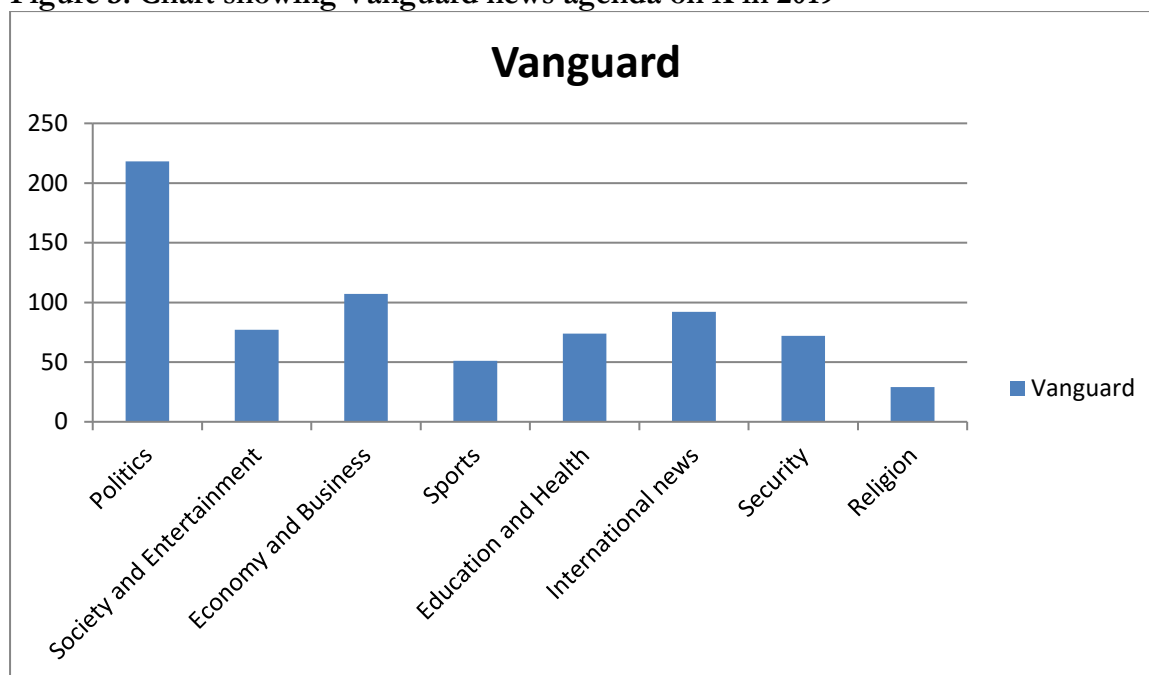
From Figure 2, it can be deduced that politics is the most popular topic that ThisDay newspapers post about on their X page, and religion is the least posted about topic. The least posted about topic switched to religion from society and entertainment in five years.

### Vanguard newspaper

**Table 3: X contents selected and coded from Monday, 9th to Sunday, 15th September 2019.**

Number of followers	2.1 million
Number of posts for the period studied	885
Repost function	none
Use of page for advertisement	none
Use of hashtags	yes, #vanguardnews was always added every post about news or information and #10ThingsAboutChimamanda was used to create awareness and start a trend about the author Chimamanda Adiche
Information gathering	none
Information sharing	yes, all posts redirect to the webpage of Vanguard newspapers
Number of repeated posts	150

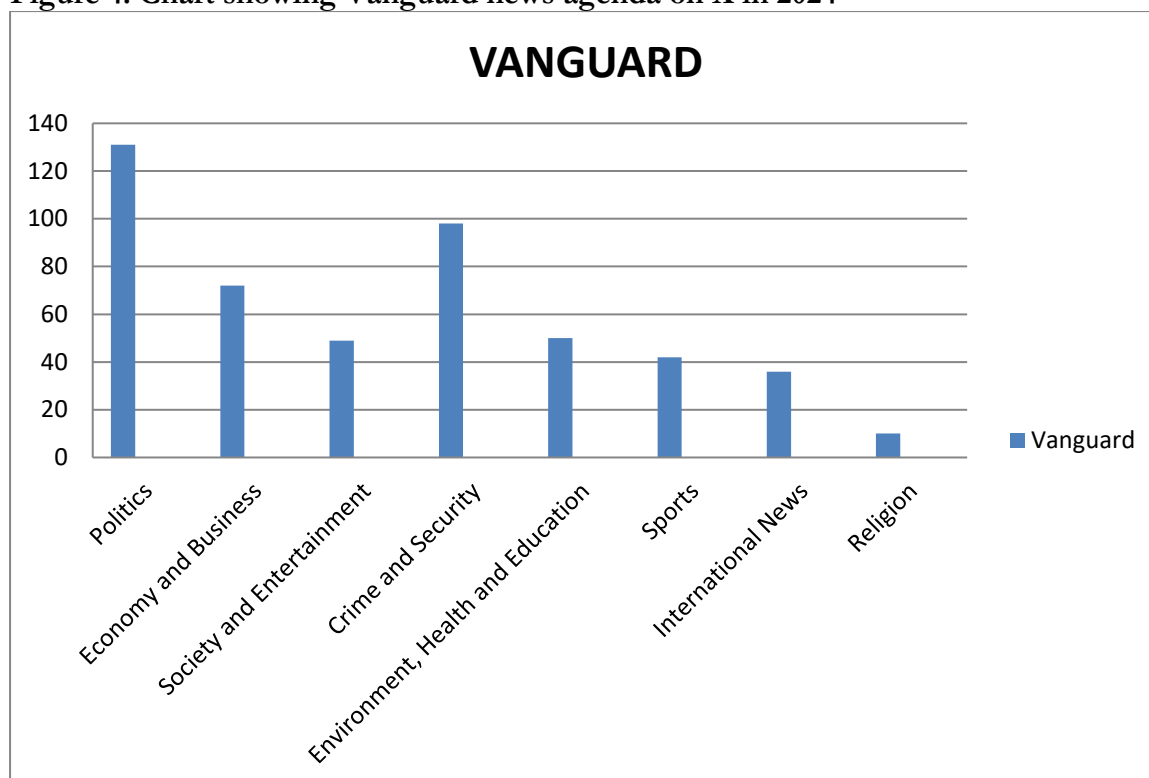
**Figure 3: Chart showing Vanguard news agenda on X in 2019**



From Figure 3, it can be deduced that politics is the most popular topic that Vanguard newspapers post about on their X page, and religion is the least posted about topic.

**Table 4: X contents selected and coded from Sunday, 23rd to Saturday, 29th June 2024.**

Number of posts for the period under consideration	513
Number of followers	4.7 million
Repost function	None
Use of hashtags	None
Use of page for advertisement	None
Information gathering	None
Information sharing:	Yes, some information on the handle was shared via posts that redirect to the webpage of the newspaper. However, they post videos on their X account that are not linked to their website, they also post full stories (the increase in maximum word count for verified accounts has made this possible) not linked to their website. Outside of these, they post their daily newspaper front page, political cartoons, and advertise the Vanguard news app store
Number of repeated posts	25

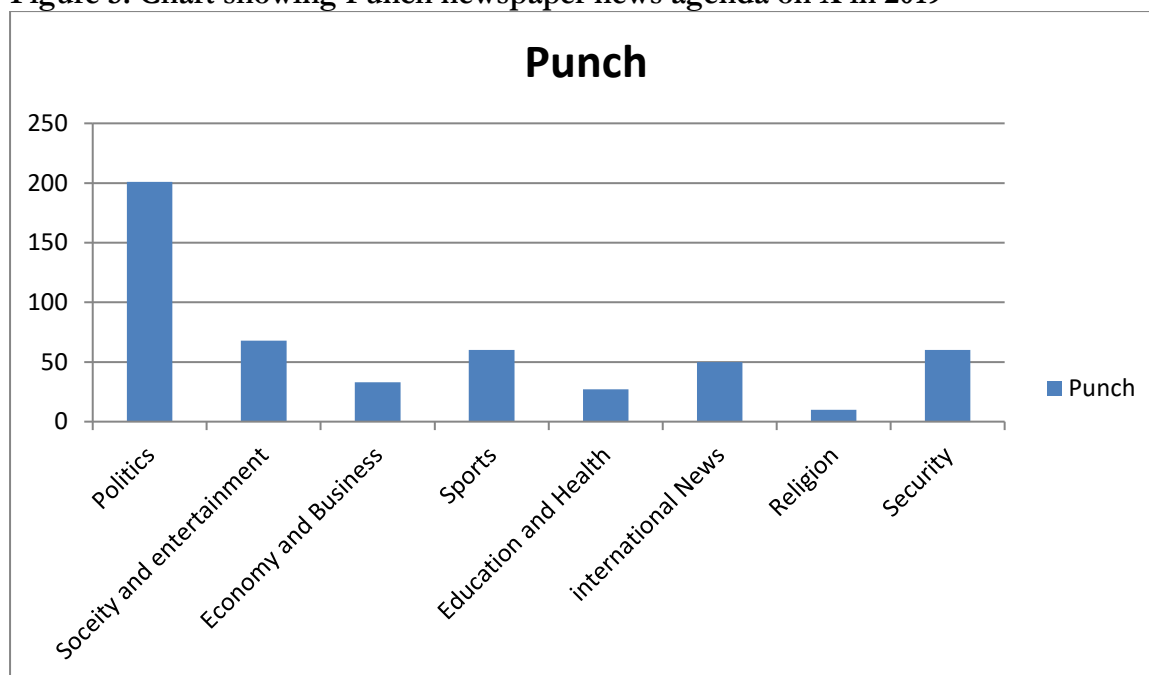
**Figure 4: Chart showing Vanguard news agenda on X in 2024**

From Figure 4, it can be deduced that politics is the most popular topic that Vanguard newspapers post about on their X page and religion is the least posted about topic. The most popular and least popular topics stayed the same as it was five years ago.

### Punch newspaper

**Table 5: X contents selected and coded from Monday, 9th to Sunday, 15th September 2019.**

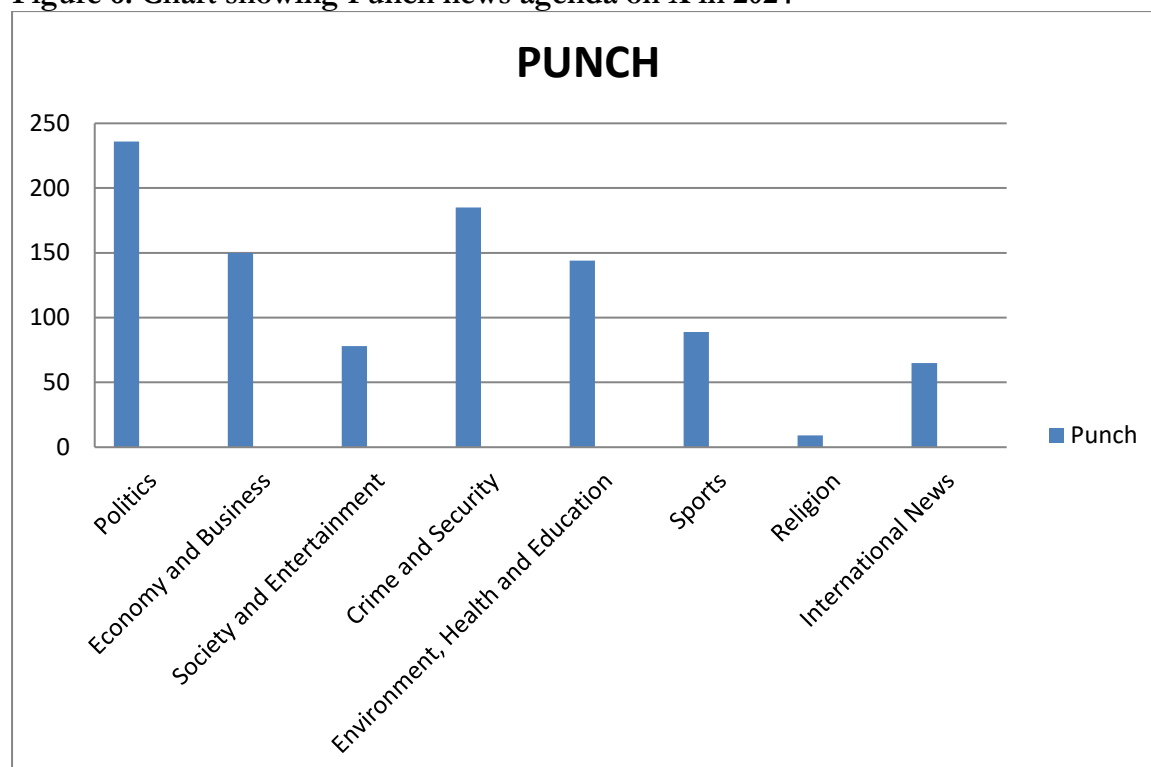
Number of followers	2.5 million
Number of posts for the period under review	605
Repost function	None
Use of hashtags	Used popular trending hashtags to share information, for example, #AtikuIsComing, #XenophobicAttacks, #MondayMotivation and so on
Use of page for advertisement	None
Information gathering	Engaged with X followers and users, for example, they were asked to give captions to the cartoon of the day
Information sharing	Actively engaged and shared information with users and followers, for example, some trending and important events were live-posted. They actively engaged in sharing information about trending topics, not all posts direct to a webpage, and they start each day with a picture showing headline/cover page of their print newspaper
Number of repeated posts	51

**Figure 5: Chart showing Punch newspaper news agenda on X in 2019**

From Figure 5, it can be deduced that politics is the most popular topic that Punch newspapers post about on their X page and religion is the least posted about topic.

**Table 6: X contents selected and coded from Sunday 23rd to Saturday 23rd June 2024.**

Number of posts for the period under consideration	1034
Number of followers	6.7 million
Use of hashtags	none
Repost function	yes, they repost the Punch Media foundation posts
Use of page for advertisement	yes, they advertise businesses under the title “branded content” on their page as business ads.
Information gathering	yes, followers who participate and share in their interactive programming
Information sharing	yes, some information on the handle was shared via posts that redirect to the webpage of the newspaper. They also post videos and full stories on their accounts that are not linked to their website. They post daily newspaper front page and Punch sports extra on their account. They post political cartoons on their page that addresses national issues. They host/post serialised/live-streaming content on their page. They also post videos (with episodes) discussing key issues, like a vlog on their page. These programmes discuss trending issues and followers tune into the live-streaming and participate in real time. Examples of these programmes are: The Round Table, So This Happened and The Lounge
Number of repeated posts	78

**Figure 6: Chart showing Punch news agenda on X in 2024**

From Figure 6, it can be deduced that politics is the most popular topic that Vanguard newspapers post about on their X page, and religion is the least posted about topic. Same as it was five years ago.

## DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Concerning objective one and the frequency of posts of traditional newspapers online, a total of 1676 posts in 2019 and 1995 in 2024 from three major newspapers in Nigeria were studied for this research. Their level of daily activities on X varied widely. Relating to the organisations X feed, in 2019 Vanguard newspapers posted the most, with 885 posts within the period under study, followed by Punch newspapers with 605 posts and ThisDay newspaper with 186 posts. This shows that Vanguard newspapers have more activities on X. For the number of followers and measure of audience reach on X, Punch newspapers have the most number of users following them on X with 2.5 million, followed by Vanguard newspapers with 2.1 million and Thisday newspapers with 1.1 million. This indicates that Punch newspapers have more reach and spread of its posts and posts on X.

While in 2024, Punch newspaper posted the most with 1034 posts and Vanguard, which had more posts when reviewed in 2019, had fewer posts in the period reviewed in 2024 with 513. The last is Thisday with 448 posts. This shows that Punch had more activities on X than Vanguard and Thisday. Overall, both Punch and Thisday increased their number of posts, while Vanguard was reduced. By 2024, Punch had grown its followership by over 4 million followers to 6.7 million followers, the highest recorded growth. Vanguard grew to 4.7 million, and Thisday grew to 1.7 million followers. This shows that Punch in 2024 still had the highest number of followers and has more reach and spread than Thisday and Vanguard on X. Their growth in followership can be tied to

their active use of their X platform over the course of the four years under review.

For objective two on news agenda on X, it is quite like what is obtained in the print media. In 2019, the top five topics for Thisday were politics, economy and business, international news, sports and security; for Vanguard, the top five were politics, economy and business, international news, society and entertainment, and education and health; finally for Punch, the top five were politics, society and entertainment, sports, international news, and security. While, in 2024, the top five topics for Thisday are politics, economy and business, crime and security, environment, education and health, and sports; for Vanguard, the top five are, politics, crime and security, economy and business, society and entertainment and environment, health and education; finally, for Punch, the top five are politics, crime and security, economy and business, environment, health and education, and sports. Crime was added to security as a topic, and environment was also added to health and education as a topic. This was done to broaden the scope of these topics and ensure those issues are well-placed and captured. This addition is also the reason those topics featured more in 2024. The news agenda and topics show that the users on X and the readers of these newspapers get similar news.

For objective three on sharing and gathering information, which seeks to evaluate how these news outlets use X, the function X serves (that is if X is another form of marketing and distribution, a tool for newsgathering), if it is a means of two-way communication with the audience, or if it is a means of adding a new service for users – curation – helping followers know what content elsewhere on web might interest them (Pew Research Centre, 2011). In general, it was observed that the major newspapers studied used X to direct audiences to web content that the news organisation has produced and posted online; the newspapers were not using X in more interactive ways, or as a reporting tool (to help inform a story or to provide feedback). Only Punch newspapers asked users for information (cartoon captions) on their X page; this was the only form of interaction observed. Also, only Punch newspaper used their X page as a reporting tool to break stories, live post events and deploy hashtags that corresponded with trending events and topics.

Punch has also moved into using their X page to host online serialised videos like vlogs, which discuss trending topics. They also host live video programming that audiences can participate in. Between 2019 and 2024, Punch has continuously improved on how they use X, and when the platform rebranded to X and gave users and organisations more opportunities to use the platform, Punch adapted their content to maximise those opportunities. That is why Punch newspaper, which has more engagement with users, has the highest number of followers in both 2019 and 2024. Both Thisday and Vanguard showed slight improvement in how they use this platform from 2019 to 2024; the only improvement was in their number of followers, and for Thisday, their number of posts. In the case of Vanguard, their only improvement was in posting full stories and videos on their platform that were not linked to their website; however, there was a decrease in how they used the platform, fewer posts and no reposts compared to what was obtainable in 2019.

It was observed that the newspapers studied primarily used X to move information and push content to users. X functions for them as an RSS feed or headline service for news consumers, with links driving traffic to the newspapers' websites. According to the Pew Research Centre (2011), this behaviour

resembles the early days of the web, when news organisations, worried about losing audiences, rarely linked to content outside their domain. One frequent practice on X is reposting, which is passing along an interesting post that originated elsewhere. In theory, reposting would allow news organisations to forward another user's post to their audience; it also has the potential to introduce new voices and current ideas from outside the news organisation. It can also expand the reporting on a given topic through the inclusion of other sources. This is keeping in line with the Diffusion of Innovation, Media Diffusion and Niche theories that support media organisations embracing recent technologies to improve and support their media activities.

On X, reposting is a form of curation and recommendation, and it helps to spread information very quickly (Pew Research Centre, 2011). In general, the newspapers studied on X rarely engaged in reposting and usually, when they do, the reposts do not originate outside the news organisation. In 2019, only Vanguard reposted posts within the period studied, a total of 16 reposts compared to 885 actual posts, and the reposts were from Allure magazine of the Vanguard newspapers. In 2024, only Punch reposted a couple of posts from the Punch Media Foundation; the posts reposted were fewer than 10 from the entire 1034 posts within the period reviewed.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This research examined 1676 posts from 9th to 15th September 2019 and 1995 posts from June 23rd to 29th 2024, revealing that traditional print media in Nigeria use X in limited ways, primarily as an added means to disseminate their own material, except for Punch, which has better utilisation of the platform. Sharing of other content and engagement with X users and followers is usually rare. The newspapers had a similar focus on their X activity. They were less likely to use X as a reporting tool or to curate or recommend information that originated elsewhere.

With X being recently modelled as a service, which is concerned with providing users with what they are looking for, even if it comes from someone else carrying more weight, it will be expected that they use X better and actively. There is room for improvement in how they use X to increase, spread and gather information, engage with users and followers to improve information reach. The recommendations of this research are that:

- 1) The frequency with which they post needs to increase, as this will improve their reach and engage their users and followers more.
- 2) They should consider their online presence and social media platforms as an extension of their offline operations and improve their offline operations and their newspaper.
- 3) Also, with Twitter rebranded as X and with all the improvements that have been made to allow for broader use, generating additional revenues should also be a focus for these newspapers that use the platform.

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