

©IDOSR PUBLICATIONS

International Digital Organization for Scientific Research
IDOSR JOURNAL OF ARTS AND MANAGEMENT 2(2): 1-11, 2017.

ISSN: 2550-7974

**Empirical Justification for the Demise of
Magazines in Contemporary Nigeria**

¹Chinelo Edith Ude-Akpeh and ²Comfort Ukwela Ojoma

¹ Department of Television Journalism NTA Television College, Jos (affiliated to Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria)

² Department of Television Production NTA Television College, Jos (affiliated to Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria)

Email: neloudeakpeh@gmail.com; comfortukwela@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This is a qualitative paper, which provided empirical justification for the demise of magazines in the contemporary Nigeria. The study was premised on the background of the opportunities and threats of the new information age vis-a-viz the orthodox media of communication. Anchored on the Uses and Gratification theory, the study among other things aimed at ascertaining the current readership status of news magazines in Nigeria, the negative effects of the internet on magazine production and circulation, and the way forward for the magazine industries. Concepts bothering on the topic were dialectically x-rayed. The results of the study showed that the circulation and readership of news magazine in Nigeria are in recession. The paper suggested interconnection and synergy with the internet as a way forward.

Keywords: Magazines, empirical, media, demise and Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Magazine, as one of the genre of mass communication, belongs to the print media class. Generally, both the magazine and the newspaper are in the category of the print media class and therefore can be referred to the “eyes” media because they are read rather than being watched (as in television), or listened to (radio) [1].

According to Aliede (2003) [2], Magazine is such a wholesome aesthetic package that contains significant, current and interesting stories, statements, events, issues, occurrences, views, and actions that are not only news worthy but are directly and

indirectly touching people's lives and activities in the society. Unlike the newspapers, magazines are mostly published at weekly, bi-monthly, monthly, and quarterly intervals. Perhaps, this informs why Aliede (2007, p.17) [3] defines magazine as "a bound printed publication issued at weekly intervals which presents information in words, often supplemented with pictures."

The role of magazine as one of the major widely utilized arm of the mass media, is indispensable and crucial to the overall sustenance and upward growth and advancement of the various sectors of human activities. Daramola, J. O. (2008) [4] itemized these roles to include: "encompass policies, economy, social, sports, science and technology, culture, domestics and international relations, communication, health and education."

Unarguably, for these roles to be seen and felt as being performed in the society, the magazine must be available and widely read by the audience. Thus, the availability of magazines on the news-stand and the willingness of the people to sustain the magazine production through regular purchase and "**consumption**" are key factors that determine the suitability of the functions of the magazine in the society.

In today's contemporary Nigeria, magazine industry appears to be declining or dying. Daranda, O. (2008) [5]. corroborate the foregoing view and states: "In the time past, news magazines were the toast of people who were desirous of in-depth and accurate reportage. Today, there has been however a sudden twist of fate based on a number of factors leading to gradual decline in the readership of magazines".

It is against the above background that this paper tends to provide empirical justifications for the demise of the magazine in contemporary Nigeria. The paper aims at achieving the understated objectives:

- Ascertain the place of the magazine in the mass media industry;
- Determine the present readership status of the magazine as a mass media genre;
- Find out the factors responsible for the demise of magazines in contemporary Nigeria;
- Proffer remedies to the dwindling fortune of the magazine industry in Nigeria.

THE PROBLEM

It is unarguable that the mass media play significant role in the society. It is equally undisputable that consequent upon the significant roles the mass media play, as agenda setting, watchdog of the society, status conferral, cultural transmission, among others, they are indispensable institutions in the society. This perhaps accounts for why the one time American president, Thomas Jefferson prefers to have the press than a government [6].

However, for the media to be seen and felt as playing the aforementioned roles, they must not exist in vacuum. The mass media institutions must be available and the public whom the media exist for must patronize the media. For magazines, as a channel of mass communication, to contribute its quota in the overall functions of the media in the society, the magazine have to be available on the news-stand and the public must sustain them by purchasing and consuming/reading their contents.

When one of the South Africa News Magazines, Hackwriters shot down production, the reason the editor-in-chief gave the public was “**Low sales**” Edwards, T. (1998) [7]. Therefore, declining readership is a serious issue in the magazine and newspaper industries.

To this end, this study intends to ascertain the current statistics of magazine readership in Nigeria. It also intends to ascertain the significant effect of the readership trend of magazines on the magazine industry in Nigeria. These are the problems this study intends to unravel.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Theory chosen for this study is the Uses and Gratification. It is one of the mass media effects theories and specifically "depends on the rate of the media effect an individual is susceptible to acquire", (McQuail, 2005) [8]. This is a theory that focuses on the audience and explains why and how people adhere to particular media to satisfy some specific needs. That is to say, that Uses and Gratification theory looks at what people do with the media as against what media does to the people.

According to Blumler and Katz (1974) cited in Edwards, T. (1998) [9] “There is no merely one way that the populace uses media instead, they believe that media consumers can

choose the influence media has on them as well as the idea that users choose media alternatives merely as means to an end". It further contained that the theory takes out the possibility that the media can have an unconscious influence over our lives and how we view the world.

Other studies in the area by Ekwehe, S. (1989). B McBride, S. et al (1980), Ndolo, I.S. (2005), Nielson, A.C. (2015) and Okunna, S.C. (1999) [10],[11],[12],[13],[14],all proved that media/newspaper consumption is as a result of the gains or benefits derived from them. Ownership significantly influences media content and level of relevance. Consumers go for a particular medium because of what it can offer in terms of its content, relevance, etc.

Therefore, the theory relates to this topic of study: The Demise Magazines in Contemporary Nigeria. Speaking more on this, Onanuga, B.(2014) [15]. says: "This theory is purely audience-centered and address needs like surveillance, excitement, guidance, relaxation, tension release, social integration, entertainment, escape, identity, socialization and information acquisition".

It is a functional approach to determine the cause of a positive and negative effect of mass media, practice and roles. Therefore,uses and Gratification theory is suitable for this work.

MAGAZINE INDUSTRY - HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Oyewole, N. (2014) [16], explains that the word "**Magazine**" can be traced back to 1583 and it comes from the Arabic word "**Makhasin**", meaning storehouse or repository for goods or merchandise. According to Randle, Q. (2001) [17], when in the early 1700s the printed periodicals began to appear, they came to be called magazines because they were in a sense portable storehouse or repository of information and entertainment. In his own explanation, Uche (2014) [18] avers:

Magazines are not daily publication; they are published weekly, monthly, bi-monthly, or quarterly. Magazines are attractive and appealing because of their high production quality - they came in colourful and glossy paperbacks. Magazines are the gloss and the glitter of the print media

Ndolo (2005) [12] traced the history of magazine industries in Nigeria to the *DRUM* published in 1954. But according to Daramola (2008) [4], the first publication in Nigeria to be referred to as a magazine was a government periodical titled, the *Nigeria Gassette*, which was established in 1900. Daramola (2008) [4], explains further that after the adoption of the Richards constitution in 1947, the British colonial government in Nigeria published magazines such as the *Nigerian Review* and the *Children Own* paper.

In the 1960s, Daily Times marketed the *Drum and the Spear Magazines* in Nigeria, while in the 1970s, Chris Okolie published *Newsbreed* magazine [4].

Akinfeleye (2009) [1], reported that it was in the mid 1980s, when *Newswatch* was established by Messrs Dele Giwa, Ray Ekpu, Yakubu Muhammed and Dan Agbase, that magazine started developing large readership in Nigeria. Commenting on the large readership of the *Newswatch* magazine, Uche (2014) [12], states: "The readership which they (the founding editors of *Newswatch*) have earned overtime as newspapers editors took interest in their magazine and this provided large audience for the magazine, and thus the magazine cultures became a part of the print media development in Nigeria".

The large readership encouraged the springing up of such other magazines as the *Tell*, *The News*, *The Source*, *The Week*, *The Concord*, and some other specialized magazines, concentrating on different areas of interest (example fashion)

MAGAZINES AND THE NEW INFORMATION AGE

The effect of globalization is all encompassing. There is hardly any area of life that globalization has not impacted, either positively or negatively. For instance, when Marshall McLuhan (1964), cited in McBride et al. (1980) [11], coined the concept of the "**global village**", he meant the speed with which information spread across the world. Relating this to *The News* magazine, which is published perhaps weekly, the information which magazines want to pass weekly has already been reported, used and overused by the daily papers, radios, televisions and the new media.

To this extent, weekly magazines must really dig deep to be able to publish something that can grab the attention of the public. And it must be fresh. The perspective must be fresh and so compelling to force the reader to cough out money to buy the stuff. If you don't have such great perspectives for news that is not ordinary, that must be extraordinary, then you have no chance.

The news magazine has found itself in the era of new information age and the foregoing encumbrances have caused the dwindling readership.

DECLINING READERSHIP OF NEWSMAGAZINES

Oyewole (2014) [16] avers that in the time past, newsmagazines were the toasts of people who were desirous of in-depth and accurate reportage. Today, there has however been a sudden twist of fate based on a number of factors leading to gradual decline in the readership of news magazines. Authorities who commented further on this development agreed that the advent of the internet and social networking platforms as well as other factors have indeed shrunk magazines' reading populace.

According to Bayo Onanuga, Editor-in-Chief/Managing Director of The News magazine and PM News newspaper (cited in Dare, 2010) [6], the declining readership of magazines copies cannot be discussed in isolation of newspapers copies. This is because whatever happened to the magazine also affects the newspapers since both are print media. Onanuga noted that the challenges of readership can be viewed from economic perspective wherein the media practitioners have been stripped off their exclusive stories due to the advent of internet and online journalism. He notes:

From the economic perspective, to a large extent, what we called news today has indeed been democratized. Virtually everybody is now a publisher of news and this is made possible with the advent of the internet. And to the embarrassment of media houses, you will discover that we are not the ones who break the news anymore, rather news are broken through social media platforms.

It is no longer news that when media organizations are to break the news on the outbreak of a development or event surrounding a newsmaker, we do quote from Facebook accounts and twitter handles.

Furthermore, Ononuga informs that most organization, within and outside Nigeria, have their presence on the internet through which they post issues and developments from time to time.

He concluded:

So what we are going through today is that, as practitioners in the media industry, we no longer have monopoly of news. We no longer determine when to post news reports because a whole of people out there now have unrestricted access to news and information through different platforms,

While supporting Onanuga's view, Segun Elijah, Assistant Editor, National Standard Magazine(in Dare, 2010) [6], said modern trend of journalism had actually shifted attention away from the hardcore media. "Information is no longer a commodity people will be rushing to buy. This is because people have actually got all the information they needed about a particular development either from the newspapers or internet. So, if what the magazines are writing at the end of the week are the same issues that have been over-flogged, nobody will be willing to buy the magazines. Also speaking on the development, one of the founders of the defunct Newswatch magazine, Ray Ekpu(in Akinfeleye, 2009) [1], said there is no denying the fact that the advent of online journalism has brought a shrank into the readership of newsmagazines copies. This he described as generational shift, saying the younger generations of Nigerians who are in tune with modern electronic gadgets have found solace in online news reports which invariably is at the detriment of the traditional news media.

Today, there are all kinds of media and this has actually restricted many people who hitherto would have loved to read newspapers and magazines hard-copies from doing so. Except among the older generation themselves, the print media are no longer popular among the younger ones [1].

He however identified other factors such as poor quality of education being dished out in the schools, poor income of an average Nigerian who may desire to buy and read news copies as well as the gradual decline in the quality of editorial contents in the magazines. "The decline also has to do with the kind of education the kids are receiving. The type of education the young people are exposed to donot encourage them to read. It was unlike our days when students were made to read comprehensions and passages. What the younger people do now is to do text messages and pinging. There is nothing wrong in pinging and texting but they also should be reading text books, novels and newspapers.

Another area of challenge is the cost of circulating the newsmagazines:

The circulating network has always been a challenge for many magazine outfits. A lot of publications abroad have in fact suffered from this. I know

a bit about the NEWSWEEK magazine which is a current affairs magazine in US. The publication has to completely shut down and moved to online. Though someone else has taken over now and there is plan being put in place to restructure and return to printing hard copies. The fact couldn't be erased that the news medium was once shut down simply because it can't meet its own cost of distribution,he said.

Randle (2001) carried a survey on declining readership of magazine in London. The paper provides an overview of the positive and negative effects of new mass media introductions on the magazine publishing industry from an historical perspective. Randle (2001) argues that since the early 1990 the trends of the new media both displacing magazines and spurring magazine, sales and introductions are evident through the introduction of feature films, sound recordings, radio, television, computers and the World Wide Web. According to Randle (2001) [17], New Media have the tendency to both displace magazines, but also cause increasing specialization. The overriding goal of the paper is to provide a perspective for magazine publishers and scholars as they address the increasing penetration of the World Wide Web.

REMEDY AND CONCLUSION

The print market is in a serious recession because of the new information age. In this age of internet, wireless telephones and all kinds of things exist in the age that people can actually read their papers in electronic form. Therefore, there is the tendency that they will not patronize the printed ones anymore.

Again, economic recession has equally caused decline in the readership and circulation of magazines and other printed materials. Who will buy the books, the newspapers, the magazines when people only contemplate about their lives?

However, for news magazines to survive this era of new information age there will be a lot of interconnection. Reporting, and publishing business has to change because of new technology.

Any publication worth its name must have an online version. For example, there are www.thenewsafrika.com and www.pmnewsnigeria.com so we are on the online form. New magazines must be able to reach the younger people through the social media (Facebook, Twitter and some other social media platforms).

Prospective magazine publishers should do research before they venture into it. Any news magazine coming up should do its study very well, to know what the people out there really want to read. It is a difficult time out there because of the erosion of over a decade of the purchasing power of Nigerians in the market for printed materials, not just for newspapers or magazines. In fact, it is a very difficult business to do. If one treads carefully and studies the market very well, one should also watch one's circulation very well because that is where one loses a lot of money.

REFERENCES

1. Akinfeleye, R. (2009). Walking a Tight Rope- Declining Newspaper Readership. Nigeria *ThisDay Newspaper* June 29th
2. Aliede, J. E. (2003). Media Consumption Patterns of selected Urbanites, Ruralites and Ruralites in Nigeria, In I.E. Nwosu (ed). *The Nigerian Journal of Communication* Vol. No. 2, August, Enugu: Prime Targets Ltd.
3. Aliede, J. E. (2007). An Evaluation of Federal Government's withdrawal from Newspaper ownership and the Implication for National Development, In I.E. Nwosu, Nkem Fab-Ukozor and L.C. Nwodu (Eds), *Communication for sustainable Human Development – A Multi Perspectival Approach* pp. 230-246 Enugu-ACCE.
4. Daramola, J. O. and Osomar, V.C. and Oluwagbemi, O. O. (2008). *A Grid-Based Framework for Pervasive Healthcare using Wireless Sensor Networks: A Case for Developing Nation*. Asian Journal of Information Technology, 7
5. Daranda, O. (2008). Public Petition and Investigations. Lagos: *Lethal Publications*
6. Dare, S. (2010), The Role of citizen Journal in Nigeria, A case study of Sahara Reporters, *Reuters Institution for the study of Journalism*, London: University of Oxford.
7. Edwards, T. (1998). Lyrics to the Rhythm: *The Uses and Gratifications of Rap Music for African American Teenagers*. Thesis (Ph.D) Lexington.
8. McQuail, D. (2005), *McQuails Mass Communication Theory (5th Ed.)* London: Wadsworth Cengage Publishers
9. Ekenyere, M.M.G. (2009). "The untold story of Distributing Newspapers and Magazines in Nigeria" www.nairaland.com/262904/w-stories
10. Ekwehe, S. (1989). Evolution of the Print Media: The African Experience. In Onuorah E. Nwuneli (ed) *Mass Communication in Nigeria. A Book of Readings*. PP 5-32, Enugu: *Fourth Dimension Publishers*.

11. McBride, S. et al (1980), *Many Voices, one world*, New York: Unesco.
12. Ndolo, I.S. (2005), *Mass media Systems and Society*: Enugu; Rhyce-Kerex Publisher
13. Nielson, A.C. (2015). Newspapers and Magazines Comparatives for Nielsons National Readership Survey, 2014 <http://www.nielson.com/n2/en/>. Accessed 22/02/2016.
14. Okunna, S.C. (1999). *Introduction to Mass Communication* Enugu: New Generation Ventures Ltd.
15. Onanuga, B.(2014). News Magazines in Nigeria are endangered www.pmnewsnigeria.com/.../interrian-news-magazines-in-nigeria accessed 22/02/2016.
16. Oyewole, N. (2014), when Stakeholders lamented Declining Readership of Magazines www.dailytrust.com accessed 22/02/2016
17. Randle, Q. (2001). A Historical Overview of the Effects of New Mass Media Introductions on Magazine Publishing During the 20th Century. *Peer-Review Journal*, vol. 6 No. 9. firstmonday.org/article/view=188512
18. Uche, L. (2014). Magazine Readership in Nigeria - Issues and challenges, <http://www.hackwriters.ng.org>.