

## **Trends, challenges and prospects of newsmagazines publishing in Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

This paper focused trends/history, challenges and prospects of newsmagazines publishing in Nigeria. It is a theoretical work as it reviewed related literature on issues concerning Newsmagazines. It revealed that newsmagazines faces a serious shakeout since the emergence of digital media, internet and the Web; that the problems militating newsmagazines include over depended on revenue from advertising, the process of reaching new readers and keeping the old ones, process of linking to online channels, price of raw materials and unfavorable government policy; that despite the emergence of digital media, many readers believed that newsmagazines form parts of delicious sources of reading, that they contains current information on the events that took place within the week, give pure report of occurrence as happen, contain original information of the investigation on the issue at hand, generate wealth, create employment, provide GDP for a country , can influence societies, are creative, are a luxury and entertaining. It concluded that despite the shakeout by the digital era, the newsmagazine will continue to be relevant but needs to have strong editorial formula, be authoritative, give pure and original reportage on issues devoid of fake news to remain relevance. Hence the new did not come to kill the old, but to live side by side.

**Keywords:** Newsmagazines, trends, history, publishing, challenges, prospects, Nigeria

### **Introduction**

Great discussion has been made about the print media crisis – the decreasing circulation, the shrinking advertising market, and the fierce competition with other media for people's attention, first with TV and cable TV and now with the Web, according to Turow (2003), as reported by Sorg (2010). But very little of this debate takes magazines into consideration, whereas newspapers are the main focus of many academic studies. Notwithstanding, newsmagazines are facing the challenges similar to newspapers, and may not survive the new conditions imposed by the digital era.

Since the introduction of internet and the Web, the society is seeing them as more or less anachronism in the new media landscape. Now the world leading newsmagazines like *Newsweek*, *US News*

and *World Report* are now experiencing nose divining in demand, all hands must be on desks to save that alarming ugly situation (Chucks & Chucks, 2020).

It is very necessary to identify the problems and possibly proffer solution all things being equal .In the light of aforementioned, this paper was set to examine the trend, history, challenges and prospects of newsmagazines publishing in Nigeria.

According to Johnson and Prijatel (1999), the term “magazine” – from Arabic words *makhazin* means “warehouse, storehouse”. Etymoline.com stated that in 1580s, magazine was seen as a warehouse, place for storing goods, especially military ammunition. French *magasin*, Italian *magazzino* to Arabic *makhazin*, and Spanish *almacen* all refer to magazines as military store house or military information storehouse. In fact, they are conglomerate of

information hubs. Therefore, their importance in the society cannot be over emphasized. The Online etymology dictionary defined newsmagazine as a “periodical publications containing miscellaneous writings photographs and possibly current news. “While Harper (2021) sees it as a publication that is issued periodically usually bound in a paper cover and contains essays, stories, poems, etc.by many writers, and often photograph and drawings, frequently specializing in a particular subject or area such as hobbies, news, or sports (www.etyonline.com).

English dictionary online (2005) defined newsmagazine as a typed, printed, and published piece of paper, commentaries that are devoted to reports current events; usually published weekly. Anders (2009) said that Newsmagazines are chiefly devoted to summarizing and analyzing news. They are more or less like newspapers but different in content and periodicity (frequency). They publish current and original reports of an events, they report pure information of events as it happened and give analytical, interpretive and condensed information about the occurrences within the week.

They are a general interest magazines devoted to the publication of news and editorial comment, usually on a wide range of subjects, from politics to entertainment. Most news magazines are published weekly and sold at newsstands, bookstores and by subscription (Reitz, 2002).

The invention of printing press brought about changes in the entire face and state of things throughout the world publishing. Before the invention of the printing press, books had to be painstakingly copied by hand. When Johannes Gutenberg invented the printing press in 1440, he created a way for knowledge to be mass produced for larger circulation for the first

time in human history. After the printing press became prevalent in Europe, early publishers began to conceptualize the magazine. The forerunners of the familiar’s modern magazine first appeared during the 17<sup>th</sup> century in the form of brochures, pamphlets, and almanacs. It was published in Germany. The success of this publication led to the introduction of magazines across the Europe. During the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, publishers founded several different types of periodicals aimed at diverse audiences, including the elite and women. The 1830s brought about the increase of mass circulation of magazines in the United States of America. Publishers began offering less expensive magazines to a wider audience, promoting greater consumption of the print media. The introduction of newsmagazines and picture magazines dramatically changed the U.S. magazine industry during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Today, newsmagazines such as *Time* and *Newsweek* continue to dominate the magazine industry in the US (<https://open.lib.umn.edu/mediaandculture/chapter/5-2-history-of-magazine-publishing>).

Germany, France and the Netherlands lead the way In England, three essay periodicals were produced which set the stage for modern magazines: Daniel Defoe’s *The Review* (published 1704-13); Sir Richard Steele’s *The Tatler* (published 1709-11); and Addison and Steele’s *The Spectator* (published 1711-12). The periodicals were however published several times a week, which can be likening to nowadays newspapers. However, their content was more similar to that of modern magazines. The *Review* published opinionated essays about National and International events. The *Tatler* and *The Spectator* sought to “enliven morality with wit, and to temper wit with morality.” These two publications influenced the manners and thoughts of the day. These periodicals

represented a middle ground between the in-depth research found in books and the quick recaps found in newspapers. Which set a stage for the idea and development of the modern newsmagazine. (Leticia, 2010).

### **History of press and newsmagazines in Nigeria**

The history of press in Nigeria dated back to 3 December 1859, when one of the early European missionaries, Rev Henry Townsend, established a printing press on which Africa's first and oldest vernacular magazine *IWE IROHIN Fun Awon Ara Egba ati Yoruba* (literally newspaper for the Egba and Yoruba). The first publication in an African language with English version later appeared then with a focus on religion and aimed at abolition of slavery, education and civil right. Thereafter, publications linked to Christianity continued to emerge, then a more politically oriented press founded by Africans made its appearance in Lagos between 1880 and 1920, providing a forum for anti-colonialists and pan Africanist opinions. Titles included the *Lagos Time*, *African Challenger*, *Lagos Observer* and *Lagos Echo*. The most radical among was the *Lagos Weekly Record*, which started in 1890 by John Payne Jackson - this was daily in nature, was more or less like newspaper (Maringues, 2001). The third of its kind was in 1980s when the Nigeria press spawned underwent some major technical and structural changes which revolutionized the press in the country, the birth of the likes of *Newswatch*, *Concord*, *Sunday Magazine*, *Tell* and later came *Oviation* magazine.

### **Genres of newsmagazines**

Over the last century, magazines have slowly moved into more specialized, fragmented groupings. The transformation from general interest to niche publications began with the popularization of television.

To survive the threat posed by the success of broadcast media, print publications worked to stand out from their competitors. Hess (2007) stressed that the fragmentation has brought about increase of magazines evidence from newspapers and magazines racks. There are different genres of newsmagazines. Example are religious groups magazines, political groups, pictures and entertainment and pulp/fiction magazines (King,2008).

#### *Religious groups*

These are newsmagazines which focus on faith. With faith at the center of many individuals' lives, it is hardly surprising that there are hundreds of magazines dedicated to religions. There are ranging from Catholic Digest, the *Jewish Kashrus*, *Shambhala Sun* for Buddhist etc. In Nigeria, there is *Women Mirror* by the Deeper Christian Life Ministry (Henry,2003).

#### *Political groups*

The political groups did not left out, they too have capitalized on the magazine industry. For instance, in America, they are two such magazines. They are the American prospect and the American conservative. (Charlie, 2009).

#### *Pulp/fiction magazines*

The genre fiction is outdated and not popular as it was in the 1930s. But it is still useful. The magazines in this genre are unique and still play important role in the industry. One of such example is *Asimov's Science Fiction* which was founded in 1939. It remains relevant to children who are developing interest in sciences. Another example is *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*. It was first launched in 1941 to raise the sights of mystery writers generally to a genuine literary form (Rantanen, 2009)

#### *Hobby and interest magazines*

These are popular classified specialized interest magazines that reflect a wide array of hobbies and interests that different individuals enjoy. One of such is *The Sports*, *Wellness (Health)*, *Cooking (Bon Appetit)* home decoration and renovation (*This Old House*), travel and geography (*National Geographic*), *Complete Sports*, *The Vogue* founded in 1892 famous in fashion, the *Spore* (Agriculture) etc. (Stebbleford,2008)

### Importance of newsmagazines

Newsmagazines as periodicals are important sources of information on diverse areas of life.. Here's a brief overview of the relevance of newsmagazines and how they impact our lives and society:

- i. *Magazines help the reader to be aware and conscious of government policies:* Magazines help the reader to be aware and conscious of government policies. Some of the magazines carry information on economy, sports, politics, cultures, and international relations, national issues etc. prevalent at a particular time. In Nigeria, for instance, *Tell* magazine carries the information about the monthly financial allocation and subvention to the local and states governments. According to Okafor (1987), human desire to know herself prompted the raise in demand to read. He further stressed that magazines form the chief instrument of communication through which the people debate problems that trouble them and their public issues. Therefore, there is no how, as a human beings, that we will not value reading of news magazine whether in a hard or electronic copy.

News magazines are very importance to the academia as it is to the general societies. This was what

prompted the indexing group of the Department of Library and Information Science in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria to start the publication of the Nigeria Magazines Index in 1989. The coverage is international in scope. This helps library users to retrieve relevant information from magazines. The index consists of alphabetically arranged subject headings with their bibliographic records such as names of people, associations, companies, institutions and places (Olorunsola, 1994, 41).

- ii. *They provide the reader with in-depth and concise information, in a portable and readable form.* In the world today, the more information you access, the better person you are. Thus, magazines are very important because they provide the reader with in-depth and concise information, in a portable and readable form. Donna (13 may, 2017). Says that, " I collect old magazines, because they give me a window into what the culture was like at certain eras in our history." Magazines offer articles, pictures, commentary, and useful perspectives about subjects the reader cares about. Some are very colorful (travel magazines for example); some are controversial (magazines about politics— some are liberal, some are conservative); and some are just for entertainment (magazines about celebrity gossip).
- iii. **They add to the GDP to the country.** Magazines are important as they belong to an industry that is called publishing which contributes to the GDP of a country. Magazines belong to a creative world. They provide jobs to the citizenry of

nation, from printers to vendors in the street and the multiplier effects is growth in the gross domestic income of a nation and improved standard of living.

### **Challenges facing newsmagazines publishing**

Newsmagazines publishing is faced with following challenges:

1. *Dependency on advertising for revenue:* According to Duffill (2015), magazines, whether online or paper, have always relied heavily on advertising as their primary source of revenue within the last decade. However, advert are being done nowadays on digital platforms which has advert effects on the printing media. While the print magazine revenue on advert is declining, the digital content is growing in revenue accumulation. This has caused loss of revenue and jobs in the sector. Duffill stressed that the concept of digital advertising is similar to that of printing advertising; the better the position, the more it costs.(www.pagelizard.com)
2. *The process of reaching out to new reader and keeping the old ones:* The magazines publishers are facing the challenges on how to reach to their readers as well as keep them as the audience are not simply responsive. Whether the audience has lost interest or they do not to pay or buy any more is a huge challenge. Even though digital magazines seem to finally be getting it right but their audience are declining too.

3. *Problem of distributing their content in digital way as much as possible:* With release of the iPad by Apple, print publishers are rushing to develop their own e-newsmagazines. The excitement around the gadget reflects the predictions that it is more probable that reader may pay for content in the new platform. Many readers may decide to subscribe and access newsmagazines in their android phones which is very convenience.

4. *Keeping up with all the online channels:* Before the rise of social media marketers, the world of online content has been piling up for years. The rapidly growing number of channels to information online continues to make it more competitive for publishers to reach and retain their target audience

Other problems of magazines publishing or press in Nigeria, according to Sherrcliff (2015) to include; high cost of printing papers, ink, tariffs and import duties, failure of government to understand what publishers do, poor transport systems, weak bookselling networks, lack of decent bookstores.

### **Way forward for Newsmagazine publishing in this era of digital media**

The following are set forth as way forward for magazines publishing in this era:

1. *Magazine should fundamental principle:* The fundamental principle on conventionalized statement expressing on how things should be done. Editorial formula is an essential part of the status of a newsmagazine, stating what sort of content is being produced and what readers can expect from it – and, ultimately, why they would buy it. Is

the newsmagazine summarizing or interpreting the week in the world? Is it presenting the various aspects of a certain concept? Is it giving heavily reported articles about the country?

2. *They should have a distinguishing quality:* Magazines should have a prominent attribute or aspect that endears readers to them, there must be something in them that will attract readership. Magazines business are so competitive nowadays so to compete with popular magazine like the new Yorker, you must be serious, like *The New Yorker*, or more strictly entertainment-oriented, like *In Style*, are hotter. And magazines of ideas – and of opposition – seem to endure in having a place at the table. The excerpt above, from the report *State of the News Media 2004*, highlights the importance of having a specialty or a distinguishable characteristic (Okrent, 2006. It can be related to a witty writing style, as it is the case of *The Week*, or to the comprehensiveness, as *The Economist*, or the presence of fiction, as *The New Yorker*. It has to be present in every issue and, in the case of writing style, in almost every article in order to be recognizable. Being half way to any of these characteristics, either style, range of coverage, and kind of content does not seem to work. One hypothesis is that, being not clear enough, these characteristics do not add to the identity of the magazine.
3. *Be excellent:* But it is obvious that not all periodicals are equally excellence; that is known for it definitive and truthful in a particular areas of reportage e.g. a magazines that is known for crime investigation or better still an authority in spots.

This question of authority is, of course, one of the chief difficulties which a magazine researcher meets. (Mott 1938, 4)

The most important one is how to be relevant and, still, particular; and how to be trusted as a content producer and curator, selecting what is important for readers.

4. *Be thorough:* Being far-reaching and original in investing news gathering goes a long way to attracts readership, being whole, absolute or reflecting on the whole range of facts was, arguably, an essential characteristic of modern newsmagazines. Original newsgathering has a high value and it has never been more necessary in the age of endless content reproduction online. Being a long or short reading, newsmagazines are, no doubt, an additional reading, after newspapers, TV and, today, the internet. Newsmagazines has other values, the aesthetic is one of them. A reader is drawn to a magazine's content and appearance for a variety of reasons: aesthetic, pragmatic, whimsical, sensational, or ideological. (Johnson and Prijatelj, 1999, 55).
5. *Pure coverage in totality.* If the magazine can remain pure, free from extraneous elements of any kind in their coverage occurrence, devour of fake news and character assassination, they will continue to remain relevance even in the midst of digital media.

The should pay attention to writing style: Being a long or short reading, newsmagazines are no doubt, an additional reading, after newspaper, TV and, today, the internet. AS a secondary source of

information, newsmagazines should also bring other values, the aesthetic is one of them. As Johnson and prijatel described in Sorg (2001), a reader is drawn to a magazine's content and appear for a variety of reason; aesthetic, pragmatic, whimsical, sensational, or ideological. The aesthetic is all about the pictures and artistic design and illustration and quality of text itself (Sorg,2001)

6. *Integrate print and online newsrooms.* If we assume that having a clear identity and a strong editorial culture is essential for newsmagazines – being in print, on the web or in any digital platform, having one single team producing content is a must. It does not mean that every journalist will become a multimedia reporter or that everyone inside the newsroom must be all the time in every media. Inside most of the integrated newsrooms, there is some sort of specialization or special time span of dedication to other media. At FLYP, for example, a digital enterprise, journalists are required to understand what is possible to do with sound, video and graphs, but are not responsible for doing it. All the articles are done by a multi-discipline team formed by a specialist in video, an expert in audio, another in animation, and another in info-graphics as well as a writer/journalist. At *Time*, the main office in New York divides the task of editing the website with the two other bureaus, in London and Hong Kong, to guarantee that the operation will work on a 24/7 basis. All the staff, to a certain extent, have a print and an online presence, varying according their tasks in one or the

other. At *The Economist*, there are assistant editors dedicated to the website, but they are subordinated to the editors of the newsmagazine, and an increasing presence of the original print staff online (Sorg, 2001).

7. *Government policy:* Sometimes when media is not in favour of the government in power in their reportage, the government in power at that particular time tried to impose sanctions on the media or at time, try to close the media home down. In Nigeria during the military jointer of General Abacha, Concord magazine was close down, the *Newswatch* magazine experience the same during the military administration of general Babangida, the recent one is the treats the media industries experience from there government. Example in Nigeria today is African Independence Television (AIT) media home and the latest is channel Television when government they are not bending to their side in their reportage. (Olorunsola, 2014).

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, despite the undoubtedly shake out in the Newsmagazines publishing and publishing industries due to the arrival of digital media, they are still relevant in the society. Evidence has showed that it can be refer to as an evidence when matters arises, because magazines are tangible and can be access by all and sundry unlike the electronic media whereby information may be deleted if something happens to the data bank. Moreover, their reporting, news analysis, and commentary still forms the backbone of the entire media, which is hardly found in the social or electronic media and web. With the pure and detail analysis, investigative and original reportage of News magazines, the printed

media, especially the Newsmagazine will continue to be relevance, social media, Internet and Web will no doubt extend and augment the old media the so called nowadays. Publishing appeared to be one of the earliest casualties of the digital world, with online piracy undermining publishers and authors. But it's becoming clear that the old is not necessarily killed by the new, the two learn to exist side by side as more reader

Prefer to have tangible information to be referred.

### **Recommendation**

The study made the following recommendation if really the society wants the industry to survive.

1. Government should subsidize the price of raw materials for printing
2. Banks should grant the publishing industries loan at a one digit interest to encourage the industry to continue in the business
3. Publishing industries should form a cooperative as a means of getting capital to boost their business
4. Copyright law should be fully entrenched to secure the authors
5. The impart of piracy should be taking serious by all and sundry to forestall the devils from their dastard acts.

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