

Examining Survival Strategies Employed by Nigerian Newspapers against Loss of Readership and Revenues

Isiaka Zubair Aliagan PhD

Department of Mass Communication, Kwara State University, Malete, Nigeria

*E-mail: isiakaliagan@yahoo.com

Abstract

The study examined the measures taken by Nigerian newspapers, facing decline in readership and revenues, to survive the harsh business climate and how effective these measures have been in sustaining newspaper businesses. The qualitative study employed in-depth interviews with 11 senior editors of seven selected newspapers to generate its data. The results of the interviews were coded and discussed thematically. The findings in this study generally agreed with the theories of Destructive Innovation and Creative Disruption that when a business organ reaches a cultural lock-in stage, to break even and avoid bankruptcy or total extinction, such a business must undertake some fundamental survival strategies, which conform with the postulations in previous studies as cited in this paper.

Keywords: Survival strategies, Nigerian Newspapers, readership and revenues

1.0 Introduction

Across the world newspaper business is facing many challenges. These are brought about by the challenges of the changing times, changes in socio-cultural traits in different societies, demographic changes which inform new audience taste for news, economic challenges, as well as the impact of new technologies (Smith 1980; Jones and Salter 2012). These challenges are robbing many newspapers of readership and revenues. More importantly, the emergence of the internet and the accompanying new media technologies is said to be disrupting the economic base of the newspaper, as many potential readers are finding alternative sources of news online (Daily Trust 2012; Jones and Salter 2012:37). It has however, been argued that this development is limited to only a part of the world, particularly the United Kingdom and the United States of America, with newspapers in Asia and Africa said to be enjoying a boom (Franklin 2009).

Nigeria's newspapers are part of the world's press ecology, hence they are not insulated from these global trends which are incapacitating newspaper economy and constituting a threat to their survival. While it may not be totally correct to argue that the hardship that newspaper business in Nigeria is going through is as a result of the migration of news readers online, it is obvious that the loss of news readers to online platforms is a contributory factor, particularly as the depression in the Nigerian newspaper sector predated the onset of the internet and the new media technologies.

There have been some studies on the challenges of newspaper business in Nigeria, especially since the emergence of digitization, convergence, internet and new media technologies. These include those by Obijiofor (2003); Olukotun (2005); Ekwo (2011); Kperogi (2011); Aborishade (2010), among others. However, none of these has addressed the problem of survival as a result of loss of readership and revenues confronting newspaper business in Nigeria, including looking at measures these newspapers are introducing to cope with the hard times they are facing, as contemplated by this study.

2.0 Research Objectives

This paper has two main research objectives, which are: (1) To identify the strategic measures Nigerian newspapers have introduced to overcome the challenge of loss of readership and revenues (2) Determine the effectiveness of these measures in improving the fortunes of Nigerian newspapers and ensuring their sustenance.

3.0 Research Questions

Based on the research objectives listed above, the following are the research questions that guide the course of the study:

3.1.1 What are the remedial measures introduced by newspaper managers in Nigeria to regain lost readership and enhance their revenues?

3.1.2 How effective have the measures initiated by the Nigerian newspapers helped to improve the readership, enhance their revenues and ensured the survival of newspaper business in Nigeria?

4.0 Background to newspaper economy in Nigeria

Nigeria had a buoyant newspaper industry until 1986 when the International Monetary Fund (IMF) – inspired Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) was introduced. Prior to the introduction of SAP, newspaper circulation in Nigeria peaked at about 2 million copies daily (Igwe 2004).

However, instead of the economy to improve, SAP brought in an era of hyper inflation, devaluation of the national currency, and closure of many industries, including newspaper businesses. Newsprint and other inputs in newspaper production became too expensive for many newspaper managers to afford.

Also with the coming of SAP, the middle class, a potential newspaper reading class disappeared (Vision 2020:20), thus leading to decreasing demand for newspapers. All these factors, among others, caused a strain on newspaper businesses, leading to a decline in circulation, readership and revenues. Newspaper circulation in Nigeria has since been on a sharp decline, with total circulation by all the existing newspapers currently put at 500,000 (Igwe 2004) or less in a country of an estimated population of 160 million.

A largely disputed 2009 survey by the Advertising Association of Nigeria (ADVAN) even put the circulation figure at 295,000 copies, with figure fluctuating between 500,000 in 1999, 570,000 in 2003 and 530,000 in 2007, until the fall in 2009, said to be as a result of the year not being an election year (Newspaper Circulation Check 2009:17-18).

This was the situation up till the second part of the 1990s when the internet was introduced. The internet was followed by the explosion in telecommunication services in 2000, and other new media technologies afterwards. The effect of this is that alternative sources of news became available for newspaper readers, leading to the migration of many readers online, with readers also obtaining news information through several new media inventions such as smart-phones, iPhones, ipads, etc. Nigerian newspaper managers reacted to this threat by launching their own online platforms (newspaper versions online).

As experienced in other parts of the world (Gunter, 2003:176), newspaper managers in Nigeria also appeared to have launched their newspapers on the internet owing to social pressure and the prestige that went with having an online platform. It did not appear that they made concrete planning. Hence, several attempts to make money from their online platforms have not yielded the desired results.

Several business models on earning revenues from online platforms and their printed versions have also been introduced by Nigeria's newspaper managers, yet a perfect model is yet to be found, same situation being experienced by newspapers in other parts of the world (Jones and Salter 2012). This study therefore, intends to examine the innovations introduced by Nigerian newspapers in response to challenges posed by declining readership and revenue. It also intends to look at the various survival strategies they have put in place and how effective these have been in helping to sustain the newspaper businesses.

5.0 Theoretical Framework And Literature

In examining the economy of the newspaper at a time of technological changes, two theories have been suggested by scholars. These are Creative Destruction and Disruptive Innovation theories.

Creative destruction theory, according to Nolan, entails a process by which organizations achieve "dynamic disequilibrium" through dismantling "old order of economic activity (technological, organizational, and managerial) and simultaneously invent and build a new one" (Nolan, 1995:10). This is achieved through 'adopting new ideas and abandoning the corresponding older ones.'

Analyzing the Creative destruction theory, Jones (2010:28) contends that the theory posits that as a company grows older and larger, cycles of creation and destruction set in. Creative destruction theory, she explains, signifies that a non-innovative successful company that has reached its height is eventually driven out of the market or scene by one or more new innovating companies, which also eventually suffers the same fate, thus completing a creative destruction circle.

Citing Foster and Kaplan (2001) and Burke (2010), Jones lists the following survival measures adopted by a company undergoing creative destruction stage, namely, the company at the 'cultural lock-in stage', must overcome the threat of extinction by shedding its bloated workforce and introducing innovations in one or more of three ways, namely (a) incremental innovation, which allows small changes over time; (b) substantial innovation, which necessitates some structural changes in the company, like cost-cutting, layoffs and restructuring; (c) or transformational innovation, in which the company essentially recreates itself (Jones, 2010: 29).

In its own case, the disruptive innovation theory essentially suggests that long-standing, successful industries and businesses fail or decline when an unexpected innovation emerges to threaten an existing technology. Christensen and Raynor (2011) state that these innovations can emerge in the form of 'low-end disruptive innovation' that could be inferior but less expensive and also appeals to customers. Thus, disruptive innovation occurs when the needs of customers are not being met by an existing technology or can be met in a better way (Jones, 2010: 30; Christensen & Raynor, 2011) by another technology.

Applying the theories of creative destruction and disruptive innovations to the newspaper industry, Jones opines that the newspaper companies are in the difficult position of cultural lock-in, as disruptive innovations such as blogs, social networking sites, mobile devices, and news aggregators (Google, Yahoo, Facebook, among others) are challenging printed newspapers (Jones, 2010: 30). Thus, she argues that the long existence of the newspaper and the stability it has enjoyed over the years has been threatened by the emergence

of a new superior media, the internet and the new technologies.

The newspapers, she says, have responded to this phenomenon by initiating incremental innovation such as phasing out old production method or launching niche publications. The newspapers have also undertaken substantial innovations by moving more of their resources to news online, reducing staff sizes, and reorganizing remaining employees, and recreating themselves through the emergence of the new multi-media platform known as convergence. However, Jones believes that it does appear that these innovations are not enough as the threats are still there (Jones, 2010: 30).

Linking the challenges newspaper business in Nigeria are going through to the creative destruction and disruptive innovation theories, it is clear that newspapers in Nigeria have reached the 'cultural lock-in stage' and are therefore undertaking several and more of the survival steps identified by Jones and others in order to survive.

5.1 Newspaper and threats of the internet and new technologies

Newspaper business in the recent times has suffered from decreasing readership and revenues. As stated earlier in this paper, the causative factors for this phenomenon include emergence of new technologies. Thus, the influence of the internet and new media technologies on this development has been subject of academic research. The focus of research on this development varies. However, an aspect of the research relevant to this study is the area of survival measures introduced by newspapers.

When the internet came into being, newspapers managers were confused as to the right approach towards its usage (Jones and Salter, 2012:37). Their first reaction was to export their entire information on the web through a measure known as shovelware (Jones and Salter, 2012:45). That was the first tactical error by the newspapers (Gunter, 2003:166). News consumers got accustomed to free news, hence attempts to introduce paywalls (Greer and Messing, 2006:18) thereafter by the newspapers were resisted. These developments made it difficult for newspapers to make revenue from launching online platforms.

Furthermore, the emergence of news aggregators and online advertising platforms such as Google, Facebook, Graigslist, Monster.com, Yahoo, among others, robbed the newspapers of not only their readers but also revenues (Jones and Salter, 2012:20-22). These, among others, forced the newspapers into the search for what is known as appropriate business model to enable them survive.

Several suggestions have been offered, ranging from freemium, continuing to offer free news on the net, in order to drive patronage for the hard print copy (Jones and Salter, 2012:46), engaging in niche publications (Jones and Salter, 2012:46-47) that are paid for in view of their uniqueness, newspaper's engagement in special services such as holiday services, financial advice, syndication, games (Jones and Salter, 2012:42), mobile journalism (Calcutt and Hammond, 2011:3), including outright phasing out of printed newspapers (Aleechea 2010) to reduce cost, among others.

What has emerged from these suggestions and their experimentation is that, till now a perfect business model (Ketmen 2013) is yet to be found. Another point is that even if found, the usage cannot be universal as situation in different countries will determine their applicability.

6.0 Methodology

This study adopts qualitative in-depth interview for its data collection. The researcher applied purposive sample in selecting the respondents for the interviews. According to Luborsky and Rubinstein (2011), sampling in qualitative research is concerned with what to observe and how many observations are needed to ensure that the findings will contribute useful information about the study. They contend that sampling for meaning entails having insider's perspective to what is being studied. In their own view, Kupper et al (2012), say that qualitative research is based on experience and in the construction of meaning. They believe that in contrast to quantitative form of research, qualitative research do not have predetermined sample. The specific research questions drawn determine the sample and its size.

Thus, from the views of the scholars presented, the sample for qualitative study is decided upon by the researcher who knows the category of people that can provide the information he or she seeks. Thus, two journalists are sampled in each of the 7 newspapers adopted for the in-depth interviews. The respondents are senior editors who are sufficiently knowledgeable about the operations of the newspaper. Thus, a total 14 respondents were targeted, but eventually 11 respondents successfully took part in the interviews, thus giving a response rate of 78.6%. The interviews were audio-taped, transcribed and analyzed on thematic basis.

6.1 Sampled newspapers

Selection of newspapers for the study relied on a 2009 survey by the Advertisers Association of Nigeria (ADVAN) which revealed that the top seven Nigerian national dailies, comprising The Punch, The Nation, The Sun, Vanguard, Guardian, Thisday and Daily Trust polled a combined circulation of 174,312, representing 91.8% of the market share (Newspaper Circulation Check 2009:5). Although the figures polled by these newspapers were disputed by some of the newspapers (Tribune 2009; Compass 2009), they are about the only

data available as circulation figure remains top professional secret among newspaper managers (Aliagan, 2011:451-466) and there is presently no Audit Bureau of Circulation in the country.

6.2 Profile of the selected newspapers

Most of the newspapers selected for this study are located in Lagos, Nigeria's commercial capital, which is the home of the print media. Thus, with the exception of Daily Trust newspaper located in Abuja, the nation's administrative capital, all the newspapers sampled are Lagos-based. All the newspapers are private-owned and have been in existence for a range of 10 to over 30 years.

7.0 Data Analysis procedure

The researcher started with some observable measures through casual study of the websites of the selected newspapers and hard print copies. Through this some of the observable measures introduced by the newspapers were obtained. These were further updated through informal or casual conversations with three of the respondents. Through these methods, 15 observable measures were listed. They were further previewed by the respondents for corroboration and updating before the interview proper was conducted. At the in-depth interview stage which was conducted at the work setting of the respondents, they were led through providing answers based on the experiences on their newspaper organizations on these listed survival strategies.

After the interviews, the responses were broken down, labelled into themes, concepts, propositions as proposed by Lindlof and Taylor (2002), quoted in Pyng (2013). The views and propositions by each of the respondents were then coded in terms of their newspapers' experiences as well as their positions in terms of agreeing or disagreeing with the identified measures or strategies as far as the experience of individual newspaper was concerned. In determining the response rates of the respondents on the listed measures presented as concepts or sub-themes, the following guides were adopted:

1. Majority of respondents: Number of respondents representing 70% and above
2. Some respondents: Number of respondents representing 40-50%
3. A few respondents: Number of respondents representing 20% or less

7.1 Circulation is nose-diving and revenue plummeting

It is assumed that the newspapers in Nigeria presently are recording loss of readership and revenue but the extent of the loss is unknown. However, it is considered by majority of the respondents to be substantial as to necessitate drastic revenue drive by the newspapers. For instance, the total circulation figure quoted for 2009 when the survey by ADVAN was conducted was 295, 000 copies. The year was a non-election year, hence the slide in the figure compared to 530,000 recorded in 2007 which was an election year, and 570,000 in 2003 another election year. However, there has been a general decline from 500,000 recorded in 1999 to 295,000 recorded a decade after (Newspaper Circulation Check 2009:17-18). This buttresses the argument that the newspaper industry in Nigeria is experiencing a depression. A further pointer to this is that no newspaper in Nigeria presently makes the list of the first 100 newspapers in the world in terms of ranking. Newspapers in the world have circulation figures ranging from 14.2million to 5.6million daily especially in Japan and China (Vision 2020:26).

Another factor that causes loss of readership and revenue is the internet and the explosion in new technologies, particularly the GSM phones. The Nigerian National Communication Commission (NCC) in 2009 recorded 132.7 million mobile telephone subscribers, a 50% increase over the previous year (Ekwo, 2011: 41-42). In a study conducted by Intelcon in 2005, most Nigerians expressed the desire to own telephone handsets. Of the sample surveyed, 72% stated that they could afford at least N5, 000 (a little over 30 USD) to acquire telephone handset and approximately 70% could afford N500 (about 3USD) a month on calls (Intelcon, 2005:5). With these technologies and the free news on the internet, readers seem to be moving online, thus creating loss of revenue for the newspapers.

Thus, faced with this unpleasant situation, Nigerian newspaper managers have adopted series of survival measures to sustain their businesses. The strategies adopted are reflected in the discussion and analysis from the in-depth interviews conducted in this study.

8.0 Survival strategies by Nigerian Newspapers

Nigerian newspapers have developed a number strategies by which they strive to wade through the challenge posed by the unfavourable business climate. Some of these survival strategies are discussed below:

8.1 Cutting operational cost: The newspapers achieve this by cutting down on staff recruitment. Unlike in the 1960s to the 80s, there are now fewer staff in newsrooms of Nigerian newspaper offices. This has brought about increased reliance on News Agencies as one of the primary source of news. The newspapers also generate online news and reviews to augment shortfalls. There are now numerous online sources of real time news. Rather than

have too many reporters they cannot sustain, many of the newspapers generate additional news from online sources. The newspapers also create the position of online editors whose responsibility, with his team, it is to generate online news content and edit where necessary and include them in the newspaper. All the newspapers selected for this study have online editors and a section of the newsroom devoted to online team. The newspapers selected also use breaking stories from online media which are acknowledged in their print editions. Beyond this, there are also numerous online articles and discussion fora that the newspapers find relevant and handy to copy in each of their editions. Many Nigerian newspapers have, this way, circumvented cost of generating news. Majority of the respondents agree that their newspapers engage in staff rationalisation, though they contend that these are generally those that are deemed to be unproductive and not amenable to the challenges of the new technologies.

8.2 Online presence and adverts: Most Nigerian newspapers have online editions. The online presence is at first seen as status symbol. It is thus aimed at differentiating between elite newspapers and those struggling for survival. Online news was first introduced by the defunct Post Express newspaper (Vision 2020:30). Since the internet became the vogue in newspaper business, Nigerian newspapers have followed the global trend. All the newspapers selected for this study have strong online platforms. Newspapers include their online status as a bargain for advert values. They also generate advertisements from their online platforms, which they use to augment earning from hard prints. However, in view of its limited space and lesser cost, earning from online advertisements is far lesser than that from hard print as confirmed by majority of the respondents. This in tune with what obtains in other parts of the world as documented in a study by Patel (2010).

8.3 Minimizing the online content: The newspapers tactically do not upload all their contents online, as a way of making the hard-prints more relevant. Most times, Nigerian newspapers upload only the lead stories and prominent contents online. The newspapers selected for this study follow the same pattern. Most other items such as reviews, feedback columns, cartoons, pull out magazines, etc, are only featured in the hard copies of the newspapers. By this tactics, the online versions of the Nigerian newspaper are seen as incomplete, hence some readers who want to enjoy full reading experience rather buy the hard copies, though an average number of the respondents in this study contend that online readers are mostly those who read the hard print copy too, in conformity with findings in the study by Cao and Li, (2006:133).

8.4 Publishing of advert and important notices only on hard-prints: To draw interest to their hard-prints, the newspapers often choose to publish some very important advertisements and public notices only on the hard print versions of their newspapers. Such public notices and advertisements by government agencies or industrial giants relating to jobs; recruitments, calls for interview, scholarships, etc often do appear only on hard-prints on specific days. For instance, in the 'Guardian' newspaper, Tuesdays and Thursdays are scheduled for publication of job vacancies. In 'The Nation' newspaper, jobs vacancies are published on Tuesdays. The attempt to reserve the important advertisements and public notices for only hard-prints makes the traditional newspaper relevant to particular group of people like job-seekers and employees of some government agencies and parastatals who must read them to have necessary updates. Only short advertisements appeared to feature on the online format in all the newspapers selected. A few of the respondents believe that these important adverts and notices are good source of revenues for the newspapers concerned.

8.5 Improved graphics: The era of improved printing technology has also led to greater input in the aesthetic value of the newspapers. High quality photograph, beautiful graphic designs and excellent layout have all become part of the newspaper selling point in Nigeria currently. The attention paid to making newspapers beautiful is indeed aimed at making them more attractive to the reading publics. Towards this end, the Nigerian newspaper newsrooms have progressed from analogue page planning to computer programmes like Adobe Page Planner, CorelDraw, to In-design which is the latest page design/planning technology. Newspapers planned with these programmes are beautiful to behold, and with improved printing quality, newspapers are lush and aesthetically appealing. This has led celebrities and event managers associating with newspapers. Many of them prefer to have their events published on the pages of hard-print newspapers, and are sometimes willing to pay advertisement rates to have them published. This study reveals that majority of the respondents agree that improved graphics and layout of the newspaper attracts advertisement and enhances a newspaper's revenues.

8.6 Niche Publications (Pullouts and Magazines): Many Nigerian newspapers have established pull-out celebrity magazines, otherwise known as niche publications. These are sometimes included either in mid-week (on Wednesday) papers, weekend and/or Sunday editions. The magazines, usually given alluring names, are also printed on beautiful gloss pages. They are printed in mart or gloss paper than newsprint and inserted into the newspaper. They contain soft content like celebrity interviews, fashion tips, home management information,

among others. In Thisday newspaper, the weekend magazine is called *Style*, in Vanguard it is *Allure*, in Sunday Trust, *Tambari* and in The Guardian, *Life*. Society women who are not known to be very keen readers of soft sell publications form the larger audience of these mid-week or weekend magazines. These niche publications are offered to readers for free unlike what obtains in other countries in which niche publications are sold to generate income. However, it is revealed in this study that the cost is passed on to some personalities or organizations featured in the publications as agreed by a few of the respondents. Only The Sun, The Nation and Punch do not have niche publications. However, the study reveals that these niche publications are offered as freemium (Jones and Salter, 2012:45-46), bonus publications meant to drive demand for the newspapers as they do not carry price tag, and are given free

8.7 Public Lectures and Awards: As part of their efforts to sustain themselves or raise fund and shore up their public rating, Nigerian newspapers also organize and host public lectures and awards. The public lectures are seen by the newspapers as an opportunity of playing a part in engendering discourses on good governance and human rights in the country or promoting certain good causes. However, a few of the respondents in this study reveal that some individuals and agencies of government lobby for these awards or prominence in the lectures, and are sometimes willing to pay for the prominence given to them. Awards given by the newspapers range from 'Man of the Year', 'Brand of the Year', 'Best Governor of the Year', 'Best Product of the Year', 'Best Performing Agency of the Year', 'Best Upcoming Brand of the Year,' etc. As confirmed by a few of the respondents, the awarded personages or brands are made to pay some money or grant the newspaper some financial privileges as part of the conditions for receiving the awards. Though these can best be described as unethical, the newspapers are able through these to raise money for their operations. Also some of the times, the newspapers propose and or get involved in the organization of symposia or public discourse where a different agency or international organization plays host. Their participation sometimes earns them some fee, which they use to augment their funding.

8.8 Social media interface: As a way of appealing to younger generation of readers, many Nigerian newspapers have introduced online social media interface. Many of them are on Facebook, Twitter, Google+, etc, through which they popularize their news content. But importantly, some of them are creating chatrooms where readers can interact with one another and discuss the news and some issues of national importance. All the newspapers selected for this study utilize social media interface to boost the acceptability of their newspapers, although the economic value of this measure is unknown as some of the respondents in this study agree. Vanguard Online Community floated by Vanguard newspaper is a typical example of the online social forum/chatrooms run by a Nigerian newspaper.

8.9 Mobile (online) Newspaper: Beyond the social media fora, some of the newspapers selected in this study are also floating their newspapers on mobile platforms. The mobile platforms prompt a subscriber once there is a news update. But importantly, they direct the reader to seek the hard-print copy and buy, because the mobile platforms sometimes have restricted contents. What is coveted in mobile prompting is the reader's curiosity towards the news or information piece. In some cases, the readers do go to buy the copies of the newspaper to read the news content they find interesting as agreed to by some of the respondents. Newspapers involved in this service used some of the mobile telecommunication networks such as Glo, MTN, and Etisalat. For instance, The Guardian, Daily Trust, Vanguard, and Punch use the mobile prompting which news readers subscribe to at a fee for weekly or monthly news update. These services are further promoted on the websites of the newspapers and on the hard print copy.

8.10 Retainership: This refers to a situation where the newspaper enters into a signed or non-signed agreement with a certain level of government (federal, state or local) or an agency of government, or a business interest to run regular news coverage on them in exchange for advertisement placement or payment of money at the end of a certain period. It must be noted that, in this case, the news reporting style is promotional and therefore, must portray the client in good light. This study reveals that some Nigerian newspapers enjoy retainership with one agency, state government, business or the other as agreed by some of the respondents. Though a few of the respondents deny this, but the evidences - the number of advertisement patronage the newspapers acquire, language of reporting the agencies in question corroborate this observation.

8.11 Content page subscription: This is a situation where a business or group with special interest subscribes to certain number of pages of the newspaper to market particular brand or ideas. Some of the times, they are made to pay, or other times they do not. However, it is understood that the content of the subscribed page is strong enough to generate stronger interest for the newspapers as agreed by some of the respondents in this study. Sometimes, it is by a group that has a large followership that could generate more subscription for the newspaper

or goodwill with a particular group or the general public. The MTN foundation supplement in The Sun newspaper is one such example, while the Ibru Foundation supplement in Sunday Guardian and Youth Column in The Guardian is another example.

8.12 Political leaning and ethnic loyalty: This study also shows that some newspapers latch on to political or ethnic loyalty to break even. Whereas most newspapers in Nigeria are published from Lagos which is regarded as the hub of Nigerian press, it has emerged that certain ethnic sentiments are employed by newspaper publishers to corner the market. For example, The Nation is regarded as a pro-Western Nigeria newspaper and its content often sympathetic to the values and political aspirations of the western Nigerians, mainly of Yoruba tribe. To this extent, greater number of advertisements-apart from products-this newspaper gets are from south westerners in government or private sector, and mostly concern activities of westerners. 'The Sun' newspapers, though a tabloid has pro-Eastern Nigeria inclination, and hence derive most of its adverts from the Igbo of Eastern Nigeria. A little of this is also seen with the 'Vanguard' newspaper. 'Daily Trust' is seen as pro-North, and hence their advertisements mostly come from the northern part of the country. Majority of the respondents agree that the newspapers have an unwritten law that determine their political/ethnic leaning.

8.13 Columns/Columnists: Columns and columnists have always played great parts in the success of newspapers. Nigerian newspapers still make very good use of columnists to achieve this end. Depending on the leanings-ideological/ political, ethnic/Nigerian, newspapers employ the services of very good columnists who write for them on specific days. Some of these columnists become the reason certain class of readers buy certain papers on specific days. Some of these powerful columnists include Funke Egbemode, (Intimate Affairs, Sunday Sun), Reuben Abati (Crossroads, Guardian on Friday, though rested for now as the writer is present in government), Idowu Akinlotan (Palladium, The Nation on Sunday), Simon Kolawole (Thisday, Backpage), Mohammed Haruna (Daily Trust, Wednesday). They are believed by majority of the respondents to have capacity to tilt readership taste in favour of their respective newspapers, though the extent of this tilt is unknown.

8.14 Multimedia publishing (Online Televisions): This is a recent innovation which is already trending among Nigerian newspapers. Here, the newspaper reporters record their interviews with both audio and video devices. While the audio is transcribed and published in the newspaper, the video is uploaded on the newspaper's website for online streaming. Thisday online, Vanguard online and Punch.com are some of the online platforms that have incorporated video streaming as part of their website. Again, a few of the respondents consider this as another form of *fremium* offered to attract readership and the economic value of this presently is unknown.

8.15 Supplements: Supplements are promotional features in newspapers paid for by businesses or agencies of government to a newspaper, which placed or caused them to be placed in the newspapers. These supplements sometimes are paid for at advertisement rates, sometimes at subsidized rate-if they are regular as agreed to by majority of the respondents. Many Nigerian newspapers once in a while secure supplement placements, and this comes often during celebrations - like Democracy Day, 100 Days in office of government officials, or other special events. The income generated through supplements is used to augment the earnings and funding of the newspapers. All the newspapers selected for this study engage in publishing of supplements.

8.16 Other sources of revenue

These sources of alternative funding are by no means exhaustive. Some newspapers also go into sponsorship of events such as fashion show, beauty competition, musical jamboree, raffle draw, or engaging in sundry business activities such as operating event centre (Thisday) etc to source alternative means of funding their businesses. These are their ways of surviving the hard times caused by declining readership and threats from the new technologies, among others, as identified by the respondents.

9.0 Conclusion

This study has revealed that Nigerian newspapers have reached a cultural lock-in stage which necessitates that they introduce some strategies to avoid going bankrupt or becoming extinct. Within the period of 1990s to the second decade of the 21st century, many newspapers have become extinct when faced with competition from the internet and new media technologies represented in new devices, competition from news aggregators that offer free services and the adoption of *fremium* by all the newspapers through free news services online. The newspapers that have become extinct include New Nigerian (established 1966); Daily Times (established 1926, though recently resuscitated after several months of publishing only online) and Compass, Next (which came into being 2003 and 2009, respectively), among others. Nigerian newspapers have continued to experiment with new business strategies to remain afloat. However, as previously stated these business strategies identified are not exhaustive and are limited to the few newspapers selected for this study. A broader study with larger sample

will definitely reveal more areas that are not covered in the present study.

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