

# Sun Girl Makeover: Evidence of Social Responsibility or Commercial Necessity?

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## Abstract

Use of pin-up photographs in Nigerian newspapers has always attracted harsh comments from readers. And when the most popular and longest surviving Page-3-Girl, *Sun Girl*, came out looking more decent after a surprising makeover in 2013, some critics interpreted it as a straight victory for audience participants whereas many critics dismissed it as hyper-commercialism in the garb of social responsibility. But the debate was limited to social media conversation and opinion articles in the print media without an empirical proof to support any of these positions. This study was, thus, designed to empirically find out the motivation for the makeover in the hope that the findings would deepen the understanding of participatory communication in developing economies. Three instruments were employed in data collection: after ascertaining the difference between the old and the new *Sun Girl* through document analysis, and interviewing the editors responsible for the page, the study was triangulated with a survey that provided data on audience perception of the motive for the makeover. The findings indicated that the motivation was a timely response to audience complaints on the one and a deft commercial strategy for sustaining the most popular page in the newspaper on the other. Pearson test of relationship conducted also indicated that there is a strong statistically significant relationship between perceived social responsibility, perceived commercial necessity and the makeover. And this result is consistent with the responses of the editors as well as the literature that shaped the study. Thus, it was concluded that the makeover was a historic victory for an audience accustomed to apathy and culpable silence. For *Daily Sun*, it was a strategic step revealing that social responsibility and commercial interests could find a common ground and may be profitable in the long run.

**Keywords:** Pin-up girl, social responsibility, female models in newspapers, gate keeping.

## Background to the Study

*Sun Girl* is a pin-up-girl feature in one of Nigeria's daily newspapers, *Daily Sun*. A pin-up girl is a female model whose pictures or drawings are featured in the print media. It is sometimes referred to as pin-up model. Initially, pin-up pictures were photographs of pretty women which were hanged or 'pinned-up' in a room for all to admire. Currently, the print media all over the world use them as feature content in publications (Frank, 2014).

Use of pin-up girls by Nigerian newspapers has always raised questions bordering on social responsibility. *The Punch* had introduced the first Page-3-Girl in March, 1973 and *Vanguard* briefly in 1984. Readers' complaints and the subsequent removal of the contents of the pages from these two tabloids seemed to create the impression that the newspapers were responding to readers' sensibilities and preferences. Then, *Daily Sun* Page-3 Girl was introduced with the first issue of the *Daily Sun* in 2003. Fashioned after a similar concept in *The Sun*, a newspaper published in London, the page was daily filled with scantily clothed ladies, with names, telephone numbers and email addresses displayed. After nearly 10 years, and having achieved popularity that motivated other newspapers (*Soccer Star*, *Daily Telegraph* and *Saturday Guardian*) to adopt the concept with modifications, the *Sun Girl* had a surprising makeover on August 10, 2013 (Ayo, 2013, Wikipedia, 2014).

The Page-3 *Sun Girl* concept was redefined to depict the *Sun Girl* as one with intelligence, unique looks, good and respectable dress sense and a likeable personality. The new concept is built around a beauty pageant in which bikinis and runways are outlawed and winners are chosen monthly by voting readers. The pageant is open to readers between the age of 18 and 26, and shortlisted girls, representing the 36 states of Nigeria, compete at the regional level. Winners from the regional contests, then, participate in the grand finale. In November, 2014, the first winner of the remodelled contest emerged (Adesina, 2014).

The makeover generated heated comments in the mainstream media as well as on social media platforms. Most of the comments centred on the motivation for the makeover. Whereas some readers perceived it as a straight victory for members of the audience who complained about the immoral dress sense and prostitution promoted by the page, others perceived it as a business strategy to use the contests and a more decent model to draw reader-traffic (Ayo, 2013). Within the framework of social responsibility, this controversial gate-keeping act deserves empirical examination, and that is the aim of this study.

## Statement of Problem

*Daily Sun* introduced a Pin-up-girl page in 2003, thereby becoming the third Nigerian newspaper to do so. After ten years and numerous complaints from readers, the *Sun Girl* had a makeover which generated comments, especially from the audience. It is not clear what the motivation for the makeover was. While some

commentators thought that it was commercially motivated (*Narialand Forum*, 2008) others thought the publishers were responding to pressure from the audience demanding for a more decent page 3 (*Narialand Forum*, 2008).

The problem of this study, therefore, is to investigate the motive for the makeover and establish whether it is for commercial purposes or an attempt to fulfil its social responsibility to complaining readers. It is expected that the finding may increase scholars' understanding of audience participation and social responsibility. Moreover, there is hardly any empirical study examining or interrogating this phenomenon (use of pin-up girls in newspapers) in extant literature. This study is, therefore, designed to fill this gap.

### Research Questions

*The following research questions are posed to guide the study:*

*RQ1: How often do the readers examine the Sun Girl page?*

*RQ2: What is the difference between the old Sun girl and the new Sun girl?*

*RQ3: What are the ethical and commercial challenges associated with the old Sun girl?*

*RQ4: What did readers perceive as the motive for the makeover?*

*RQ5: Is there any relationship between readers' perception of publisher's commercial motives and the makeover?*

*RQ6: Is there any relationship between the reader's perception of the ethical challenges and the makeover?*

### Objective of the Study

Editors and reporters select newspaper contents based on diverse internal and external factors. These factors include audience interests and commercial necessity. In other words, in a bid to inform, educate, entertain as well as maximise profit, newspaper publishers make different decisions which are aimed at satisfying the interest of the newspaper as well as the interests of the audience. But there seems to be a prevalence of commercialism in the local press, a situation which makes a seeming response to audience voice an interesting development. The primary objective of this study, therefore, is to identify the ethical and commercial challenges associated with the old Sun girl and establish if there is any relationship between the reader's perception of the ethical and commercial challenges and the makeover?

### Review of Relevant Literature

Ideally, mass media content should be determined by the interest, needs and wants of readers. But sometimes commercial and corporate interests of publishers determine the nature of media contents offered to the readers. In the same vein use of female models in newspaper pages, a phenomenon which is more than 40 years old, could be determined by any of these factors (Frank, 2014).

As a concept, Page-3- Girl originated from a feature in *The Sun* newspaper published in the United Kingdom since 1970. The page contains a large picture of a lady who is usually topless. The feature is normally found in every third page of *The Sun's* publication and this is where the name "page three girl" is coined from. The official page three website was introduced in June, 1999. Other newspapers around the world have also adopted the page-3 innovation. Similar features in other newspapers are found at the back cover, front and inside pages, depending on the choice of the editor (Encyclopedia.com, 2015; Wikipedia, 2015).

The page is expected to lure readers to *The Sun* newspaper thereby increasing its circulation and patronage. In addition, it has also served as a platform for nurturing and grooming female models over the years. However, in 1999, there were complaints from the audience that the page - three feature should be removed from *The Sun* (Greenslade, 2015). Majority of page 3 Critics argue that the tradition of showing pictures of topless ladies on a daily national newspaper is offensive, sexist and demeaning to women. Following these complaints, there were several anti-page- 3 campaigns by groups, mothers and other non-government organisations. The complaints led to an online survey aimed at finding out empirically what the view of the readers was. The result showed that the majority of readers either enjoyed the content, or were not offended by it, thereby justifying the publisher's insistence on publishing the content (O'Carroll; Sweney, and Greenslade, 2015).

*The Sun* subsequently challenged the campaigners explaining that its Page-3 models were also used for societal good. In March 2014, *The Sun* used its semi-nude models to create breast cancer awareness. This they did by collaborating with *CoppaFee* (a breast cancer Charity) to encourage women to check their breast on a regular basis. In respect to this, each Tuesday edition is titled 'Check them Tuesday' (Greenslade, 2014). *The Sun* newspaper, UK, stopped featuring topless models around late 2014 instead pictures of fully clothed models were used. During this period, the official page three website continued to operate. Surprisingly, on January 22, 2015 the newspaper featured a picture of topless model and continued to do so (Holmes, 2012).

### The Concept of Pin-Up Girls in Nigerian Press

In Nigeria, the use of pin- up girls has been adopted by different newspapers, and photographs, illustrations, cartoons and comics have been used at one time or the other by newspapers (Ajala, 2012). The first newspaper

to adopt this concept in Nigeria is *The Punch*. According to Ayinor, (2015) the newspaper started as a tabloid and so the original team wanted soft human angles to the publication, and so the very first edition in March, 1973 had a photograph of a lady on the cover. It was, however, not a weekly feature until research proved that it helped sales and it soon became a weekly feature on page 3. It was, however, discontinued when *The Punch* upgraded from its Sunday-only appearance to a daily newspaper (Ayinor, 2015).

The second newspaper to feature pin up girls in Nigeria was *Vanguard* newspaper in 1984. The pin-up girls were used as sex appeal to readers. The feature stopped appearing in the newspaper in 1986 because of a commercial factor: to target the serious market for endorsement. However, in recent times photographs of female models are used occasionally on the cover page of *Saturday Vanguard* (Adefaye, 2015).

*Daily Sun* newspaper introduced pin up girls with the first issue of the publication in 2003. It was fashioned after a similar concept in *The Sun* of London in the UK (Wikipedia, 2014). A football daily newspaper called *Soccer Star* from the stable of The Sun Publishing Limited also featured pin up girls. It is Nigeria's first and only all-football daily newspaper. It appeared on the newsstand on February 20, 2005. According to Solaja (2015) taking a cue from the older publications in The Sun Publishing group, it devoted part of its page 3 to pin-up photographs of ladies. It is called *Ball Girls*. The reason is to draw traffic to the newspaper and thus, increase sales. In-house research however indicated that people picked the paper, not for the page 3, but strictly for football news content, especially from the lucrative and entertaining European league. There was, therefore, need to devote more space to football news. So, the concept of *ball girl* was dropped from the edition of March 2, 2010. The last time page 3- girl featured in the paper was March 1, 2010 (Solaja, 2015). The sport newspaper has since rebranded.

*New Telegraph* also had content, *Adam and Eve* similar to the pin up feature. However, instead of using only a female picture, a male picture was placed beside the female picture. The feature was first published in 2014 and was rested in May, 2015 (Obasi, 2015).

### **The Concept of Newspaper Makeover**

Over the centuries, the physical look of newspapers has undergone many changes. Media historians explained that the first printed newspaper which appeared in Germany in the late 1400's was in form of news pamphlets often highly sensationalized in content. In 1850's the first pictorial weekly newspapers emerged, featuring, for the first time, extensive illustrations of events in the news. Also by 1890's appeared feature of modern newspaper which includes bold banner headlines extensive use of illustrations, funny pictures plus expanded coverage of organised sporting events. By 1910 all the essential features recognisable in today's modern newspaper had emerged (Leveson, 2012).

These changes are sometimes made to satisfy the audience, commercial needs or both. For instance, a 1991 survey found that women did not think that there was much for them in today's newspaper; that fashion sections feature clothes that the majority of women can't afford or that only look good on stick-thin models; and that women are underrepresented as reporters, sources, and subjects. A 1993 study of 20 newspapers found that only 15 per cent of sources cited on front pages were women, and only a third of front-page stories were written by women. Many newspapers are, therefore, expected to make content changes that may alter this situation, attract women readers and minimize anti pin-up girl campaigns (Leveson, 2012).

Some have designed beats that are more relevant to women. Such beats rely less on officials and government and more on things that affect women's daily lives. Newspapers are running more inspirational stories about how women have broken gender barriers, but emphasizing "superwomen" risks alienating many women who feel like second-class citizens by comparison (Holmes, 2012).

Another form of makeover in newspaper is change in editorial policy. In early 1980's *The Guardian* newspaper in Nigeria had a policy of not publishing advertised obituaries. However, this policy was discarded in 1989 and elite advertisement now makes a large portion of the newspaper revenue (Ogbodo, 2015). The above shows that *The Guardian's* policy was modified because of commercial necessity.

### **Commercial Necessity and Editorial Content**

Independence of editorial content from advertisers' influence is an absolute necessity for the preservation of journalistic ethics and maintenance of social responsibility because media houses would not be in business without advertising revenue (Okolie, 2011). One of the factors that contribute to the increasing influence of commercial interests on editorial decisions is increase in conglomeration and this has led to increased pressure on newspapers to make profit, often at the expense of their journalistic mission. In many cases, objectivity, exactitude and rectitude are sacrificed on the altar of advertising revenue (Frédéric, 2011; Baran, 2013).

In Nigeria, some newspapers frequently sell their front page to political advertisers at exorbitant rates. In the process, they sacrifice fair, objective and balanced reporting (Johnson, 2011). Though, advertising revenue is mandatory for the survival of a print medium, caution must be taken in the number and nature of adverts accepted, in order for the medium to maintain a professional outlook with its ethical tenets intact, and also

remain devoted to its reason of existence. Kasoma (1999) explained the need to remain focused in the face of advertising requests with the case of the training newspaper of the Department of Mass Communication of the University of Zambia: *Lusaka Star*, which circulates in Zambia's capital city. The 12-page newspaper with a circulation of 5000 could have increased its advertisement pages to seven or eight but chose to discard some advertisements so as to keep its 50-50 ratio.

The use of pin-up girls in newspapers does not seem to attract the attention of many scholars but some studies have been reported on broad issues of ethics (Leveson, 2012). But O'Reilly (2015) conducted a study using Usurv, an online polling tool to determine if the page-3-Girl photos published in *The Sun* (UK) were offensive, sexist and demeaning to women. The respondents were asked whether the newspaper should continue to run its page-3 section. The results indicate that the majority of the readers either wanted to keep Page-3 (39.6%) or were not bothered if it stays or goes (36.7%). On whether the readers would stop patronising the paper if its page-3 section was discarded, the result showed that (28.6%) of the respondents would stop buying the newspaper if the feature was discarded while (71.3%) of the respondents would continue to buy the paper if page -3 section was removed. They concluded that critics of the page were wrong since those who buy the paper either enjoy it or were not offended by it.

Ehidiamen (2010) conducted a study on the usage of pictures in Nigerian newspapers but the scope was limited to news rather than feature photographs. But Nwaolikpe (2014) conducted a study to find out if women's pictures are sensationalised discriminated against and trivialised in Nigeria print media. The result of the study indicated that there was an unbalanced representation of women's pictures in the newspapers analysed, that women's diverse lives and contributions to society were not portrayed much like that of men, and that more of women's pictures appeared in entertainment, and fashion advertisement thereby confining women to areas that are traditionally meant for them. The Project for Excellence in Journalism conducted a survey to examine the influence of advertising pressure on media content and found that 53% of the 118 TV news directors surveyed experienced efforts by advertisers to influence editorials content (Nwaolikpe, 2014).

### **Theoretical Perspectives**

**The Gate Keeping Theory:** The term gatekeeper was first used by Kurt Lewin in 1947 to refer to individuals or groups of people who control the flow of news in the communication channel and Folarin (2004) clarified that it means that no media organisation can transmit all the messages it receives in the course of the day or week's routine. Thus, some individuals have to decide which information to transmit, which to defer, which to modify and which to delete entirely. Commercial necessity and social responsibility are some of the factors that influence the decisions of media organisations to select or reject, defer, modify or transmit potential newsworthy items for publication. To the extent that commercial necessity and social responsibility are some of the factors that influence the gatekeeping exercise, this theory is relevant to this study.

**Social Responsibility Media Theory:** By 1945 the Libertarian or Free Press Theory had failed to deliver a socially responsible kind of freedom expected in a truly free-market place of ideas. Instead, commercial development of the press and developments in media technology had tended to limit individual and group access to the media by concentrating media power in the hands of a few advertisers and media professionals (Frost, 2011). The social responsibility media theory prompts the media to accept, among other things, that the society has the right to expect high standards of performance from the media and that accountability of media professionals should be to the society, employers and the market and not to media owners and advertisers (Baran, 2013). In the light of this theory, this study assumes that the Sun-Girl makeover was probably motivated by society's complaints of low moral standards and reflects the newspaper's attempt to be accountable to those readers.

### **Research Design**

The primary design for this study is survey. However, it was triangulated with in-depth interview and document analysis. Survey research was employed to collect data from readers on the perceived motivation for the makeover whereas document analysis was employed to analyse the old and the new Page-3-Girl in search of differences and similarities. Data collected from 379 readers, with the self-administered questionnaire was augmented with in-depth interview of the Page-3-Girl editors. Five-point Likert scale was used for measuring ordinal items whereas frequencies and percentiles were computed for nominal items (Idahosa, 2007).

Document analysis, a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents, both printed and electronic, was used to review prior and current publications of the *Sun Girl* in order to make a comparative analysis of the old and the new. The nature of the study recommends this method as a low-cost means of obtaining empirical data in an unobtrusive and nonreactive manner. Documentary evidence was combined with data from interviews and the questionnaire to minimise bias and establish credibility. The analytic procedure involved finding, selecting, appraising and synthesising data contained in the two sets of documents (Bowen, 2009).

For the interview, the current editors or former editors of the relevant pages in *The Punch*, *Soccer Star*,

*New Telegraph* and *Daily Sun* were selected because *The Punch* and *Soccer Star* once published Page -3- Girl whereas *Daily Sun* and the *New Telegraph* currently have this feature. For readers' perception, four hundred copies of the questionnaires were administered on 379 newspaper readers in south western Nigeria. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) analysis software was used to analyse survey data and measure relationships.

### Data Presentation and Analysis

**Table1: Frequency Distribution of Respondents Gender**

S/N	Gender	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Male	183	48.2%
2.	Female	196	51.7%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>379</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 1 indicates that 48.2% (n=183) of the respondents were male while 51.7% (n=196) of them were female. The number of female respondents is larger than that of male respondents. This is consistent with the population demographics which indicate that male and females are almost equal in number. The interview responses of this study also indicate that the page under investigation is popular with both men and women of all classes.

#### **RQ1: How often do the readers examine the Sun Girl page?**

**Table 2: How Often the Respondents Examined the Contents of the Page**

S/N	Extent of use	Frequency	Percentage
1	Daily	97	26%
2	Weekly	101	27%
3	Monthly	57	15%
4	Once in a while	107	28.2%
5	Never	17	4.4%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>379</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 2 indicates that about 62% of the respondents read the page regularly (25% daily, 27% weekly and 15% monthly whereas 28.2% read it occasionally. About 4.4% never read the page before. Interview responses also indicate that the page is regularly read by various categories of readers as one of the editors explained: "Men and women, young and old read it, even the religious people have to read it regularly to ensure we do not step out of line".

#### **RQ2. What is the difference between the old Sun girl and the new Sun girl**

To answer this research question, the study examined the old and new pages of the Sun girl in search of differences and similarities.

**Table 3: Differences between the Old and New Sun Girl Page.**

S/N	Old Sun girl page	New Sun girl page
1	No Sun girl logo	A sun girl logo introduced
2	Extensive Sun girl profile: name, occupation, turn -on, turn- off, hobbies, phone number and email address	A brief profile: name, phone number and email address.
3	Sometimes Black and white	Colour page always
4	Sun girls were highly indecently dressed	Fairly decently dressed Sun girls.
5	Sun girls were required to send in their pictures and profile to the newspaper.	Sun girls are required to visit designated photo studios for photo sessions.

#### **RQ3. What did readers perceive as the motive for the makeover?**

**Table 4: Frequency Distribution of Audience Perception of Motives for the Makeover**

S/N	Attributes	Frequency	Percentage
1	Audience complaints	92	24.3
2	To attract more adverts	54	14.2
3	To attract more readers	232	61.2
4	Not Available	1	.3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>379</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 4 indicates that almost 75% of the respondents perceived that the makeover was motivated by either of two commercial goals—to attract readers or to attract advertisements—whereas over 24% thought it was a response to readers' complaints.

#### **RQ4: What are the ethical and commercial challenges newspaper readers complained about in the old Sun Girl?**

**Table 5: Primary Complaints of Respondents against the Old Sun Girl.**

S/N	Complaints/comments	Frequency	Percentage
1	Indecent exposure	202	53.2%
2	Seductive postures	31	8.17%
3	Display of phone numbers and email addresses	59	15.5%
4	Colluding with advertisers	87	22.9%
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>379</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 5 indicates that over 77% of the complaints bordered on immoral or unethical practices whereas about 23 % had to do with commercial practices. This is consistent with other findings of this study indicating that the motive for the makeover is partly commercial and partly an attempt to respond to readers' complaints.

**RQ5. Is there any relationship between readers' perception of publisher's commercial motives (to increase readership base and attract advertisements) and the makeover?**

**Table: 6 Perceived Commercial Motive for Sun Girl Makeover**

	Pearson's Correlation Coefficient for Motive of Makeover	To Attract Adverts	To Attract More Readers
	Pearson R	.528**	.540**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000
	N.	376	376

**Correlation is Significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed).**

To assess the relationship between the makeover and the publisher's commercial interests, Pearson correlation coefficient was computed. The results in table 6 indicate that there is a strong statistically significant relationship between perceived commercial interests and the makeover at N=376,  $r = .566$ ,  $P < 0.01$  level. This means that the higher a publisher's commercial motive, the higher his propensity to makeover a newspaper page to suit his commercial interests. Conversely, the lower a publisher's commercial motives the lower his propensity to makeover a newspaper page to suit his commercial interests.

**RQ6. Is there any relationship between the reader's perception of neglect of social responsibility (as seen in their complaints) and the makeover?**

**Perceived Social Responsibility Motive for Sun Girl Makeover**

	Pearson's Correlation Coefficient for Motive of Makeover	To Address Readers' Complaints
	Pearson R	.566**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N.	376

**Correlation is Significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed).**

To assess the relationship between the makeover and perceived social responsibility motive, Pearson correlation coefficient was computed. The results in table 7 indicate that there is a strong statistically significant relationship between perceived social responsibility motive and the makeover at N=376,  $R = .566$ ,  $P < 0.01$  level. This means that the higher a publisher's commercial motive, the higher his propensity to makeover a newspaper page to suit his commercial interests. Conversely, the lower a publisher's commercial motives the lower his propensity to makeover a newspaper page to suit his commercial interests.

### Discussion of Findings

The makeover affected the dress sense of the *Sun Girl*, the mode of taking and forwarding photographs as well as the profiles of participants whereas the newly introduced beauty pageant dimension was not just a move to engage with the readers more interactively but a move to interact profitably. These findings are consistent with the interview responses of the editors. For instance, one of the editors explained it thus, "We modified the quality of photos and then took out the phone numbers, leaving only the email. We later did another modification, whereby we reinstated the phone numbers when readers began to complain". Another editor explained that the last phase of the modification was done when they "needed to organize a competition with the page, to enable the girls win prizes. At that time, we had to introduce a voting code to enable readers vote for their best Sun Girl of the month. The winner for the month got an I-pad, while the overall winner for the year got a brand new car as her prize".

These findings are consistent not only with the observed differences on the pages analysed, they are also consistent with the perceptions of the readers as well as the suggestions and comments in the literature. The expression "when readers complained" suggests that there was an attempt to please readers, which is an evidence of social responsibility.

Responses from the readers indicate that their complaints weighed heavier on the side of indecent

exposure and its implications than it weighed on commercial practices but the statistical analysis suggested that the motive was more of commercial than a response to readers' complaints. This seeming contradiction could be explained by the fact that the readers, from their complaints, did not really have anything against the commercial motives so long as the issue of indecent exposure is curtailed.

However, the responses of the interviewed editors partly affirm the contradiction and partly explain it. For instance, one editor explained it thus,

The complaints were always around the fear that it could encourage prostitution. There was also the case of people sending other people's photographs for publication, without the consent of the girls concerned. This made The *Daily Sun* management to adapt more stringent measures before taking photographs – including compelling the girls to submit their photographs in person and to also sign consent form.

Another editor explained that the concerns about promoting prostitution were not unfounded arguing “that some people may have abused the platform provided by *Sun Girl*, arguing that there is always a good side and a bad side to every concept.

Just as I have seen a girl who got impregnated by a contact she met through the *Sun Girl* exposure, I have also seen many girls who got lucrative modelling jobs from the exposure, including one who did a multi-million naira calendar job. Two other girls launched their NGOs through the platform given them on the *Sun Girl* page.

Among the complaining readers were some rights groups that took the newspaper to task over the possibility of promoting prostitution. The study confirms this also as one of the editors explained that some rights groups were initially of the view that the page was promoting prostitution and pimping:

They insisted that we take off the phone numbers of the girls. However, the reverse side of the argument was that there were so many girls who got genuine modelling jobs from the exposure, as well as many calls from prospective advert agencies that called to complain that they could not reach some of the models whose photos we published without their phone numbers.

This argument lends credence to the thinking that the newspaper's ultimate motive for responding to readers' complaints was both for commercial and social responsibility purposes, especially as one editor explained that, through a study, it was found that the page is the most popular page in *Daily Sun* newspaper. This makes the intricate attempt to balance commercial and social responsibilities imperative.

Just as the survey responses indicated, the editors stated that the motive for the makeover was a case of both: They needed to accommodate the interest of companies and other corporate organizations (like makers of beauty products), which either wanted to brand or sponsor the page. They also needed to see how they could respond to the pressure from the readers – both positive and negative-- since it was discovered that the *Sun Girl* page had become the newspaper's most popular page.

It is noteworthy that an essentially entertainment page designed to lighten the mood of readers with the faces of beautiful women in order to enhance sales, as an editor explained, has given birth to a job-creation platform for models and advertisers. The editor explained thus: “It also provides an avenue for people seeking modelling jobs to get exposure. So, it's a win-win situation for both the girls and the newspaper”.

Furthermore, the results of this study seem to suggest that being a socially responsible newspaper can lead to commercial success, not only because there is a significant relationship between the motive and these two factors but because even the responses of the editors support this. One of the editors explained that corporate bodies previously reluctant to identify with the page began to show interest in sponsoring it after the makeover: “It also enhanced the pages acceptability among corporate organization. This made one particular telecommunication company, at some point, to offer to help hold a mini competition to produce the models for us”.

Another major finding of this study is that readers' complaints were not always negative as some readers complained any time they perceived the day's *Sun Girl* as ugly while some others called to ask for telephone numbers of the models when the numbers were removed. This is consistent with the experience at *The Sun* of London where the publishers also reinstated the Page-3-Girl in response to readers' demand. This also seems to suggest that gate-keeping may only be adjudged socially responsible if the majority of the readers are gratified.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The basic question which this study seeks to answer is whether the surprising makeover of *Sun Girl* is an indication of social responsibility in practice or simply a commercial necessity? And, from the findings, it is clear that the motive was both an act of social responsibility and a commercial necessity. It was able to address a contentious moral question, thereby fulfilling a social responsibility, and at the same time advance the publisher's business interest beyond the initial objective of the makeover. Thus, we may conclude that acts of social responsibility that promote morality attract patronage from ethics-conscious corporations and conversely,

use of morally debasing models repel ethics-conscious corporations from patronising newspapers in terms of readership, sponsorship and advertising.

The statistical tests also indicated that there is a strong positive significant relationship between readers' perception of social responsibility, commercial necessity and the makeover. The move to address readers' complaints, even if the ultimate aim is profit, is a welcome development in an environment where newspapers frequently devote the entire front page to advertisements against the expectations and rights of their readers. This also indicates that readers have a vital role to play in asking for and receiving suitable contents from the media. A docile audience is likely to worsen the increasing cases of hyper-commercialism in the media.

For practising journalists in other newspapers, especially the papers that have adopted the Page-3-Girl feature, it is recommended that they seek and find out through an audience survey how their readers would want this content designed and presented. This will make for a healthy customer relationship in which both parties are satisfied in a mutual engagement.

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