

# Newspaper Management Problems in Nigeria- A study of Defunct Compass Newspaper

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## Abstract

This paper explored certain problems of newspaper management that confront newspapers in Nigeria and particularly Compass Newspaper. This paper particularly analysed the characteristics of the newspapers as it relates to departmental, structures, and management problems associated with the defunct Compass Newspaper. Different levels of management problems and types based on human or material and also internal and external challenges are identified. The study has a singular objective of unravelling the mystery behind the death of Compass Newspaper as the paper entered the market with lots of promise. In-depth interview was the method used to collect data from the purposely selected management staff, circulation, and account unit staff respectively. The findings showed that the newspaper's demise was a result of its political partisanship, corruption, and disloyalty among the staff. Therefore, the paper concludes that the type and level of management problems hinder the growth and development of newspapers in the country. The process of founding, managing, and sustaining newspaper from the initial 'new-to-the-market' status, to competing with the already known and acceptable ones and other newcomers pose a serious challenge to the industry. The paper concluded that newspaper companies that are building up their first core capabilities still have problems related to a lack of knowledge of management workings. This sets up specific issues for knowledge management in newspaper firms. This research is based on a detailed case study about the major management problems associated with, but not limited to, Nigerian newspapers.

## Keywords

Newspaper management, survival, challenges, newspaper mortality

## Introduction

Newspaper organisations are like other business ventures that require that they enjoy virile management to sustain activities and at the same time fulfill the

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expectations of the society of getting it informed. Also, like other business ventures, some hurdles could militate against a smooth running and eventual survival of the organisation, hence the need to critically dissect possible ways of wriggling out of such limitations, even long before they come.

Edmund Burke, who coined the term “fourth estate of the realm,” Emperor Napoleon who said four newspapers were more to be feared than a thousand bayonets and Oscar Wilde who remarked that, in America, the president governs four years but the journalist governs forever, were all individuals who recognised the importance of the press in a nation.

Were it left to me to decide whether we should have a Government without newspapers, or newspapers without a Government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter... Thomas Jefferson (1787).

For decades, much of the newspaper business has been characterised by well-insulated publishers and editors who dictate the daily news agenda along with the emphasis given to certain categories of stories. The American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE) found much of this arrogance still in place in the early 2000s among journalists. Part of the findings is that reporters and editors still distance themselves from their readers, underestimate readers’ intelligence, and develop a limited tunnel vision about conditions that exist in the outside world.

Scholars and professionals have at various times argued on the enormity of the challenges facing the newspaper industry worldwide. Issues such as changes in age demographics of readers, competition, changing nature of readers, and general societal changes are some of the challenges proffered by these scholars and professionals.

Economists must not only know their economic models but also understand politics, interests, conflicts, passions the essence of collective life. For a brief period of time you could make changes by decree; but to let them persist, you have to build coalitions and bring people around. You have to be a politician. Alejandro Foxley, Chilean Minister of Finance (quoted in Williamson 2000).

Issues such as media ownership, media management, and political factors influence media content and how the Nigerian media operates both at macro and micro levels (Adebiji, Salaudeen & Sanni, 2018). At the macro level, political

factors include media ownership and control. On this, political leaders, through their privileged position, manipulate content through funding, using their privileged position as official sources and imposing media regulation, censorship, and legislation.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The newspaper plays a vital role in the socio-economic and political development of the Nigerian nation. Politically, Nigerian newspapers, among other media of mass communication, are enjoined to “uphold the responsibility and accountability of the government to the people by Section 22 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, as amended, which states that the press, radio, television and other agencies of the mass media shall at all times be free to uphold the fundamental objectives contained in this chapter and uphold the responsibility and accountability of the government to the people.

Aliagan (2005) opines that Nigeria's newspapers are part of the world's press ecology; hence they are not insulated from these global trends which are incapacitating the newspaper economy and constituting a threat to their survival. While it may not be correct to argue that the hardship that newspaper business in Nigeria is going through (Adebiyi et al., 2018 and Aliagan, 2015) is a result of the migration of newsreaders to online, it is obvious that the loss of newsreaders 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.

This study is interested in empirically x-raying other likely causes of the high mortality rate in the newspaper subsector of the media. Like Veronis (2006) and Isacchson (2009) averred, there are numerous causes of the collapse of a newspaper organisation, the study delves into the likely factors which could be related to the environment. Olukotun (2018) also opined that unless drastic action is taken newspapers would continue to be defunct in Nigeria

### **Research Objective**

The only objective of this study is:

- i. To examine the challenges that led to the collapse of Compass Newspaper.

### **Research Question**

The research question is one:

- i. What were the challenges that led to the collapse of Compass Newspaper?

### ***Profile of Compass Newspaper***

The *Nigerian Compass* was a daily newspaper with National circulation in Nigeria, covering news, business, politics, and sports. The paper had weekday and weekend editions.

Nigerian Compass Newspaper started in 2008 with a robust organisational structure which was later discovered to be too robust and cumbersome and was modified a couple of times. The first Daily Editor of the newspaper was Mr. Bayo Oguntimehin, while the Saturday was being edited by Mr. Dotun Oladipo, who later became the Sunday Editor, while Gabriel Akinadewo was the pioneer Sunday Editor. It started with Executive Directors Admin, Finance, and Accounts. The Editor in Chief was the managing director and the direct head of editorials issues in the newspapers. The structure was said to have caused some friction at some point because of the overlap of roles and issues bordering on control. The various departments were headed by managers apart from editorial, which is naturally controlled by an Editor. The newspaper started with three titles; Daily, Saturday, and Sunday. Each of these titles has its Editor and Deputy Editor. The paper has its slogan as “a different kind of newspaper”.

The vision of the newspaper was to become Nigeria’s leading newspaper as defined by influence, circulation, and profitability; while its mission was to provide all the news all the time and deliver unadulterated, unbiased news without limitation. It wanted to provide information that will help its readers make important decisions in all areas of their lives. And promptly too.

The newspaper also had it set out to reach, by 6.00 am every day, the streets in all the states of Nigeria. From Lagos to Maiduguri, Port Harcourt to Sokoto, and that it promised to be faithful to prompt delivery on the market. Over 25 distribution vans were procured and drivers were employed to ensure the just stated mission was accomplished.

In the area of manpower, the newspaper claims to have combed the media industry for the best hands available. Seasoned professionals who share the aspirations of the promoters were brought in to prepare the industry for the journey of “return to excellence in journalism”. They were motivated like never before in the industry. All line Editors and above were given brand new official cars, fat and attractive housing loans, guest house apartments in the newspaper’s chalet, executive staff busses for other staff, state of the art digital cameras for all reporters, and correspondents. A retreat was also arranged to inculcate the spirit of Compass into the new staff at Ijebu Ode. At the retreat, everyone shed the encumbrances of the previous experience and donned the toga of the new brand.

Compass newspaper had eight departments namely: Editorial, Accounts/Finance, Admin/Personnel, Circulation, Adverts, Technical, ICT, and Production. The Editorial department is headed by the Editor, while Accounts, Admin, Circulation, Adverts, ICT, and Production are managed by managers. The Technical department was being managed by an engineer.

### ***Involvements of Compass Newspaper in Politics***

In June 2009 the newspaper named Daniel the most outstanding governor in education in the country. The award to the paper's owner drew both criticism and ridicule. In July 2009 the paper published a photograph of Wale Alausa, a member of the Ogun State House of Assembly, taking an oath of loyalty while naked. Conflicting explanations were given about the event and the publication of the picture, which seemed to have political motivations.

In December 2010 Femi Shodunke, the deputy editor of the Nigerian Compass, was waylaid by four gunmen in Abeokuta, the Ogun State capital. He narrowly escaped with his life. In February 2011 Chief Akintola Adeniyi (SAN), an Ibadan-based lawyer, launched a N50 billion libel suit against several individuals as well as the *Nigerian Compass* and the paper's Daily Editor, Mr. Gabriel Akinadewo. The suit said the newspaper had reproduced libellous remarks made by the main target of the suit, Otunba Sunday Ojo Williams.

After *The News* published a highly critical story on Daniel's eight-year governorship, Daniel responded angrily. He accused the weekly news magazine of having collaborated with Bola Ahmed Tinubu on the story.

In their riposte on 17 March 2011, *The News* asserted the independence of their newspaper, saying "... we can only be bemused by the unfounded claims that our stories are being teleguided externally. The governor does that with his Nigerian Compass. We concede that right to him".

However, in January 2014, after going into comatose and hibernation for some years, the Nigerian Compass announced the acquisition of its publication right by Segun Oyebolu who had earlier made an offer of N1 Billion to Mr. Daniel in 2012. The newspaper subsequently is published as a free online newspaper in Nigeria by the newly registered Compass Free Paper Limited owned by Segun Oyebolu.

It should be noted that Nigerian Compass newspaper started owing salaries and could not afford to buy newsprint and other supplies from late 2008 up until 2010 when it finally went under as staff left in droves.

## **Literature Review**

### ***History of Newspaper Development in Nigeria***

The historical background and development of the Nigerian Press commenced with the printing media on 3rd December 1859 by a Christian Missionary named Reverend Henry Townsend who established the first Newspaper in Nigeria called "Iwe Iroyin fun awon Egba ati Yoruba" which literarily means "A newspaper for the Egba and Yoruba Nations" in today's Abeokuta the Capital city of Ogun State to promote literacy and build up elites among the then EGBAs and not with a current serving political motive but succeeding Newspapers choose contrary with an indelible footprint as far as the political history of Nigeria is concerned. It was initially only published in the local language

(Yoruba) but its English supplement was added in 1860. The demise of 'Iwe Iroyin' later resulted in the emergence of other Newspapers like Anglo-African, Lagos Time and Gold Coast Advertiser, Lagos Observer, The Eagle, and Lagos Critic, The Mirror, The Nigerian Chronicle, etc.

Meanwhile, media mortality in Nigeria is very high because many of the surviving newspapers now were established less than 30 years ago. The ones that were founded around the independence era have died. Tador (1996) (Adebiyi *et al.*, 2018) however classifies the development of the Nigerian media into three phases as follows: The early press (1800-1920); Nationalist press (1929-1960); and contemporary press (1960-till date).

Adesoji (2010) and Ette (2000) claim that the press has remained, by and large, tools in the hands of politicians in perpetuating hegemonic power structures. They are posited that politics is what drives ownership of the newspaper in Nigeria more than any other consideration.

Ibrahim (2016) posited that at every stage some of the management and departmental problems that modern newspaper houses face vary from deadline to meet, high cost of production, readership decline, slow production process, uncoordinated management structures, and emergencies.

According to a Pew Research Centre report that looked at 38 newspapers, both large and small, some are seeing massive declines in revenue while others are seeing dramatic increases. One of the main reasons for this discrepancy, the report suggested, are cultural differences within newspapers. So culture forms part of the problems of newspaper management.

Experts in the nation's media and marketing communication industries at a forum organised by the Advertising Agencies Association of Nigeria (AAAN), in 2010 in Lagos, raised alarm on the future of newspapers in Nigeria. The majority of them concluded that unless the print media braced up to the challenges posed by the new media, which was identified as a threat, it might go extinct in the nearest future. This apprehension was no doubt a fall-out of the report which portrayed an alarming slide in the patronage of a newspaper.

Amankwah (2010) posited that according to a study carried out by the Advertisers Association of Nigeria (ADVAN) across the country, the daily sales figure of all the newspapers was less than 300,000, meaning that only one in every 470 Nigerians buy newspapers daily. Putting this reality in proper perspective, Popoola (2010) said that all the newspapers in Nigeria today have combined circulation figure that is far less than 500,000 copies per day of Daily Times of Nigeria in 1980 when the population of Nigeria was about half of what it is today. Presently the stockpile of unsold copies of newspapers and magazines in the circulation departments of most print media organisations is a vivid sign of this challenge.

Ekeng (2010) further disclosed that The Punch as the number one selling national daily only circulates 34, 264 copies, The Sun was ranked third with 25, 632 unit sales. Vanguard got 25, 241, while Guardian and Thisday came 5th and 6th respectively, with 25, 222 and 21, 703 daily sales. Daily Trust, the most popular newspaper up North has 11, 672 daily unit sales. Tribune, the oldest surviving newspaper in Nigeria, was another surprise, managing only 8, 314 daily sales. The above-mentioned dailies constitute what is known as the top 8 in the standing. The others combined, including Compass, Daily Independent, Leadership, National Life, New Nigeria, Mirror, and Westerner, could barely rake up 1,600 daily sales.

Good management ensures that resources are not wasted, set goals are achieved and professionalism is adhered to in the realization of organisational objectives. Management is the engine that powers an establishment.

Oyokunyi et al. (2017) argue, that the future of newspapers in Nigeria especially beyond 2030 is bleak. This was part of their findings in a related study on “Economics of Decline and Survival Strategies of Nigerian Print Media Industry: A Study of The Guardian, the Sun, and Leadership Newspapers”. The study focused on Guardian, Sun, and Leadership newspapers. Each newspaper provided its view of the survival strategies to be adopted to match up with the retinue of challenges facing the newspaper industry.

Ekeanyanwu (2015, p. 173) paints the contemporary picture of the Nigerian media scene thus: The Nigerian Media industry is in a state of flux and has many contradictions. For instance, the population strength of Nigerians is more than 170 million and the literacy level is above 60% but still the newspaper circulation strength is about half a million. This major contradiction underscores the economics of decline ravaging the industry currently.

Nwabueze (2011), citing Edeani (1990) writes that in a troubled economy, the press experiences intermittent publications, reduced editions, leaner pages, reduced circulation, fewer advertisements, and as a result of all these, less income. This is what has been the major bane of newspaper survival in Nigeria. Many years of economic hardship have impacted negatively on the newspaper industry. Many newspapers cannot afford basic services and equipment. Usually, the newspaper is among the early items dropped from the important or priority list when there is an economic dispute by readers. It belongs to the group of items that people will naturally not consider when faced with tight economic decision-making. This is due to the ranking that items like these occupy in the hierarchy of needs of people. The basic things of living are first considered before expending leftover funds on these items. This makes it easy for a newspaper to suffer a decline in readership in times of economic unfriendliness.

A newspaper is a business like other businesses and there are ways to achieve set goals. Nwabueze (2011) posited that management is the livewire of any establishment. But in a developing environment such as Nigeria, managers require extra training and motivation which could be as a result of the type of society. In developed countries like America and the United Kingdom, for

example, the sophistication of the inherent technologies makes all members of the society have access to modern trends in all issues. As sophisticated as these managers may seem to be, they will find their readers in equal measure and this will continue to push them in their quest for further managerial development.

Abdulraheem, Adisa and La'aro (2012) explained that in a fast-paced world where information can be found with the click of a button, newspapers are finding it hard to compete. Since the early 1990s, the image of a new revolution has been haunting us. Variouslly called the Information Revolution or the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) revolution, it assumes a classic shift in production processes and relations, the emergence of a new knowledge-based economy, and a quantum leap from an industrial society into an information society.

Ajibade (2013) opined that a defective curriculum is a major problem affecting newspaper management in Nigeria as many newspaper managers only trained as journalists without properly or adequately complimenting this training with management courses that would have made them complete managers. He argued that had these journalists have added management training to their reporting and editing coursework, they would have been able to surmount many of the problems confronting the development of the newspaper industry.

Anaeto, Anaeto and Tejumaiye (2009) argue that contemporary newspapers and magazines have become indispensable in the present time because of the strategic role they play in social development and that despite this enviable role they play they are faced with many challenges. Some of the challenges highlighted include circulation and distribution, financial constraints, lack of feasibility study, high cost of production, poor power supply, repressive press laws, and poor economy.

## **Theoretical Framework**

Mediamorphosis is a recent theory propounded by Roger Fiddler in 1997. According to him, mediamorphosis is the transformation of communication media, usually brought about by the complex interplay of perceived needs, competitive and political pressures, and social and technological innovations. He asserts that the essence of mediamorphosis is the notion that the media are complex adaptive systems. Anaeto, Osifeso and Onabajo (2008, p. 191), note that the media, like other systems, respond to external pressure, with a spontaneous process of self – reorganization. They contend that new media do not arise spontaneously and independently; rather, they emerge gradually from the mediamorphosis of older media. He suggests that emerging forms of communication media propagate dominant traits from earlier forms. The relevance of this theory to the paper cannot be overemphasized. First, the



adoption of various ICTs in newspaper operations indirectly or directly course change, since the new pattern of operations is learned from such. Second, old machines are often replaced by new ones or with the relevant ICTs features that can make operations faster. In the modern era, only newspapers that adopt these new technologies stand a better chance to compete in the volatile newspaper environment. The adoptions of these technologies require frequent training, frequent evaluation, and practical use to make the desired change possible. Again, the non-adoption limits the capacity of a newspaper to achieve its ultimate goal.

## **Methodology**

The study was done using the qualitative approach to research. In-depth-interview was conducted on four staff of the defunct newspaper. It was adopted because the researcher saw it as the most appropriate research method to unravel the reasons behind the death of the newspaper under study. The four staff that were interviewed by this researcher were the ones accessible and since they cut across different management levels of the newspaper, it was due to this limitation that the researcher limited the sample to four respondents. The purposive sampling technique was particularly employed to choose Compass newspaper for this research. Purposive sampling technique has been used through the years; Palys (2008), Creswell (2012) and is currently actively employed. Bernard (2002) Lewis and Sheppard (2006) all posited that despite its inherent bias, purposive sampling can provide reliable and robust data. The strength of the method lies in its intentional bias. Two former managerial staff (former editor-in-chief and a former title editor), a former circulation officer, and a former account officer were purposively chosen for the study. This was done to get to the root of what went wrong that led to the demise of the newspaper.

Meanwhile, narrative analysis was adopted for the data analysis.

## **Findings**

Research Question: What are the challenges that led to the death of compass newspaper?

The major problems, as highlighted earlier, are divided into two; general and internal or peculiar problems. On the general problems, the study found the following to be from the larger society to affected businesses generally. They are related to virtually all businesses in Nigerian society. However, for fear of repetition, some of these general problems reoccur internally and would only be mentioned under the general societal-related problems.

The in-depth interview this researcher had with the managers of this newspaper including former editors, were treated generally and the interviewee deliberately preferred to state the problems in general terms without direct mention to names and specific departments, and the issues include.

The study found out that, despite the activity of the newspaper in recruiting qualified staff, a few bad ones, particularly reporters, still found their way into the organisation. Availability of dedicated reporters is the hallmark of good media performance, but over the past decade, good and dedicated reporters are on the decline as other more lucrative businesses have enticed the few good ones and that has drastically reduced the number of qualified hands to handle the reporting tasks. As the first line of reporting, quality reporters are elements that cannot be compromised for quality production. Many reporters have put their newspapers in trouble by writing libellous stories. “Our reporters were taking us in and out of courts with many libellous stories. It was that sad”, respondent E2 submitted.

According to respondent E1, “we were faced with several court issues that emanated from bad stories that were not well researched and verified. This put us in a serious mess and we were going in and out of the court and this affected the business.”

The study also found out that another issue that was affecting newspapers was social media proliferation. Respondent C1 quipped that “the advent of social media has had its negative impact on newspaper business as news that would have been hitherto reported the next day are now being reported on the social media seconds after the occurrence or the break of such news. By the time the newspaper goes to press the following day, it would have been stale and nobody wants to buy stale news.” This competition with social media is a great issue that is now being dealt with by many media organisations by enlisting on these platforms and breaking the news along other newsbreak sites. Coping with the new technology was challenging.

In the words of the circulation officer; “social media took a chunk of our followers and this brought down cover sales. Advertisement revenues started dwindling because advertisers then preferred online ads to the ones printed newspapers offer.”

Another finding of this study is a stale educational curriculum for media managers and workers. The curriculum run by various journalism and management-based institutions is not designed to meet the challenges of contemporary media management. The institutions run archaic courses with little recourse to prevalent media challenges and ways to deal with them. One of the editors claimed that;

“When you look at the journalism curriculum being operated by many departments and institutes running journalism courses in Nigeria, you will be surprised that the same was used on us and still being administered in this period. It is not compliant with modern media

realities. Unless it is reviewed, the type of practitioners we get will keep getting lower in quality and this is a serious headache or management.”

Growing high cost of production was also a major challenge that the study discovered as one of the main reasons businesses will find it difficult to survive. Power instability attracts extra costs on fuel, high cost of newsprint and other consumables, and general high inflation. Every activity either industrial or domestic rests on a good power supply. The prevalent situation in the country where there is interrupted power supply across the country is worrisome as excessively high bills on diesel and other alternative power supply sources take a chunk of the meagre fund available to the media houses. Production and other vital activities are being carried out on reliable alternative sources. According to Respondent E1:

“We run all productions on the generator. The reason is obvious. You dare not rely on metered electricity to power production. You will lose all. Can you imagine running on electricity and the power holding strikes with failure? You lose your paper, ink, time, and several other things. So, we run production on generator always.”

Respondent E2 also declared that;

Newsprint, ink, plates, and other printing materials are too expensive to procure and this makes the newspaper business more difficult. The price keeps going up because they are imported from overseas and had the interplay of foreign or international trade. This leads to the high cost of producing a newspaper. It was argued that a copy of the Nigerian Compass costs about N180:00 and sells for N150:00. The N30:00 deficit ordinarily is expected to be paid for by the advertisement but even the adverts are not forthcoming.

### ***High Cost of Machinery***

This study also found out that the high cost of machinery is a big factor militating against the survival of the newspaper business in Nigeria. The high cost of deploying the best and latest technology is a big issue in managing a newspaper company. Respondent E1 claimed that; “For instance, the latest printing machine costs about 3 billion naira. This is a colossal sum that is difficult to invest if the owner is not in control of state power or an economic juggernaut. This alone does not also guarantee success and that’s where the problem is.

“High cost of training manpower for the machinery is another issue. The sophistication of contemporary machines and gadgets requires an up to date training to be able to maximise the potentials of this machinery. These trainings are sometimes done outside the country and this involves a lot of money.”

Another general reason for the collapse of Compass newspaper as discovered by this study is government policies, repressive laws, and instability in government. The inconsistencies in policies of the government and sometimes the summersault of these policies affect the environment in which newspapers operate. Issues like a ban on imported materials and the likes are antithetical to good management of the newspaper business. One of the respondents averred that; “the moment the owner left office as the governor, the newspaper started suffering and this is particular with papers that tend towards a particular government. Once that government leaves power, it dies, naturally.”

### ***Competitors Sabotage***

The study also found out that competitors sabotage other newspapers. Competitors work against the success of their competitors. Saboteurs work endlessly to ensure the failure of the business. This is done for various reasons. The circulation officer claimed that; “when we started having distribution issues, as many of our vans were off the road, we approached other newspapers to assist us. They deliberately, on many occasions, delayed, submitting our paper to our vendors. This affected our business and eventually business collapsed.”

### ***Negative Public Perception***

For the particular factors that led to the demise of the Compass newspaper, its negative public perception came tops. Readers have different backgrounds and these backgrounds inform their choice of newspapers. One of the respondents opined that; “No matter how brilliantly written some newspapers are, some readers will not buy them, instead, they will settle for their choice which could be informed by their level of education, cultural affiliations, religious beliefs, and other socio-cultural factors. The Compass newspaper had this negative thing about it despite attempts to clear it. It was seen as PDP newspaper and that was the main reason it could not live for long.”

### ***Management Problem***

Another particular factor that led to the death of Compass newspaper was the inability of the owners and managers to match media with business. Another issue militating against media organisation management in Nigeria is the lack of workers to take their job seriously with the thinking that the newspaper was established primarily to make money as a business venture. Respondent C1 argued that; “It is disheartening that many staff of our newspaper companies feel the newspaper is just there to fill its place in the social responsibility scheme and thus only interested in this while the business aspect of the company is neglected and left in the hands of the advert executives. This affected our business and that contributed to the closure of the company”

The study found out that one of the main reasons and intentions for founding media houses is a direct problem that started the problems of Nigerian Compass (Sanni, 2014). The orientation of the founders of many newspaper companies and interests go a long way in streamlining the operation of the newspaper. For instance, a politician who formed a newspaper organisation to make it a public relations arm of its political machinery will automatically direct the editorial policy towards this interest. It was found out that Otunba Gbenga Daniel, the then governor of Ogun State, established the Nigerian Compass as a way of counter-balancing the alleged propaganda of some opposition Lagos newspapers, notably, The Nation, which was believed to be sponsored by Senator Bola Tinubu, then governor of Lagos State. This intention did not allow freehand and absolute objectivity and this informed the type of media managers that were deployed from inception. According to a respondent, “oga was wrong from the beginning. He wanted to counterbalance news reportage as regards the Lagos press which he believed was against him and his political partisanship.” The political and economic cum social affiliations of the owners of newspapers go a long way in affecting the operations of the newspaper. It shapes the perception of the public towards the title. This is related to the earlier point as the People’s Democratic Party controlled Ogun State felt Lagos was using the overwhelming presence of media in the opposition Action Congress controlled state to an undue advantage and felt all attempts to corner a few of them to his side failed, informed his forming of the Compass.

### ***Appointments to Boards***

The study also found out that arbitrary appointment of unqualified persons into key managerial positions is another factor that led to the untimely death of Compass newspaper. Appointments to boards are no longer made on merit or statesmanship but socio-ethnic and political patronage. “Friends and well-wishers, even family members, are appointed to manage many media houses without recourse to professionalism. Executive Directors who were appointed to run the company with the board members are political and close associates of

the owner and most of who had no media management experience previously, and this was the beginning of the problems”, a respondent submitted.

Another finding is that publishing more than one title by the Western Publishing Company contributed to the misuse of funds. Newspaper organisations that publish more than one title have the problem of synergy and sustenance. A respondent said, “Though it is supposed to be a blessing as most of the workers would be used for the production of different titles but this could be counterproductive as these titles may be competing on the stands. Instead of the Western Publishing Company limiting itself to the production of just the Nigerian Compass Daily and Weekend, it immediately added the publication of a magazine to it- The Westerner, and this also caused so many problems for management because roles started clashing.

Another peculiar factor that killed the newspaper was circulation problems emanating from difficult, diverse terrain and poor network of roads in Nigeria it is difficult to distribute copies. The politically tailored policy of the newspaper made it unappealing to numerous readers according to internal research by the organisation. The public opinion of the newspaper, which was informed by its posture, led to the declining fortunes of the paper. Another issue discovered by management is that there is low patronage from the intended audience or readers. The intended beneficiaries of the newspaper, PDP loyalists, PDP governors, and the ruling federal government failed to advertise and patronise the paper shortly after its take-off thereby destabilising the calculation of the founders.

### ***Corruption***

The study also discovered that the overwhelming pervasive corruptive tendencies in the country have in no small measure created a similar effect in the newspaper companies. Managers and other workers want to make money at the expense of the company. One of the respondents posited that; “Money not approved is being spent on personal effects and company properties are converted to personal use at the expense of the business. Unsold copies of the newspapers are not declared while the money made is diverted.” Mention was made of a circulation manager who collects over N600, 000:00 daily to circulate less than 40, 000 copies initially being published by the company, and was discovered that he spent less than N100, 000 on the job. He was making about N500, 000 naira from the company on daily basis. Another manager was said to have carted away properties of the company for personal use.

## Discussion of Findings

The major finding of this study is that many newspapers tend to go political with the thinking that politics will sustain the newspaper and at the end of the day, it may sustain it temporarily, the newspaper may eventually die. This finding is in Adesoji (2010) and Ette (2000) which claim that the press has remained by, and large, tools in the hands of politicians in perpetuating hegemonic power structures. This negatively affected their survival because the death of a political party or its main financier meant the death of the newspaper. This is particularly worrisome as many newspapers which are still surviving, as the study found out, are clinging to one political strand or the other.

Ekeanyanwu (2015, p. 173) paints the contemporary picture of the Nigerian media scene thus: The Nigerian Media industry is in a state of flux and has many contradictions. For instance, the population strength of Nigerians is more than 170 million and the literacy level is above 60% but still the newspaper circulation strength is about half a million. This major contradiction underscores the economics of decline ravaging the industry currently. This position, that reading habit decline has led to drop in circulation figures. This is exactly the finding of this study. These two correlates perfectly that there has been a sharp decrease in circulation figures and this has led to the collapse of many newspapers.

Fowler (2011) is of the opinion that the newspapers have tried to solve the problem of lack of patronage and decline in readership in the day by reporting "Breaking News" but the bloggers are usually some steps ahead. The emerging movers in the media industry in Nigeria today are mostly bloggers or those they call Twitter overlords, and whose qualification is no more than sheer enterprise and an understanding of how the new technologies of communication can be deployed to influence the public mind. This is in line with the findings of this study, that new technologies are threatening the existence of the traditional ones. Therefore, newspapers that want to live healthily are expected to adopt these new technologies in a bid to meet up the changing demands of this generation.

Moreover, as this study also found out that with the pace at which newspapers come and go in this country and the threat technology is posing these days with the online and electronic versions gaining more momentum daily, newspaper organisations must think outside the box and look for other ways, beside the traditional news gathering and dissemination approaches. This is in line with what Oyokunyi et al. (2017) argue, that the future of the newspaper in Nigeria especially beyond 2030 is bleak. This was part of their findings in a related study on "Economics of Decline and Survival Strategies of Nigerian Print Media Industry: A Study of The Guardian, the Sun, and Leadership Newspapers". The study focused on Guardian, Sun, and Leadership newspapers. Each newspaper provided its view of the survival strategies to be adopted to match up with the retinue of challenges facing the newspaper industry.

## Conclusion

This paper found out that though the challenges facing newspapers in this country are daunting, it is however a case of all hope not lost as some have wriggled their ways out of the daunting challenges and remain afloat and profitable, while serving the public interest, to the best of their abilities. The frequency of change of some of the information technologies put constant pressure on management, added to the harsh economic conditions, which tend to vitiate the progress been made. The type and level of management problems hinder the growth and development of newspapers in the country. The process of founding, managing, and sustaining newspaper from the initial 'new-to-the-market' status, to competing with the already known and acceptable ones and other newcomers pose a serious challenge to the industry.

Therefore, governments, media owners, media managers, reporters, and other workers in the newspaper houses should ensure the survival of their various places of work in a bid to sustain their livelihoods.

## Recommendations

From the findings of this study, it is hereby recommended that, firstly, media organisations should as a matter of urgency partner with journalism institutions to contribute to the curriculum of these schools so that well-trained reporters who are the hallmark of good media performance can be produced for better quality content in the newspapers

Secondly, present and prospective owners of newspaper organisations should distinctly define their political and economic interactions with the newspaper to allow the newspaper to have a good public perception because a paper that is perceived to be objective and fair will likely be accepted more.

Also, the development of the agricultural sector particularly the papermill companies. Government should revive the Oku Oboku Newsprint Mill in Akwa Ibom State to make newsprint readily available in large quantities without the stress of importation hassles and at a cheap local rate. This will go a long way in assisting the newspaper organisations

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