

UNDERSTANDING
THE NEWSPAPER
BUSINESS IN
NIGERIA

A RESOURCE BOOK

EDITED BY
David Jowitt,
Godfrey N. Danaan
and Taye C. Obateru

Understanding the Newspaper

Jowitt, Danaan

Understanding the Newspaper Business in Nigeria

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A Resource Book

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*To all who fought or are fighting for vibrant, respectable journalism
in Nigeria.*

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND INTRODUCTION

This book is a revised collection of papers presented at the 2013 media workshop for Priests, Religious and Laity which was convened by the Archbishop of Jos and President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria, Most Rev. Ignatius Kaigama. Our first note of gratitude goes to him for initiating the training, and supporting the production of this book as a response to the poverty of literature for the teaching of journalism and mass communication in Nigeria. Our co-presenters at the workshop – Fr. Alex Dung, Mr. Eric Pam, Mr. Raymond Goshit and Mr. Clement Yelkopba have played a significant role in shaping our thoughts. We thank our colleagues at the University of Jos and University of Salford, Manchester, UK, for providing the motivation to come up with this project.

Dr. Benjamin Halligan, the Director of the Doctoral College, University of Wolverhampton, UK, deserves a special place in our hearts. He kindly assessed and endorsed this book for use by students and anyone desiring a career in newspaper journalism.

This ten-chapter resource book is designed as a guide to various segments of the newspaper business. It focusses on the editorial, management and income-generation aspects of the business. In Chapter One, Godfrey Danaan critically analyses the viability of the print newspaper amidst the current trends in the industry. Chapter Two by Taye Obateru, is a guide on communicating effectively with the newspaper audience. In Chapter Three, David Jowitt examines how English is used in Nigerian newspapers while Chapter Four, again by Danaan, illuminates the concept of news and their evaluation. Next in Chapter Five is a detailed treatment of editorial and feature writing by Obateru which is followed by Danaan's paper on the process of copy editing which was illustrated with various examples.

In Chapter Seven, Obateru discusses the law and ethics guiding the mass media while the next two chapters written by Dantala Garba analysed the business aspect of a newspaper. In Chapter Eight, Garba x-rays issues surrounding revenue and sustainability and the techniques of income generation through advertisement in Chapter Nine. The final chapter, written by John Galadima focusses on the principles guiding the management of newspapers.

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Taye Obateru is a journalist with over thirty years' experience, and has taught at the University of Jos, Nigeria, for sixteen years. He specializes in journalism studies and media law and ethics, and is currently studying for his PhD in Media and Cultural Studies at the University of Salford, UK. He has published a number of articles in peer-reviewed journals, and formerly worked as the Jos Bureau Chief of *Vanguard* Newspapers and as a Visiting Lecturer to Plateau State University, Bokokos, Nigeria.

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FOREWORD

PRINT JOURNALISM FOR THE GLOBAL VILLAGE

It seems terribly idiosyncratic to be considering journalism and print media at the moment. When the British broadsheet newspaper *The Independent on Sunday* published its final issue after a full quarter century on the newsstands, on 20 March 2016, responses included, arrestingly, praise for what was perceived to be a far-sighted strategic response to the wider crisis of print journalism: to stop the press. *The Independent on Sunday* was to be no more on paper but would live on via a website. The “brand” of the paper, and what it stood for, remained. And for readers who customarily access news media via a variety of digital devices, the ending of the print newspaper may have been imperceptible anyway. In this respect, *The Independent on Sunday* was seen as leading the way – and that invariably *all* newspapers will, at some point in the future, commentators noted, follow this lead.

Perhaps then the crisis in print journalism is not so much one of dwindling interest and shrinking readerships but, rather, the very reverse of this trend. We read news widely and promiscuously, perhaps even constantly, and accessing our news from around the world. Our “global village” then is one that is now served (for the Anglophone world) by news outlets across Northern and Southern hemispheres. The challenges, for newspapers in print, seem to be along the lines of production cost (with the perception among the younger readership that news ought to be free), of timeliness (to read a newspaper often means being reminded of the news you first heard about during the afternoon of the day before), and of accommodating, or re-accommodating informed opinion. This latter aspect has been in direct conflict with the matter of cost: as overheads have been slashed to maintain or lower the shelf price, the balance has tilted in favour of facts and figures, over thought and analysis. But facts and figures are often freely available, and no one outlet has a monopoly (or, at least, a monopoly that can last more than a couple of hours) over facts and figures. Thought and analysis, as associated with incisive and expert writers, often

not beholden to his or her proprietor's editorial line, remains something of a unique offer. In Western Europe, it has not been unusual for that difficult figure of the "intellectual" to turn up regularly in newspapers, reacting to or offering commentary on the events of the day. Indeed, those with a longer view may consider it something of a duty of social or civic care to maintain a space for otherwise challenging writing: to ensure a level of critical inquiry remains alive, in the manner of cultivating and educating a readership, along with offering a source of modest income for those writers who provide as much in terms of opinion. In this way, the newspaper becomes characterised by a richness of character. At the other end of the spectrum – for what is, in the UK, often referred to pejoratively as the "gutter press" – the careful tracking of stories and dangling of insights around celebrities achieves something of a comparable character. One knows that a certain tabloid will be the destination for scoops on certain media stars, and so this becomes a unique offer.

One conclusion that can be drawn at this juncture is that the profession of a newspaper writer is again coming to the fore. The authors in this book are therefore quite correct to address aspects of the process of writing for newspapers, of expectations of reportage, of the sway and meaning and power of reportage, and to have this considered in a context that is particular to the challenges and opportunities of the Nigerian political and cultural situation. For the Western reader, Nigerian journalism offers a chance to break free from the stranglehold of received opinion in their own mainstream "home" media. For the Nigerian reader, the lessons of the successes and failures of Western newspapers can and should be absorbed into the daily news discourse. The crisis in print journalism, from this perspective, is entirely generative.

Dr Benjamin Halligan
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April 2016

CHAPTER ONE

IS THE PRINT NEWSPAPER STILL VIABLE?

GODFREY N. DANAAN

Background: Decline in reading culture

The declining culture of reading has long been debated across disciplines. What has received greater world attention in this era of online messaging is individuals' loss of interest in writing by hand – the art which dominated early education and made learners and composers of ideas stand out. In mass media research and practice, experts tend to focus on the viability of the once ground-breaking print technology that gave rise to book publishing and the newspaper as a medium of mass communication. The ongoing transformations in the media landscape, which provide alternative platforms for information-sharing including direct online newspapers, suggest that the print newspapers do not fit into the new media sphere and might be phased out eventually. The critical and frequently asked questions include: Are print newspapers the same commodities that have attracted unprecedented consumers to newsstands in recent decades? Do people still read them? Do advertisers – small and large-scale entrepreneurs - use them to promote their products and services? Are they profitable? These questions arise because people now read newspapers online and get the same information published in print.

One way in which scholars have attempted to respond to these questions is by conducting readership and circulation studies, in addition to analysing the revenue profiles of print newspapers. From these efforts, they have discovered that newspapers in most developed economies have witnessed a sharp decline in advertising and circulation revenues (Danaan, 2007; Nielsen, 2015), some of which is due to economic recession (Carson, 2014; Molina, 1997; Roark & Stone, 1994). For example, in 1994, Roark and Stone claimed that the United States of America had “a declining percentage of readers” and predicted that “the prognosis of reversing this

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This book brings together a selection of articles on newspaper writing and reporting. It represents a resource book intended to sensitize would-be journalists to the arts of reporting and writing, and to the ways in which newspaper readership can be sustained in the age of online messaging. It will provide students of journalism and media studies, particularly in Nigeria, with the skills required by newspaper journalism, and is a response to the poverty of literature on newspaper journalism in Nigerian universities and colleges.

David Jowitt was born in Britain and is a Professor of English at the University of Jos, Nigeria. After graduating from the University of Cambridge, he took up a teaching post in Nigeria and has spent more than forty years in the country, teaching at different levels of the education system and in different States of the Federation. He has authored and co-authored numerous books, particularly in the field of English language teaching. His scholarly work lies chiefly in the field of the study of the Nigerian variety of English, and his book *Nigerian English Usage* (1991) has become a classic on this subject.

Godfrey N. Danaan studied Mass Communication at the University of Jos, Nigeria, and the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. He received professional training in Journalism at the Scripps College of Communication at Ohio University, USA. He is currently a PhD student at the University of Salford, UK, having previously worked as a Visiting Lecturer at the Plateau State University, Bokkos, Nigeria, and Bingham University, Karu, Nigeria. He is the editor of *The Word of Life* newspaper and has twelve years' experience of teaching at the University of Jos. He has published several articles in academic journals and chapters in books on a large range of topics including media research, mediatisation, and conflict journalism, and is a member of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC).

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