

**PRINT MEDIA ECONOMICS, ETHICAL ADVERTISING AND
PUBLIC DECENCY IN RECESSION: AN ANALYSIS OF
ADVERTISING IN TWO NIGERIAN NEWSPAPERS**

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Abstract

This study examines the types, volume, frequency, gender and decency of advertising in two newspapers in Nigeria: the Daily Sun and the Vanguard. It uses quantitative content analysis of 184 editions with findings from systematic structured content coding of 1737 advertising and advertorials contents from the two select newspapers. It finds out that Nigerian newspapers have low frequency of advertising from entrepreneurs and social groups. Additionally, products advertising from entrepreneurs on full pages are low in volume unlike advertorials of celebrations, invitations, anti responses from political parties and pressure groups. Furthermore, data showed that the entertainment sector attracted a higher number of advertments at 51% in the two newspapers, above economy, politics and education which had 49% in all. Above all, they integrate indecent contents that manipulate sensibilities of readers and committed entrepreneurs. Hence, newspapers lack financial security and cannot breakeven nor decently meet public expectations. The study recommends that newspapers have to jettison the single product producer business management model and diversify into many options of book publishing, library consultancy, annual lectures and awards, printing and sales of customized dairies, almanacs and calendars to multinational firms.

Keywords: Advertising, Decency, Economics, Ethical, Newspaper

Introduction

Media institutions especially the newspapers are agents of socialization. In essence, their operations are expected to be on the foundations of social services. On emphasis, media institutions are not primarily expected to focus on generating profit margins. But the perspective of media social service has since gone with the onslaught of economic recessions across many nations, including Nigeria. Su (2008) writes that newspapers and magazines are significantly affected by economic downturns due to their considerable reliance on retail and classified advertising.

These days, the setting up of a typical newspaper requires capital intensive printing machines and computer processing appliances. It is also from huge funds that newspapers are expected to pay for rents, maintain poll vehicles, settle electricity bills, pay salaries of administrative and editorial staff and engage in community relations. Katejri (2014) says that the work of media conglomerates in the United States, U.S. since the 1980s has been affected by massive cuts in budgets. It is no longer a truism that no newspaper house expects to break even without taking into consideration the many heads and sub heads of expenses standing against it daily. In this circumstance, newspaper publishers and editors have to look for sources of

funds to do required services. The main sources of fund for newspapers come from advertising and advertorials.

Media organizations survive largely on advertising revenues. Advertising revenue is akin to the blood veins of a living organism since the interplay of the forces of demand and supply for advertising space is critical to the wellbeing of any news organization. Generally, the advertising market from clients just as every economic venture has never been without stiff competitions. The saturated markets for advertising have caused newspaper publishers to engage trained and untrained advertising canvassers while most of the newspapers without special advertising canvassers woo correspondents to combine the search for news and advertising (Angulucci & Cage, 2016).

In Nigeria, it is not uncommon that most newspaper publishers tie the continuation in service of news correspondents and editors to the capacity and proportion of generating funds to the coffers of the institution. In the zeal to generate revenue and maintain status in media institutions, the editorial staffs often abandon the primary responsibilities and work against ethics of the journalism profession. Idris (2020) mentions that many news publishers have also develop alternative business models of attracting advertising to account for huge parts of revenue. Some of the advertising models leave editors and other staff exposed to vulnerable threats against editorial independence, advertising rules and morals of the public.

In order to escape from drought of funds and subsequent bankruptcy, newspaper publishers force editorial staff to accept the publication of any sort of advertising or advertorial irrespective of the contents in words or pictures. The core aspect of this research rest on examining the many forms of advertising published in newspapers, present best-practice example in media economic and advertising patterns, to suit public decency using Nigerian daily newspapers: *The Daily Sun* and *The Vanguard* as leading daily mainstream newspapers. It aims at helping newspapers adopt a model of advertising without inflicting harm to the decency of the public in spite of the economic downturn.

Statement of the Problem

The 2016 report by Media Research OMD showed that the Nigerian newspaper business operating costs had increased tremendously (Idris, 2020). It also indicated that the low purchasing power of the reading public had discouraged many brands from advertising in newspapers. A similar report in 2017 also showed that newspaper advertising yielded less than 20% of total advertising revenue in Nigeria. (Ekwujuru, 2017). Writing on advertising revenue in Nigeria, Guttman (2021) states that between 2018 and 2020 a reasonable chunk of advertising funds had come from television and video promotions rather than from newspapers and magazines.

Given this, newspaper publishers and editors in Nigeria became inclined to look for several sources to fund their operations. This has led to deviations by the acceptance of indecent advertising and advertorials on pages of newspapers and

magazines. The challenges of funds scarcity on Nigerian media industry are not far from the global recession and the effects of the corona virus lockdown that makes it difficult to have adequate advertising operational revenue. Notwithstanding the difficulties, the operators are still churning out copies and the returns are rather low with heaps of unsold copies.

It is observed that the newspapers are not appropriately utilizing some of its pages for advertorials and subscribed items. They rather indulge in the printing of trivial images, pictures of celebrities and syndicated advertorials and rejoinders which are neither paid for nor attract readers to pay for cover prices. The editors seem to ignore ethical considerations of Part 5(iii) of the ethics governing media practice on decency which states that a journalist should not present lurid details, either in words or picture, of violence, sexual acts, abhorrent or horrid scenes.

The fear is that the predicaments of newspapers without funds from advertising may cause an extinction of newspapers while the surviving ones may maintain staffs that encourage indecent contents at the detriment of public values. The statements of the problems are whether some of the advertising published by newspapers for purposes of revenue is suitable for public consumption. Or whether Nigerian newspaper advertising promote decency or immorality in the public?

Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study are:

1. Find out the sector that feature advertising most frequent in select Nigerian newspapers;
2. Determine the volume of advertising attracted by select Nigerian newspapers;
3. Find out the type of advertising that usually appear in select Nigerian newspapers;
4. Establish the outstanding mode or style of dressing by advertising promoters in Nigerian newspapers.

Research Questions

The purpose of this research is to answer the following questions:

1. Which of the sector feature advertising most frequent in select Nigerian newspapers?
2. What is the volume of advertising attracted by select Nigerian newspapers?
3. What is the type of advertising that usually appear in select Nigerian newspapers?
4. What has been the outstanding mode and style of dressing by advertising images in Nigerian newspapers?

Scope

The work is an analysis of advertising contents in the *Daily Sun* and the *Vanguard* newspapers to review trends in media economics base on public decency. The *Daily Sun* was picked due to the motto which is “the voice of the society.” The *Vanguard* was taken due to its motto “towards a better life for the people.” The period of

October 1, to December 31, 2020 was taken because it was the end of the quarter of a significant year for Nigeria as the country had turned 60. It was hoped that the advertising industry was to come together to partner with the media and the government to project the country positively to the world at large.

Theoretical Framework

Corporate Governance Theory

The study is also based on corporate governance theory, which is the system of rules, practices, and processes which a firm can be directed and controlled (Bezo and Dibra, 2020). Picard (2002, p. 2) defines corporate governance as “concerned with the owner and management relationships, distribution of power, and accountability in corporations. Governance structures and processes are inextricably linked to the environments which corporations’ exist and operate. Corporations are legal entities with specific rights and responsibilities, depending upon the nation which they are established, and whether shares are privately held or publicly traded”. Corporate governance theory assumes that higher transparency and trust between firms, investors and the public can be achieved through the establishment of principles, policies and practices for better financial performance (CalPERS 2004, OECD 2004, Carlsson 2001, Murschetz, 2006). The foundation of corporate governance can be traced to the pioneering work of Berle and Means (1932) who observed that once modern corporations have grown to very large sizes, they could establish a separate system of control from that of direct ownership (Cadbury 1992, Shleifer & Vishny 1997, Ruparelia & Njuguna, 2016).

This theory is relevant since in media management, managers are required to regularly review the financial health of their firms by the application of corporate governance principles. The reason is that financial data provide the key indicator of whether a firm is viable or not. Specifically, corporate governance theory has mainly been recommended for investments in media management and financial security (An & Jin, 2005).

Commitment – Trust Theory

More so, it is also based on commitment trust theory of relationship marketing propounded by Morgan and Hunt in 1994. On the commitment - trust theory of relationship marketing, Wang (2009) expatiates that the success of an enterprise does not depend only on subjective decisions but on the values and satisfaction the product or service provides the customers. Commitment - trust relationship marketing is by establishing satisfactory long-term relationships with customers rather than turning out brands of substandard products to customers.

The importance of this theory is that in media management, it can help the media institutions to gain the trust of the advertisers and the readers. It can also bring the implementation of models of committed relationship with entrepreneurs, in anticipation to convince payments for stockpiled volumes of advertising even in the economic downturn. In addition, it can help newspapers to maintain policies of publishing only decent advertising that are not offensive to emotions of readers and entrepreneurs.

Literature Review

Development of media in Nigeria

The print media is the oldest and earliest nontraditional media in Nigeria by the establishment of “Iwe-Iroyin Fun Awon Ara Egbaati Yoruba,” literally meaning, (the book of news For Egba people and Yorubas). The maiden issue of the newspaper hit Abeokuta on December 3, 1859. Salawu (2015) notes that the contents of IweIrohin focused on a wide range of issues from reports of births, deaths, parish activities departure and arrival of gospel ministers, baptisms, confessions, communal civic services, produce prices and statistics, politics, announcements and advertising.

The newspaper made great impacts on the publics within the communities but the publishers realized early that sales revenue was not enough to sustain the publications, and as such needed to develop the interest of advertiser for the advertising in the newspapers. This was a revenue generating motive (Egede, 2013). Ojebuyi & kolawale (2016) argues that Nigerian newspapers do not fare well in social responsibilities and development roles. The newspapers give more attention to the urban centers at the neglect of the rural sections while they place monetary value on the scanty events they report from the rural sections. This has affected the psyche and output of local manufacturers as there is a total advertising blackout for products in rural areas.

From sponsored contents to fillers, journalism in Nigeria is no longer a social service. The journalists in league with the employers have made journalism a form of theatre, played out for the benefit of the highest bidders. Udoakah (2014) notes that since the advent of news commercialization, money, more than newsworthiness or public interest, has remained the principal factor in media access and news selection in Nigeria. The case of advertising influenced by the money bags against the interest of the public cannot be ruled out in the daily search for funds by media institutions. Nwaubani (2015) adds that the Nigerian media has become a thriving arena for all sorts of sponsored items, in which newspapers are paid to keep big stories off the front page by the influence of advertisers.

Trends of Media Economics

Media economics is a term referring to business transactions and financial activities of various media industries. It consists of studying the application of economic principles, concepts, and theories of macro and micro economic aspects to fit media companies (Shameer, 2015). In the same way, Hameer (2021) defines media economics as a field of study that is concerned with how media operators meet the informational and entertainment wants and needs of audiences, advertisers and society with available resources.

Furthermore, Albarran (2004) provides a rationale for the study of media economics, as an understanding of the behavior of media firms, media markets, and consumers when answering questions such as why did one company merge with another. Siegert, Gabriele; Rimscha, Bjørn (2013) remark that the consumption of

media contents can have positive external and negative external effects on the choice of news and at the same time in the citizens exhibiting of behavior. Both effects are largely the products of media content controlled by the owners and the advertisers.

Media and Advertising in Nigeria

The way the media of mass information operate in Nigeria is a the atrical picture of what has become of the Nigerian society and its institutions. The proprietors can rightly be said to be political businessmen and adventurers meddling with editorial affairs. Kadhi (2000) observes that newspaper proprietors in Anglophone Africa (including Nigeria) seem to have succeeded in making puppets out of their editors. They seem to have also succeeded in commanding total control of their newspapers. The sense is that newspaper owners are individuals with wealth but no talent to produce newspapers; and editors are men and women of great journalistic talent but no wealth to produce newspapers. This contradiction makes it difficult for newspapers to survive in the market. Picard (2000) sums up that the most prominent trend in current media development is the growing conglomeration of media ownership dinosaurs witnessed across the globe.

The primary purposes of media proprietors start and end up in piling up profits, and competing for societal status with one another. In the print, many are without known addresses and they publish just for a living. They have no capacity to employ labour, and contents are apologies to the profession. The Nigerian news media industry is deemed as one of the leading industries in Africa. In spite of status, it is plagued with economic challenges. Consequently, privately owned media outlets without government subventions and huge advertising have short-life span in Nigeria (Ojo, 2018).

Njoku (2017) says that print media challenges stem from the continued reliance on traditional revenue-generation models of seasonal advertising in Nigeria. This is a problem given that, advertising budgets have fallen at 30% average. Beyond this, there is a shift in how and where companies are willing to deploy advertising budgets and resources. In the position of Akinyemi (2020) most product and service brands prefer to allocate more budgets for advertising in electronic media channels excluding newspapers. He explains that fresh brands prefer public relations marketing mix, social media and digital marketing to reach a wider audience. Sutcliffe (2019) states that brands and advertisers are investing less and less money in the print format, with the vast majority of advertisements spending going to digital formats. Johnson (2021) explains that advertising is a means of communication with the users of a product or service. Advertising messages are paid for and are intended to inform or influence message receivers.

Types of advertising

The major types of advertising are: Product Advertising, Public service advertising and institutional advertising. Product advertising appears in all media. It is financed by a company or organisation to sell a product or service. This type of advertising creates in the potential consumer the desire for a product or service. Product

advertising is probably the most common type of advertising and is the lifeblood of agency operations (Sugget, 2020).

Public service advertising is a kind of advertising that supports non-profit causes by organisations in the interest of the public. This kind of advertising usually concerns public issues of safety, health campaign, or environment. They are usually paid for by companies, which want to be seen as good corporate citizens. Nureeva (2015) states that public service advertising informs the public to be wary of deceptive advertising against public good and welfare.

Institutional advertising is part of public relations package of a company, designed to brighten perception among the public. Usually, oil companies and multinational companies engage in institutional advertising of giving clean environment and care for the vulnerable groups in the society, which they want the public to be aware of. Some companies advertise some roads, which they construct in cities (Bhasin, 2018).

Newspaper Contents and Advertising

First and foremost, newspapers are known for the giving of news, views, ideas, interpretation of opinions, comments and explanations covering social, economic, political, educational, moral, cultural, ecological and legal aspects. But deeply, of all the media, newspapers are considered effective platforms for advertising as the most powerful message carrier. The total space content of a newspaper, of 60% goes to advertising and the rest for news items at 40% (Considine, 2016). Advertising through newspapers have advantages of wide reach to local, regional and national markets, people of all age groups and income levels, a sense of urgency, frequency and regularity, flexibility, and economical in acquisition. In spite of these newspaper advertising have disadvantages since many readers rush through newspapers hurriedly and fail to see the advertising deeply.

Review of Empirical Studies

In a previous work, on “Old and New Issues in Media Economics” Ballon (2014) notes that there is justification for media economics research since private enterprise media is as old as media itself. Ballon explicitly states that normative and cultural approaches of media affairs are generally given prominence over economic ones. The author says that media economics in contents, messages and symbolic publications are capable of exerting influence on the performance of media to the public.

He states that the economic sustainability of media industries are sufficiently important to justify the capacity of attaining diversity in the quality of contents, through the availability of independent funds for production.

In a similar work, “Newspapers in Times of Low Advertising Revenues” Angelucci and Cagé (2019) posits that large newspaper companies have steadily cut the employment of journalists causing concern about the ability to produce high-quality contents. They stressed that in the United States, the average number of journalists

per newspaper has decreased sharply from 39 in 2001 to 24 in 2015 as newspaper advertising revenues shrunk from nearly \$50 billion in 2000 to less than \$20 billion. The authors confirm that the newspaper industry is in a state of economic turmoil with decreased advertising revenues due to lowering advertisers' willingness to pay for pages. They mentioned that problem is connected to the rise of alternative advertising platforms from social media. The work concluded that there exists need to analyze the relationship between advertising revenues and newspapers' services regarding the volume, decency and quality of contents.

Methodology

Research Design

The research design was a content analysis of *the Daily Sun* and *Vanguard* newspapers. Hawkins (2013) states that content analysis is the systematic method of collating data, the sorting and comparing of different items for general results. It involves placing items on categories and reducing large data to reliable, accurate and objective results.

Population

The first set of population of this research was based on the existing number of newspapers circulating in Nigeria. Abana and Ashemi (2019) citing the Nigerian Press Commission, NPC, (2018) indicate that there are 310 national newspapers operating in Nigeria. The second set of population was the purposive selection of two newspapers: *The Daily Sun* and *Vanguard*. These two general interest newspapers typically publish advertising. The two select newspapers contributed 92 issues each between October 1 and December 31 2020, multiplied by 2 to get 184 copies, editions or issues as the population.

Sample and Sampling Technique

Wimmer and Dominick (2010) explain that the sample size may largely be determined by factors such as the type, purpose, complexity of study, the amount of acceptable sampling errors as well as time and financial constraints. A census method was applied where all the 184 editions of the newspapers were adopted. A census is a survey conducted on the full set of observation objects belonging to a given population or universe. A census is the complete enumeration of a population or groups at a point in time with respect to well defined characteristics (Dodge, 2003).

Nature/Sources of Data Collection

The research made use of data drawn from the published editions or issues of the two select newspapers: *the Daily Sun*, *Vanguard*, which provided original documents. A total of 1737 advertising contents were identified by two coders from the categorization of frequency, sector, volume, type, gender and dressing of advertising.

Data Analysis

The distribution of advertising in select newspapers showed that the Daily Sun had 752 or 43%, Vanguard 985 or 57% of the 1737 advertising within the period.

Table 1: Most frequent sector advertising frequent in select Nigerian newspapers

The	Sector	<i>Daily Sun</i>	<i>Vanguard</i>	Total	%
	Economy	71	275	346	20
	Politics	102	164	266	15
	Education	123	112	235	14
	Entertainment	456	434	890	51
	Total	752	985	1737	100

Table 1 shows that the entertainment sector attracted a higher number of advertising at 51% in the two newspapers, above economy, politics and education which had 49% in all. This means that the aspects of economy, and matters of education did not attract advertising revenue to newspapers except social and entertainment matters. The implication is that the economy witnessed a weak base.

Table 2: Volume of advertising on select Nigerian newspapers

Volume	<i>Daily Sun</i>	<i>Vanguard</i>	Total	%
Full page	103	190	293	17
½	210	298	508	29
¾	399	392	791	46
Others	40	105	145	8
Total	752	985	1737	100

Source: Data Coding 2021

Here, the advertisements seen on full pages stood at 17%. This is a poor standing compared to other advertising on pieces of spaces on newspapers. The full page advertising attracts higher revenue, yet the number attracted to newspapers was few. This means a lean financial purse to the newspapers.

Table 3: Types of advertising on Select Nigerian newspapers

Types	<i>Daily Sun</i>	<i>Vanguard</i>	Total	%
PSA	345	456	801	46
Institutional	306	404	710	41
Product	101	125	226	13
Total	752	985	1737	100

Source: Data Coding 2021

Data coded has it that public service advertising (PSA) was at 46% against institutional 41% and Product 13%. Public service advertising and institutional advertising were higher in number against product advertising. The implication is that Nigerians are interested in patronizing social matters and events rather than

inventions, discoveries. The public service advertising and institutional advertising are seasonal. This means that newspapers only have seasonal boom in revenue while keeping near treasuries over periods.

Table 4: Dominant Advertising Promoters mode of dressing

Mode	<i>Daily Sun</i>	<i>Vanguard</i>	Total	%
Nude	81	100	181	11
Dazzling	277	408	685	39
Standard	394	477	871	50
Total	752	985	1737	100

Source: **Data Coding 2021**

The dominant mode of dressing was standard at 50% against nude at 11% and dazzling 39%. This shows that advertising promoters do not have a special mode of dressing that reflects a culture of any section of the country. The style of dressing is also not too absurd since a combination of the nude at 11% and dazzling at 39% to arrive at 50% which also meets the standard mode of dressing at the same figure and percentage.

Discussion of Findings

This work began as a proposal to answer four different questions. It was concluded that the contents of newspapers are largely determined by advertisers. This is in line with Porlezza (2017) position that pressures from advertisers frequently influence contents of newspapers beyond economic interests. In a bid to please advertisers, media personnel fall short of social responsibilities to the society by violating codes of ethics in journalism practice.

The first question of this investigation referred to the specific sector that provides advertising revenue for newspapers. In the case studied, the economic sector advertising was not prominent with just 346 or 20% of the 1737. This makes it difficult for the advertising real-time selling of products to users. Other advertisements like obituary, social activities appear in the newspapers. These are advertising from social sector. This one-sided position needs a reverse to the profitability of media institutions. Typically, Linchpin (2021) means that advertisements are placed on specific sections of newspapers depending on what products or services that are selling especially in sports products or as it applies to each category of product that may be largely required without deadlines, sizing and formats.

Secondly, the research objective aimed to find out the types of advertising that appear much on full pages, half pages, quarter pages or others. With data evidence, though advertising are expected to be on competitive strategy to attract huge sources of income for newspapers, much of the advertising were not on full pages to attract much revenue. Incidentally, many of the advertising were on half pages which cost less to the advantage of advertisers and to the loss of the newspapers. Hence, full page advertising were 293 or 17%. This reduces the ability of newspapers to make more money for overheads. This study was at variance to

Oyekunle and Tiamiyu (2010), Oniyide (2010) study findings which found out that full page adverts dominate other sizes in newspapers. This explains reflections on the perception of the advertisers that a full page advert is more attractive and captivating to the audience.

In the third aspect, it was to know the type of advertising that usually appear in select Nigerian newspapers. From the coded data it shows that most of the advertisements on newspapers are not on products and services. On this, Omotayo (2016) explains that majority of the firms advertising products could not afford the high cost of frequent adverts, and observed that low advertisements on product content was an indication that the industrial sectors and markets are underdeveloped in Nigeria. This study retains the position that social activities advertising ranging from obituaries, birthdays, announcements, award ceremonies, congratulatory messages and other classified rejoinders, caveats outnumber other types of advertising. This was not unconnected with the closing of shops by existing mega industries, consequently affecting the funds of media industries. The 801 or 46% PSA advertising reflected the mode of the festive period which the research was carried out.

Lastly, on the outstanding form of dressing by advertising promoters in select Nigerian newspapers, analysis showed that the promoters prefer wearing standard dressing at 871 or 50% while dazzling and nude styles of dresses and outfits also competed to make a combined figure of 685 or 39% and 181 or 11% respectively. In spite of the fact that the journalism profession abhors publishing of indecent pictures and photographs, the newspapers could not resist the temptations of collecting monies and sending the messages and the objects to the public without much of editing. Obeku (2015) agrees that celebrity dressing endorsements have become one of the most prevalent forms of advertising globally, since people are likely to patronise products endorsed by celebrities than those that are not. It is no gainsaying also that the advertising monitoring and regulatory agencies are mere toothless bull dogs lacking capacities of sanctioning newspapers for publishing indecent pictures under the guise of seeking for advertising funds to survive in the media industry.

Recommendations

1. Newspapers are to develop measures and incentives that can lure advertisers to place more products and services advertising to the awareness of users on full pages and the boosting of the economy.
2. Newspapers have to establish strong partnership with firms for upfront payments on advertisements of public service rather than waiting for piecemeal seasonal social and classified entertainment adverts.
3. Newspapers have to accord adaptable media economics and business model innovations the right of place as ways to survive in an ever-changing competitive environment.

4. Newspapers are obliged to addressing matters of obscene advertising through effective editing and also encourage the use of male advertising promoters on products and service brands.

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