

CREATIVITY AS A MEANS OF ENHANCING THE SURVIVAL AND SUSTAINABILITY OF NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES IN NIGERIA

Gbaden Jacob Chiakaan

*Department Of Mass Communication,
Nasarawa State Polytechnic,
Lafia, Nasarawa State.*

and

Jubrin Ibrahim Ahmad

*Department Of Mass Communication,
Nasarawa State Polytechnic,
Lafia, Nasarawa State.*

Abstract

Creativity is what must be embraced by people in all areas of human endeavours. This is premised on the believability that without creativity, there will be no innovations in society. This implies that the society will be stagnated without creativity. This paper, however, is inclined to creativity in the print media of newspaper and magazine. Dwelling on the mass communication theory of selectivity, the paper made a case for the embracement and application of creativity by editors, sub-editors and other people involved in the production of these print media. Specifically, the paper held that since the world is dynamic as a product of creativity and innovations, the print media industry must also be creative to stand the taste of time. The paper recommended effective training for print media operators so that they will be creative and innovative at any given time.

Key Words: Creativity, Innovations, Newspaper, Magazine, Media and Communication.

Newspapers and magazines are channels of mass communication. They are agents of mass communication which, according to Rabi (2013:197) are referred to as print. Fundamentally,

these media, like others, exist to attain certain objectives. These objectives, among others, include: to inform, educate and entertain members of the public. In order to achieve these, newspapers and magazines carry news

Creativity as a Means of Enhancing the Survival and Sustainability of Newspapers and Magazines in Nigeria - Gbaden Jacob Chiakaan and Jubrin Ibrahim Ahmad

in words and pictures. They also carry advertising messages. Since they exist to serve the people, it therefore means that they need the patronage of the people. Incidentally, these print media are faced with a terribly fierce competition in the pluralistic media world. They are also faced with the problem of competing elements for space. Newspapers and magazines are also facing the problem of physical appearance to attract attention and patronage. All these require newspaper and magazine practitioners or publishers applicability of certain fundamental attractive and patronizing strategies, one such exigent strategies is creativity. This is what forms the thrust of this paper.

Creativity, Newspaper and Magazine: A Conceptual Approach

There are many definitions of the concept of creativity. One of such available definitions is the one offered by Csikszentmihaly (2014:396) on www.google.com which says creativity is the tendency to generate or recognize ideas, alternatives or possibilities that may be useful in solving problems, communicating with others and entertaining ourselves and others. Franken (2014) defined creativity as “an act, idea, or product that changes an existing domain or that transforms an existing domain into a new one.” What counts is whether the novelty he or she produces is accepted for inclusion in the domain (www.google.com).

Specifically, what can be derived from these few definitions

presented above is the fact that creativity involves imagination which results in changes that improve on what is already in existence. This implies that people use their original ideas to improve on what is already in existence to make it more meaningful and relevant to others. On this note, we can even agree with those who define creativity as the use of one’s imagination or one’s original ideas to produce a work.

From the foregoing discourse, it can still be perceived that there is a nexus between creativity and innovation. This is because creativity can give birth to innovations. From a definitive perspective, innovation “is the implementation of a new or significantly improved product, service or process that creates value for business, government or society” (www.google.com). From the ideological perspective of mass communication, however, creativity is the act of imagining or using original ideas to bring about innovations in the media industry. It is the generation and application of new ideas aimed at improving on the performance and patronage of the mass media involving radio, television, newspapers, magazines and so on.

Concept of Newspaper and Magazine

Newspapers and magazines are agents of mass communication. Sambe (2005:34) defined them as “means of transmitting agents or structures within the mass communication process.” Other channels or agents of mass

Creativity as a Means of Enhancing the Survival and Sustainability of Newspapers and Magazines in Nigeria - Gbaden Jacob Chiakaan and Jubrin Ibrahim Ahmad

communication include radio, television, internet, books and so on. Chiakaan and Ahmad (2014:37) explained that the media of mass communication are specifically classified into two categories. These include print and electronic or broadcast media. The print media are called so because they use printed symbols in form of words and pictures in order to communicate information to the general public. Ciboh and Iyorkyaa (2004:1) posited that the print media are so called due to their ability to appeal to the sense of sight only. Newspapers and magazines belong to the print media. Other media in this category are books, billboards, pamphlets, direct mails and so on. Electronic media, on the other hand include radio, television, internet, and so on. These make use of electromagnetic waves in transmitting messages.

Even though newspapers and magazines are print media performing same functions, from a definitive perspective, they are not same. Sandman, Rubin and Sachsman (1976) in Sambe (2014:1) defined a newspaper as an unbound, printed publication issued at regular intervals, which presents information in words, often supplemented with pictures. Another definition of newspaper was offered by the Danish Union of Newspaper Publishers and Editors (1964) in Sambe (2003:12). The union defined newspaper as a local, regional or national printed periodically appearing daily or several times a week, taken by readers in subscription or bought on single copies.

From the foregoing discourse, it can be deduced that a newspaper is not a bound printed publication that is regularly published.

A magazine, on the other hand, is a bound publication; it is a bound pamphlet issued more or less regularly containing a variety of reading matters. A magazine, apart from being bound, is a print medium which carries information on different items published less regularly than a newspaper. Dominick (1996) in Chiakaan and Ahmad (2014:60) attested to this submission as they stated that in colonial times, the word magazine meant warehouse or depository; a place where various types of provisions were stored under roof. Magazine usually has a cover.

Why Creativity in Newspaper and Magazine

If newspapers and magazines are not patronized, their essence of existing will be defeated. For newspapers and magazines to gain patronage, their producers must employ creativity. Creativity, in this regard, becomes the hallmark for the successful operation of these print media of mass communication. There are numerous reasons why creativity is imperative for newspaper and magazine production. Some of them include:

Advancement in Technology:

Advancement in technology and communication in the modern world requires changes in the creation or

Creativity as a Means of Enhancing the Survival and Sustainability of Newspapers and Magazines in Nigeria - Gbaden Jacob Chiakaan and Jubrin Ibrahim Ahmad

production of newspapers and magazines too. Editors need creativity or new ideas to produce newspapers and magazines that can suit the current trend in the highly advanced communication technological world in which they operate. The technology being referred to is the computer which has given birth to internet and social media. Jobs carried out by editors or sub-editors in producing newspapers and magazines before are reduced now with the coming of information and communication technology. Sambe (2014:107) supporting this view, stated that:

The publishing industry has continued to experience much changes occasioned by advances in information and communication technology in the area of copy writing, reporting, editing, page making, filming, the industry has witnessed a revolution, thanks to the technological advances.

With the new technology, better and more improved quality productions are guaranteed. Sub-editors that intend to produce newspaper and magazine copies that must attract patronage of readers in this modern era must develop corresponding creative ideas. Contributing to this discourse, Ogunwale (1997:121) also declared that “from all ramifications, the modern African sub-editor has come to terms with the reality of this high technology age. His daily life is influenced with electronic technology in all forms from domestic appliances--” He further stated that:

The vast outlay of computer is no longer an object of awe and mystery scarecrow! It is a trade tool just like any other materials that he must handle, juggle or manipulate in the course of discharging his work-a-day duties. As a matter of fact, the sub-editor’s job has undergone a change for the better in view and what modern technology can grant him. His interaction with his reporters and indeed the entire world is easier and swift. Breaking news and information is now at his doorstep (122).

Ogunwale’s submissions are all still supportive to the position that modern producers of newspapers and magazines need creative skills to match the new information technological world order.

Ogundale’s views were further supported by Okoye (2000:186) who appreciated the fact that the computer is built on the platform of the principles of speed, access, multi-task and security. The computer itself is a product of creativity. The essence of this new technology is to bring innovations that will improve on the communication system for man’s interest.

For Aesthetics: Aesthetics is that which appeals to the sense of beauty or good taste. Newspapers and magazines do not just inform, they also entertain. Chiakaan and Ahmad (2014:44) providing a view similar to the one in this paper, stated thus:

The entertainment function of the mass media is premised on the adage that “all

Creativity as a Means of Enhancing the Survival and Sustainability of Newspapers and Magazines in Nigeria - Gbaden Jacob Chiakaan and Jubrin Ibrahim Ahmad

work and no play makes jack a dull boy.” Bombarding people in society with information without making provision for recreation and refreshment is likely to produce an unfavourable result from them.

The writer of an article who is not creative in his choice of words may be writing and presenting articles that are not entertaining; articles that are dull to readers. The physical appearance of newspapers and magazines must be appealing to readers' eyes. When they appear dull, they may not be appealing to the taste of beauty. Some readers may not patronise such papers.

Competition Among Elements for Space: Both newspapers and magazines are made up of elements. These elements include pictures, colour, news stories, advertising messages, name plates and so on. These elements all compete for attention for limited space in newspapers and magazines. To place these elements in the scarce available space needs creativity on the part of the editor or sub-editor. Creativity is required to achieve balance, contrast, proportion, harmony, unity and rhythm. Editors that lack sound imaginative sense can find it difficult to prepare make-ups for these print media that can bring to bear these principles.

In short, creativity is required for the make-up of newspapers and magazines. Make-up in this context was viewed by Okoye (2000:113) as the arrangement of the newspaper pages by

putting together elements that can go into the pages in a manner to achieve unity and attraction as a whole.

Editors that lack creative and innovative ideas can produce newspaper and magazine pages that are clustered and gray. This implies that some pages will be overcrowded with stories and pictures while others will be clean. This also implies that such editors can use some headlines and typefaces that are unpleasing; they can use small and dark pictures with little white spaces between the columns or between stories. Such pages, Sambe (2014: 29) noted are usually uninviting to many readers.

Nose for News: A good reporter who works for newspaper and magazine is the one who uses his knowledge of creativity to determine what is news in a situation he comes across. When a journalist is creative, he is said to have nose for news. Now that there are many means of getting people informed, now that the world has been reduced to a global village consequent upon technological breakthrough in communication, newspapers and magazines must strive to create news out of what people have already been told. This is very important for patronage. Achieving this requires nose for news which is partly a product of creativity.

Dynamism of the World Itself: The simple fact that changes keep on occurring in the world means that newspaper and magazine producers need to be creative and innovative to stand the

taste of time. This is very important as it makes them part and parcel of the environment in which they exist for patronage.

Theoretical Framework

There are many theories which are related to the topic of our discussion here in one way or the other. The presenters however, adapt one theory of mass communication referred to as theory of selectivity. This theory, according to Folarin (1998:63) is one of the minimally powerful media theories. The minimally powerful media theories are direct opposite of the powerfully effect media theories. Chiakaan and Ahmad (2014:108-109) referred to them as active audience and passive audience theories.

Specifically, the passive audience theories consider consumers of media products as not having the power to resist the influence of the media on them. In sharp contrast, the active-audience theories believe that the media have no power to magically exercise influence on their audience. That the ability of the people to be influenced by the media is premised on perceived benefits they can derive from them.

It is on this note that the selective theory which is one of the active audience theories is felt to be relevant to our discussion here. Providing explanation to the theory, Folarin (1998:63-64) says the theory is of three stages through which consumers of media products pass before taking a decision of patronizing media products

or not. These include selective exposure, selective attention and selective retention.

When people are exposed to information or media products that interest them in one way or the other, they are likely to pay attention to what they are out to offer them. This is what Folarin referred to as selective attention. After patronizing the media, they cannot retain or remember every message or information they have acquired, they can retain only the information that suits their needs.

The theory of selectively, from the foregoing discourse, may not be wholly suitable to this paper; it is nevertheless, related in one way or the other to it. People tend to value current fashion more than outdated one. Newspaper and magazine producers who are not creative and innovative to match up with the current technological world, can, no doubt, be left behind. Moreover, people will be more attracted to newspapers and magazines that are beautifully designed and produced than those that are dull and uninteresting in physical appearance.

Conclusion

Creativity appears to be a very fundamental ingredient for the survival and development of society as a whole. This belief is based on the fact that if there is no creativity, positive changes in the world for the betterment of man cannot occur. Since this is the case, newspapers and magazines and the whole media industry must embrace

Creativity as a Means of Enhancing the Survival and Sustainability of Newspapers and Magazines in Nigeria - Gbaden Jacob Chiakaan and Jubrin Ibrahim Ahmad

creativity. Without creativity, innovative ideas that can improve on the quantity and quality of media products given the technological changes in the society can be neglected.

Recommendations

Based on what this paper has discussed, the following recommendations are hereby offered:

Frequent Training: Frequent training programmes should be organized for media practitioners particularly those in the print industry to equip them with more creative skills.

Constant Reading: People in the print media industry should be committed to reading constantly and broadly. This can make them to be exposed to new ideas that can strike them more with creative and innovative ideas.

Computer Literacy: It is not surprising that some people operating in the print media industry are yet to be computer literate. This is not good. Everybody in the media particularly, those operating in the industry of newspaper and magazine should strive to be effective in the usage of computer. This is very important especially now that the world has been globalized. The globalized world offers more creative and innovative ideas to media operators,

References

- Chiakaan, G.J and Ahmad J.I (2015). *Mass Communication for Beginners*. Makurdi: Azaben Publishers.
- Folarin, B. (1998). *Theories of Mass Communication: An Introductory Text*. Ibadan: Stirling Holden Publishers, Nigeria Ltd.
- Franken, R. (2014). *Flow and Psychology Discovery and Innovation*. www.google.com. Retrieved on 1st July, 2015.
- Ogunwale, T. (1990). *Modern Sub-Editing*. Enugu: Acena Ventures Ltd.
- Okoye, I. (2007). *Newspaper Editing and Production in the Computer Age*. Lagos: Mbeyi and Associates (Nig) Ltd.
- Rabiu, M.S. (2013). *The world of News: Career Prospects in Journalism and Mass Communication*. Ibadan: Sterling Horden Publishers Ltd.
- Sambe, J.A (2005). *Introduction to mass Communication practice in Nigeria*. Ibandan: Spectrum Books Ltd.
- Sambe, A.S. (2014). *A Guide to Newspaper Production*. Makurdi: Samphil Communications Ltd.