



WHY IS THE PRESS LIKE THIS? THE ASCENT OF A MODEL FROM A PRACTICE

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ABSTRACT: *The study introduced a model titled, Funding and Economic Practice of the Catholic Press in Nigeria to the academic community. It is divided into three aspects: strong, weak, and no initiative practice. It captures the inherent behaviour of the workforce as depicted by values from the top. The method deploys both key-informant interviews and focus group discussions to seek direction from historical and professional figures. Research findings show some historical pitfalls that gave direction to the theory's framework. Therefore, the study recommends that such historical insight is germane to future efforts to develop the Catholic press. Both weak and no initiative practices are symptomatic of the pitfall. The strong initiative practice has predictive and futuristic significance for press development. It is significant in emphasising the place of advertisement in contemporary newspapering. No newspaper business will survive without it, but we should limit our search for patrons to wealthy Catholics who understand ecclesiastical culture and ethics.*

KEYWORDS: Catholic press, model, economic practice, strong initiative.



INTRODUCTION

What the researcher does in this study is to examine the Catholic press in Nigeria as an operational system that works in three aspects. None of the aspects can stand alone without the Catholic press losing its nature as an entity; the three aspects are somewhat intertwined. This means the line separating one aspect from the other is both imaginary and blurred. This model captures the inherent behaviour of the workforce as depicted by the values from the top. In the model, the ideal practice is benign, even though the present and the future stares us in the face without notice. The Catholic press is an ensemble of publications including newspapers, magazines, and newsletters, educational and pastoral materials. When the missionaries arrived in the country, they availed themselves of publications from Europe. From 1862 when the Society of African Missions of Lyon (SMA) arrived in Nigeria, these publications impacted the missionaries in no small way. It later impacted the locals too. For instance, the bible, breviary, and other prayer books became integral parts of their praying/spiritual experience.

The bible and hymn book became an integral part of the community liturgy. With the French-Igbo dictionary, they had a more functional social life. The foreign newspapers and magazines enhanced their leisure experience (Trichet, 2016; Akodu, 2023). The rulebooks ensured a well-ordered religious experience. They routinely used these books to enhance their life, enhance their collective identity, and reinforce beliefs. Such a high level of understanding of media helped them to appreciate its role in society. They kept relating back home to order new editions of these publications, which came out periodically. At this point in history, they had the prerogative of the bible and other media, but they wanted the locals to also have the media at their beck and call. To actualise this goal, they established the first printing press in Asaba in 1900 (Akodu, 2023). The coming of the first printing press signalled the end of the first fragment of media impact.

The second fragment started with the publishing of printed materials for use of mission, and so 24 years later, Leo Taylor established the first newspaper in Lagos, titled *Catholic Herald Newspaper*. The SMA also established *Catholic Weekly Independent* in Ibadan on August 14, 1960 (Akodu, 2023). They established printing presses in places where the periodicals were domiciled. They employed foreign professionals to work at the presses and serve in the periodicals. These foreigners impacted Nigerians who worked at the presses and those who served at the periodicals (Dianne, 2007). Such Nigerians enjoyed increased capacity at their duty posts. Training, though, was informal and on-the-job (Akodu, 2023). The experience that started small has yielded many publications, though some have folded up as a result of financial and management issues.

This chain of economic activities that is geared towards production, services, and profitability is the focus of this study. It seeks to introduce to the academic community the economic model describing the operational practice in three ways.



Objectives of Study

The objectives guiding this study include the following:

1. To examine the evolution of funding challenges faced by the Catholic press in Nigeria from 1900 to 2019
2. To develop and present a conceptual model of the Catholic press in Nigeria, highlighting its structure, nature, and implication for publications' development.

Significance of Study

This study has the capacity to help shape the operational practice of Catholic publications in Nigeria in order to achieve business growth, profitability and sustainability in the market. It also has the capacity to redirect the workforce and management of Catholic publications to the pitfalls that characterised business operations in the past. The model has the capacity to predict the future by encouraging stock-taking and necessary adjustments towards professionalism and loyalty to the public in order to achieve business success.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Political Economy of Media

In 1994, Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky introduced a theory into the academic community titled *Propaganda Model of Media Control* in their book *Manufacturing Consent-The Political Economy of Mass Media*. This theory became a seminar as its predictions matched the reality of contemporary media usually characterised by media bias. According to Herman and Chomsky, media bias is skewed in favour of the elites as they own the means of production. The class called elites therefore may include owners of media and advertisers. Therefore, they control media institutions because they own material instruments of production. Media bias must favour their interests. Even though the term 'political economy of media' was nonexistent during Karl Marx's lifetime, he discusses the role of media and communication in relation to capitalism in his works. In his work titled *The German Ideology* (1846) Marx and Friedrich Engels argue that the ruling class controls the means of production, including the means of mental production, such as media and ideas.

They argue that media become a tool to maintain power and shape public opinion. This idea is in sync with Herman and Chomsky who insist that the elites deploy the media to take their interest through the channel to the public. The media help the elite to reshape news into a form that conforms to their interest (Virilio, 2005). They do this perhaps through their gatekeeping function and agenda setting. By influencing the public concerning what to think about, they indirectly influence public opinion. However, proponents of agenda setting argue that the media do not foist those influences on public opinion as an everyday man still has the right to hold an independent opinion. The media only set an agenda after all opinion leaders also set an agenda for the public through interpersonal interaction.

In another work, *Das Kapital*, Marx reveals the intention of a capitalist system in the relationship between elites and media. According to him, the relationship is geared towards enforcing commodity fetishism. In commodity fetishism, the value of a product is attributed to



its market value rather than its actual usefulness or the labour that went into producing it. This attribution creates a “fetish” where social relationships between people become hidden behind relationships between things (commodities) (Bon, 2013; Todd, 2012). As a result, people start to see each other and themselves in terms of their relationship to commodities, rather than as human beings with social connections and relationships. In terms of human disengagement, commodity fetishism leads to the following:

1. **Alienation:** People become disconnected from their labour, their fellow humans, and their own humanity.
2. **Reification:** Social relationships are treated as things, rather than as dynamic and changing interactions.
3. **Obscuring of power relations:** The focus on commodities hides the exploitation and power dynamics between capitalists and workers (Choubassi, Sharara & Khayat, 2020).

Marx argues that commodity fetishism is a fundamental aspect of capitalist ideology, masking the true nature of social relationships and perpetuating exploitation. How does commodity fetishism apply to information or news? It applies in several ways:

- Information is treated as a commodity to be bought, sold, and traded, rather than as a social good or a means of knowledge sharing.
- Information is often valued based on its scarcity or exclusivity, rather than its usefulness or relevance.
- Information is packaged and branded to create a marketable product, hiding the social relationships and labour involved in its creation.
- The work of information producers, such as writers, researchers, and editors, is often invisible or undervalued.
- Information is controlled and owned by corporations or individuals, limiting access and creating power imbalances.
- Commodity fetishism in information can perpetuate dominant ideologies and reinforce existing power structures.
- Personal data is harvested, packaged, and sold, often without users’ knowledge or consent, creating a new form of exploitation.

Commodity fetishism creates an undemocratic environment for information sharing where managers of information have to kowtow to capitalist power. They (owners of newspapers, editors, and journalists) do this by attracting advertising revenue, which enables the capitalist to control information/news production and management. The capitalists, who most often double as advertisers, become the patrons of the newspaper house (Herman and Chomsky, 1994). The newspaper house, thus cannot afford to ignore their complaints. If they do, they will lose the close and beneficial relationship they enjoy. They will lose patronage. The newspaper house can afford to ignore readers’ complaints, but certainly not that of advertisers (Botton, 2005). This is a result of the undemocratic environment in which newspapers operate,



which is bereft of humanity as it reinforces and perpetuates dominant ideologies of the powerful in society (Dunne & Cluley, 2012).

METHODOLOGY

Study design: A good theory must be supported by empirical observation and backed by evidence. The author employed Personal Observation, Key-informant Interview, Focus Group Discussion (FGD), and Documentary evidence to build this model. The major secondary data, though not sole data, employed was the document titled, “The Catholic Press of Nigeria Prospects: An Evaluation of *The Independent*, *The Leader*, and *Catholic Life*, Proposals for the Establishment of a National Catholic Print Media Programme”. This is a major document central to the phenomenon of interest. The other documents ranged from reports, books, newspapers, minutes of meetings, diaries, interventions and other documents the Catholic community in Nigeria produced in relation to the press-related activities of the Church from the past to the present.

Population of Study

The population of this study comprises key historical figures among the laity and hierarchy of the Catholic Church in Nigeria.

Sample Procedure/Sample Size

The researcher adopted a purposive sampling technique to select eight historical figures from the hierarchy and laity of the Church. The criteria for selecting interview respondents include their status as known historical figures in the Church. Their knowledgeable understanding of the issues counts. For instance, the list contained three bishops, one took over a diocese and newspaper from a missionary, another a cardinal of the Church and he took over a diocese from the founder of a newspaper, and the third was a communication scholar of note. There are three priests on the list, one took over a publication from a missionary as editor, another the secretary of Nigerian bishops after the civil war, and the third is a communication scholar of note. One of the laymen in the list is well entrenched in Catholic publications history. He is also a journalist. The other one works with the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC). Their wealth of experience made them relevant to the study.

For the FGD, those considered include members of the Catholic Media Practitioners Association of Nigeria (CAMPAN), which is the professional body of Catholics working in both Catholic press and secular media outfits in Nigeria. Twenty of them were purposively selected to participate in two sessions of discussion held on December 13 and 15, 2019 in Osogbo and Lagos respectively.

**Table 1: Structure and Dates for FGD**

Date	LGA	Location of FGD	Number of participants
December 13, 2019	Osogbo Local Govt	Social Communications Office, Bishop's Court, Osogbo	9
December 15, 2019	Ikeja Local Govt	St. Agnes Catholic Church, Maryland, Lagos	11

Total number of participants: 20 *Source: Fieldwork (2019)*

Table 2: Structure of FGD sample by Gender, Education and Profession

COUNTRY SAMPLE	FGD1	FGD2
Men	8	5
Women	1	6
Educated	9	11
Journalist	5	10
Journalist and Lecturer	4	1
Talkative	5	5
Reserve	4	6
Catholic newspaper Editors	1	1
Catholics in the press	8	10
No of Participants	9	11

Source: Fieldwork (2019)

Sampling Technique: The sampling technique used is purposive sampling. This technique entails the researcher deliberately selecting what constitutes his sample based on some predetermined purposes or aims that his study hopes to achieve. The purposive sampling method was used in selecting the historical figures due to the following reasons:

1. Closeness to newspaper culture and practice
2. Professional competence in matters of the press
3. Historical affiliation with the Church
4. Availability and Age.

Method of Data Analysis

The researcher adopted thematic analysis to analyse data from both the interviews and FGD (Braun and Clarke, 2006). However, some insights from Ritchie, Spencer, and O'Connor (2003) on using a 'thematic chart' in qualitative analysis supported this analysis process. The researcher manually identified quotes/expressions that appeared relevant to the research questions. He then arranged related quotes/expressions into piles (categories) (Ryan and Bernard, 2003). The researcher then put related categories into themes. The ideas outside the already sorted categories are put under a new category on and on (Boyatzis, 1998; Fielding, 2008; Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). After sorting out relevant themes and categories, the



researcher performed electronic cutting and sorting of those quotes/expressions with the aid of Microsoft Word functions.

Table 3A: Structure of Key-informant sample by Gender, Demography, Profession, Vocation and Status

Country Sample	Respondent 1	Respondent 2	Respondent 3	Respondent 4
Gender	Male	Male	Male	Male
Demography	Elderly	Elderly	Elderly	Elderly
Profession	_	_	Journalist	Journalist
Vocation	Clergy	Clergy	_	Clergy
Status	Alive	Alive	Alive	Alive

Age bracket: 70+ (Elderly) 45-59 (Middle Aged). *Source: Fieldwork (2019)*

Table 3B: Structure of Key-informant sample by Gender, Demography, Profession, Vocation and Status

Country sample	Respondent 5	Respondent 6	Respondent 7	Respondent 8
Gender	Male	Male	Male	Male
Demography	Elderly	Middle Aged	Middle Aged	Middle Aged
Profession	Communication Expert	Communication Expert	Communication Expert	Lawyer
Vocation	Clergy	Clergy	Clergy	_
Status	Deceased	Alive	Alive	Alive

Age bracket: 70+ (Elderly) 45-59 (Middle Aged). **Source:** *Fieldwork (2019)*

RESULTS

Table 4: Themes and their categories

THEME	CATEGORIES
Institution	Authority, Owner, Proprietor, Policymaker, Newsmaker, Financier (Budget, Legal Structure), Image-maker, Regulator
Individual (Personal) Choices	Initiative, Attentive, Bad Choices, Good Choices, Applause, Condemnation
Religion	Catholic Precept, doctrine, concept, riddle
Environment	Terrorism, Secularism, Interaction, Secularising news Content
Government Policy	Infrastructural deficit
Structure	Organogram, System, (Full) Commercial, (Semi) Commercial, Non-profit



Content	Professional, Factual, Accurate, Broad-based, Secularise, News sharing, Networking among editors
Funding	Legal Structure, Budget, Subvention, Policy, Initiative, Advert, Subscription, and Finance

Source: *Fieldwork* (2019)

Objective 1: Thematic evolution of funding challenge

The themes shove aside all integrity to gang up against funding Catholic newspapers in what has become a sort of conspiracy theory. The themes conspire insistently to deprive funding of coming to its full potential as culture and practice in the Catholic press.

Institution: The institution weighs funding down by not providing financial subvention for the newspapers on a consistent basis. According to an interview participant, “The funding agencies, first of all, helped the bishop to buy one of the crucial machines. And then, we were short of making ends meet. We print today, whatever we were able to realise the bishop will add more money.” This means survival was difficult without subvention from the bishop. The timeline here was remotely into the pre-independent period. Unfortunately in the contemporary time, subvention is not a regular occurrence. One FGD participant opined, “Most of the publications are left to source for funds with little or no support from the Bishop”. Another participant said, “The bishop should make it mandatory for parishes to promote and sell the newspaper and assist in funding since the newspapers are for evangelisation and not for profit”. This implies that priests in dioceses where many of the newspapers domicile do not promote them.

Individual Choices: Individual choices impose a deficit if there is no initiative to transform the newspaper business. Choice is a cousin of freedom. It presupposes the availability of a variety of options, alternatives, or preferences granted by nature. So it is about opportunity and power to freely select from these available options. Choice exists within the “either-or” dichotomy. This means the chooser has the power or opportunity to select one item or another. Choices drive everyday human events. Participants made value statements to explain their choice. “Naturally, some priests love write-up publications while for some priests whether it comes out or not, they don’t care.” Another participant used his experience to reveal another value judgment thus, “We have been having situations where somebody will sell the newspaper and will not want to return the money. We have to be pressing and pressing and pressing.” These choices have implications for funding.

Religion: Religion works against newspaper operations whenever it generates a riddle. The riddle of religion begins when the Christian finds himself/herself on the wrong side of the law. Or the Christian gets caught up in controversy scandal or fraud. How does he/she manage to get inside this web? This is the riddle. For instance, how did the ‘somebody’ who refused to submit the money from selling newspapers get himself inside this web?

Environment: The environment affects newspapers negatively when a conspiracy of secularism and terrorism disturbs newspapers from reaching the wider market. In line with categories under environment, participants said the following: “Wherever there is unbridled secularisation of society, religious newspapers will not sell”. “Terrorism (affects newspaper operation) in northern and central Nigeria where it is more prevalent. Catholic publications are affected because Christians are persecuted and so they are not psychologically ready or



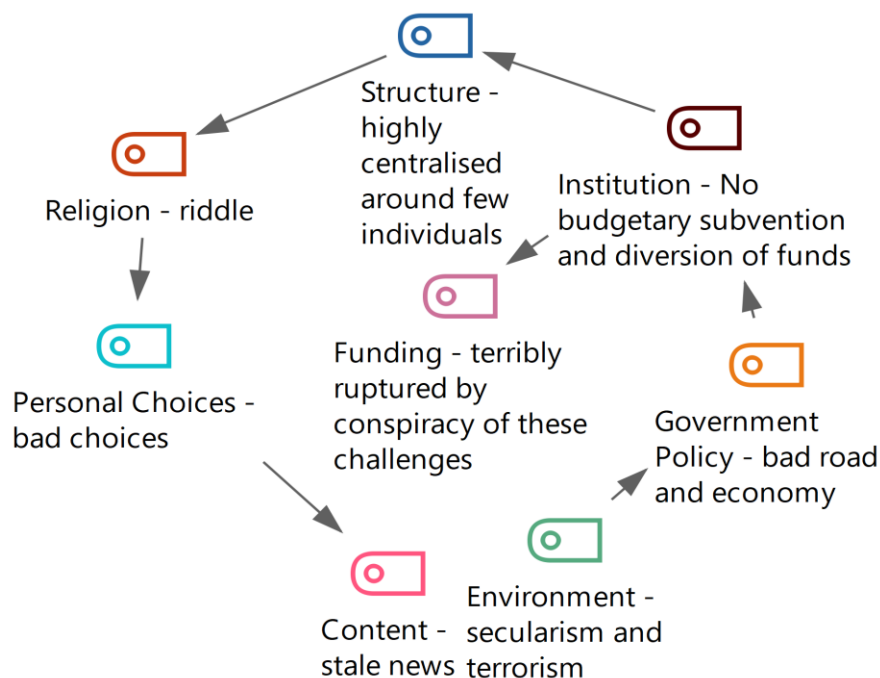
balanced to buy or patronise Catholic newspapers for fear of being identified as such”. Another participant said, “It is in those territories dominated by hardened Moslems who have zero tolerance for Catholic/Christian events that terrorism has a negative effect on Catholic newspapers. There is the fear of exhibiting or selling Catholic papers or even getting news might be difficult. This will have an adverse effect on sales or moving around to publish because anywhere there is no peace, no business can thrive.”

Government Policy: Government policy works against the interest of funding when it makes distribution of the newspapers difficult. “A lot is working against distribution such as bad roads”. Participants see the economic crunch as a reason why people do not buy Catholic papers. “The economic problem is part of it. Some people will like to buy, but when they don’t have money, they cannot buy.”

Structure: Structure embarrasses the editor and newspaper’s fortune when it is not in place. According to one participant who is an editor of a Catholic newspaper, “Most people who do volunteering work, you don’t pay them. So there is little or no commitment from them. They believe they will do it at their own pace. You cannot command them. You cannot instruct them. You only appeal to them. ‘Please we have not seen your story this week. What is happening in your parish?’ They send it on their own time. Even when you give them a deadline, they don’t treat it as a deadline. They don’t even know what the deadline is and how crucial it is to production. So it is because you don’t pay them”

Content: Content does not help when it is not representative of the whole community the newspaper serves or is not broad-based. In line with the categories under content, participants’ views covered a wide spectrum of areas. Some touched on the role of the editor, some on the role of priests, some implicated the Church, and others on the role of readers. The following views explained these clearly. “The editor is the man to blame if a newspaper is not doing well. The editor must ensure that quality stories are published. For a Church newspaper, the trust should be to ensure that the paper publishes stories that are factual, and accurate and stories that also reflect the teaching of the Church. First and foremost, a Catholic newspaper should be a tool of evangelism”. Another participant supported the secularisation of content, “The editor could also use his office to bring in some secular stories that could attract outside patronage. When I say outside patronage, I mean that with this and other initiatives, the paper could also appeal to non-Catholics too”.

To improve content and make Catholic newspapers widely accepted, some participants advocated for a little bit of secular news. According to a participant, “The Catholic newspaper carries mostly activities that happen in the Church and I believe they should be a bit secular to also include activities in the state and even in the country that is not basically Catholic”. Another participant said, “From my own understanding, most of the things Catholic newspapers carry concerns Catholics only, not other things. If I may advise, I will say they should at least pick some other things from other places and add to it to make it witty so that other people will read it. Let it not be only Catholics that read the paper”.



Source: Fieldwork (2019)

Figure 1: Representation of Funding Conundrum in the Catholic Press

Objective 2: Presenting the Conceptual Model

The model the author proposes is titled, *Funding and Economic Practices in Nigerian Catholic Press*. Funding as seen from above is a serious issue in Nigerian Catholic press. However, the bishop who is the sole proprietor envisions a self-supporting press that subsists within the public-relations model as a method to escape rough times situations. He bandies ‘initiative’ (i.e. ‘use your head’) as his buzzword. By initiative, he invests the editor or manager with the liberty to source for local resources using legitimate means. The term ‘initiative’, therefore, helps media editors to conceptualise their role and operation in society. The economic and political condition that precipitates this kind of thinking is, however, the monumental historical changes that have occurred over time. First, by post-1978, the foreign subsidy regime had ended. This stifled funds. Bishops have lots of competing projects on their plates.

This sometimes took their attention away from newspapers. Catholic newspapers operate within a society gripped by harsh economic realities. Catholic newspapers cannot approach commercial banks for credit facilities because banks do not grant such facilities to a sole proprietor (Fra and Ngangue, 2001; Traber, Vanhengel, and Ohieku, 1978). These complicated the already bad economic condition of Catholic papers. Second, the modern era of the Church’s newspaper history witnessed the evolution of diocesan newspapers in areas that used to be territories of regional newspapers thereby shrinking their economic strength. Third, a number of factors conspired insistently to degrade Catholic papers’ image as consumers’ assets.

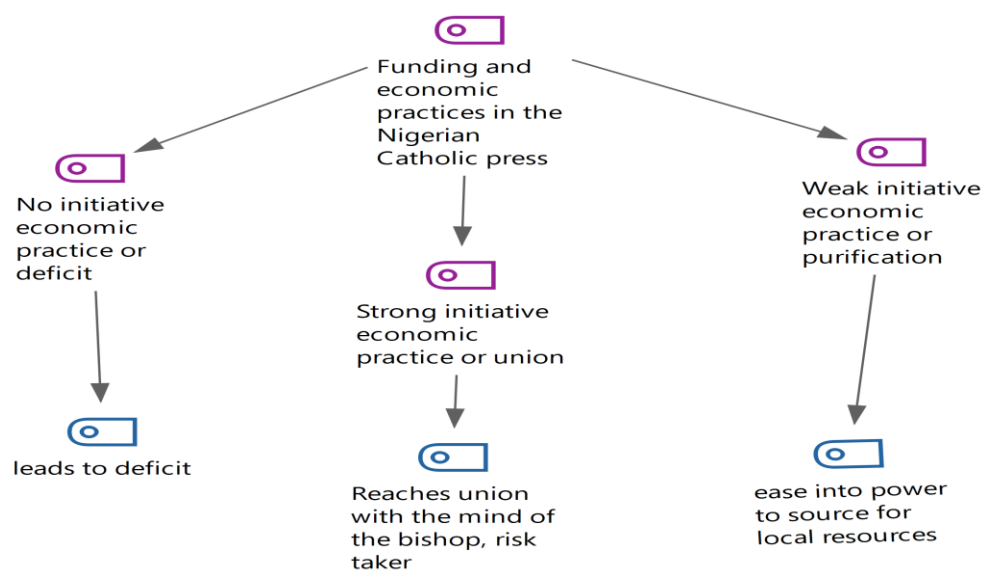
These include:

- The civil war, which wreaked serious damage on equipment and machines



- Unbridled secularisation, enveloped society and media with secular and humanist ideas. This made people prefer secular newspapers, especially in areas where secularisation has successfully widened its stronghold. Though this secularism does not include the suppression of religious ideas/positions in the public sphere, it nevertheless involves being free to exercise commitment to a religious belief in the manner an individual deems fit (Chaput, 2008). Hence, there are Catholics who can be classified as Catholic literature avoiders because they demonstrate more commitment to either secular literature Protestant/Pentecostal literature or even African Traditional Religion (ATR) literature.
- Terrorism too conspires with secularism to deflate the commercial success of Catholic newspapers, particularly in the North where reaching out and diffusion Catholic newspapers is difficult as a result of fear of attack.
- Illiteracy is still rampant in rural Nigeria, and crass poverty too

In response to the bishop's unspoken charge and the economic predicament, therefore, the editors have developed three economic practices. The first is the 'strong initiative economic practice or union practice'. The second is the 'weak initiative economic practice or purification practice'. The third is the 'no initiative economic practice or deficit practice'. The assumption of this model is that the commercial success of Catholic newspapers is most often a function of an effective editor. Therefore, possession of academic achievement (or a lack of it) is not enough to be effective as a Catholic newspaper editor. Rather, a Catholic newspaper editor must possess personal attributes such as initiative, mercantile traits, and economic interest (enterprise) in order to be effective as an editor. The economic attribute, which this study calls 'enterprise' embraces the following: the ability to organise and manage human and material resources, ability to model behaviour he expects to see in team members, ability to resolve crisis/conflict within an atmosphere of disintegration, ability to influence others, listening ability, transparency, integrity, dependability, courage, risk-taking, and consistency.



Source: Fieldwork (2019)

Figure 2: Graphical Representation of Three Economic Practices



The Strong Initiative Economic Practice or Union

- those tied to the support of rich individuals, rich families, corporate families, and entrepreneurs, social and pious groups in city areas

The editors who uphold this practice see advertisement as one of the core functions of media even though their newspapers exist to serve a specialised group. Hence, they aggressively give the quest for advertisement revenue their best shot – both social-political and Church adverts. The newspapers have well-organised and coordinated advertisement efforts. Because they do not tie the paper to the exclusive support of the bishop and there is a good return on investment, the bishop likes them. They develop a strong economic base for the newspapers by tying them to the support of rich individuals, rich families, and corporate families, entrepreneurs, social and pious groups in city areas. They establish link credibility through symbols around these social and pious links. They explore these social links in ceremonial situations to get necessary resources ensuring that their rhetoric is good enough to persuade them.

Editors do not subject themselves to the fear certain conservative Catholics subjected them to by attributing their closeness to social links to the protection of self-interest. They enjoy the active support of Priests because of these initiatives. The priests give their financial blessings and help to promote the market. However, editors in this group are few in number. They are very competent. On the pages of their newspapers, it is possible to find social-political news reports. The newspapers here come out regularly, as a default will make them lose the close relationships they enjoy with advertisers and patrons. They have a good number of regular purchasers as readers. It is mainly urban-based, but it is not unlikely to see some of these newspapers in rural dioceses culturally gifted with thriving commerce. In fact, the real initiative factor here is the editors' bursting commerce orientation having come from a region culturally gifted with enterprising commercial skills.

The initiative of these editors is gifted with enterprise because it creates activity (ies) that is engaging, consistent and commercial. Such activity too involves risk-taking as everything commercial must contain an element of risk. So the editor here is a risk taker with a gaze on profit making. However, some initiative motivators account for the concentration of this model where it exists in Nigeria. These are strong Catholic population, monopolistic market, being the voice, intrusive Catholic religious communication, intrusive Catholic response and purchasers as readers. A classic example of this model is *The Leader* newspaper of Owerri. *The Leader* became the voice of the people and attracted commercial adverts because of its age-old influence and domination within a religious environment that has a strong population of Catholics.

Thus, Catholic religious communication permeated all corners including corridors of power and influence. *The Leader's* influence created an opportunity for purchasers to become readers of the paper. The illumination started like a floodlight in the '50s. Those who went to Catholic schools (Catholics and non-Catholics alike) consciously accepted it so that when the paper eventually started, it sat well with both Catholic and non-Catholic readers. According to Traber, Vanhengel and Ohieku (1978), "The fortnightly newspaper *The Leader*, published in Owerri, has a much greater potential sphere of influence and of sales than the other regional Catholic papers of Nigeria. Almost three million of Nigeria's estimated four million Catholics live in the area of the Onitsha Ecclesiastical Province and thus represent a potential market of *The Leader*."



They maintain, “In contrast to the *Independent*, *The Leader* has a high proportion of ‘In Memoriam’ or funeral notices. The paper also carries a few small advertisements and announcements of people who have changed their names. A high proportion of advertisements are from religious orders (soliciting for vocations), religious institutions etc. And there is no reason to classify ‘In Memoriam’ notices as non-commercial advertisements.” In the late 1970s, the management of *The Leader* started a practice of giving complementary copies of the paper to institutions such as government ministries, information offices, libraries, etc. This exposed the paper to market corridors outside the Catholic Church. It made *The Leader* a ‘consumer’ asset in the ‘70s. However, it took the exercise of ‘initiative’ for *The Leader* to overcome the technical and financial difficulty into which the Nigerian civil war put the newspaper.

Msgr. Nwalo Akujobi, who was the first Nigerian editor of *The Leader*, reveals more in an interview with the author.

Well, we were just rising from the ashes. It was just a Catholic news media and we were just picking the pieces together. ...It was not about Limited Liability or whatever, it was just building up and by the time I left, Msgr. Ben Chima came in, the place has grown big enough to such an extent that we became government security press. As soon as I moved in, I had enough business ideas, and as far as that business is concerned in my time, we were just trying to come back to life. ... We were paying the staff then. The press itself provides odd jobs, other jobs, apart from the newspaper. So from there, whatever we collect, we just pay workers. We were paying them. They were happy and we were happy too. ...Of course, we don’t rely on the bishop. We need to use our brains and enterprise and make sure we get things done. At that time, things could only be done through the finances of the Church. Msgr. Chima was able to attract government patronage to the press and everything was great. So then, we don’t have to totally rely on the bishop to give us everything. (But) ... there must be a caveat, you must be careful with who is coming to patronise and fund your publications so that you can still be able to speak the truth without fear or favour” (Personal Communication, 12-09-2019).

The limitation of this practice, however, is that the public relations’ content drops in relation to the volume and proportion of advertisements each edition attracts, except for the public interest contents that serve the advertiser’s needs, which newspapers must respond to. This practice, not only cleanses and overtakes the deficit of the ‘no initiative’ group, not only eases into the power to source for local resources, but it reaches union with the mind of the bishop, which embodies the objective for which the Catholic newspaper is established.

The Weak Initiative Economic Practice or Purification

- those tied to the exclusive support of bishops and priests of the province and dioceses only

The group of editors here ties the newspapers to the exclusive support of bishops and priests only. Therefore, bishops’ support got a notch more active than what obtains within the ‘no initiative’ group. Like the strong initiative economic group, editors here have academic achievement in print media, but no enterprise (mercantile trait) to make their initiative productive. Unlike the strong initiative editors, editors here respond to the fear certain conservative Catholics subjected them to by attributing their closeness to social links to the protection of self-interest. They therefore avoid such closeness to a large extent. They are largely not risk-takers. They were able to cleanse the deficit of the ‘no initiative’ group by



easing into power to source local resources to develop the newspapers, but they did this without fully reaching union with the mind of the bishop.

This means they were not able to fully achieve the objective for which newspapers were established. They are able to break even, even though they do not make serious profit, and not lose at the same time. Their commitment and passion endear them to priests who give their financial blessings and readily promote the market. The newspapers in this group do not carry big adverts but they sprinkle their pages with Church related adverts. Most advertisers in these papers are Church institutions, and religious congregations, and some advertisements are in-house advertisements like announcing their advertisement rates and reminding subscribers to pay past subscription money. This practice is basically urban-based. Newspapers, here, operate within a relatively competitive market. It is possible to see two or more big newspapers competing for readership and attention of advertisers.

Apart from the fact that editors here are not risk takers, the environment too being the secular newspapers hub in the country hardly encourages the economic viability of Catholic newspapers, especially in terms of the availability of adverts. Advertisers here prefer secular newspapers. Some initiative determinants account for the nature of this model where it exists in Nigeria. These are not too strong Catholic population, secularist outlook, being a voice as against being the voice, competitive market, restrictive Catholic religious communication, restrictive religious response, readers, more than purchasers. The presence of the *Catholic Herald* and *Catholic Weekly Independent* in the Southwestern part of Nigeria, for example, increases market competitiveness because the two big newspapers represent two different voices in every respect in a secularist environment.

One limitation is the nature of the environment, which encourages a strong attachment to affiliations thereby restricting Catholic religious communication and Catholic response. As a result, papers could not rein in big commercial advertisers. The initiative of the editor is good enough to cleanse and overtake the deficit by easing into power to source for local resources but without full union with the mind of the bishop.

No Initiative Economic Practice or Deficit

- those tied to the exclusive support of bishops of the province and dioceses

Nigerian Catholic newspapers are major charity organisations existing as departments in the dioceses. As a result, they entirely depend on the prosperity and subvention from the bishop. They are also responsible to the bishop because of their public relations model. Many editors hide behind this reality as they conceptualise their roles accordingly. The bishop must do everything for them. However, many of the dioceses are locked within an economic environment of paucity of funds to drive projects. In some instances, bishops tend to engage in mistaken role definitions in making media appointments; sometimes putting round pegs in square holes e.g. appointing a priest who specialises in radio to be in charge of a newspaper or a priest who has no media skill/commercial skill to be in charge of media.

Apart from these, some of the dioceses are located within poverty and illiteracy-ravaged, anti-clerical and anti-church environments dominated by terrorist activities especially those in the Northern part of Nigeria. As a result, newspapers and other publications have difficulty reaching out and achieving their full potential. The editors here face a lot of disintegration. They do the work largely all alone. Volunteers who offer to work with them do not do their



tasks properly. They prefer to do it at their own pace. This is what disintegration means; it is a period of crisis and conflict. The editor cannot command or instruct them because they are not on the payroll of the newspaper. The combination of these factors seemingly compromises the Editors. The editors therefore accept the responsibility reluctantly and would rather tie the newspaper to the exclusive support of bishops not willing to develop sustainable local resources.

Hence editors in this group refuse to exercise skills they perhaps have no competence for. So it is possible to have newspapers designed to be published fortnightly not being published one month, two months, or even more. It takes like forever for some to come out. One bishop says, "If out of nothing you produce something to train a manager and the manager fails to produce the result, what do you do?" The managers, in turn, accuse bishops of not providing the funds to publish newspapers. These kinds of exchanges or 'cold war' became the albatross of newspaper development. The market could not develop as fast as the Church had expected. Largely circulation suffers, as the market does not go beyond the diocese. The next diocese would not prefer another diocesan newspaper to its own. The involvement of bishops became passive; some bishops even abandoned their diocesan newspaper to embrace cheaper means of information dissemination.

The exchanges received the lukewarm-ness of priests who refused to support the editors in terms of finance and market promotion. The newspapers under this practice are many. Some of them have folded up as a result of paucity of funds. Those yet to fold up do not come out regularly because new monies to sustain the papers refuse to come. As said earlier, most of the newspapers here are rural papers as they subsist in dioceses far-flung in rural communities. Hence their readers are not purchasers. Also, bad infrastructure makes distribution difficult. Budgets do not come and editors too refuse to ease into power to source for local resources to develop newspapers. They become mere nominal managers. This 'no initiative' scenario eventually leads to a deficit when there is no budget and no local resources and the prospect is in jeopardy.

They became deficit because they carry the image of a cripple who drags on irredeemably and perpetually depends on the mercy of others. They could not break even, nor make a profit, but lost and folded up in the end.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND NATURE OF THEORY

What the researcher does in this study is to examine the Catholic press in Nigeria as an operational system that works in three aspects. None of the aspects can stand alone without the Catholic press losing its nature as an entity; the three aspects are somewhat intertwined. This means the line separating one aspect from the other is both imaginary and blurred. This model captures the inherent behaviour of the workforce as depicted by values from the top. In the model, the ideal practice is benign, even though the present and the future stares us in the face without notice. Table 4 represents the various thematic observations that brought about the model. Obviously, the institution is the authoritative depiction of the Church where everything cascades down. The bishop is the symbolic representation of that authority; he influences every plan and policy. In respect of Catholic publications, he is the owner, proprietor, policymaker, newsmaker, financier, major image-maker, and regulator who sets rules of engagement. He has the power to hire and fire and does this at his whims.



He is a very powerful figure in the hierarchy set-up of the Church. The FGD participants refer to this by saying, “The priest is always the director and he has the overall say for any publication. Even when professionals are on board and they advise that this is how it is done in secular newspapers, the priest may say, ‘I am not doing it that way.’ Or he may say, ‘The bishop does not want it that way.’ We believe he is saying the mind of the bishop, but at the end of the day, we feel the paper is not doing well as it is supposed to be”. The priest acts in vicarious ways for the bishop either as director or editor. Therefore press workers ask questions frequently because of behavioural fluctuations they see in the institution.

Some of such questions as presented by the FGD participants include the following. “How regularly does he (bishop) release funds from donor agencies meant for the development of the diocesan newspapers to the editors? Is it when such funds arrive that the local ordinary will change the diocesan newspaper editor who prepared it so that the new person will not know anything about such? And such fund would be diverted to other areas that it was not meant for”. Basically, the authority system in the Church operates from top to bottom most of the time, but it is also participatory by encouraging horizontal engagement and communication among Church workers. That is why every sector of organisation can interact at their own level and norm in order to produce their own cultural and economic practice. Hence, this theory has its vertical input with respect to institutional contribution. Now, the editor and his team enjoy a commanding height and place in the theory because of the preference the model gives to workforce behaviour. This is deliberate as they own the workplace, just like the undergraduates own the university.

It is in the workplace they come to their being and full element. They make the place a home and thus interrelate in order to achieve the goal of the organisation (Evans, 1990). According to Table 4, through their norming and social interaction, they initiate productive ideas, attend to tasks, and make choices, either good or bad. This means each choice made brings applause or condemnation, growth or destruction, a climax or anticlimax, good or bad, right or wrong, norm or digression from norm depending on where the pendulum swings in the dichotomy of opposites. A choice swings either to the right or left of the dichotomy. In the model, the editor, being the leader of the team, is supposed to lead the charge of productivity. The editor is the mediator between management and staff. It is on his table that the buck stops. He carries the responsibility of newspaper house on his head. This is why he cannot afford to fail.

Therefore, the editor should always be careful in making decisions in order not to offend the sensibility and mindset of stakeholders in the press. In fact, he should always collaborate in making decisions. Hence, the assumption or the generalised idea is associated with him. Academic achievement is a requirement but it is not the most important requirement. There is the ethical requirement, which considers both ecclesiastical ethics and professional ethics as very important for effective functioning. There are also organisational and mercantile skills. Regulations and skills are more important than bearing certificates. Such regulations set limits to character and proclaim loudly acceptable behaviours. Such regulations ensure that the staff yields to enhanced task performance, make staff team players, and ensure reformation. Hence the editor must be a transmitter and enforcer of those skills and workplace ethics to his team. He must personify the ability to resolve crisis/conflict within an atmosphere of disintegration, the ability to influence others, listening ability, transparency, integrity, dependability, courage, risk-taking, and consistency.



The next item is funding. The whole discussion at the key informant and FGD levels was flooded with issues about funding. They saw funding as a protracted challenge. According to a viewpoint from key informants, “Church media only survive on the funds from the Church and are not really operated as a profit-oriented institution like the secular press you have around”. According to some viewpoints from FGD, “Just like some secular newspapers, Catholic newspapers are faced with financial problems. I believe this problem ... stemmed from lack of advertising, which is the major source of funding a newspaper”. “Due to the problem of funding, they are not able to engage very competent people”. Therefore, any editor that is able to make the newspaper assignment a success the way strong initiative practice described receives enhanced status in the Church. From the foregoing, the building blocks of the theory are evident. The author only puts these facts into perspective to formulate the theory. Therefore the nature of this model is threefold:

- It is administrative in the dispensation
- It is normative in scope
- It is predictive and futuristic

However, the distribution and application of these three elements is not even, in the three aspects of the model.

IMPLICATION OF MODEL FOR PUBLICATIONS’ DEVELOPMENT

The theory is inherently historical as it recounted the pitfall that became the albatross of Catholic press development in the past. Therefore such historical insight is germane to future efforts to develop the Catholic press. Both weak and no initiative practices are symptomatic of the pitfall. The strong initiative practice is the one with predictive and futuristic significance for press development. It is the one that integrates administrative, normative, and predictive ideals into its framework. It is significant in emphasising the place of advertisement in contemporary newspapering. No newspaper business will survive without it, but we should limit our search for patrons to wealthy Catholics who understand ecclesiastical culture and ethics. Much of the mistakes the press made in the past could be traced to a neglect of history. This study therefore recalls history so we can learn from it.

CONCLUSION

In earlier pages, the author has been able to trace the history of the Catholic press in Nigeria. He impliedly made us understand the nature of theory especially mass communication theory, which is characterised by changes and inconstancy as a result of the behavioural nature of man. The inconstancy of man is fluid in the sense that what he is today he may not be tomorrow (Douglas, 2015). This is why some mass communication theories do not stand the test of time. This trait affects everything he does including his relating with others in business and society (Cherry, 2020). The inconstancy is largely felt even in the model just introduced by the author. This confirms Folarin’s (1998) notion of mutability of theory. The mutability and dynamism expressed in the three aspects somehow delimit the capitalist framework under which secular newspapers operate. It rather promotes an ecclesiastical framework that maintains church



power instead. It is well guarded by meta-ethics that give freedom and responsibility on all sides, including to patrons. It is therefore able to remove the undemocratic framework that operates under a capitalist system characterised by exploitation and masked social relationships.

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