

ESTABLISHING A PUBLISHING OUTFIT IN NIGERIA

EMENYONU, Chinyere C.

Department of Library and Information Science

Federal Polytechnic Nekede, Owerri Imo State

Abstract

The paper examines the steps in establishing a publishing firm in the Nigerian environment. The importance of publishing, determination of the book publishing to undertake, steps to follow in establishing a publishing company, networking with stakeholders in the publishing industry, the legal environment of publishing, challenges and the prospects of publishing in Nigeria were among the vital issues discussed. Library and documentary review formed the methodology of the investigation. The paper concludes that any investor intending to set up a publishing company should have an in-depth understanding of all the intricacies in publishing in order to maximize and enjoy the benefits and profits inherent in the publishing sector. It recommends that intending investors in the publishing sector avail themselves of the opportunities outlined in the section on prospects.

Keywords: Publishing, Publishing Industry, Publisher, Nigeria.

Introduction

Book publishing is an economic function which involves the production and distribution of a commodity known as book. Publishing is the profession or business of preparing and printing books, CD-ROMs and selling or making them available to the public. Publishing affords permanent record and preservation (Duru, 2006). However, book publishing requires the cooperation of different stakeholders for its sustainability. The economics of publishing involves much more than the cost of producing a book in a particular country. In other words, success in the management of a publishing house depends largely on the publishers' ability to define his/her role and the provision made for editorial capacity building (Emenanjo, Ndimele&Okere, 2012).

Book publishing helps to produce a literate citizenry, develop entrepreneurship, and create wealth (Ohanu, 2006). The fundamental purpose of book publishing is basically to extend the frontiers of knowledge from one generation to the other, thereby bringing about continuous intellectual development. Publishing is channeled towards promoting learning and expanding knowledge (Oyeyinka, Aganbi&Atewolara, 2016). The publishing house is a manufacturing industry where productivity is measured by tangible output, this is because, as a result-driven industry, output in a publishing house is seen, touched and utilized to be ploughed back into the publishing, wages and salaries (Emenanjo, Ndimele&Okere, 2012). The purpose of the paper is to examine the processes and requirements for establishing a publishing outfit or company in Nigeria. This paper will specifically examine:

- i. Understanding the Concept and Importance of publishing.
- ii. Determining the Book Publishing to undertake
- iii. Steps to follow in establishing a publishing outfit/company.
- iv. Managing and working with stakeholders in the publishing firm.
- v. The Legal environment of publishing.
- vi. Preparing for operational activity
- vii. Challenges Faced by publishers in the Nigerian Environment, and
- viii. Prospects of publishing in Nigeria.
- ix. Conclusion

Understanding the Concept and Importance of Publishing

The term, publishing as noted by Oyesiku (2004), is all embracing. It includes anything that is publishable, and defined as the trade of publishing books. It includes the process of negotiating with author(s) or agents for manuscripts, design of books in conjunction with printers, book production, publicity and sales through books wholesalers and retailers. Publishing is a peculiar form of business for which a special group of very intelligent and adequately educated people can effectively operate.

Oyenyika, Aganbi and Atewolara-Odule (2016) articulated some of the significant impacts of book publishing industry on the society to include the following:

- i. It enhances literacy development in the areas of science and technology, humanities, sociology, medicine, law, politics and others.
- ii. It facilitates literacy which in turn fast-tracks national development.
- iii. It enhances cultural heritage and values.
- iv. It provides job opportunities for many young graduates and professionals

Determining the Book Publishing to Undertake

To establish a publishing firm, one has to determine the kinds of book publishing to engage. Ohanu (2006) enlightened on the following three kinds of book publishing, namely, trade books, educational and references books publishing.

Trade Books Publishing

These are books intended for the general reader. They are distributed through book stores, book-sellers, book departments of super-markets and book clubs in advanced countries. Examples are novels; picture books for children, biographic, books of current affairs, cook books and do-it yourself books.

Educational Books Publishing

Educational books are textbooks used for instruction in schools, colleges, and tertiary institutions. In educational book publishing, teachers and educators are employed to plan and they have been acknowledged as the most profitable group/area of book publishing because a great number of teachers and students are required to buy certain textbooks for their classes.

Reference Books Publishing

This class of publishing is expensive to produce. In reference book publishing, specialists are hired to serve either as authors for the topics or as consultants for general areas of knowledge. The markets for reference books are majorly libraries, where people go to look up information. However, some reference book publishers use sales representatives who demonstrate and sell their books in the home.

Steps to Follow in Establishing a Publishing Outfit/Company

Book publishing, as pointed out by Ohanu (2006), is a serious investment. Anyone contemplating to become a publisher should follow the following steps.

1. Product with the help of a Competent Consultant, a sound Bankable Feasibility Study with which to apply for funds to start the Business

A good feasibility study, as opined by Ohanu (2006), is necessary as a guide to the publisher.

2. Incorporate a Company at the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC)

To fully incorporate a corporate company, the investor must decide a name under which the publishing firm would be registered.

3. Recruitment

Publishers are expected to consider staffing as an essential component of the whole publishing setting. As noted by World Intellectual Property Organization, publishers would add value to authors' manuscript by employing editors, designers, layout artists, illustrators and indexers to polish and package the books and to undertake extensive sales and marketing campaigns to capture the attention of the public.

4. Managing and Working with Stakeholders in the Publishing Firm

In order to succeed, survive and remain in the publishing industry, the investor should network with the following stakeholders. The book industry, like any other industry, needs cooperation, networking and shared responsibility by its stakeholders (Duru, 2006).

- a. Book Seller:** This is the last man before the final buyer in the chain that began with the author. They ensure that books get to the ultimate consumers or users through sales either to the library (wholesale) or directly to the reader (retail). As the agents of delivery, booksellers understand and analyze, as well as serve the market. Although they play no part in the creative or productive processes, in other words, do not generate the product that is the subject of intellectual property protection, their well-being is important for the publishing industry as it provides the channels through which their work reaches the consumer (WIPO, n.d.).

- b. Publisher:** This is another stakeholder in the publishing sector. As noted by Nwogu and Akinde (2006), the publisher is seen as the entrepreneur who assumes responsibility for the issuance of a book (or other media) to the public. He promotes the sale of book through the distribution of review copies, advertising, maintaining a sales force and the stock of copies, handles, sales both to the wholesalers and retail bookstores.
- c. Authors:** The author is a major stakeholder in the publishing chain. He is the first owner of the right to publish the work he has created. According to Opara (2006), once the author's manuscript has been accepted for publishing, his relationship with his publisher becomes contractual and the relationship has legal implications. It is important to emphasize that agreement vary from publisher to publisher and from author to author, depending on certain variables. According to Duru (2006), authors are owners of copyrights of books written by them, but in most cases, they may not be fully liable for their books. They are only liable if they are also publishers of such books. Authors have been acknowledged as very vital in the book industry but they need the full complement of efficient and knowledgeable publishers.
- d. Audience:** Oyesiku (2004) describes the audience as a major consideration in desktop publishing. This goes a long way in determining the overall outlook of the publication. She contends that since every publication has audience, it is necessary to put into consideration the audience, value system, beliefs, lifestyle needs, motivations, religions. The audience factors to consider are: Age, background, internet, level of experience and vocabulary.
- e. Wholesale Distributors:** Most publishers will do business with all the major distributors, whereas bookstores will always work with single distributor. Wholesale distributors play a vital role in the publishing industry, but publishers and bookstores are perhaps too dependent on them. Distributors act as intermediaries between the publisher and retailer. They add value to the publishing industry by making the finished product available and accessible to the reading public.
- f. National Library of Nigeria (NLN):** The publisher should have clear understanding of how National Library of Nigeria operates within the contexts of publication. Since issuance of International Standard Book Number (ISBN) lies with the National Library, it is expedient that publishers should understand how to get the ISBN in blocs. ISBN refers to the digit numbers allocated to authors and publishers. They are unique code numbers

for identifying books, and eliminate the need to quote author, title, edition and publisher in all transactions.

- g. Printers:**As pointed out by World Intellectual Property Organization (n.d.), a printer's stake in the book publishing industry will also depend on the overall health of publishers.
- h. Different Associations/Professional Bodies in the Publishing Sector:**According to Okwilagwe (2001), there are many agencies and professional associations whose activities directly influence the publishing industry in Nigeria. These agencies and professional associations include:
 - i. Association of Nigeria Authors (ANA)
 - ii. Association of Nigerian Textbook Authors (ANTA)
 - iii. Nigerian Publishers Association (NPA)
 - iv. Booksellers Association of Nigeria (BAN)
 - v. Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT)
 - vi. Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU).

A clear understanding of the roles of the identified agencies and professional associations outlined above could go a long way in enabling the publisher to strive and succeed in the publishing venture.

The Legal Environment of Publishing

Legally, publishing freedoms are more or less established in Nigeria, but there are still threats to this freedom.

Tax System

The publisher should have a clear understanding of the tax systems. The publisher, according to Okwilagwe (2001), is in position to deduct from any payment(s) which many become due to the author under the agreement of any sum(s) which is due to statutory obligation to pay in respect of income tax or any other taxation in any part of the world.

The Copyright Factor

The genesis of the copyright laws meant that under the laws all works, whether published or not published, are protected by statutory copyright as soon as they are put in a tangible medium of expression and/or communication (Duru, 2006). Copyright is an important issue in book publishing. It enables the author to concede the sole right to copy and publish his work to the publisher without which it would be difficult and impossible for a publisher to trade (Ohanu, 2006).

Publishers of books, newspapers, and other documents rely on the protection afforded by copyright law to safeguard their investments. However, with the very rapid

advancement of information and communication technology (ICT), the problem of copyright gets increasingly complex daily; relevant issues like photocopying, electronic books, radio and satellite broadcasting are examples (Ihebuzor&Odu, 2016).

The copyright on any publication belongs to the author and the copyright owner is at liberty to transfer his rights, wholly or partially, in writing. Nigerian has a well-articulated copyright law, administered by the Nigerian commission.

Preparing for Operational Activity

The publisher that wants to delve into publishing should prepare for the followings:

Accommodation

You need space (accommodation) where your clients can recognize as your official residents / workplace / office.

Provision of Furniture and Fittings

The publisher should provide furniture and fittings for the staff and intended customers. The basic essential furnishing equipment remains tables and chairs; other optional equipment is shelves and cabinets.

Equipment

The publishers should provide the various equipment required for sustainable operational activity. The basic office equipment is computers, desktop, i-pad, printing machines and scanners.

Provision of Stationary

The publisher requires stationeries to be able to operate effectively. The basic stationary required is paper of different sizes and different qualities.

However, beyond the above outlined operational activity, it is important to note that the publishing house, as an organization, must be structured along operational functional units to ensure that there is a coherent flow of activities. It is in line with this that Oyesiku (2004) highlighted the under listed departments as what can be found in a publishing house.

1. Administrative department
2. Editorial department
3. Production department (designing/manufacturing)
4. Marketing department (promotion and sales)
5. Account department
6. Warehouse.

All these departments, to him, work closely together for the success of the publishing house as no department can function exclusive of others.

The Administrative Department

This coordinates the activities of the other departments, evolves and implements policies, personnel matters and houses the accounts of the publishing house.

The Editorial Department

This is regarded as the heart of the publishing house. Here, books to be published are selected; the tasks of the critical reading of the typescripts, and revision, if necessary, are performed as well as the detailed preparation of the typescripts before printing. Equally, the responsibility of dealing with the various authors rests mainly on the staff of this department.

The Production Department

This department sees the book through the press. Most times, every staff of this department, from the designer, illustrator, paste-up artist to the typesetter and sometimes the lithographer are involved in the final production of the book.

The Marketing Department

This sees to the sale of this book. The business success of any publishing house depends largely on the effectiveness of or efficiency of the staff of the marketing department.

Account Department

Account department exists in publishing houses to take care of the financial transactions. Basically, this is where the financial transactions are conducted. It involves a statement of income and expenditure of the publishing house. It also includes a bill for work done or services rendered. Payment of workers salary is also part of the duties of the account department. In a nutshell, the account department in a publishing house is responsible for the recording, classifying and summarizing of all the financial transactions of the publishing house and interpreting the results thereof.

Warehouse

This is one of the most important departments in any publishing house. Essentially, this is a building a room in a building where goods are stored. It could also be repository of products like books kept until they are ready for purchase. Apart from keeping books, publishing warehouse also acts as a store house for raw materials used in publishing. It is the inventory room.

Challenges Faced by Publishers in the Nigerian Environment

Establishing a publishing firm in Nigeria is not without challenges. The challenges faced by publishers in the Nigerian environment include:

Absence of National Policy on Publishing

As a result of no national policy on publishing in Nigeria, it has led to a situation where publishing is left in the hands of non-professionals, making it an all corners-affair business thereby denying investors huge profits. As noted by Okwilagwe (2001), any publisher that does not make enough profit cannot stay in the business, for long, as he will be forced to liquidate and pack up the business. Also, Ike (2004) observed that primarily through lack of will on the part of the Federal Government, Nigeria has neither a National Book Policy nor a National Book Development Organization or Commission. This to him, drastically reduces sources of funding since early 2001 and has, however hampered effectiveness.

Conflicts between Publishers and Major Stakeholders

According to Oyeyinka, Agambi&Atewolara-Odule (2016), the relationships between the authors and publishers are hardly healthy. Citing examples, they observed that many authors are of the opinion that the publishers cheat them by making huge amount of money but give peanuts as royalty, whereas, publishers, on the other hand, accuse authors of double deals.

Dearth of Expertise

The publishing industry in Nigeria lacks technical expertise in various departments of the industry.

Other challenges are;

- ❖ Absence of national book policy to provide a legal regulatory framework for the industry.
- ❖ Low returns on capital
- ❖ Unwillingness of investors to commit their funds to such an enterprise when areas of higher returns exist in the economy.
- ❖ Absence of good libraries right from secondary school level.

8.Prospects of Publishing in Nigeria

The question is this, considering the enormous challenges surrounding the publishing sector, is it all that bleak for the intending publishers? Are there no prospects and opportunities that can be tapped? Below are some of the prospects of the publishing industry in the Nigerian environment.

- a. **Viable Market** A critical look at the Nigerian educational system shows a viable market for the publishers. With the proliferation of government-owned and privately-own academic institutions there is a pointer to the viability of the publishing venture. In other words, there is hope for the publishers.
- b. **Less Capital Intensive** Publishing is becoming less capital intensive. One may not need high capital before one can delve into the publishing terrain.

- c. **Proliferation of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)**
With the overwhelming influence of technologies that promote digital publishing, which is faster and better in quality, there is hope for intending publishers. For instance, the prevalence of Desk Top Publishing facilities makes the process of book publishing much more easier. The process of book publishing is changing globally and technology has transformed its operations and the effects are noticeable across the world. It is in line with this that publishing has grown beyond the traditional practice because modern equipment makes publishing easier and faster (Oyeyinka, Aganbi&Atewolara-Odule, 2016).

Conclusion

Having x-rayed the steps in establishing a publishing firm in the Nigerian environment and looking at the technological developments, it is now pertinent for publishers to re-assess their product lines and continually ask themselves pertinent questions. Who are the audience? As noted by Afolabi (2015), the saying that “technology drives business and business drives technology” holds true with the development of digital press in the print communications industry. There is no doubt that publishing in Nigeria has been dramatically transformed with the penetrating effects of ICTs. Moreover, the business of publishing rests on a contract between the author and the publisher success. Every publishing house that aims at sustainability must define very clearly, its role which is the purpose for which the publishing house is established. The publishing industry therefore is a vital engine that drives the development of any society. Any investor intending to step into the publishing ventures is expected to have an in-depth analysis and understanding in order to maximize and explore the inherent benefits in the industry.

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