

STRATEGIC NETWORKING AND LEVERAGES IN ADVERTISING PRACTICE – LESSONS FOR THE NIGERIAN PRACTITIONERS

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ABSTRACT

This article is a rehash of APCON (NOW ARCON) Advertising Day lecture I delivered on 7th December 2006. This has been updated to accommodate some of the developments and changes ever since. ARCON Advertising Day lectures (which started in 1995) are delivered by erudite Scholars and world class practitioners considered worthy vectors of knowledge and scholarship in the industry, and carefully selected by ARCON. Prior to my lecture Professor Pius Okigbo, Mr Felix Ohiwerei – then CEO of Nigerian Breweries and a couple of other eminent practitioners delivered in previous years.

As at that time I was the CEO of Pertcom and Partners now Havilah Open Door, a conglomeration of businesses in Communications, tertiary Education, publishing, Health care, Security and others with over seven thousand staff; after a short spell of teaching in the Post-graduate School of University of Lagos, lectured in Philips Business School; served as the Secretary General Nigeria Marketing Association, Pioneered as President Media Independent Practitioners Association of Nigeria, Chief Examiner ARCON in Account Planning and Client Service and Co-founding of Media Planning Services (MPS). The lecture was a product of my scholarship and experience in the Marketing Communications industry and beyond.

This article is about leveraging scale, networks and collaborations in the advertising industry to build robust organizational resilience, deliver superior performance and value to the shareholders, and hopefully benefit other stake holders in the process. It also identified the configurations of those collaborations as well as how social capital of celebrities have been utilized for brand building. But certainly there have been abuses in the process particularly how sexism has refused to submit to decency in the advertising industry. As multinational Agencies have been dictating the tune in this space in Nigeria, I suggested that local agencies should come together in whatever way or shape possible to form a critical mass that could engage with the global Communications giants to ensure they are positioned to extract fair returns in the business. Since the lecture was delivered over 18 years ago, my fears have been validated by what has happened (since then); and my recommendations are still relevant today and worthy of consideration by the practitioners and local investors, to create a level playing ground, fairness, resilience, just and healthy advertising and Marketing communications Industry in Nigeria.

Key Words: Networking, Leverages, Marketing, Communications, Advertising, Robust



INTRODUCTION

The field of Strategic networking and Scale leverages, at the global level, is a highly contested one; from Jupiter Drawing Board in South Africa, the iconoclast Bollore and his Havas group headquartered in France, to the global behemoths of Publicis and Omnicom. So is it at the local level in Nigeria, from Mindshare Communications group, Tunde Ojo led, Touchstone, CentreSpread, Noah's Ark, and to the giant called Insight Communications, led by Biodun Shobanjo and Jimi Awosika.

What is not in doubt, however, is that scale, institutionalization and network alignments have always been important (among other factors) in building dynamic capabilities, resilience and robust stakeholders' value in organizations and industries, particularly among those in Marketing Communications space.

They also create opportunity for superior performance, value optimisation, fairness in competitive environments, and in the process deconstruct monopolistic take all syndrome.

The above narrative informed the paper I delivered on ARCON ADVERTISING Day in 2006.

President Donald Trump appears to share my position on strategic Networking and communications leverages in his public endorsement of the recent purchase of Tegna by Nextar Media group for \$6.2b as announced on 20th of August 2025 (Grantham-Philips and Chapman, 2025). Similarly, Omnicom Group, a global marketing Communications leader, acquired Interpublic Group for \$13.45 in 2024. This exercise created the largest marketing communications group globally, generating unprecedented economy of scale for its shareholders. This deal also aligns with my earlier material on the importance of scale and network leverages (Emokpae, 2025), and the urgency, as well as pathway, for Nigeria's Marketing Communications industry to benefit from the unfolding global communications consolidations.

This Omnicom's acquisition of Interpublic creates an unprecedented scale in the world in the Marketing Communications space that gives Omnicom unparalleled advantage in leveraging Interpublic's capabilities, that embed creativity, technology and innovativeness, implicating efficiency in aggregating value for the combined behemoth (Tipranks, 2025).

Some of the other major recent acquisitions in the same space in the world's biggest Market, USA include:

- i. BlackRock's taking over HPS Investment Partners (Scanlan,2024)
- ii. WPP doing same with New Commercial Arts Deal (West, 2024)
- iii. Independent Agencies coming together in Barkley & OKRP Merger (O'Brien, 2024).



In Nigeria, it has been a mixed bag. Many advertising and communications companies went under while some got much bigger by leveraging investments from Global Marketing Communications Networks like Dentsu, Publicis and several other global brands, which combined with technology, digitalisation, (and more recently AI) leading to an industry size of \$1.04b, contributing about 1% to Nigeria's Economy in 2024 (ARCON,2025, Emokpae,2025).

Some years ago, I read an article by Tope Afolayan in the Tribune of Friday, August 25, 2006 (Page 34). It reads:

“People don't make money by snapping their fingers. What they do is to position themselves in such a way that financial opportunities won't elude them”.

Microsoft wouldn't exist today had Bill Gates, who had the idea, not walked up to his friend who had the money. Motivational speaker Brian Tracy says, *“One of the greatest forms of financial leveraging is contacts. Knowing the right people and being known by them can open doors for you that can save you years of hard work.”* The quality and quantity of one's contacts and relationships will have more to do with one's success than perhaps any other factor (Tracy,2006 in Emokpae,2025).

“To expand your list of contacts, make a list of 25 people you feel would be most useful for you to get to know. Develop a strategy to get to meet every one of them over the next 12 months. Then make a list of 25 more” Brian Tracy recommended (Tracy, 2006).

“The next thing to do”, Brian says, *“is to network at every opportunity”.* *“Once, when I was working with Chamber of Commerce, I came to the attention of a senior executive who hired me away from the company I was working with for a year at triple the salary. Meeting people is important. Join business and trade associations. Attend meetings. Get involved. Volunteer for service on a key committee. This action alone can cut years off your career”*(Tracy,2006).

One important thing to possess when it comes to network marketing, like the GNLD, is a network of people. The system in operation is such that the more people you are able to sell to and more importantly get to register as members, the more you are able to influence your financial potential.

“Most people miss out on ample opportunities because of poor relationship management”, Pastor Yemi Adeoti said, while addressing a group of young people, several years ago. According to him, if people could learn to maintain the relationships they have with others; it would save them a lot of financial stress (Emokpae,2006 in Emokpae, 2025).

Brian says another way to empower one's financial potential is by being creative. *“Remember, one idea is all you need to start a fortune. All great fortunes begin with an idea. Everyone has the ability to come up with creative ideas and solutions, if they look for them”.*



"Another powerful form of leverage that can help is good work habits. Good work habits make an extraordinary difference. It will bring you to the attention of the important people in life, faster than anything else you can do. In the final analysis, you always get paid for your results. If you develop a reputation for being the person who gets the job done fast, that alone can put you onto the fast track in your career" (Tracy,B, 2006 in Emokpae,2025).

Jimoh Ibrahim, GMD, NICON Group, who at age 37 was already a billionaire said in an interview, that not being satisfied with one's status is actually the drive that many people need. *"I have never seen myself achieving anything extraordinary until recently when people started to embarrass me. Some of my colleagues outside the country have achieved more than I do, people like Bill Gates. These are CEOs I want to emulate and catch up with. So, I don't think I have achieved anything" (Tell Magazine, 2006, Emokpae, 2025).* Hunger, real hunger for growth associated with idea and action may have taken hold of Jimoh.

Jimoh Ibrahim has not achieved anything? Everybody knows what huge transformation he had brought to NICON Hotel. Speaking in another interview with entrepreneurs, Mrs. Ronke Onadeko-Osayande, a business expert, said, *"As entrepreneurs, our businesses and financial potentials are fueled by the volume of potential customers reached and the purchases that result from a fraction of the customers reached. In many cases a small number of satisfied customers within a niche is more profitable than numerous customers with various needs" (Emokpae, 2025, Tell Magazine, 2006).*

So much ought to be done to enhance one's financial potential, no doubt. Perhaps, learning more about the financial success of others will also help as Jimoh Ibrahim said, *"I have regard for some people and seem to admire the way they do their things. I like Goldman Sachs for the number of employees he has. I like Dell Computers for turning the Info Tech business around, I like Cecilia Ibru because she believes religion is very important to business, and Bill Gates for tuning around things so quickly" (Tell Magazine, 2006).*

For you to have friends, you must reach out to them; you must be friendly(New Spirit Filled Bible,2002). That explains while Aliko Dangote hosted me to a lunch several years ago, intended to create an environment for me to help him solve a thorny business challenge. The lesson from the above is that knowing and being around the right people can open doors for you and save you years of hard work in prospering financially and in business. So it is in marriage, being around the wrong people will bring a wrong person for a spouse.

1. ADVERTISING LEVERAGES

Some years ago, the makers of Police Sunglasses decided to engage David Beckham to front its ad campaign. Sales doubled. David Beckham defied conventional wisdom as a style icon, soaring even when his football prowess and football icon profile were diminishing. Similarly, Motorola signed a three-year contract with him as his international appeal continued to upscale in Asia, South America, and, to some extent, Africa. The question was why were brands like Adidas, Marks & Spencer, Brycreen,



Tokyo Beauty Centre and Diesel falling over themselves alongside Police Sunglasses to key their brand image on the Beckham Brand.

Beckham was more than any other footballer of UK extraction offered himself as a major case study in celebrity advertising. Other celebrity campaigns which had been most successful in British advertising history (eighteen years ago) included Prunella Scales and Jane Horrocks for Tesco (£2.2billion); ‘Jamie Oliver for Sainsbury's (£1.1billion); Stephen Fry and Hugh Laurie for Alliance & Leicester (£656 million); Bob Hoskins for BT (£297million); Vic Reeves and Bob Mortimer for First Direct (£223million); Ian Wright/Martin, Luther King/Kate, Moss/Elvis/Jolin, McCarthy/Yuri, Gagarin for One 2 One (£199million); Martin Clunes, Caroline Quentin, Jonah Lomu, Caprice, Jonathan Ross for Pizza Hut (£55million); Pauline Quirke & Linda Robson for Surf (£42million); George Best, Chris Eubank, Rolf Harris, & Prince Naseem for the Dairy council (£21million); and the Simpson's for Domino's Pizza (£13million)’.

(Source: Institute of Practitioners in Advertising of the United Kingdom, 2005).

What of the 3 Orange men used to relaunch the Mirinda brand in Nigeria several years ago? It had a similar result as the Beckham police sunglasses campaign, albeit technically not celebrity advertising. Here, curiosity and association offered a viable platform, otherwise termed strategic leverages for building brand equity and moving sales volume. Beyond celebrity and curiosity platforms, what of sexuality being exploited by several advertisers?

In the same way, telecoms, electronics appliances, many alcoholic and other beverages, etc., had been leveraging sexuality as a compelling need (check out Maslow's Hierarchy of needs) to launder their images and draw attention to themselves. Either the legs, breasts or other sensuous areas, mostly of the female are used to attract attention to the brand benefits. It is not in doubt that sex has been a potent, leverageable platform of advertising salesmanship, its misuse or abuse notwithstanding.

All said, it is fair to declare that advertising has been a child of circumstance more than any other discipline in marketing management. You may wish to ask why. Do a historical exegesis of the discipline, and the answer will be obvious.

Right from the Babylonian to the Roman Empire and through the ages, publishing important royal messages or any message to the entire citizenry required direct mail and sometimes trumpets or town criers. In the ancient Benin Empire, town criers were very critical in disseminating political, security and military information. Most circumstances in human history have often thrown up the need to communicate not only on a one-to-one basis but, more importantly, to groups of people with the intention of influencing behaviour, attitude formation, and/ or even character moulding.

Technology-animated communications in the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries with the invention of the printing press and its incremental up scaling in electronic media, are worth remembering. Whereas, earlier communications were propelled by political and military imperatives, in no time, selling and marketing of products took over as primary motivation for advertising whether of the above or below-the-line persuasion.



Technology accelerated the deepening and broadening of the advertising discipline, as well as strategic planning and account navigation.

In all, the desire has always been for mutuality, i.e., bringing two interests together with the goal of satisfying both in a socially and/ or commercially acceptable manner. As all these progressed, the following seven issues became critical to advertising development, viz:

- Truthfulness,
- Integrity,
- Morality,
- Social responsibility,
- Integration/Skilling,
- Accountability and Scale.

All the above issues, a matter of public debate all over the world, particularly as they affect or are affected by strategic networking and leverages, and to what extent they have impacted contemporary advertising will be touched upon in this paper.

2. STRATEGIC NETWORKING

Sustained or ongoing structured relationships and interfaces aimed at long-term mutual advantages or benefits is termed Strategic Networking in modern-day business management (Emokpae,2025). It involves but not limited to constructive engagements between two or more organisations/persons or even between goal and strategy on an ongoing basis.

To “network” is to reach out to develop leverageable relationships for the initial benefit of the one doing the reaching out. The Institute of Directors, Metropolitan Club, Rotary and several other organisations are set up primarily for networking, be it tactical or strategic.

The ultimate purpose of advertising is to structure a relationship between the target of the message and the content of a product so advertised and /or the sender of the message with the ultimate goal of either bonding or “unbundling”. The relationship could be to acquire buy-ins, customers or even good citizens and so on and so forth.

It is more transactional in nature, with the purpose of mutuality in exchange. Once the relationship is intended to be ongoing, it becomes strategic. In that case, such a relationship needs regular nutrients to nurture it. Such nutrients, their “packaging,” and actions associated with their promotion are defined as “networking.”

It is an extension of this development that motivates advertising agencies to build bridges for collaborative or complementary functions/disciplines like PR, Media Independents, Marketing Research, Entertainment, and even broadcast businesses; and contemporarily decomposing or unbundling their functions into marketing



communications components, leading to a group where there is Brand Agency, Promotion Agency, PR Agency, Media Independent, Digital agencies etc. Most practitioners are very familiar with this development. What we may not be too familiar with or have refused to do in our market in Nigeria is one group strategically reaching out to the others to build synergies, scale and competitive advantages in pursuit of delivering quality services.

Martin Sorrel was a great champion and an apostle of strategic networking, not in building loose relationships but strong ones for gaining scale, competitive advantage and sustainable financial results. He presided over a group whose media alone product, known as “Group M” generated business in excess of \$61 billion a year, some years ago. The strategic alliance between O & M, Y & R, Grey, JWT, Mediacom, Media Edge, Cia, Mediashare, etc. created the advertising behemoth called WPP.

Levy, the Publicis CEO, tried to replicate the Martin Sorrel Model in Publicis Group comprising of the original Publicis, Leo Burnett, Saatchi & Saatchi, Starcom Media Vest, Zenith – Optimedia, etc., with Media business alone close to \$ 50 billion when they were initially brought together. That has ballooned over the years, embedding Nigeria’s Insight communications, along the way. This relationship has helped Insight Communications to become the dominant Marketing Communications group in Nigeria, what a smart move by its founders- Shobanjo and Awosika.

Other strategic networks included Omnicom, comprised of TBWA, BBDO, DDB, OMD, PHD, etc. Inter-public made up of Lowe Lintas, McCann, FCB, Universal McCann, Initiative Media, etc. The fifth global advertising network was the HAVAS Group, in 2007 driven by the investment iconoclast - Bollore with interests in Euro RSCG, Arnold, AEGIS, and MPG with combined media billings in excess of \$ 35 billion in its early days. In a smart move, it collapsed all its media products into HAVAS Media worldwide. Although my agency was technically affiliated to the HAVAS Group, after the divorce with Young and Rubican, we did not really benefit from the relationships primarily because of lack of capabilities in managing affiliation; and may be lack of strategic fit.

Before concluding this section, we need to check out the development between JCDecaux, and the outdoor Advertising giant- Clear Channel. JCDecaux, a family business established in 1964 in France, desirous of acquiring incremental capacity to serve its clients outside Europe, particularly in North America. It knew that the only feasible strategy was to have a strategic alliance, which it could do with CBS Outdoor or the much bigger Clear Channel. It chose the latter, which created the world's biggest outdoor Ad Company with operations in 33 countries and the utilization of about 200,000 Clear channel hoardings in the USA alone. (Source: - *Wall Street Journal-Media & Marketing - Wed Nov 8, 2006*).

Strategic networking, which is intended to bring to the fore complementarities from different organisations for synergistic advantages, was exemplified par excellence by the JCDecaux approach. Compatibility or strategic fit was a critical ingredient in the long-term survival of strategic networks, like in most other alliances and relationships.



4. RECENT DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

A new PwC's (2025) report indicates that the Nigeria's marketing communications industry had a size of ₦605.2 billion in 2023, expected to get to ₦893 billion by 2028.

The report was titled, "Economic Contribution of the Marketing Communications Industry to the Nigerian Economy". It indicated that for every ₦1 spent on marketing communication in Nigeria multiplied Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by ₦16.50 kobo.

The report, commissioned by the Advertising Regulatory Council of Nigeria (ARCON) was funded by associations in the industry; some of which are 'the Experiential Marketers Association of Nigeria (EXMAN), the Association of Advertising Agencies of Nigeria (AAAN), the Outdoor Advertising Agencies of Nigeria (OAAN), the Media Independent Practitioners Association of Nigeria (MIPAN) and the Broadcasting Organisation of Nigeria, (BON).'

It was revealed that the top three contributors to marketing communication total market 'between 2018 and 2023 were cable TV (25.5 per cent), digital media (18.5 per cent), and creative & content production (13.4 per cent)' (PWC,2025).

This is a situation very different when I presented my ARCON Day paper in 2006.

Surge in digital and social media spend, accentuated by increase in Mobile and internet and platforms, reconfigured Advertising and Marketing Communications in Nigeria.

"The investment by video-on-demand platforms like Netflix and Amazon Prime in Nigerian productions, particularly in the thriving Nollywood industry", complemented her elements in the changed Landscape (Onwuamaeze, 2024).

Global leverages have been further illuminated as necessary and needed but can we not start with big mergers and acquisition in Nigeria that can generate scale to negotiate with possible global partners from the position of strength? Opinions differ about collaborations, mergers and acquisition in Nigeria's marketing Industry (Rufus, 2022)

'For over a decade, mergers and acquisition in the ad ecosystem have been widely considered as a strategic tool for strengthening brand equity. However, it appears that only a few have demonstrated and embraced collaboration as a way of further enhancing business opportunities and growth'(Onwuamaeze, 2024).

Speaking on his experience in an interview with MARKETING EDGE, Plural Media boss, Uduak Bassey shared: "We have tried to do business with other companies, we tried collaboration, and even joint ventures. We are yet to do merger and acquisition. We actually tried to do acquisition... the mindset of the people in the industry" (ARCON,2025) did not allow.

For the enlightened self-interest of the practitioners, if they do not want their agencies to enter graveyard of dead agencies, they must pull down egos and do merger and acquisition to compete in the modern word of today.



Lanre Adisa, Creative leader and CEO Noah's Ark disagreed with Bassey.

Meanwhile, Bunmi Oke, CEO of Ladybird Ltd and past president of AAAN, avers collaboration is needed in the industry.

The Mediashop Nigeria had a collaborative arrangement with CentreSpread. It did not last. Mindshare also sought a commercial relationship with Lolu Akinwunmi's communication group, but could not agree terms.

Mergers & acquisitions has been described as an effective way to maximize the strength of agencies, if indeed we desire optimum results(Rufus,2022)

The President of the Association of Advertising agencies of Nigeria, Steve Babaeko is canvassing for increased collaboration in the industry. He however fell short on mergers and acquisitions as the way to go for scaling up.

Scale is critical in leveraging strength and capabilities to be able to thrive in the Marketing Communications of today. This affirms my conclusion in the ARCON day paper presentation in 2006. It has become even more important now if the mortality rate of Advertising agencies in Nigeria is not going to increase

5. LEARNINGS

From the strategic global networking, I have highlighted and recent developments in Nigeria, there are at least twelve critical lessons for the Nigerian Advertising practice.

- Advertising is a serious business that should be driven on the commercial side more by the head than by the heart. Emotions inherent in creative products have no business in the area of building strategic fits and alliances.
- Strategic fits and complementarities are important for competitive advantage and organisational resilience.
- Scale has become an issue in delivering superior performance and enhanced values to key stakeholders, almost overtaking positioning/niching.
- Specialisation and scale have wonderful opportunity of working together in strategic posturing of advertising business, when well resourced.
- Accountability- profits, shareholder values, government, society, etc. are critical considerations in business navigation / decision-making.
- Leadership and managerial skills are being called upon in scales unprecedented in managing the complexity of integration and unbundling in the strategic networks of today.



- Delivering service to an all high level through teamwork and tactical collaborations exemplified in the Marriott story as told by Marriott Junior and Oren Harari Chronicled in the book “The leadership secrets of Colin Powell”.
- Balancing financial results with social responsibility in terms of impact on larger society and community of business residence.
- The morality or lack of it in using scale to diminish competition and opportunity to choose upon which modern economy is built and thrives.
- Achieving seamlessness in product/ solution has become a serious challenge, which at the end of the day could escalate cost to the disadvantage of those paying the bills whilst the service provider smiles all the way to the bank.
- Corporate cost minimisation and job losses in mega groups resulting from strategic networking and alliances could generate social unrest and social challenges.
- Finally, the issue of integrity and business ethics in corporate governance and optimising stakeholders' values cannot be swept under the carpet and must, in fact, be given adequate attention in the emerging scenarios of advertising/communications governance in Nigeria.

Whereas, the developed world is learning fast and driving to minimise the downside of the global strategic alignments not only in advertising but also in airlines and several other industries, Nigerian practitioners seem mostly interested in hooking onto the apron strings of these international networks and often lily-livered in generating its own, thereby losing the opportunity of showing the world that we have something to offer.

Take for instance WPP and Havas which brought together their media brands under strategic arrangements that gave the groups the power to negotiate with big media organisations to the advantage of their clients. The Nigerian agencies in these two groups could not take the initiative to do business together. Can we call this small-mindedness not seeing the big picture, or is it just a “follow-follow” mentality?

Twenty five years ago, when Pertcom and Partners Group started (now called Havilah Group), went to several of our Nigerian advertising agencies to invite strategic collaboration as a part of our strategic intent for doing marketing communications business in Nigeria. The only agencies that saw the merit in our proposition then were CentreSpread and Tunde Ojo's led agency - Touch stone. Most of the agencies we approached refused to see the big picture in local strategic alignment, one that originates from us, indigenous to our collective wisdom and creativity, and not forced on us from the West or Johannesburg.

Examples of strategic collaborations of profound magnitude abound in South Africa. Number one was our affiliate, Mortimer Harvey. For over 30 years of existence, it was



at the forefront of delivering integrated through-the-line advertising with a service orientation unsurpassed. It could do this based on three simple principles.

- Passion for excellence displayed with service quality results.
- Strategic networking / collaboration with the brightest media specialist agency, i.e., The Media shop for all the years, with mutuality of interest and respect.
- Acquisition and utilization of multi-skilling in thinking outside the box most of the time.

Then, it refused to be glued to the apron strings of any multinational group. It developed a home-grown strategy for global competition. What of Jupiter Drawing Room? No other agency had received as much acclaim locally and internationally in Africa as Jupiter, with dozens of awards from Cannes, Loeries, Black Eagle, etc. The secret was anchored on three legs as well, viz:

- Strategic networking/collaboration at the local level and maintaining international independence. Where international networking became expedient, it was based on mutual respect and win-win mentality.
- Vision backed by passion and Creative exceptionality.

Sir Steve Omojfor had unceasingly called for this strategic partnership in Nigeria through his merger paradigm which Professor Soludo “borrowed” for the banking and insurance sectors of our economy. My experience in chairing the Board of Directors of a national microfinance bank taught me that strategic upscaling is often over 75% of cases dependent on a combination of organic growth and strategic networking and partnerships.

Are the industry captains in Nigeria listening? It would be unfair to say that all are not listening. Some do, particularly those in advertising, seeking strategic marriages with those in PR and Promotions. A number of these marriages have been consummated successfully. I salute those who went into these. But we need to go beyond that if we are not to be whipping boys of not only the West but also of South Africa. There is something I wish to share within our company's 25 year's experience in the industry.

In our very first year of business, we went into strategic collaboration with four international agencies - Media Shop PTY, Young & Rubicam, The Media Edge / CIA and Mortimer Harvey. We also sought strategic collaboration with three or four agencies in Nigeria and two in Ghana.

We were trying to develop a home-grown model of scale and skills development. Whereas, only two agencies then responded to our entreaties positively in Nigeria, one of the international networks we had affiliation with sent a semi-skilled white-skinned boy with the title of General Manager West Africa with a responsibility to “teach” us



how to do business in our industry. Not only that, our entire group must be conscripted to their network to “help us out of poverty”. We were not prepared to trade principles, integrity, and human dignity for a pot of porridge.

As our values were being betrayed, we decided to get out of the marriage very quietly. Our local agencies need to stand up for principles, human dignity, and self-respect. We need courage to wean ourselves from the garage or houseboy mentality. Money-making is not everything, to grow a vibrant industry that has an inner momentum for growth is something to treasure.

We should be able to stand up like Jimoh Ibrahim or Dangote. In the October 4th edition of Tell magazine of 2006, Ibrahim Jimoh was quoted, *“You must know the nature of the business you want to do and you must know how you want to do it. In our case, we know what we want to do and we developed a system that is the very key to business success and that is acquisition as opposed to building”* (Tell Magazine, 2006).

In the advertising industry, acquisition could become a key strategy in the strategic alignments. Talk to an average Nigerian advertising agency. The agency will rather die than allow itself to be acquired. That explains why the morbidity or mortality rate of advertising agencies is very high in Nigeria. Is this an issue of pride, “*my own thing*” syndrome or “*perishing for lack of knowledge*”? or even inferiority complex hiding behind the wall of silence? Whatever the reason is, we need to wake up, ourselves and our colleagues, to begin to embrace global best practices in our industry and day-to-day business conduct which gives opportunities for mergers, acquisitions, etc., as strategies for building competitive advantages, organisational resilience and dynamic capabilities, not only in ourselves but also in our businesses.

Please note that I have nothing against international affiliation. What I am against is not getting our acts together locally, which exposes us to exploitation and becoming whipping boys of the West and even South Africa.

CONCLUSION

Since my original paper was delivered, several developments have occurred in the advertising and communications space. The above – the – line Communications media have been displaced locally and globally. Technology and innovation have changed the world and marketing communications. I attempted to embed some of those changes in this article. But what certainly has not changed is the need to have home grown approach to develop leverageable scale and local networks that can strengthen Nigeria advertising practitioners’ ability to stand shoulder to shoulder with global communications networks, as equals, helping in extracting more value for the Nigeria’s Marketing Communications practitioners. The master servant mentality needs deconstruction. The crumbs from the ‘Master’s table must turn into a full meal.

Only mind-set change among marketing communications agencies; and strategically pulling together local strategic fits; pristine innovativeness and pulling advertising agencies in Nigeria to believe in the Nigeria dream, despite pursuit of profit, can truly propel robust capability and network leverages that benefit Nigeria Marketing



communications agencies long term. In the same vein, Marketing Communications Agencies consolidation is worthy of consideration; and may be a fertile area for deeper investigation.

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