

# Media Commercialization, Public Interest and Sustainable Development in Nigeria

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**Abstract:** The economics of media production, distribution and consumption makes the issue of commercialization an inevitable reality in the modern society. But the mass media exist essentially as a social institution to provide voice to the populace through a ‘full, truthful, comprehensive and intelligent account of the day’s events in a context – that gives meaning’. However, unfolding realities reveal that commercial considerations have vitiated the statutory mandate of the media as the fourth estate of the realm. In Nigeria, like other developing countries, the challenge is how media professionals can balance their desire to break even and successfully navigate the complex and harsh mace of economic realities for an enhanced bottom-line on the one hand and remain committed to the professional demands of their calling on the other. This is crucially so because of the media’s place and role as societal conscience, compass and barometer of development. This paper x-rays the emerging issues in the wake of media commercialization in Nigeria and their implications for public interests and sustainable national development with suggestions on the way forward.

**Key words:** Commercialization, Media Economics, Social Institution, Public Interest, Sustainable Development.

## Introduction

One of the challenges of the mass media in this age of information society is how to resolve a basic contradiction that has emerged from the complex realities of their professional practice. All over the world, the mass media enjoy dual acknowledgement as a social institution and an industry. And herein lays the problem. As a social institution, the mass media, according to McQuail (2005:213), are entrusted with the sacred mandate to “fulfill, with varying degrees of voluntariness and explicit commitment, certain important public tasks that go beyond their immediate goals of making profits and giving employment”. This notion is akin to the ‘fiduciary’ or trustee model used to refer to the idea of the media being held in trust by their owners (whether government or private) on behalf of the public. The logic here, according to McQuail citing Hoffmann-Riem (1966), Feintuck (1999), is that of public interest in matters of information, publicity and culture. Where and when they (the media) are perceived to be falling short of expectations, they may be called to account by public opinion or other guardians of the public interest, including politicians. The emphasis here, however, is on open societies.

As an industry or business concern, the media while providing their traditional products of news, views, information and entertainment, keep in view, and are in fact being directed, motivated and controlled by the manifest principles of the bottom line. The overriding goal of this school of thought is that of profit maximization and increased returns on investment of the owners. Opinions vary among media scholars on the propriety or otherwise of either of the dual concepts of the media. But as Oso (2006) rightly observed, “the debate is no longer a normative question of the propriety of commercialization of the media, rather it is coming to terms with the opportunity cost of a media system weighted in economics at the expense of social responsibility to the society.

The survival of any society largely depends on the efficacy of its communication networks. Communication is the bedrock and life-wire for the smooth functioning of human organizations and societies. The mass media are responsible for the information exchanges that take place and needed for peace, harmony and co-existence of the various components of the society. The media serve as the link between the government and the governed, and the conveyor belt of the opinions, views or reactions of the governed to the actions and inactions of the government. The media represent and present views expressed by the masses about government policies and programmes. Thus, they earn for themselves the accolade of “the voice of the voiceless”.

However, in the contemporary society, the ability of the press/media to protect and defend the cause of the masses has become a contentious issue. The emergence of “commercialism” in the media industry with a paradigm shift in emphasis from “public good” to “commercial value” of media products has put a question mark on the public interest concept of the mass media. The paper examines the practicability and relevance of media’s claim and capacity to service and protect the interest of the masses and national development in the wake of the commercialization and tabloidization currents which compel them to operate essentially as commercial organisations with a radical shift of paradigm in content packaging in favour of human interest and entertainment stories for as a bait for audience catchment and expectations of returns on the investment of their owners.

### Conceptual Clarification

Media commercialization is a concept that has to do with the restructuring of media structures, characters and contents to reflect the profit-seeking goals of media industries. It underpins the assumption that media products are governed by economic/market considerations. Thus, for any media organization to remain afloat in a competitive world of market forces of demand and supply, it must generate enough revenue to cover cost, break even with considerable profits on investment.

The term ‘media’ is the plural of the noun ‘medium’, it means a method of giving information or a form of art. Literally, a medium could be the human voice, television, radio, newspaper, body language, interpersonal communication etc. through which a message travels. Communication scholars have often distinguished between medium and channel as elements of the communication process. While the former relates to the mode of communication, the latter denotes specifically, the pathway, the conduit or the mechanical substance which links the source to the receiver. Hence, we talk of channels in terms of the technical modulation of signal frequency and amplitude (i.e. AM/FM) in the case of radio and the quality range of signals (whether Ultra High Frequency (UHF) or Very High Frequency (VHF) in the case of television broadcast.

Commercialization is a concept that gained much currency in Nigeria in the eighties. Its arrival in the Nigerian media lexicon followed the introduction of the World Bank’s Structural Adjustment Programme as the remedy for Nigeria’s ailing economy by the Babangida administration. Like its twin variant, deregulation, commercialization, as applied by the military regime then came in different nuances. There was partial and full-scale commercialization depending on the fate and lot of whatever organizations that were so listed for unbundling by the erstwhile Technical Committee on Privatization and Commercialization (TCPC). The idea of commercialization was for corporations or organizations which hitherto had depended on government to source for their own revenue and be self-sustaining.

We operationalize the concept of media commercialization in this paper to imply the on-going trend in the media industry wherein the idea of public service journalism or media practice is subjugated to purely commercial consideration of market forces. In other words, media commercialization is construed in line with Nnorom’s view cited by Ekwo (1996:63-64) as:

A phenomenon whereby the (electronic) media report as news or news analysis a commercial message by an unidentified or unidentifiable sponsor; giving the audience the impression that news is fair, objective and socially responsible.

Media commercialization is the natural precursor of commodification of news, information and other sundry products through the policy and principle of cash and carry or what is now known in media parlance as “Let Them Pay” (LTP). This is what Oso (2006) refers to as news by barter.

Public Interest on the other hand denotes what is generally regarded as ‘good’ to the majority of the people. It relates to the concept of *majoritarianism* which implies that the media consider the opinion of the majority and strive to satisfy or meet their needs. Public Interest is superior to “particular interest”. The media are expected to meet the needs of their audiences through carefully designed contents or products in line with the prevailing trend in the industry. The pursuit of public interest requires that the mass media carryout a number of important tasks in the contemporary society and these tasks are supposedly to be of benefit to the generality of the populace. The concept of public interest continues to gain prominence in intellectual discourse because the so-called free market place of ideas (the central tenet of the Libertarian theory) has failed to generate press freedom and to yield the expected benefits to the society. Rather, the commercial development of the press and unforeseen developments in media

technology always tend to limit access to the media for individuals and groups, and to concentrate media power in the hands of a few businessmen (advertisers) and media professionals who have the means to set-up media empires.

In Nigeria, the term ‘public interest’ as a key variable in this paper is a fundamental issue which derives from the constitutional provision on the people’s right to know. As a key provision of Section 22 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria under the Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy, journalists are empowered to “at all times uphold the fundamental objectives and responsibility and accountability of the government to the people” Such objectives include: freeing the nation from the pangs of scourges of unemployment, homelessness, poverty, ignorance, illiteracy, disease, population explosion etc. Hence all media activities directed towards fulfilling the constitutional provision on the people’s right to know, accountability in governance, freedom of expression including other objectives identified in this section fall within the ambit of public interest. Anything done by the media which in reality negates the spirit and letter of the constitutional stipulation is deemed to be against public interest.

A lot of scholars have examined the concept of development and its implications for the socio-economic and political life of people at both societal and national levels. Like in all other human issues opinions vary on the appropriate conceptual context of development as a socio-economic construct. However, for the purpose of this paper, development is interpreted in the context of Usman (2008:46)’s definition to imply, “the ability of a people within a given area to manage the local natural resources within their local environment effectively to induce positive changes that would enhance the quality of their lives and their economic well-being. Conceived in this way, we have tried to avoid such controversies usually associated with the divergent ideas of scholars on development theories or paradigms along the lines of modernization, dependency, communitarian etc. The engagement here is to see how the reality of media commercialization interfaces with public interest and in turn impact on the nation’s drive to attain what Ugwu (2004:28) describes as the “improvement of the total circumstance of an individual and granting him mastery of his environment, and such fulfilled individuals acting together to build a systematically organized, self-generating and technologically advanced society”.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is anchored on two out of the many related and relevant communication theories in media literature. These are:

- (i) The Social Responsibility Theory, and
- (ii) The Democratic-Participant Media Theory.

The Social Responsibility Theory was propounded by Siebert et al (1956) and it originated from the report of the Hutchins Commission on Freedom of the Press set up in the United States of America in 1947 as a result of the shortcomings of Libertarian Media Theory. According to Folarin (1998:27) this theory identifies six specific functions for the press; among which are: to serve the political system by making information, discussion and consideration of public affairs generally accessible; and to inform the public to enable it to take self-determined action. Although the media need financial autonomy to pursue and maintain objectivity in news reporting, nevertheless, as a social institution, the mass media exist to serve and service the social system, and as such, priority should be given to what the public considers the “common good”.

Democratic-Participant Media Theory on the other hand was propounded by Dennis McQuail in 1987. The theory was formulated as a result of the inability of the previous postulations to live up to the expectations of the scholars on the media and public interface. Folarin (1998:30) juxtaposes commercialization and monopolization of privately owned media against the centralism and bureaucratization of public broadcasting institutions established according to the norms of social responsibility. According to him, the commercialization and concentration of the media had made the media to become too elitist, too rigid in structure, too slavish to professionals’ ideas and susceptible to the whims and caprices of those in government. Thus, the Democratic – Participant theory posits that greater attention be given to the needs, interests and aspirations of the masses and that, media conglomeration and monopoly be broken to give way to pluralism, decentralization and small scale media enterprises. The theory calls for “association mode” of communication rather than the existing “command” and “service” mode of socio-political communication. Protagonists of the theory enjoin media owners and managers to de-emphasize economic benefit and concentrate on mass participation and usage of media facilities and institutions.

### The Media and Society

Mass media are vehicles used for the dissemination of information regarded as important and necessary for the functioning and survival of every society. They include newspapers, magazines, books and other periodicals. In the pre-industrial societies, mass media performed, basically, functions such as information dissemination, education and entertainment. However, the 19<sup>th</sup> century industrial revolution in Europe and America brought about a phenomenal and unprecedented change in the structure, character, content and powers of the media. Aside the print media, electronic channels such as radio, television, film, Internet, CD-ROM etc. were invented and put into use.

The structure of the media is largely dependent on the type of the society in which they operate. Folarin (1998:24) citing Siebert et al (1956) states that, “the press always takes on the form and coloration of the social and political structures within which it operates”.

McQuail (2005:97) citing Lasswell (1948) posits that the media, in every contemporary society, perform three functions, namely: surveillance of the environment, correlation of the parts of the society in responding to its environment, and the transmission of the cultural heritage. Wright (1960) and McQuail (2005) add the fourth function of entertainment. The media thus serve and service the society within which they operate, and the society in turn depends on the media for structural maintenance and survival. There is a complex inter-relationship between the society and the mass media. The two institutions, though different, are organically and mechanically interdependent such that one needs the other to function effectively and for goal attainment.

Randaff (1981:58) states that:

A society is the complex or totality of the relationships existing between people living in a community- relationship such as marriage and family unit, the sharing of ethical ideas and political and religious relationships.

Though the mass media could only be contextually situated within the confines of a society, the relationship between them is cyclical and mutually beneficial. Thus, Daramola (2008:32) contends that the relationship which exists between mass media and the society is symbiotic and interminable in nature adding that it is not only a give-and-take exchange but also a permanent as well as an enduring association. What this means is that the people need the mass media for information, education, entertainment and cultural regeneration for the survival of the society. Likewise, the media need people to carry out their functions because they use “people in their reports” and “report about people to people”.

The surveillance function of the mass media is seen as a “protective shell” for the citizenry. Ethically, the media keep close watch over and monitor the activities of the government and its agencies, and report same to the people so as to make informed decisions. Any break of contract, maladministration or abuse of fundamental human rights is promptly reported, and thus, public action or reaction is instantaneously generated. The mass media thus become the “voice of the voiceless” and these are performed and performed well (McQuail 2005:164).

### Evolution of Media Commercialization in Nigeria

As observed earlier, media commercialization evolved in Nigeria as a consequence of the interplay of market forces and trends. It is a product of the economic down-turn of the eighties which heralded the austere policies of the second republic that culminated in the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) of the erstwhile Babangida’s military regime.

Of course, the economic logic of the bottom-line had always been a reality in media productions since the establishment of Henry Townsend’s *Iwe Iroyin fun awon ara Egba ati Yoruba* in 1859 at Abeokuta. However, the poor economy of the eighties threw up some ethical pressures in the various sectors of the nation’s life. The effect of this in the media industry was cyclical. First, soaring inflation led to high cost of production which at the same time accounted for customer’s reduced purchasing power. This invariably translated to dwindling circulation, falling readership and eventually, reduced advertising patronage. The ultimate consequence of that vicious cycle is the reduced income for the media. In the broadcast sector, the awareness struck both government and media managers that reliance on the annual budgetary allocations, including periodic releases, could no longer provide the needed bailout for the operations of the stations. Analyzing the trend, Oso (2006) states:

As a result, many of them (broadcast stations) could not acquire new equipment, and in some cases, only manage to pay staff salaries as at when affordable. Under this parlous state, programming and the general quality of programmes declined. Most stations simply could not locally produce good programmes. They relied more on low-budget, cheap format programme genres, essentially

studio-based interviews and discussion programmes, scheduled assignments and events interspersed with press releases from corporate organizations for news.

Against this background and the fact that Nigeria's political economy correlates with, and indeed shares a lot of structural similarities with the capitalist system of the West where the control of the economy is largely private sector-driven, media houses, especially government-owned ones, were asked to 'go to the market', a synonym for commercialization. Soon after, the economics of media production, distribution and transmission, being subject to the reins of the free market overwhelmed the logic of the public service orientation of the initial government-dominated electronic and print media.

Today, commercials have gone beyond their initial complementary status for media capital such that the possibility of eliminating commercials is a perpetual nightmare for media industries and their advertisers. So ingrained and pervasive is the trend of media commercialization in Nigeria, and indeed the global world, that the audience, contrary to media products, has become a commodity that the mass media sell or deliver to advertisers (Smythe, 1977, cited in Oso, 2006).

### **Media Commercialization, Public Interest and National Development**

The legal and moral justification for any media operation, as has been examined earlier, derives from the constitutional provision. The mass media, whether print or electronic, are held in trust by their owners on behalf of the public. This sacred mandate derives from the tenets of the Social Responsibility theory which empowers the media to provide a full, truthful, comprehensive and intelligent account of the day's event in a meaningful context.

Arising from this theory, according to Baran and Davis (2000:14) is the need for an independent press that scrutinizes other social institutions and provides objective, accurate news reports and which calls on the media to be responsible for fostering productive and creative 'Great Communities'. To accomplish this task, the two authors suggest that the media should prioritize cultural pluralism by becoming the voice of the people, and not just elite groups that had dominated national, regional or local culture in the past. Here lies the problem, and indeed the contradiction that the commercialization of the media has thrown up.

Contrary to earlier postulations on the propriety of the so-called free market of ideas, media commercialization, particularly, the way it is being carried out globally and especially in the Nigerian context, appears to negate the principles and advocacy for press freedom in real and absolute terms. This is because commercial pressures and survivalist instincts now combine to compel the mass media to abandon the so-called fact-based standards of mainstream journalism for the "never – let – facts – stand – in – the – way – of – a – good – story" standards associated with tabloid journalism (Kayode, 2014:280). Instead, as has been noted earlier, the commercial inclinations of the press and other unanticipated developments in technology have actually restricted access to the media to a few businessmen (advertisers) including media professionals who have the wherewithal to own media empires. The question therefore is: are the media now being held in public trust for whom and by whom? Obviously, the logic in the saying that there is security in numbers and the assumption by Americans that the media will be financially healthier and their news more impartial if they rely on support through advertising from the private sector appears to have failed the test of media reality at least in the Nigerian context.

While providing a sociological review of the ethical crises in the Nigerian Press, Idowu (1996) contends that the concept of responsibility by media professionals parades a triple mandate that sees the role of the press as being contractual, self-imposed and assigned. By Idowu's analysis, the constitutional mandate on journalists under the banner of the Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy, earlier broached in this presentation, constitutes the assigned role of the media. This confers the exclusive privilege on journalists as the only professional group given a specific assignment, from which they have derived the accolade as the Fourth Estate of the Realm. The contractual nature of media responsibility, according to Idowu, derives from the awareness that there is a tacit understanding between a medium of communication and its audience that well-processed information and opinions which are useful to the audience will be provided, that is information and opinions that can be acted upon.

This is what is known in media parlance as credibility, which in turn is a function of similar constructs like "balance", "fairness" and "objectivity". While objectivity remains a contentious construct in journalism ethics, Wang (2003) believes that media owners see it as a way of attracting the readers desired by advertisers. According to Wang:

The content of the news is built with the economic objective of the company. Though in some cases, the owner may choose to make profits secondary to an ideological goal such as promoting a particular agenda, the

organization can't definitely ignore the economic goal. Especially when media firms are owned by stockbrokers, public service is usually sacrificed for the sake of profitability (Wang, 2003).

As a result of the reduced income which the poor economy brought about for the media, the survival strategy forced many publications including broadcast houses to adopt cheap and instantly rewarding practices of junk journalism where half truths become acceptable option in contrast to the 'professionally exacting but slow rewarding enterprises of responsible journalism. The consequence of this is the erosion of public confidence in the press as an agent of development.

Besides, another major backlash of commercialization of the media, according to Oso (2006), is that the role of the media as custodian of public interest is greatly impaired. This is because media content, especially broadcast programmes, are overridden by the commercial logic of the advertising industry with its utmost dependence on entertainment as a ploy to capture the unwary audience. This, Oso contends, is usually done at the expense of other programme genres, especially those with deep current affairs and high intellectual discourse content. Democracy, Oso laments, "suffers in this regard" as "consumerism and political apathy become the order of the day as radio and television purvey fun and laughter in place of knowledge and enlightenment".

Equally, worrisome in the commercialization phenomenon is the growing exclusion of the populace from participation in media discourses, news and programme sources. As access to the media increasingly gets tied to the ability to pay either as programme sponsors, newsmakers, advertisers or producers, the poor, and the socially marginalized groups in the society become in Gaye Tuchman's words, symbolically annihilated (Gaye, 1981 cited in Oso, 2006). This reductionist attribute has turned the citizens to mere consumers in what a media scholar describes as part of the process of the disempowerment of the poor and the socially deprived. This is the kernel of Atkinson (1997:38)'s view when he asserts that "when culture is reduced to goods and services which can be converted into cash in market, the result is a misappropriation of the rights which citizens have acknowledged in favour of the proclaimed freedom of consumers to procure that culture".

Even if one ignores the issues of marginalization and disempowerment of the masses which media commercialization or its twin variant, commodification of news engenders, one cannot but acknowledge the effect of the propaganda model on media reality as enunciated by Herman and Chomsky (2002). Among other functions, the media, according to Herman and Chomsky serve and propagandize on behalf of the powerful societal interests that control and finance them. It is in the contention of these scholars, for instance, that:

The competition for advertising has become more intense that boundaries between editorial and advertising departments have weakened further. Newsrooms have been more thoroughly incorporated into transnational corporate empires with budget cuts and a further diminution of management enthusiasm or investigative journalism that would challenge the structures of power. (Herman, E. & Chomsky, N., 2002: xvii).

The kernel of Herman and Chomsky's submission here is that editorial content of media production has been subjugated to the whims of advertising. This in turn has a serious implication on the waning zeal of the media for investigative journalism because invariably there often seems to be a meeting point between media owners, sponsors and those who control political power. With this development, it may no longer require a gift of clairvoyance to predict that the press may soon forfeit its accolade as the fourth estate of the realm due to the emergent contradictions in its compromised status as a dispensable adjunct to the already bloated structures of political power.

It is of course true that the social reality of a privatized or deregulated media system appears irreversible both in logic and expediency. After all, it is normal for human beings to invest into anything and expect to reap profits either in hard cash or social influence. As Adaba (2001) notes, normal societies also never stand in the way of profit-making because it enriches the Commonwealth, except when such threatens the cohesion and orderly progress of society. It is gratifying to acknowledge, with limited optimism though that media commercialization has not degenerated to this stage in Nigeria. In his analysis of the dangers of commercialization, Adaba identifies two instances of the aberration of the concept in broadcasting to imply:

- (1) the sale of an entire newscast to a so-called "sponsor" whose logo or message or product is continuously displayed throughout the newscast; or
- (2) charging news sources for the "privilege" of covering and relaying their pre-packaged views or messages as news.

According to Adaba, himself a renowned broadcaster, what the so-called 'sponsor' is buying in the first instance is the credibility of the newscast and newscasters to confer status by association on his company's logo, message and product, while the broadcasting station, by conceding, is selling cheaply the integrity of its newscast and newscasters as testimonials to the "truth" claim of the so-called "sponsors".

In the second category of news commercialization, the renowned broadcaster avers:

By charging and receiving fees, by whatever name called, to cover news, company Annual General Meetings, weddings, funerals, chieftaincy installation, town festivals, workshops and seminars, even events organized by charity organizations, stations are not only prostituting the integrity of news, they are insulting their audiences and breaching the National Broadcasting Code. (Adaba, 2001, *ibid*).

The National Broadcasting Code states unequivocally in Section 4.3.11 that news is universally accepted as sacred and that the sponsorship of news detracts from its integrity and predisposes a bias in favour of the sponsor, hence, newscasts shall not be sponsored.

It would appear that this crucial section of the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) code is observed more in the breach than in compliance as any meaningful content analysis of media presentations, whether print or broadcast in Nigeria would reveal. Apart from the above, the tendency of a commercialized media system to reinforce the hegemonic power of the powerful social class while it, at the same time, disempowers the socially weak groups in the society cannot be over-stressed.

Media scholars like Oso (2006: *ibid*) have argued that:

*With their ready access to the media and higher social capital, the members of the powerful class are able to define the critical issues of the day and dominate the ideological field with their own world view and discourse. The voices of the poor are muted, and if heard by any chance, are muffled, incoherent and inaudible.*

With the turn of events, it does seem that the contradictions thrown up by commercialism in the media industry have called to question the ability of the media to protect and defend the cause of the masses. As it were, the media's slogan of being 'the voice of the voiceless' is flat and does not excite any passion from the presumed beneficiaries of the cliché.

### **The way forward**

To attempt to prescribe the way forward from the inherent contradictions that have arisen out of socio-economic and political issue is not as straight forward as it seems. Experience on the historical phases, transitions and applications of the theories, and models as postulated by media scholars has revealed that, in most cases, challenges that emerge while attempting to solve communication problems appear more complex than the initial problem they were designed to fix. For instance, if the Libertarian theory had been perfect, in real life applications as it was on the intellectual crucible, there would not have been further need for its update in the Social Responsibility theory.

Be that as it may, media commercialization may indeed be a necessary evil, but the fact remains that it by no means un-tame-able. Because of the sensitive nature and role of the media in society, it is dangerous to totally abandon its reins to the so-called free market forces. Unfolding realities of the political economy of communication through concentration, conglomeration and the activities of transnational corporations (TNCs) have confirmed that there is, in absolute and utopian terms, nothing is really free about the capitalist 'free market'. There is indeed a need for some moderating influences to be brought to bear on the free swing of market forces, as they relate to the activities of the media.

The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights confers on every citizen the right to seek, receive and impart information. This is a sacred duty that the tenet of Social Responsibility assigns to the media to the people they are meant to protect.

Secondly, there is wisdom in Oso (2006)'s suggestion of the need, through appropriate policy, to re-orientate the mass media as a social service institution within the context of the developmental needs of Less Developed Countries (LDCs). Part of the strategy to accomplish this, according to Oso, is to deepen the professional commitment of journalists and other media workers to enhance the social responsibility of the press. This is because, as Halin (2000) notes, "there are some things which a truly professional man will not do for money". Broadasson

(1994) had earlier made a similar submission when he argues that journalism shares some of the main attributes of professionalism. These, he says, include its sacred mandate to equity and rendering of altruistic services to the society, stamping the credo with ethical requirement that journalism must be committed to 'public service', the desire to serve the general public interest objectively and impartially.

### Conclusion

Much as the commercialization of the media has become an irreversible aspect of the modern society, the fact remains too that the media are first and foremost social institutions. As such, no effort or sacrifice is too much to harmonize the commercial need of the bottom-line with the social responsibility role of the media to empower the citizenry to actively participate in community and national affairs. To do otherwise, is to violate the spirit of the American scholar James Carey's statement that:

*Without the institutions and spirit of democracy, journalists are reduced to propagandists or entertainers ...journalism can be destroyed by forces other than the totalitarian state: it can also be destroyed by the entertainment state. (Carey J. 1999, p.17).*

The mass media are a national trust. They derive their relevance and legitimacy from the sacredness of their mandate, therefore, they must not be allowed to be the unwary victims of the very socio-economic inequalities they seek to impeach in society as the voice of the voiceless through the current wave of the wholesale adoption of commercial principles to the detriment of public good and advocacy which their statutory mandate dictates.

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