BALANCING PROFIT AND PUBLIC GOOD IN NIGERIAN MEDIA: EXAMINING THE TENSION BETWEEN COMMERCIAL INTEREST AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Omowale Taofeek Adelabu[1], Mariam Ojonugwa Musa[2] & Daniel Ayomide Shekete[3]*

[1,2,3]Department of Mass Communication, Redeemer's University, Ede, Osun State, Nigeria

*dannyprayz@gmail.com

ABSTRACT: While media organisations aim to maximise profits and maintain competitiveness, they also have a social responsibility to inform, educate, and promote diversity and inclusion. Thus, as the line between commercial interest and public interest continues to blur, this delicate balancing act has become a defining challenge for modern media. This study explores the inherent tension between commercial interest and social responsibility in media operations. Guided by the Theory of Social Responsibility and the Manufacturing Consent Theory, this study examines the complex dynamics between commercial interests and media content, and their subsequent impact on the public interest. The findings reveal a nuanced and conflicting relationship, where some media organisations prioritise profit over public interest, while others successfully balance both. The study concluded that media organisations must navigate the delicate balance between profit and public good, two essential elements crucial to their survival. To achieve this balance, media organisations must tread this path with utmost care and caution, carefully weighing both sides. Ultimately, transparency, accountability, and ethical decision-making are essential to maintaining public trust and credibility, ensuring that media organisations can thrive while serving the public interest.

Keywords: Media Ethics, Commercialization of Media, Social Responsibility Theory, Public Interest, Nigerian Media Landscape

INTRODUCTION

From the very beginning, media in Nigeria has been subject to constant development in terms of its content and the way it is distributed. Whether it is the early print media and newspapers, audio content on the radio, audiovisual content on television, or today's multi-platform digital media, media owners must be able to react quickly in order to remain relevant. Media ownership has changed over time. Initially, the government was a large owner of media, but since broadcast media were deregulated in 1992, more media have become privately owned (Sanusi et al., 2022). Today, there is a combination of government-owned and privately owned media in Nigeria outlets. There are some non-profit government stations that are for the public good, but most private stations are for profit.

One of the fundamental principles of media is social responsibility – the duty to serve the public good and provide objective, accurate information. However, this is very difficult in a shrinking economy (Oyewole et al., 2025). The collapse of traditional newspapers as a result of digitisation and changing consumer preferences shows this very clearly (Ifeduba, 2013). To stay relevant,

media organisations need to innovate, respond to the market, and fulfill their social responsibility. This means finding creative ways to balance the two. This delicate balance requires creative solutions, such as: Embracing digital transformation is also vital. Investing in digital infrastructure enables media organisations to reach wider audiences and stay competitive. Moreover, producing high-quality, engaging content is essential. Focusing on unique, informative, and entertaining content attracts and retains audiences, ultimately driving revenue ("Talabi, et al., 2022").

According to Ifeduba, (2013), one of the major tensions in the media today is between commercial imperatives and social responsibility. Media companies want to make a profit, but they also want to serve the public good. But then, they are left with these questions to answer:

To what extent do commercial considerations affect media content?

To what extent do media operations have social responsibility built into them? What are the consequences for democracy and society?

Undoubtedly, ownership influences media content and distribution. This resonates with the cliche, "He who pays the piper sets the tone." Hence, private media must generate revenues, and that impacts editorial judgment and the quality of content, as noted by Sanusi et al. (2022). Consequently, Uzuegbunam (2013) noted that to balance profit and public good, media organisations must develop innovative business models, maintain journalistic integrity and operate in a transparent manner. Meanwhile, according to Picard (2011), the media are in conflict between commercial interests and public interests. To survive in a competitive environment, media companies must generate revenues from advertising, sponsorships, and product placements, while also fulfilling a social responsibility to provide accurate, unbiased, and informative content for the public good (Picard, 2011).

As the media landscape evolves, so does the influence of commercial interests on media content. Scholars like Ifeduba (2013) and Ayo-Obiremi and Adelabu (2020) buttress the fact that advertising revenue drives editorial choices, sponsored content blurs the boundary between journalism and marketing, and media conglomerates centralise ownership and homogenise content. These trends raise critical questions about the impact of commercial interests on the media's social responsibility. - The complex and often controversial relationship between commercial interests and the public interest in the media - The effects of advertising, sponsorship, and media consolidation on media content and social responsibility. Thus, the purpose of this study is to examine the tension between commercial imperatives and social responsibility in the media industry, as it plays out in relationships among media owners, advertisers, audiences, and the broader social context. By examining how media organisations negotiate this tension, this research seeks to shed light on the challenges and opportunities facing the media industry today.

Statement of the Problem

Media is critical in shaping public opinion, interpreting and understanding issues to any society and the agenda projected usually forms the foundation of people's thinking on matters of social, political and economic interests (Uzuegbunam, 2013). The power to decide on news items to be

presented to the public, as well as the importance to be attached to particular news items and personalities, should be decided by media managers, such as editors, independently of any influence. On an annual basis, regulatory bodies and associations like the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), National Broadcasting Commission (NBC), and Nigerian Press Council (NPC) receive complaints on the professional conduct of media institutions and journalists (Ayo-Obiremi & Adelabu, 2020).

Nevertheless, the reality is that news media operate in a competitive market today; commercial interests, including audience ratings, circulation and profitability index, are some of the pressing factors that determine how the media operates (Knighton, 2014). In addition, commercial interests and editorial decisions must have a very delicate balance. Soontae and Jin (2015) explain that media owners and commercial interests have compelled editors to slant stories due to pressure from advertisers and powerful interests. In their bid to balance the commercial interests of the media owners with the interests of society, editors' professionalism is sometimes affected.

Furthermore, various complaints have been raised against the media regarding professional standards (Ayo-Obiremi & Adelabu, 2020). Thus, this study aims to investigate the impact of commercial interests on editorial independence, which influences the nature of content published or disseminated to the public, and the outcomes within Nigeria's media space.

However, traditionally, the media is considered an organisation with the responsibility of informing and educating people without undue influence, whereas organisational interests are key, and the guiding principle for news organisations should be to inform without bias (Ngonso & Nworisa, 2021).

However, vested interests by senior management, owners and external forces such as advertisers make media responsibility, such as editors' decisions, even more difficult. Inyang and Essien (2021) have strongly argued that the media promote propaganda on behalf of the powerful social interests that control and fund them. Further, Inyang and Essien (2021) argue that media are largely accountable to the powerful forces that fund them and not their audiences, thus influencing the content published or broadcast to their audiences.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual clarifications

Commercial Interests

This is the desire of media owners and shareholders to maximise profits and protect powerful forces in society, especially big corporations and influential government officials. Media owners and managers depend on these powerful forces for revenues, and hence they influence decisions editors make in content collection, packaging and dissemination (Mokaya, 2020)

Editorial Decisions

Although editors are expected to make independent and professional judgments in the choice and use of content, more often than not, most of their decisions serve the commercial objectives of their respective media organisations and not public interest, which should be the main function of the media. The editorial decisions include: ownership, professionalism, and public interest (Mokaya, 2020).

Social Responsibility Theory of the Press and Media Ethics

The Social Responsibility Theory of the press emphasises the importance of journalistic ethics. As a result of this theory, professional journalistic associations created self-formulated codes of ethics and official journalistic standards in order to encourage responsible behaviour among their members (Okunna & Omenugha, 2012).

Ethics is the moral philosophy concerned with the standards of right and wrong conduct, good and bad conduct, and the rightness or wrongness of actions. Okunna (2003) distinguishes ethics as self-legislation from official or government legislation through outside compulsion as is characteristic of law.

Basic Tenets of Social Responsibility Theory

According to Okunna and Omenugha (2012), McQuail (1987) outlined the basic principles underlying the Social Responsibility Theory.

1. Accepting and carrying out certain societal duties.
2. Setting high professional standards for truth, accuracy, objectivity, balance and informativeness.
3. Regulating itself in accordance with the law.
4. A commitment to media pluralism, that is to say, to a plurality of voices to represent different points of view.
5. Accountability to society, their medium, and others.
6. Recognising that people are entitled to expect them to do so.

In Western liberal democracies, the media participate in an implicit social contract with the societies they serve, which entails, in exchange for the freedom to publish, media performance of core functional obligations. These obligations are outlined in the Social Responsibility Theory of the press and include attention to issues such as bias, invasion of privacy, and the untruthful or careless presentation of information.

In short, the Social Responsibility Theory of the press emphasises the importance of journalistic ethics and encourages media outlets to assume responsibilities to society, uphold high professional standards, and self-regulate in accordance with the law. As Mokaya (2020) noted, 'Within the framework of open and free press criticism, codes of ethics, government regulation, and guidelines for responsible action by members of the press lies the Social Responsibility Theory.

The Advertising Effect: How Revenue Influences Editorial Content and Decisions

The extent to which advertising revenue influences editorial content and decisions is a complex and nuanced issue. On the one hand, advertising revenue is crucial for enabling many media outlets to continue operating and producing high-quality content. However, reliance on advertising can have negative consequences, including a loss of editorial independence and a focus on content that appeals to advertisers at the expense of critical or hard-hitting reporting.

One of the most obvious ways advertising influences editorial decisions is through so-called "advertorial" content. This content promotes a product or service but is disguised as editorial content. Audiences are not aware they're reading advertising, not impartial reporting. This leads to problems like the erosion of media trust and the spread of misleading information (Mokaya, 2020).

Another way advertising income can influence editorial decisions is through 'branded content.' This is content produced by advertisers to promote their products or services subtly. It can be effective for advertisers but can undermine editorial independence and prioritise product promotion rather than accurate, impartial information.

Media organisations also prioritise certain types of content based on advertising revenue, for example, by publishing content that is more likely to draw a large, desirable audience (e. g., sports or entertainment news) over critical or hard-hitting reporting. This results in a lack of diversity in content and can marginalise certain voices or perspectives (Mokaya, 2020).

To reduce the influence of advertising revenue on editorial choices, media outlets should prioritise transparency and accountability by clearly marking advertorial and branded content and informing audiences about funding sources. Media outlets must also maintain editorial independence so that content is shaped by a commitment to accuracy, fairness and impartiality, rather than by advertisers' wishes.

The Effects of Sponsored Content on the Media's Social Responsibility.

Sponsorship and product placement in the media have increasingly become a major issue. Sponsored content in which a media outlet incorporates a product or service into its content has emerged as a key source of revenue for many media companies, but this has raised questions about the impact of sponsored content on media social responsibility (Oyewole et al., 2025)

One concern about sponsored content is that it blurs the line between editorial and advertising content. When a media outlet partners with a brand as a sponsor, it can create a conflict of interest that compromises its editorial independence. It can prioritise the interests of the sponsor over those of the audience and fail to fulfil its social responsibility to provide accurate and unbiased information (Talabi et al., 2022).

Another concern about sponsored content is that it may be misleading or deceptive. Because a product or service is embedded within a media outlet's content, audiences may struggle to distinguish between editorial content and advertising. As a result, audiences may encounter

advertising messages without realising they are advertisements, undermining the media's social responsibility to provide transparent and honest information (Mokaya, 2020).

In addition, sponsored content can reduce media diversity and quality. As mentioned above, when a media outlet relies heavily on sponsorship, the content that is published will likely be more palatable to the sponsors than critical or controversial pieces. As a result, the types of content that are published will be less diverse, and some voices or perspectives will be silenced.

To minimise the negative impacts of sponsored content on media social responsibility, media outlets should promote transparency and accountability by clearly labelling sponsored content, informing audiences about funding sources, and making sponsored content easily distinguishable from editorial content. Media outlets must also maintain editorial independence, guiding content by a commitment to accuracy, fairness, and impartiality, not by appealing to sponsors (Uzuegbunam, 2013).

Factors that Influence the Selection of News and Editorial Content

Several factors determine the editorial decision-making process, including demographics, including gender, race, age and education level (Coleman, 2013). Deadlines also influence the selection of news. This observation was made by Sylvie and Huang (2012), who noted that in every newsroom, operations run with closing deadlines. Hence, reporters and editors lack sufficient time for making reliable decisions. Experience equally influences a person's decision-making style. For instance, as one moves up in their career, there is a steady progression toward openness, diversity of opinion, and participatory decision-making (Brousseau et al., 2016). The implication of this study is that experience in journalism could be a key factor in making various content publication decisions, thus not favouring any individual or organisation. Furthermore, news values also influence how editors make decisions about the type of content to disseminate to the public or in the news selection process (Urbany et al., 2013; Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2011).

However, some key factors may override different normative considerations, for instance, tough advertising revenue and competition for audiences. This forces the media to consider what kind of advertising and news segments the audience is interested in. Hamilton (2014) proposes that the commercial media are interested in who cares about certain information rather than the who, where, what, when and how of a story. From this perspective, whether the news is important matters less than whether they are profitable. Further, research suggests that news content favours content that involves the elite and popular organisations and actors (Bennett, 2010). This is due to their incentives, which usually give them the authority to shape news (Gans, 2011). They may also have an impact extending beyond their normative newsworthiness. Ishengoma (2007) observed that advertisers, businesses, political and influential allies of the media owners interfere and adversely affect editorial independence when corporate organisations force owners to coerce their editors not to publish unfavourable content so as to protect advertisement revenues.

Although editors, by the very nature of their obligations and responsibilities are expected to be fair and impartial and should remain steadfast, upright and just, this is never the case due to the external interference as a result of commercial interests.

Due to the powerful commercial interests exerted on them, some editors, as noted by (Ogongo-Ogong"a, 2008), are forced to practice self-censorship so as to placate advertisers at the expense of public interest. The scholar explains that there are often conflicts between the editorial staff and the advertising department in making key decisions about influential advertisers. His findings, however, established that at the end of it all, it is the commercial interest that carries the day, with editors forced to protect advertisers by projecting their business positively in their coverage.

Challenges Editors Face Balancing Editorial with Commercial Interests

According to Mokaya, (2020), media organizations face numerous challenges in balancing their social responsibility and editorial independence with commercial interests. Some of these challenges include:

- Pressure to Increase Revenue: Media organizations face intense pressure to increase revenue and profitability, which can lead to a focus on sensationalism and clickbait headlines rather than in-depth reporting and investigative journalism.
- Commercialization of News: The increasing commercialization of news has led to a blurring of the lines between editorial and advertising content. This can make it difficult for media organisations to maintain their editorial independence and social responsibility.
- Advertising Influence: Advertisers can exert significant influence over media content, which can lead to self-censorship and the suppression of stories that may be critical of advertisers or other powerful interests.
- Conflicting Loyalties: Media organizations may face conflicting loyalties between their duty to the public and their duty to their shareholders or advertisers. This can lead to difficult decisions about what stories to publish and how to present them.
- Maintaining Editorial Independence: Maintaining editorial independence is a significant challenge for media organisations. This requires a commitment to high-quality journalism, a willingness to take risks, and a strong sense of ethics and integrity.
- Balancing Short-Term and Long-Term Goals: Media organisations must balance short-term goals, such as meeting deadlines and generating revenue, with long-term goals, such as building a reputation for quality journalism and serving the public interest.
- Regulatory Challenges: Media organizations must navigate complex regulatory environments, which can include laws and regulations governing advertising, libel, and other forms of content.
- Technological Disruption: The media industry is undergoing significant technological disruption, with the rise of digital media and social platforms. This can make it difficult for media organisations to adapt and maintain their social responsibility and editorial independence.
- Public Trust and Credibility: Media organisations must work to maintain public trust and credibility, which can be challenging in a rapidly changing media landscape.

Social Responsibility in Media Operations

Social responsibility is central to media practice, encompassing a commitment to serve the public interest and contribute to the welfare of society. Media outlets have a particular role to play in

fostering public discourse, influencing cultural norms and holding power to account. As a consequence, they should operate in a transparent and accountable manner and respond to the needs of their audiences (Oyewole, et al., 2025).

One critical dimension of social responsibility in media is a commitment to accuracy and truthfulness. News media should strive to provide accurate and unbiased information, avoiding sensationalism and misinformation. This requires a commitment to fact-checking, verification, and openness about sourcing. By embracing accuracy and truthfulness, news media can build trust with audiences and contribute to a more informed and engaged citizenry (Mokaya, 2020).

Another critical component of social responsibility in media operations is diversity and inclusion. Media organisations should strive to reflect the diversity of their audiences in terms of diverse perspectives, experiences, and backgrounds. This requires a commitment to diversity in hiring, content creation, and sourcing. Through embracing diversity and inclusion, media organisations can break down social and cultural barriers, foster empathy and understanding, and contribute to a more equitable and just society (Mokaya, 2020).

Media outlets must protect the privacy and dignity of individuals, including children, women and other vulnerable groups, by adopting ethical reporting practices and avoiding sensationalism, exploitation and harm. By valuing privacy and dignity, media outlets can promote a culture of respect, empathy and compassion.

Ultimately, media outlets have an obligation to be accountable and transparent in their operations. This includes a commitment to transparency in ownership, funding and decision-making. Through accountability and transparency, media outlets can build trust with audiences, promote accountability and good governance, and contribute to a more democratic and participatory society.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Social Responsibility Theory

The Social Responsibility Theory was developed in the 20th century to solve problems created by the Libertarian Theory of the press. The Media widely accepted the Libertarian theory. This gave journalists excessive freedom to publish whatever they wanted. This freedom created power abuses and yellow journalism.

In response to these criticisms, the Hutchins Commission was created in the 1940s to re-evaluate the Libertarian Theory. The commission, headed by Robert Hutchins, developed the Social Responsibility Theory. According to this theory, the media's focus is on its social responsibility. The media should provide truthful and comprehensive reporting of all sides of an issue while focusing on its societal impact (Oyewole et al., 2025).

The Social Responsibility Theory has also been influential in the development of the media in the US, Japan, Britain, etc. and also in the formation of journalism professional associations such as the American Society of Newspaper Editors and the Nigerian Union of Journalists.

One of the foremost Communication scholars, Denis McQuail, summarised the basic principles of Social Responsibility Theory as follows:

- Media should accept and fulfil certain obligations to society.
- These obligations are mainly to be met by setting high or professional standards of Informativeness, truth, accuracy, objectivity and balance.
- In accepting and applying these obligations, the media should be self-regulating within the framework of law and established institutions.
- The media should avoid offensive content that triggers crime, violence, civil disorder or harm to minority groups.
- The media as a whole should be pluralist and reflect the diversity of their society, giving access to various points of view and rights of reply.
- Society and the public have a right to expect high standards of performance, and intervention can be justified to secure them for the public good.
- Journalists and media professionals should be accountable to society as well as to employers and the market.

The social responsibility theorists called on the press to put the public interest above their personal interest and to allow the public access to information. Therefore, the press in this theory is expected to furnish political leadership with information by setting the public good above party allegiance, the media should be free of partisanship but not of principle and it should actively promote the community welfare (Apata & Ogunwuyi, 2019).

This theory is, however suitable for this study as it explains the normative responsibility of the media and media professionals in relation to the socio-political and economic needs of society, it states that media has an obligation to society and expects some stewardship of media resources on behalf of the public, certainly it assumes the media to be educators and avoid detailing of structural changes that would allow performance of these functions.

Social Responsibility Theory plays a crucial role in the topic of balancing profit and public good in media operations. The theory, developed as a response to the limitations of the Libertarian Theory of the press, emphasises that media organisations have an ethical obligation to serve the public interest while still maintaining their commercial viability. Social Responsibility Theory posits that media organisations have a responsibility to serve the public interest, beyond their commercial interests (Siebert, Peterson, & Schramm, 1956). This theory suggests that media organisations should prioritise social responsibility and public service over profit maximisation.

Key Principles of Social Responsibility Theory:

Media organisations should serve the public interest by providing accurate, unbiased, and informative content that promotes social welfare (McQuail, 2005). They have a responsibility to

promote social values, such as democracy, equality, and justice (Christians, Glasser, McQuaid, Nordenstreng, & White, 2009). Finally, Media organisations should be accountable to the public, transparent in their operations, and responsive to feedback and criticism (Berrigan, 1979).

Application of Social Responsibility Theory in Media Operation

1. Balancing Profit and Public Good: Media organisations should strike a balance between their commercial interests and social responsibility, prioritising public service and social welfare over profit maximisation (Katz, 2005).
2. Ethical Decision-Making: Media professionals should make ethical decisions, considering the potential impact of their content on society and individuals (Ward, 2010).
3. Community Engagement: Media organisations should engage with their communities, soliciting feedback and responding to concerns and criticisms (Rosen, 1999).
4. Guiding Ethical Media Practices: Social Responsibility Theory argues that while media organisations have the right to operate for profit, they must also ensure that their content serves democracy, educates the public, and upholds societal values. This means striking a balance between commercial interests (such as advertising revenue) and the public good (such as providing truthful, diverse, and informative content).
5. The Thin Line Between Profit and Public Good: Profit-Driven Pressures: Many media organisations rely on advertising and corporate sponsorships, which can influence editorial decisions and lead to sensationalism or biased reporting. Public Interest Obligations: According to Social Responsibility Theory, the media should avoid misinformation, uphold journalistic ethics, and provide balanced news that benefits society.
6. Social Responsibility Theory supports the idea that media should be accountable to the public through self-regulation, industry ethics, and sometimes government policies. This prevents media houses from focusing solely on profit at the expense of public welfare.
7. Corporate Social Responsibility in Media: Media organisations also engage in Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives such as promoting social awareness campaigns, supporting marginalised communities, and ensuring fair labour practices. These actions demonstrate a commitment to the public good while still maintaining financial sustainability.

The Challenges and Limitations of Social Responsibility Theory

- Commercial Pressure: Media organisations face intense commercial pressure, which can compromise their social responsibility and public service obligations (McManus, 1994).
- Regulatory Frameworks: Weak regulatory frameworks can hinder the ability of media organisations to prioritise social responsibility and public service (Hitchens, 2006).
- Globalisation and Digitalisation: The increasing globalisation and digitalisation of media have created new challenges for media organisations, making it more difficult to balance profit and public good (Castells, 2007).

Manufacturing Consent Theory

The Manufacturing Consent Theory, proposed by Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky (1988), posits that the mass media are influenced by the economic and political interests of the powerful,

and that the media serve to perpetuate the dominant ideology and protect the interests of the ruling elite. This theory argues that media are powerful ideological establishments that serve and propagate the interests of advertisers, the elite, their owners, the government, and other powerful forces in society at the expense of public interest. The theory states that media owners create institutional policies that ensure editors and other staff operate in conformity with their interests.

The Manufacturing Consent Theory identifies five filters that shape the content of the media: government, advertisers, flak, ownership, and anti-communism. These filters act as gatekeepers to ensure editorial content serves the interests of powerful forces in society, not the public interest. The theory has been criticised for assuming that journalists can only source information from the government and that editors do not have the autonomy to make independent decisions.

The Manufacturing Consent Theory is relevant to this study as it explains why commercial interests have taken over editorial independence in determining what content is disseminated to the public. The Descriptive Decision Theory is also critical in understanding how editors make decisions, especially in complex and unique situations. Both theories guided the study in answering the research questions and analysing and interpreting the data collected.

Manufacturing Consent Theory plays a significant role in analysing the balance (or imbalance) between profit and public good in media operations (Herman & Chomsky, 1988). This theory posits that the media serve the interests of the powerful and wealthy, while marginalising or ignoring dissenting voices and perspectives. It also argues that media organisations, driven by commercial interests and influenced by powerful elites, shape public perception in ways that serve dominant economic and political interests rather than prioritising objective journalism or the public good.

Key Principles of Manufacturing Consent Theory

The theory proposes a propaganda model, where the media serves as a tool for the ruling elite to shape public opinion and maintain their power (Herman & Chomsky, 1988). The theory identifies five filtering mechanisms that shape media content, including ownership, funding, sourcing, flak, and anti-ideology (Herman & Chomsky, 1988). Finally, the theory argues that the media manufacture consent by creating a narrow range of acceptable opinions and perspectives while excluding or marginalising alternative views (Herman & Chomsky, 1988).

Application of Manufacturing Consent Theory in Media Operations

1. Influence of Corporate Ownership and Advertising: Media outlets are often owned by large corporations with vested economic interests, making it difficult for them to challenge powerful entities that fund them. Advertising revenue plays a crucial role in sustaining media businesses, leading to self-censorship or biased reporting to avoid upsetting sponsors. This creates a conflict between profit motives and the responsibility to provide unbiased, socially beneficial journalism.

2. Filtering of Information Through Propaganda Model: Herman and Chomsky outline five filters that shape media content, which directly relate to the struggle between commercial interest and social responsibility:

- Ownership: Large media conglomerates prioritise profit over public good.
- Advertising: Dependence on advertisers discourages critical reporting on corporate interests.
- Sourcing: Media rely on government and corporate sources, limiting diverse perspectives.
- Flak: Negative consequences (lawsuits, funding cuts) deter critical reporting.
- Anti-Communism (or ideological control): Media narratives often align with the interests of political and economic elites. These filters illustrate how commercial imperatives influence media content, potentially undermining public interest journalism.

3. The Thin Line: Profit vs. Public Good: Profit-Driven Media - News organisations may prioritise sensationalism, political bias, or corporate-friendly narratives to maintain viewership and attract advertisers.
4. Public Good Media: Ethical journalism seeks to inform and empower the public, but doing so may risk losing financial backing or facing political pressure.
5. The Role of Alternative and Independent Media: To counter the dominance of profit-driven narratives, independent media outlets and public service journalism aim to provide more balanced, socially responsible reporting. However, these organizations often struggle with financial sustainability.
6. . Commercial Influence: The theory highlights the influence of commercial interests on media content, where the pursuit of profit can lead to the marginalization of public interest and social responsibility (McChesney, 2004).
7. Media Concentration: The theory argues that media concentration, where a few large corporations control a significant portion of the media landscape, can lead to a lack of diversity in perspectives and viewpoints (Bagdikian, 2004).
8. Public Interest vs. Commercial Interest: The theory emphasises the tension between public interest and commercial interest in media operations, where the pursuit of profit can compromise social responsibility and public service (Katz, 2005).

Implications and Challenges of Manufacturing Consent Theory

1. Critical Media Literacy: The theory emphasises the need for critical media literacy, where audiences are aware of the filtering mechanisms and propaganda model that shape media content (Kellner, 1995).
2. Media Reform: The theory argues for media reform, where policies and regulations promote diversity, inclusivity, and public interest in media operations (McChesney, 2004).
3. Alternative Media: The theory highlights the importance of alternative media, which can provide a platform for marginalised voices and perspectives (Atton, 2002).

METHODOLOGY

This study analysed the application of manufacturing consent theory and social responsibility theory respectively.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Social responsibility is fundamental to media practice and represents a commitment to serve public interest and contribute to social welfare. It helps define the fine balance media organizations must strike between being profitable businesses and serving the public interest. It suggests that while financial sustainability is important, media should prioritize truth, ethics, and societal well-being to maintain credibility and trust.

The commitment of media to the public interest is increasingly under threat from commercial considerations that influence editorial freedom and decision-making, giving rise to a pro-business orientation in the selection, packaging and dissemination of content, giving primacy to organizational interests rather than the public interest.

Social responsibility is an integral part of media activity, manifesting itself in the form of a commitment to contribute to the development of society. As a matter of public interest, social responsibility enables media organisations in Nigeria to make a tangible contribution to the improvement of society in a wide variety of fields. However, balancing commercial interests and social responsibility is often difficult for media organisations. In order to be successful, media organizations must make profits, but they also must be socially responsible in order to maintain public trust and credibility. Maintaining this balance requires that media organizations prioritize transparency, accountability, and ethical decision-making, so that their commercial interests do not overshadow their commitment to social responsibility. In balancing profit and public good, media outlets in Nigeria should:

  i. Ensure transparency and accountability by clearly disclosing advertising influences, sponsored content and conflicts of interest.
 ii. Maintain editorial independence: Refuse to bow to pressure from advertisers and special interest groups to sacrifice editorial integrity.
iii. Invest in quality content - create informative, engaging and diverse content in the public interest
 iv. Diversify revenue sources: Look into subscription models, foundation funding, and other creative funding approaches to reduce reliance on advertising in Nigeria.
  v. Build collaborative relationships – reach out to audiences, advertisers and community groups to build understanding and support.

With these approaches, news organizations can align their commercial interests with their social responsibility, contributing to a more informed, engaged, and thriving society.

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