

# Understanding the media

[Media](#)



Since the media has now become the centre of today's life controlling every aspect of it, it is therefore very important to understand and to critically observe how the media operates. It is however questionable to understand how the media balances between meeting its goals and targets as a business and fulfilling its role of acting as the people's voice as expected by the society it serves without compromising on each of the two. BODY It is only through the understanding of the media that the people get to know that the media plays an important role in educating the society.

Francois Nell notes that 'the media contribute to social development'. (Writing For The Media In Southern Africa: 3rd Edition). Through the media, education has moved from indirect teaching to direct teaching whereby the minors and students get to learn through different T. V programs like the Tekalani Sesami(SABC 3) and Matrics Uploaded(SABC 2). Though this development in Media production learning has become so convenient thus contributing to the educational growth of the community. It is also vital to understand the media production so as to know when and when not to blame the media when scandals take place.

Stony Brooke notes that, 'the effects of media seem necessary to depend on the patterns of audience use.' It is however unfair to blame the media on the abuse of the media forms by the public it tend to benefit. It is therefore important to take note of the fact that the audience has a major role to play as far as media content is pertained. Understanding media production is vital too so as to know the truth behind some nasty news said of the media by the public. a good understanding of the media enables us to know how to relate and deal with some of these accusations.

Gilmore p37 notes that `news is more of a conversation and the lines have blurred between producers and consumers. The once passive audience has become an active participant in the creation and dissemination of news, and the flow of information is no longer controlled by journalists (Haddow & Kim S. Haddow) . It is therefore important to note that the media is not solely to blame for some scandals in media content but also the audience has a role to play for media abuse. It is only through media literacy that the audience know how to utilise different forms of media and to know when to draw the line as far as their engagement with the media is concerned. Although the media development `encourages individual change and mobility` (Francois Nel ), it is however important for one to know how for example the internet operates so as to protect oneself from cannibals that has flooded this media form, many peoples` lives. Through this awareness one is able to know when to draw the line as far as his/her engagement with different characters on this blog is concerned.

However it is also important to critically observe how the media conveys its messages to the people so that one will not fall a victim to some of the media content that tend to `induce political apathy, alienation, cynicism and a loss of social capital` ( Kenneth Newton) thus brainwashing the public into making wrong political choices. Peter Phillips argues that `democracy does not work within last minute sound bites, taking the place of important public debate and compromising the bulk information that could be available to the people` (Censored 2007).

This however shows that in their bid to meet targets, the media tend to compromise on their expectations from the society and also on their role of

informing the public. Through a critical engagement with the media, one is made to observe that the media has a 'mass effect on societal behaviour' (Jatto et al). During the Family Planning Campaign in Tanzania, the media had an incremental effect on contraceptive use. The more media sources a woman was exposed to, the more she was to adopt a contraception (Jatto et al, 1999: 65-67). The media campaign in the Philippines had clearly positive effects .

Nancy Morris notes that 'the mass media information campaign was largely responsible for the improvement in vaccination coverage' (McDivitt, Zimicki and Hornik, 1997: 111). This clearly shows that the media has the power to control peoples' behaviour so a critic understanding of it is vital to prevent possible brainwash. Since the media has become the 'backbone of the marketing , advertising and public relations industries' (Peter J Jourie) notes that 'a sound knowledge of how the media work, think and disseminate meaning is fundamental to these industries'.

It is however important to critically engage with the media so as to know how to relate with the information given by the media so as to know how to act on their 'education' as far as their information about these industries is pertained since they will be advertising. It is very important to note that the media is only after sensational stories so that the people will know that behind the information dished out by the media, lies more helpful and important information.

This will enable the audience to be on the lookout of more helpful stories that do not make it into the newspapers that might be of great importance to their livelihood. It can be concluded that although the media is there to serve

the people and to meet their expectations, the media itself ends up on a very compromising position with only one way out, that is to do anything possible to meet its goals as a business even though it means compromising on their role within the society .

This means that the public should be well informed as on how to utilise useful media content and at the same time on how to screen some of the media content in order to protect themselves from the harm that comes with it. The complication only now lies on how the public can get informed when the only means to inform the public is only through the media.