

Implications of the triumph of market- based model for democracy in mass media: An Analytical Study

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Abstract

The aim of the paper was to highlight the distinction between the public sphere models and market based model of mass media in order to understand the behavior of the media working either on profit directed or nonprofit directed perspective. Market based model was discovered to have trumped the public sphere model in recent times. This paper examined the implications, in the light of various studies, of the triumph of the market based model. Media, working according to market-based model, were found to be promoting trivial news items, disregarding the importance of news, and considering the brutality and violation of benchmark importance for determining the worth of news items. The market-based model was found to be entrenched more firmly in entertainment-driven media, allowing commercial concern to shape the script of dramas and movies. The market-based model was found to be responsible for creating the wave of a crime and moral panic and developing fear for crimes. This paper examined the implications of the triumph of media that 'sell' to underscore that rather than having media that 'sell', media that are orientated to the public welfare.

Keywords: Market-based, Public sphere, Entertainment -driven media

Introduction

This paper begins with the identification of the two frame works. This identification is important to make the distinctions between the public sphere models and market based model of mass media. This identification is important to understand the behavior of the media working either on profit directed or nonprofit directed perspective.

Profit directed or nonprofit directed perspective determines the objectives in the selection of news items. These objectives govern the choice for selection of the items of news and even decide the pattern of coverage. Colin (2007) describes these dynamics which compete with each other as sphere model and market-based model.

The market-based model and the public sphere model subscribe to two contrary notions. The market based model ties success to the profit, but the public sphere model measures success by its service to the general public.



Market-based model

Market-based model is based on the understanding of how the private organization works, and acquire, therefore, the concept of a company and work as all private companies work to sell different things and products.

The function of the media, according to market-based model, is to market its content for the maximum profit, therefore, in catering to preferences and predilections of the consumers, market-based model is concerned only to increase the marketability of content by making sure that consumers derive from content the maximum pleasure. Such media as Sherry (2017) points out is least concerned with morality, norms, values and the importance of the event because as Sparks (2018) notes that market orientated media exist because of gathering as much profit as possible.

The information in market-based model is not to be important to be publishable for higher aims. According to market based model, media are not as Ransohoff (2016) observes the purveyor of information that is important in itself, but of information that is popular, thus popularity among people determines the worth of news. The consumers of media are, thus deprived of news important for making informed decisions and learn about things those are of interest to them but have little or no bearing on the important issues of life.

Profit- directed media abhor *government regulation*. The media working according to market based model are least concerned with morality in pandering to the predilections of consumers, therefore understandably like no interference from government. Ransohoff notes market based media do not like government to interfere with media industry through regulation because according to this model it amounts to interference with demand and supply, but as a matter of fact the government intervention s can protect public interests through rules and regulations.

Public sphere model

The public sphere stands in sharp contrast to market-based model. The public sphere model employs different criterion all together. Profit or money is not used as the indicator of success rather success is tied and measured by the service of media to the general public.

The objective of the media is to reinforce democracy. *Deane (2019)* considers that the most important objective of media is to serve and facilitate flowering of democracy by delivering information in order to provoke people to ponder on important issues.

The public sphere model works for the promotion of the citizenship by transmitting knowledge so that consumers as Dhiman (2017) notes can learn about the context and surroundings for taking informed decisions for their lives. Curran (2019) believes that the public sphere model underscores the role of mass media as the guardian of the interest of the public and make media appear as an enabler for democracy by promoting as *Petros (2017)* points out awareness so that better-educated voters could lead to a more legitimate government. The public sphere model is suited to serve and facilitate flowering of democracy, but the media have subscribed to market-based model and that bodes ill for the democratic society.

Implications of the triumph of market based model

Market-based model has trumped the public sphere model. *Mark* (2017) observes with concerns that this triumph has serious implications for democratic society because the media, then do not work for the promotion of the citizenship rather are interested only in marketing its content for the maximum profit.

Market based model promotes trivial new items

In Market based model, the interest of people in any happening or a thing determines the content of media. Stewart (2018) notes that the popularity among people determines the worth of news, and media purvey information about a thing not because a thing is important, but because people are interested to hear about it. In Market based model, Journalists can never be the public servants because they do not share information that is important to the public nor oversee informing the public of what has happened, what is next and what to do about it; regarding anything that may affect them.

In market based model, frequency and worthiness determine the worth of news

Worthiness of news is synonymous with the frequency and intensity. When media learn as Corliss (2018) points about the interest of people, a thing is reported with much more frequency and intensity to give it worth it otherwise does not deserve. Event tends to be over-hyped because of the frequency and intensity media show. It is important for the financial interest of the news enterprise. From the end users' standpoint, it results in increased attention to things those are irrelevant to important concerns of life.

To make things worthy of attention, the media place stories in front or back page and cover them in prime time. Butressing this, Stewart (2018) further says that apart from position and time, the media are careful regarding diction to ensure that stories of public interest are distinguished from other stories in terms of words and phrases. People consequently grow interested in events which do not affect them; and must not, therefore, be worthy of news, but the trivial news items gain ascendancy just because of the priority, not because of the elements such as proximity, prominence, timeliness, oddity, and consequence.

In market based model, importance of news items is context-based

In market based model, context plays an important role for determining the worth of news. Any event or happening generates public interest when any celebrity is the part of it either as the spectator, participant or judge. In this model, the importance of the event is irrelevant as Sparks (2016) observes the mere presence of any celebrity that makes the event that has no importance in itself as the important news items. The world is textually presented to consumers through the activities and behaviors of celebrities. People, therefore, do not judge the event in terms of its cultural, social and political significance rather consider it important because of a celebrity being a part of it.

In market based model, brutality and violation of benchmark determine the worth of news items.

In market based model, social and cultural implications of crime are not important, but as Chermksteve (2015) argues that the worth of crime news is judged in terms of the brutality of the crime; gender, age or cultural status of the murdered or murderer. The brutality not the murder in other words is important. Brutality seizes front pages of media outlets. Article after article are fixated on details that how and why anger or frustration is channeled to nondestructive outlets.

In market based model, violation of benchmark determines the worth of news items.

In market based model, status is determined in terms of wealth or in terms of race. Tulloch, (2015) notes that rich white male has usually much better status than the black people, therefore if any well off and rich white is killed so this killing is the violation of benchmark and hence receives more coverage. Because violation of benchmark is important for determining the worth of crime, the murder of any black leader receives not much coverage despite its consequences for a nation. By directing focus towards wealth or race, media outlets continue to contribute to and perpetuate societal attitudes of giving importance to things in terms of status, not in term of its social and political importance.

The implications of following market based Model in entertainment media

It is interesting to note that entertainment driven media entrench more firmly market based model. Yadav, author of the article, 'Facts, fallacies and fears of Tabloidisation' observes that market based model govern entertainment media in much deeper and comprehensive way as the entertainment industry is not obligated to educate its consumer about the society and culture they belong to. Consumers can never learn about society and culture through movies that tend to glamorize violence and trivialize important concerns of life.

The MIT linguist Chomsky (1997), author of the article, 'Shallow personalities' says that the themes running through dramas and movies are produced from the bottom-up and dismisses them as superficial, shallow, evanescent and shows concern over shallow content of entertainment media because he believes it erodes the human capacity to think deeper and deliberate upon important issues.

Market based Model prefer soft news to hard news.

In market based model, soft news is preferred to hard news. Media, as Davies (2018) notes, prefer soft news to hard news because significant disruptions in the routines of daily life attract people more than stories that have a big impact at the society as a whole. Consumers of media, consequently, develop liking for sensational, personality-centered, and less time-bound news and ultimately soft and even tabloid news is one of the most sought after genres among the general public.

Market based model is only concerned with profit

The function of the media, according to market based model, is marketing its content for the maximum profit. Market based model, therefore, helps to understand the dark sides of

entertainment driven media, such as violence and pornography and explains why media permit market-related factors and commercial concern shape the script of dramas and movies as Ekwo (2016) observes that the theory of market based model is premised on the notion that media outfits are business-oriented and profit-driven. The observation of EKwo helps to understand the increasing importance of soft news and news as entertainment and the decreasing importance of news capturing the important societal changes.

Market based model creates the perceptions of crime

In market based model, the media create the perceptions of the waves of crime. Fishman had an interesting research in 2009 to analyze the elements inherent in the production of media and then explored their influence on its coverage of stories. Fishman (2014) implies that media create different perceptions of the waves of crime, if the imperatives of the organization are dictated by market based model. Crime stories help to sell newspapers; therefore, stories are often 'sensationalized' with the intent to make attention-grabbing headlines that do not represent the true facts; but play a part in needlessly fueling the public's fear of crime.

In market based model, waves of crimes bear no relation to the objective happenings. In his research, Fishman sees the wave of a crime as nothing more beyond a sporadic awareness society has of crime and that basically there is existence of a mind. The fear of crime is an emotional reaction characterized by a sense of danger and anxiety and media create this sense by giving cues which produce in consumers the fear of harm. Fishman, therefore, concludes that waves of crimes bear no relation to the objective happenings rather it is a mere subjective thing produced by the behavior of mass media.

Market based model deprives crime of its context

In market based model, the crime is deprived of original context. Fishman finds to his concern that in the process of the development of packages of news, the journalists do stripping: they deprive the crime of its actual or original context and put the happening in a different context to create 'interesting' theme for the news. Fishman concludes that crime as the theme becomes pervasive because of this stripping. The public's knowledge of crime is primarily derived from its depiction in the media. The media are responsible for the stripping, therefore, the conclusion is that it influences the public's attitude regarding crime incidents.

In market based model, stripping is an important activity. Kelsey (2016) sees stripping important for sensationalism. The media hunt for the crimes which have the potential to create the mysterious narrative, and then exploit this potential for obtaining the increase in sale; but in case the hunt is unsuccessful or successful, but if it does not yield as many stories as the media want then stripping can work well to create the fear of crime as a major social problem that can't be accounted for by the actual amount of criminal activity.

In market based model, stripping increases the worth of a crime. Actual or original context, Kelsey (2016) notes may decrease the worth of news; therefore, in the process of the development of packages of news a journalist deprives the news of its actual or original context and puts the happening with a context that is different in a sense that it can appeal to consumers by developing the mysterious narrative. Stripping increases the worth of a crime because this increase translates into the increase in circulation.

Market based model constructs reality

In market based model, media construct reality. Alejandra, author of the article, 'how media changes the world' states if a major part of reality comes to people which is pre-constructed and interpreted, and conclusions already built in, the media, rather than objective realities construct reality: Market based model help media sell but the society is divorced from reality and the consumer feels imaginary threats and problems as the most important concern of life. People come to be fearful of criminal victimization because they perceive their immediate environment to be threatening, thus noisy neighbors, teenagers hanging around street corners and flats with broken windows may all signify to some individuals that their neighborhood is threatening. Media create subjective feelings so that people consume media to know what is happening all around and what is done to protect them of any criminal victimization.

Market based model creates moral panic

In market based model, the media create moral panic. Cohen (1990) states that moral panic happens if some events or people pose threat to the values a society cherishes. The media create moral panic by providing moral tinge to panic. This moral tinge as defined by Cohen is very swift and intense and creates deep emotional enthusiasm for the problem or any matter that media consider important. Media cover things posing threats to values in a sensational and in the stylized manner by applying terms which are loaded such as orgy or frenzy to exaggerate the extent of threats in order to lash consumers into a frenzy.

People grow increasingly anxious about threats to values because media incite by appealing to the emotions, and consume more and more media to learn about threats and measures to combat them.

Market based model resists moral barricades

In market based model, moral barricades are not possible. Cohen argues for the establishment of moral barricades to prevent moral panic from echoing. Ward (2009) does not think that the establishment of moral barricades is possible because market based model is least concerned with morality, therefore media, acting in accordance to this model, would never establish moral barricades nor would like government to interfere in this regard. The establishment of moral barricades would make the sensational approach impossible and the media, then would not be able to present threats

to values in vividly shocking or sensational terms to create as Akinfeleye (2017) states the great opportunity for increasing circulations and ratings.

Market based model creates fear of crime

In market based model, the media create the fear of crime. The theory of cultivation of crime serves as the building block for developing the concept of the fear of crime. Shrum (2017) suggests that the higher the consumption, the higher the fear people have of crime. Selling is the art of matching product benefits as Penelope notes (2018) with customer needs or desires and the media know the art of selling not simply by matching news with needs or desires of consumers but if required by creating needs or desires for the news. Aday, author of the article, 'Unethical Crises in the Press' finds that the fear of criminal activities is tied to the consumption of media and further notes that media create for customers' fear of crime, so that consumers feel the need to know through the media what sorts of crimes are taking place and feel the desire to know through the media what protection they have from criminal activities. The more intense the desire, the more consumption of media.

In market based model, the media earn by promoting crime. The media create fear, but this creation of fear promotes crime as well. Greer (2019) holds media responsible for glamorizing crimes because the media make criminals such people who are feared, who enjoy limelight by going on killing spree with impunity. Young people follow suit as they see crimes passport to a position of power and fame.

Conclusion

Media are to work for the promotion of the citizenship by transmitting knowledge for consumers to take informed decisions. But media have succumbed to market-based model that is premised on the notion that media outfits are business-oriented and profit-driven. Market based model has the serious implications for democratic society. Media do not promote awareness so that better-educated voters could lead to a more legitimate government. The shallow content of media erodes the human capacity to think deeper and deliberate upon important issues. This paper examined market-based model in an attempt to grip its implications for democratic society and to understand the influence of this model in governing the media content and imperatives. This examination has helped to understand that if the pursuit of monetary gains is only consideration, media can never be the enabler for democracy.

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