

The Price of Truth: Corruption and Norms of Journalism in Nigeria

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Abstract

The media are the primary source of information in a democracy. Accurate and reliable information is the lifeblood of the democratic process. Perhaps, the most obvious players in this information flow are journalists who gain access to privilege information and attempt to provide such information as accurately as possible to the citizens to make informed and intelligent decisions. At the minimum, media audiences demand information unencumbered by deliberate falsehood or distortion of the truth. When this expectation is not forthcoming, a crisis of confidence occurs between the news media institutions and the public. This paper attempts to show that truth is undoubtedly the most fundamental norm in journalism. Truth in journalism does not only win public confidence, but also bring about well-informed citizens, more profit for the news organization, good returns to its shareholders and growth of the news media organization as a whole.

Keywords: Nigeria, Truth, Corruption, Ethical Journalism, Competitive Advantage

Introduction

The obsession with unlimited gain and enormous wealth at the expense of morals and ethics has led to the inglorious fall of many well respected business organizations. The mass media are among the most influential enterprises in a democratic society, standing at the crossroads between the citizens and their political, economic, and social institutions. At the minimum, media audiences and readers demand information unencumbered by deliberate falsehoods or distortion of the truth. When this expectation is not forthcoming, a crisis of confidence occurs between the news media organizations and the consumers of news.

Journalists have always claimed that they feel obliged to report the truth. Truth in journalism is primary. Hence, respect for truth and for the right of the public to truth is the first duty of the journalist. Every bit of news and every bit of information he/she gives out must be inspired and propelled by truth which is the underlying principle behind all communication, and not profit. Profit therefore, is secondary – not a priority.

The belief in the truthfulness of communications builds trust between individuals and between individuals and society's institutions. Due to the fact that, trust is built on truthful communication; lying and deception undermine the very foundations of society. The problem of slanting or altering the truth by journalist in order to achieve profit (or personal gain) at the expense of the public good therefore becomes an issue to be tackled.

In a profession that values truth, is it ethical to report falsehood to the viewers or readers for profit or selfish sake? If journalists know that a piece of information is not true, do they have an obligation to share that knowledge with their readers? And if they do share that knowledge, how can they claim to be objective in their reporting? Do journalists have something to benefit from ethical journalism?

This paper attempts to show that truth is undoubtedly the most fundamental norm in journalism. Truth in journalism does not only win public confidence, but also bring about well-informed citizens, more profit for the news organization, good returns to its shareholders and growth of the news media organization as a whole.

Truth in Journalism

The concept of truth has changed throughout human history. At one level or another, human beings since ancient times have acknowledged that truth may vary depending on individual points of view. Since Plato's analogy of life as shadows on the wall of a cave over 3,000 years ago, scholars have grappled with the notion of truth.

In philosophy, truth deals with both the meaning of the word "true" and the criteria by which we judge the truth or falsity in statements. Philosophers have attempted to answer the question "What is truth?" since the time of Plato.

Right from the time of Aristotle to Aquinas and Kant to Chisholm, the common sense has been to locate truth in judgements. Aristotle, in his *Metaphysics* asserts: “To say of what is that it is not or of what is not that it is, is false, while to say of what is that it is, or of what is not that it is not, is true” (Quoted in Omoregbe 43). This implies that truth is conformity of the mind with reality. And even the fact of Kant’s “Copernican Revolution” could not allow him to see beyond the common tendency of regarding truth as the mind’s correspondence with the object. Kant also concurred to the notion of truth as the agreement of knowledge with its object. Truth, for Kant, lies in judgement which the mind makes when it applies the categories to phenomena (things as they appear to us) (Lamprecht 365 – 366). One can see the correspondence notion of truth in Kant also.

The concept of truth, for Chisholm, is principally linked with the idea of “states of affairs”. In his expressions,

Our answer to the question “What is truth” refers not only to the “states of affairs” but also to “states of affairs that exist”, and “states of affairs that do not exist”. We must say, for example, that among the entities that exist are Socrates’ being mortal, there being horses, there being no unicorns; and we must say that among the entities that do not exist are Socrates’ not being mortal, there being no horses and there being unicorns (104).

The import of this is that truth is connected with the idea of “state of affairs” and facts. This is only a restatement of the traditional correspondence theory of truth.

In attempting to determine what claims are true, scholars have emerged with many theories of truth. There are three major traditional theories of truth, namely, the correspondence theory, the coherence theory and the pragmatic theory. The criteria of truth according to these theories are correspondence with fact, coherence with other propositions of judgements, and what works in practice, respectively.

From a journalistic perspective, expert opinion abounds on what constitutes a truthful news account. At the minimum three concepts appear to underlie the notion of truth in news reporting. These concepts are accuracy, objectivity, and the twin – fairness and balanced. A truthful story should be accurate, objective and be fair and balanced.

Truth is unquestionably the most fundamental principle in journalism as Gilmore and Root correctly point out that: “truth is the word that summarizes many journalistic ideals, and the ideals of accuracy, objectivity, and fairness are all contained in the larger ideal of truth” (cited in Okunna 73). In agreement, Lazaro maintains that “editorial cosmetics or window dressing of truth is journalistic anathema. People deserve the truth; they must be given the truth” (www.manilatimes.net). The importance of truth in journalism can never be over-emphasized. Every bit of news and every bit of information a journalist gives out must be inspired and propelled by truth, the underlying principle behind all communication.

Truth requires objectivity and accuracy. Otherwise, Lazaro avers that truth loses its values and news becomes a worthless piece of scrap (www.manilatimes.net). Truth may be difficult, according to Lazaro, because objectivity is difficult to establish, and objectivity is founded on truth, as truth is founded on objectivity. However, in spite of the subjective perception of the journalist, there is still the objective truth in real names, places, events, identities. These, to him, are what the readers want to read and learn, and for the readers, the news reports they read are expressions of the truth.

In their concentration of the essence of journalism at the beginning of the 21st century, Kovash and Rosenstiel posit the pursuit of truth as the primary principle:

This is what journalism is after – a practical or functional form of truth. It is not truth in absolute or philosophical sense. It is not truth of a chemical equation. But journalism can – and must – pursue truth in a sense by which we can operate day to day (42).

This implies that journalists are expected to be committed to truthful information that would help their readers or audiences to make informed judgements about a whole host of activities.

In a complex democratic society, the media are the primary conduits of information flow, and to the extent that they do not provide truthful, accurate, and meaningful information, they deprive their audiences and readers of the intellectual nourishment necessary for rational decision-making (Day 80). The fundamental position of truth in journalism is also underscored by the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) in its Declaration of Principles on the conduct of Journalists. As the first proclamation in this declaration says, “respect for truth and the right of the public to truth is the first duty of the journalist” (cited by Okunna 74).

News as a Community

The output of journalism is the circulation of news in either print or electronic media. Newspaper, magazines and the electronic media primarily deal in news. News, according to Etukudo (2), is a report of an event which has some intrinsic values to the audience. It is the intrinsic value which motivates the audience to pay with time or money in order to read, hear or watch reports of activities relating to events. Etukudo goes on to maintain that:

News is not synonymous with information. There are facts and data available about many subjects. But the facts should be selectively harnessed and accurately presented by a reporter in the news medium to an interested audience. It is only when a piece of information is thus treated, using the criteria of news value that the report becomes news (2-3).

It follows that the reporter plays an active, participatory role in the news selection process. He makes judgment about what is news and what event is news worthy. He is therefore a gatekeeper of news; deciding what should pass for news.

A newspaper corporation, according to Han, Lee and Khang (668) “falls within the category of other economic enterprises since the newspaper business deals in the production of a commodity (newspaper) in a market (readers’/advertisers’ market) and keep profits in mind”. The news becomes a product, a commodity, while the reader, viewer, or listener is now a customer.

The term “commodity” is a term used in economics for any item, which is produced to suit wants or needs of individuals. And it is also used in relation with other economics terms such as demand, supply and price. In other words, in economics, a commodity is any item which can be demanded, and supplied for a price. Another characteristic of a commodity is its utility value, that is, it is able of gratifying definite individual needs.

What is more, the making of a commodity consist of the factors of production and division of labour. These factors of production include land, labour, capital and investor or entrepreneur. To this end, any item for consumption which is short of these characteristics may not meet the requirements of a commodity.

The request for and selling of news is clear in the undertakings of news agencies across the globe. The responsibility of the news agencies is to collect news from all places of the world and put up for sale to the print and electronic media. For instance, the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) was established by Decree 19 of 1976 to, among other things:

- ... Seek, obtain and otherwise receive through subscriptions, payments exchange or other means, international, regional, local news and news material, and news features;
- ... Distribute news, news materials, and news feature to subscribers against payment either in the form of fees or news exchange or on such other terms as may be agreed (Udoakah 30).

This implies that news, like other commodities, is manufactured and is demanded because it fulfills definite needs.

News is the product of the efforts of many professionals who work as a team in the making of the news. They work in different departments of the news organization. The news organization is complex nature, costly to establish and maintain and which is extensively permeated by the principle of division of labour. The division of labour in the making of news shows in the different departments found in a typical news organization either print or electronic. They include an editorial department, administration department, production department, advertisement department, personnel and maintenance department, composing, graphics, commercial, library, photographic, circulation and transport. They all work together to manufacture the news.

The capital needed for the establishment of the news organization is provided by the entrepreneur(s). News organizations are owned by individuals or groups, institutions or governments. There is no doubt, from the explanation so far, that news is a commodity.

Corruption and Journalism in Nigeria

The journalist is not expected to distort the truth in news reporting. It is the duty of the journalist to have respect for the truth and never to withhold or falsify such facts as he/she knows, either to suit his/her own purpose or that of the news organization he/she works for. Newspapers and electronic media operate under society’s pressures. There are

pressures imposed by ownership and control; there are pressures directly or indirectly shape the media policies and the output of the media products. Many of the ethical dilemmas journalists face begin with the inherent conflict between the individual's role as a journalist and his or her employer's quest for profit (Richards 119).

Gone are the days when people believed almost everything they read in the newspaper or news magazines. There was a time when the newspaper authenticates what Nigerians consider to be truth in any given situation. Once a person backs up his/her assertions with "It is in the newspaper, if you doubt my statements, I still have a copy of the newspaper" and at that time backing up one's claim with a publication in the newspaper settled any argument on the veracity of any claim. But, today the story has changed due to the pressure to make profit at all cost and fear from government threat.

What we see today are fabrications of story, "head lines" to catch the attention of the readers and viewers. A case study is a headline of one of the dailies Daily News Wire of Monday April 18, 2011 which reads "2011 polls: ACN's woeful outing- withdraws from A'ibomguber race – supporters to vote PDP". There was no truth in this headline; it was intended to mislead the heavy supporters of ACN in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria and also to increase the sale of the newspaper.

Okunna citing Ekpu points out the following unethical practices by Nigerian journalists particularly their disregard for truth:

Have you read some of the evening papers recently? Sheer fabrication. What they sell is what Dr.AdidiUyo of the Mass Communication, University Lagos calls HEADLIES.

Have you seen the soft sell magazines recently? Sheer pornography plus anything goes.

Have you looked at some of the news magazines and seen how wonderful some of the stories are?

Sheer apocryphal stuff with no shred of evidence or fact or corroboration (85 – 86).

Another issue is the brown envelope syndrome that is acceptance of gifts from news sources. Sambe and Ikoni (2004, p. 184) maintain that "in Nigeria we have the idea of "Brown envelopes" which many have code-named "PR" to show appreciation to or induce favours from journalists". The reporter that involves in bribery defines news based on who gives him/her what. The receiving of gratification by journalists, including other forms of unethical practices in journalism distort the definition of news (Nwabueze 159). The journalists are given brown envelope by government minister, agency, ministry, individual or a corporate organization, to colour the truth, tell a lie, stop or publish a story. If news is published on the basis of brown envelope, how then does the journalist guarantee objectivity and fairness which are fundamental responsibilities of the journalist?

In Nigeria, graft and corruption have become normal way of life for many, not only for political office holders and government officials. Corruption has polluted every section of our national life – from the naked theft of public funds by adults to examination malpractices by school children (Agbese 5). While relating the magnitude of corrupt value system in the Nigeria society, Nwabueze cites Dele Momodu as stating that, "even our society frowns at you if you remain as poor as you went into government" (158). The import of this is that political office holders are expected to be corrupt. The bane of corruption which permeates the larger society has eaten into the profession of journalism.

The journalist in order to meet with the challenges of existing meaningfully in such society finds himself/herself fighting with conflicting values both of the society and his/her profession (Nwabueze 158). In an attempt to live, according to the dictate of the corrupt society many journalists engaged in activities that are against the norms of their profession. Pressure can cause a journalist to be irresponsible or unethical if the source of the pressure compels the journalist to carry out actions that are contrary to journalistic ethical principles.

One obligation of journalists is to inform the public. To fulfill this obligation, journalists must maintain credibility with the public. But, what credibility can journalists maintain with distortion of the truth, deception and lying? A commitment to truth demonstrates a respect for persons as ends rather than as tools to be manipulated. Distortion of truth, deception or lying to the viewers or readers by news organization usually place self-interest over the interests of others. By and large, a lack of veracity in the communication process places the recipient of the distortion of truth at a competitive disadvantage.

Examination of the Two Competing Ethical Theories of Human Conduct

Here, we intend to consider the ethical implications of lying or distortion of truth in news reporting by journalists in the light of the two fundamental theories of moral standard – Teleological and deontological. These are theories which have been put forward to set standards of conduct, to set guidelines for making moral decisions and more so, for making and evaluating moral judgements.

What then do we mean by teleological and deontological theories? The teleological theory of ethics maintains that it is results or consequences of actions that determine the rightness or wrongness of such actions. Here, we are talking about morally right or wrong conduct. Teleological theory is also sometimes referred to as consequentialism. Consequentialists, unlike deontologists, do not ask whether a particular practice is right or wrong but whether it will lead to positive results.

Rossouw clearly describes the nature of the consequentialism theory thus:

Consequence oriented theories emphasize that we should look at the possible consequences or practical implications of our intended actions in order to determine whether an action is right or wrong. If the bad consequences outweigh the good ones, the proposed action should be abandoned and it should be regarded as morally wrong. Should the good consequence outweigh the bad ones however, the proposed action can be considered as morally permissible (15-16)

In effect, teleological or consequentialism theory holds that we ought to do the action or adopt the rule that will produce the greatest possible balance of good over evil.

There are, of course, variations of the teleological theme. At one extreme are the egoists, who argue that moral agents should seek to maximize good consequences for themselves. They should, in other words, look out for number one (Fink 53). At the other extreme are the utilitarians, represented primarily by the writings of philosophers such as Bentham and Mill. Utilitarians believe that we should attempt to promote the greatest good (the most favourable consequences) for the greatest number of people.

Utilitarianism is appealing because it provides a definite blueprint for making moral choices. When confronting an ethical dilemma, moral agents should analyze the benefits and harms to everyone affected by the decision and then choose the course of action that results in the most favourable outcome for the greatest number.

The consequentialist approach to resolving ethical questions does have certain appeal. Teleological theories provide a clear-cut procedure for confronting moral choices through listing the alternatives, evaluating their possible consequences, and then analyzing each option in light of its impact on others (Day 62).

Consequentialism can be summarily understood as the view that “the end justifies the means”. This tenet of consequentialism has been noted to be perhaps its weak point. It has been argued for instance, that bad means can never produce good ends, and that the principle had been used repeatedly to do evil and to justify evil. Despite this objection and others, consequentialists ethics is a valuable tool in moral reasoning because it does force us to weigh the impact of our behaviour on others.

Deontological Theories on the other hand, are based on the philosophy that judging an action as morally right or wrong should not depend on the consequences of the action. Deontological or non-consequentialism theories are of the view that actions are intrinsically right or wrong (i.e. in and of themselves), the consequences of such actions notwithstanding (Oke and Esikot 111). In this, they are opposed to teleological or consequentialist theories.

The most famous deontologist is Immanuel Kant. Kant’s fundamental moral principle is his categorical imperative, which is based on moral rules that should be universally applied and that respect the dignity of people. According to this duty-based theory, prohibitions against certain kinds of behaviour apply, even if beneficial consequences would result. Rather than focusing on the consequences (after all foul deeds might produce good results), deontologists emphasize the commitment to principles that the moral agent would like to see applied universally, as well as the motive of the agent. Duty-based theories do not approve of using foul means to achieve positive ends. The moral agent’s motives are important.

Because of their emphasis on rules and commitment to duty, deontological theories are sometimes referred to as “absolutist”, admitting of no exceptions. Under a duty-based approach to ethical decision making, for instance, reporters would not be justified in using deception in searching out a story. It is little wonder that many media practitioners dismiss this absolutist approach as unrealistic and even as a threat to their First Amendment rights (Day 60).

However, deontological theories do have some advantages. First, concrete rules that provide for few exceptions take some off the pressure of moral agents to predict the consequences of their actions. There is a duty to act according to the rules, regardless of the outcome. Second, there is more predictability in the deontological theories, and one who follows these ideas consistently is likely to be regarded as a truthful person.

In addition, Brody (31) asserts that rules can be devised for special circumstances to take some of the ambiguity out of ethical decision making. For instance, in cases in which reporters refuse to divulge the names of their sources to a court, even when these sources may have information relating to the innocence of a criminal defendant, a special rule might be devised to compel disclosure on the ground of justice to the defendant. Such rules would then have to be applied in all such circumstances, without regard to consequences in particular situations. The problem, however, is that such rules often collide with other fundamental principles, such as the obligation to keep one's promises.

The situation illustrates one of the shortcomings of duty-based theories. In cases in which a conflict exists between two equally plausible rules, deontologists have a difficult time resolving the moral deadlock. Moreover, even when there is no rule conflict, it is sometimes difficult to apply general principles to specific unusual circumstances. For instance, should a TV reporter knowingly broadcast false information at the request of the police to save the life of a hostage being held at gunpoint? Many of us will probably vote in favour of doing anything to save the life of the hostage, but strictly interpreted duty-based theories might suggest otherwise.

At this point, let us briefly examine the implication(s) of the particular kinds of teleological theories (egoism and utilitarianism) and deontological theories (categorical imperative) in the distortion of truth for the sake of profit in the business of journalism.

Ethical egoism states that every person ought always to act on the basis of one's own best interest. So, if a journalist reports falsehood that is aimed at producing consequences that will benefit the journalist personally, such a journalist is an egoist. It is often argued that people ought to behave egoistically because, if they do, it will promote the general welfare. It is important, however, to note that this defense of ethical egoism is not itself an egoistic one. It implies that there is a different, non-egoistic basis for the rightness or wrongness of actions – their consequences for society as a whole. We have moved from egoism to utilitarianism.

Utilitarianism holds that it is the consequence of an action that decides the rightness or wrongness of that action and not the nature of the act itself. Rather than looking at the intention behind the act, one must explore the best outcome for the greatest number of people. Thus, when an action is taken by a journalist with the intention of seeking the good of the wider society or group, that journalist is a utilitarian. For instance, reporters who use deception to uncover social ills often appeal to the principle of utility on the ground that, in the long run, they are accomplishing some moral good for the public they serve. In other words, the positive consequences for society justify the devious means in gathering the information. The criterion of quality in utilitarian framework poses so many difficulties, it can be argued that utilitarianism justifies – and perhaps even demands – acts which seem to us to be unjust or immoral.

It seems to be true that consequences of an action play an important part in determining whether that action is right or wrong. But egoism's failure to acknowledge that it is sometimes our duty to perform acts which are in our own interest and utilitarianism's inability to take into account rights suggest that the rightness of an action does not depend solely upon its consequences – for us or for others. Other non-consequentialist factors may also have a bearing on the moral quality of actions. For an approach which does take such factors into account we turn to the categorical imperative of Kant.

The categorical imperative has two formulations. One of Kant's formulations of the categorical imperative is "act on the maxim which you can will to be universal law". This maxim could be interpreted to mean that before one performs a particular action, he should ask himself whether he would consider it desirable for everyone in a similar situation as his to perform a similar action. If the answer is in the affirmative, then his action is morally right, otherwise it is morally wrong.

If a journalist is contemplating a deceptive news reporting in order to make profit for his/her newspaper, for example, he/she must be willing to endorse a world in which all people lie when it seems to their advantage to do so. Of everyone was entitled to lie, one would never be able to tell if a person is lying or telling the truth. Under such circumstances, the very practice of truth telling is undermined and lying ceases to be advantageous.

In a second formation of the categorical imperative, Kant turns his attention to the rights of human beings. One ought always to act, he claims, so as to treat all human beings as ends in themselves, and never only as means to an

end (Hoffman and Moore 16). Both egoism and utilitarianism seem to violate this principle. For the egoist, others have value only insofar as they promote the egoist's self-interest; for the utilitarian, every person appears to be a means for the maximization of good.

Truth in Journalism: Key to Competitive Advantage

In a profession that values truth, is it ethical to distort the truth in order to achieve profit at the expense of the public good? Can deadline, competition for newsbreaks, profits and the need to catch public attention be justified for inaccuracies or distortion of the truth in news reporting? Do journalists and the organizations they work for have anything to benefit by reporting truthful stories?

Newspaper and other media of mass communication operate under society's pressure. There are pressures imposed by ownership and control; there are pressures of political, business and ethnic in nature. These pressures directly or indirectly shape the media policies and the output of the media products. Pressure, Okunna opines "can cause journalists to be irresponsible or unethical if the source of the pressure compels the journalists to carry out actions that are contrary to journalistic ethical principles" (90). There is no doubt that many journalists and news organizations have lost credibility by succumbing to these pressures. Maintaining credibility with the public is a condition that sustains a news media organization.

To be credible is to be believable and worthy of trust. Credibility is a fragile commodity, and, in today's highly competitive and permissive environment, its preservation is sometimes tedious. Nevertheless, our faith in credibility as an energizing force must remain undiminished because the fact remains that a lack of trust can be deleterious to both individual journalists and news organization (Day 10). Trust has emerged as a key issue in business and is surely just as central to the world of journalism. After all, how can journalists and the news organizations their work for have credibility with audiences or readers without their trust?

Today, emphasis has shifted from traditional goal of profit making as the sole concern for business. For any news organization to survive the present day competition and remain in business, the issue of ethics has become a major consideration. New products or services, organizational structures, compensation policies, exploitation of new markets, possession of valuable assets, are all factors that can provide a competitive advantage. Unfortunately, however, they are often easily replicated by one's competitors. On the contrary, factors like reputation, trust and credibility, in so far as they spring from the fact that organization acts in a consistently ethical way, are far harder to imitate and can provide competitive advantages that last for decades.

What is competitive advantage? Competitive advantage, according to Madura, "is an organization's unique qualities that allow it to compete successfully with other organizations offering similar products or services"(10). In other words, it is a special edge that allows an organization to deal with market and environment forces better than its competitors.

The 21st century manager must do the "right" things-things that really count, things that add value to the organizations products and for services, things that make a real difference in performance results. Increasingly, the challenge of doing the right things is focused on the concept of competitive advantage (Schermerhorn (688). This is a distinctive competency that clearly sets an organization apart from its competitors and gives it an advantage over them in a competitive market-place.

The question that comes to mind is: How can news organizations employ truth ethics in news reporting as a competitive advantage over an organization that distorts the truth in news reporting? Most newspapers, news magazines, and television and radio stations strive to produce a profit for their owners and share holders. And while radio and television stations are licensed to serve in the public interest and newspapers commonly assume a watch dog role on behalf of their readers, if they do not make money, they go out of business. The consumer is the ultimate sources of these profits. The news organizations own most of their profits by selling their audience to advertisers. Advertising revenue is closely related to circulation since papers with a large circulation are able to charge more for advertisements that will reach a larger audience.

Newspaper or a broadcast medium which disseminates the truth consistently, win the public confidence. The public confidence won by a news organization will bring about brand loyalty – a situation in which news consumers

continuously avail themselves of a particular type of paper or station each time they used it. And, brand loyalty will culminate in large audience for the news organization which in turn attracts more advertising agencies. Repeat transactions and customers loyalty is the aim of every business. This is what makes profit. As a result of this, a news organization that disseminates the truth continually makes more profits and remains in business.

While, on the other hand, a newspaper or a broadcast medium that is noted to disseminate falsehood, even occasionally, undermines its credibility and reduces not just its effectiveness, but its profits also. And, with time the news organization will be out of business due to customers' dissatisfaction, which will lead to no patronage, by news consumers and advertising agencies.

Customer's satisfaction is the ability of a good or service to meet or exceed a customer's needs and expectations. It is important because satisfied consumers become long-term customers who account for a big percentage of a company's business (Boone and Kurtz 370). In a business, word of mouth is influential and consumers possess a desirable empowerment in persuading other consumers to purchase goods and services. On the account of unsuitable transaction they might spread the word to prospective consumers who withhold from the specific point of business.

Truth in journalism is therefore the key to competitive advantage in several ways. The news media organization concerned will develop and sustain good reputation and brand image. The sustenance of good reputation will ensure that the news media organization not only retains its customers but enlarges their number. Moreover, the news media organization will make profit and therefore ensure good returns to its shareholders and its growth will be assured in spite of competitions.

Conclusion

Truth, the greatest single attribute of news, is sacred and should form the foundation of all news reporting. Truth in journalism, is fundamental; all else takes a backseat. Therefore, respect for truth and for the right of the public to truth is the first duty of the journalists. Every bit of news and every bit of information he gives out must be inspired and propelled by truth, the underlying principle behind all communication.

Credibility, reputation, profit or whatever begins and ends with truth in news reporting. An obligation for responsible journalism devolves, in many cases, upon finding out and then presenting the truth. Style, writing skills, superior research would amount to nothing if the truth is started or altered in order to achieve dubious ends, for example, to misinform, to cover-up anomalies in government, or to favour or to promote a specific interest at the expense of the public good. In today's highly competitive and permissive environment, lack of trust can be detrimental to both the journalists and the news organizations.

Truth is a guiding principle and an ultimate end of the journalists. It is guiding principles because it provides the journalists with the direction he should take along the path of objectivity. And it is an ultimate goal to which all journalistic must tend, but which can be achieved only if the journalists and the organization he works for would abide by the imperative of truth from which fairness and accuracy are drawn. Truth motivates professional writers to expose wrong doings in and out of the government, in business and in other sectors of powers and influence in society.

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