# Shifting Roles of Media in Tanzania: From Development Communication to Watchdog Journalism

## Dotto Emmanuel Bulendu [a*]

*ᵃ Communication University of China, Institute of a Community of Shared Future, Beijing, China.*

***Author's contribution***

*The sole author designed, analyzed, interpreted and prepared the manuscript.*

*Original Research Article*

## ABSTRACT

This study examines the implementation and challenges associated with development communication in mainland Tanzania, focusing on news articles and programs from eight media organizations. Surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions were conducted to gather perspectives from journalists, editors, and news consumers. Prior to 1992, Tanzania's media landscape was oriented towards promoting the national development agenda. However, policy changes influenced by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund's Structural Adjustment Program shifted the media's focus towards watchdog journalism, aimed at monitoring government performance. This shift impacted both private and state-owned media entities. Presently, the media landscape in mainland Tanzania is rapidly evolving into a profitable industry, serving as a tool for accountability, government communication, and revenue generation. It's crucial for Tanzanian consumers to actively engage with the diverse media options available, rather than passively consuming information primarily designed to attract advertisers.

The transformation of Tanzania's media landscape from development-oriented to watchdog journalism has significant implications for both media organizations and consumers. While this shift promotes accountability and transparency, it also raises concerns about the role of media in

advancing development goals. The findings indicate a need for media organizations to balance their roles as watchdogs and promoters of development. This requires a reevaluation of editorial priorities and a commitment to providing accurate and balanced information to the public. Furthermore, there is a pressing need to enhance media literacy among Tanzanian consumers to empower them to critically evaluate and navigate the diverse media landscape. This includes providing education on media literacy in schools and communities and promoting digital literacy skills to enable access to online information.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Development and communication are inseparable companions, particularly within development discourse. Effective development necessitates effective communication, just as successful communication signals progress in development endeavors [1]. Moreover, communication shares a symbiotic relationship with culture and human civilization Stevenson, [2], with the loss or neglect of one adversely affecting the other (Bakhshandeh and Khaniki, 2007). Despite their inherent interconnection, there is a growing concern that the role of communication in development remains inadequately understood, particularly in developing countries. Diverse perspectives abound regarding how communication should be wielded as a tool to advance development, particularly within the developing world.

Following independence in 1961, Tanganyika swiftly recognized the potential of utilizing media for developmental purposes. Emphasizing citizen jurisdiction over broadcasting, the government aimed to shift from missionary aspirations to Julius Nyerere's vision of Tanzanization [3]. Under Nyerere's Policy of Socialism and Self-Reliance, development was seen as emancipating citizens. Despite this, media in Tanzania experienced neoliberalization trends akin to global patterns, transitioning from national, state-owned, and public-service systems to commercially driven entities with concentrated ownership (MCT, 2012). Despite media liberalization, Nyamnjohn [4] notes a persistent trend across many African countries, where journalists are penalized for criticizing state officials. Presently, Tanzania faces a dilemma: government-controlled media fails to spur development, while private ownership does not guarantee media serving public interests.

Economists, sociologists, and political scientists often frame national development in terms of a country's urbanization, industrialization, and democratization efforts. Fair (1998) emphasized the critical role of information in societal development, suggesting that inadequate access to information could impede progress. In Tanzania, limited accessibility to information, compounded by the prevalence of negative stories, poses a significant challenge for the community. It's not surprising that the news media tends to prioritize negativity and conflict over empowering news consumption with constructive resources. Traditional news functions often necessitate the adoption of development communication principles. Conflict and negativity in news reporting are not random occurrences but rather structured patterns ingrained into journalistic practices. These elements, alongside news values such as proximity, impact, and timeliness, shape the selection of newsworthy information by journalists [5].

Schudson [6] argues that the adversarial and confrontational nature of traditional journalism often falls short in critically evaluating policy effectiveness, another vital function of news. Mass communication holds promise in mitigating information deficits by employing various theories and models to raise public awareness. However, the prevalence of negative news carries costs, with studies indicating primarily adverse effects on consumers, despite some perceived benefits (Parrott, 2014; Rodriguez, 2013). While research on development communication has been conducted extensively in regions like West Asia and Africa, the practical challenges persist in many developing countries. In this context, this paper seeks to evaluate the challenges and practices of development communication in mainland Tanzania

### 1.1 Theoretical Framework

#### 1.1.1 Development communication as a concept

Development communication is a dynamic force aimed at empowering ordinary people to drive

their own development agendas. It boldly confronts both successes and shortcomings in developmental plans, fearlessly holding governments accountable for their actions. As posited by Xiaoge [7], it serves as a critical voice, unapologetically shedding light on achievements and deficiencies while advocating for societal progress. Anord (2010) further elucidates that development communication operates as a meticulously planned and strategic endeavor, systematically crafting informative materials to address developmental issues. Its primary aim is to cultivate awareness and provoke transformative changes in entrenched norms and behaviors.

This echoes Deane's (2004) and Anold's (2010) emphasis on leveraging media and communication technologies to disseminate development-focused messages and foster desired societal shifts. Moreover, Odame [8] highlights the pivotal role of development communication in facilitating knowledge exchange between stakeholders, such as scientists and farmers, through platforms like rural radio. This underscores its function as a catalyst for inclusive dialogue and participatory decision-making processes. Rogers [9] provides a comprehensive framework, portraying development communication not as a mere transmission of information, but as an intricate process encompassing audience analysis, strategic planning, message creation, dissemination, reception, and interactive feedback loops. It embodies a holistic approach, recognizing the agency of individuals and communities in shaping their own developmental trajectories.

African scholars have been criticized for their reliance on Western theories and terminology in the realm of development communication, without adequately defining and adapting these concepts to the African context. This lack of indigenous frameworks raises questions about the applicability and effectiveness of imported models in addressing Africa's unique developmental challenges. As observed in Chinese media discourse, the pressing issue is whether Africa possesses its own development communication paradigm, forged by African scholars to serve the needs of the continent and its people.

Ethiopia stands out as a pioneer in revitalizing the concept of development communication to align with government-led development initiatives. This proactive stance contrasts sharply with the prevailing skepticism and decline of development communication across Africa. Skjerdal [10] highlights Ethiopia's bold move in 2008, officially endorsing development communication as the preferred reporting style for state media. However, critics argue that this move encroaches upon media independence and press freedom, raising concerns about government control over the dissemination of information.

In Zimbabwe, the ambiguity surrounding development journalism is attributed by Tshabangu [11] to a lack of institutionalized training and inadequate financial support for journalists. This situation hampers their ability to engage with grassroots communities, particularly those in remote areas, thereby limiting the reach and impact of development communication efforts.

The challenges faced by African countries in developing and implementing effective development communication strategies underscore the urgent need for homegrown solutions that are grounded in local realities and responsive to the aspirations of African populations. It is imperative for African scholars, policymakers, and media practitioners to collaborate in shaping a distinctively African approach to development communication that prioritizes inclusivity, autonomy, and genuine grassroots engagement.

Following Tanzania's independence, the media was swiftly enlisted as a tool for development on the mainland (Tanganyika). Despite evolving notions of development—from the missionaries' aspirations of conversion to Julius Nyerere's vision of Tanzanization—the media remained a pivotal force in pursuit of national goals. Recognized for its potential to engage and mobilize the populace, the media was entrusted with the task of fostering development across the nation.

However, contemporary Tanzania finds itself grappling with a paradox: while government ownership and control of the media were intended to promote development, this approach has not yielded the desired outcomes. Conversely, private ownership does not guarantee a media landscape that prioritizes the public good. This dichotomy underscores the complex relationship between media ownership, governance, and development outcomes in Tanzania.

Despite the initial optimism surrounding the role of the media in development, the current reality challenges conventional wisdom. The inefficacy of government-controlled media in driving development objectives highlights the limitations of centralized control and underscores the need for a more nuanced approach. Similarly, the shortcomings of privately-owned media underscore the risks of profit-driven agendas overshadowing public interest concerns.

Tanzania stands at a crossroads, facing the imperative to recalibrate its media landscape to better serve the needs and aspirations of its citizens. This necessitates a reevaluation of media ownership structures, regulatory frameworks, and professional standards to ensure that the media plays a constructive role in advancing development objectives while upholding principles of freedom, transparency, and accountability. Only through concerted efforts to strike a balance between public interest and commercial imperatives can Tanzania harness the full potential of the media as a catalyst for sustainable development.

### 1.1.2 A theoretical perspective of communication for development

Communication for development theory underscores the indispensable role of the press in advancing societal development. As articulated by McLuhan (1964), communication media, particularly newspapers, act as conduits that bridge geographical distances, ensuring that events from remote corners of the globe resonate with and impact all individuals, creating a global village. This interconnectedness is further explored by scholars like Aghili and Tatary (2012), who extensively analyze the reciprocal relationship between media communication and global developments.

Moreover, in today's interconnected world, mass media play a crucial role in shaping public opinion and influencing social change. The reach and immediacy of media platforms enable information to spread rapidly, sparking discussions, mobilizing communities, and catalyzing action on various societal issues. Through news reporting, investigative journalism, and opinion pieces, the press not only informs but also educates and empowers individuals to engage critically with complex global challenges such as poverty, inequality, and environmental sustainability.

Beyond its role in disseminating information, the press serves as a watchdog, holding governments and institutions accountable for their actions and decisions. Investigative journalism uncovers corruption, human rights abuses, and other injustices, serving as a check on power and ensuring transparency and accountability in governance. By shining a spotlight on issues that would otherwise remain hidden, the media empowers citizens to demand change and participate actively in shaping the development agenda.

Furthermore, communication for development theory emphasizes the importance of participatory approaches in media interventions. It advocates for the inclusion of marginalized voices, fostering dialogue, and promoting community-led solutions to development challenges. By amplifying diverse perspectives and facilitating grassroots engagement, the press can facilitate more inclusive and sustainable development outcomes.

In the contemporary era dominated by media, mass communication channels penetrate every aspect of human life, leaving an indelible mark on cultural evolution and hastening societal advancement. The pervasive influence of mass media is undeniable, shaping the way individuals perceive the world, interact with one another, and participate in collective endeavors. From traditional platforms like newspapers and television to modern digital mediums such as social media and streaming services, media consumption has become an integral part of daily routines for billions of people worldwide.Within this landscape, media policies emerge as pivotal instruments in shaping the trajectory of communication diversity and cultural development within nations. Policies governing media ownership, content regulation, and access to information have profound implications for the dissemination of ideas, the preservation of cultural heritage, and the promotion of pluralism in public discourse. Effective media policies thus serve as catalysts for fostering inclusive and vibrant communication ecosystems that reflect the diversity of voices and perspectives within society.

Kazemzade and Kouhie [12] underscore the transformative power of media in transcending geographical and cultural boundaries, permeating every facet of social life and human culture. The ubiquity of media platforms facilitates the exchange of ideas, the dissemination of knowledge, and the formation of

global communities united by shared interests and values. Through the interconnected web of media networks, individuals have unprecedented access to information, enabling them to engage with diverse viewpoints, challenge prevailing norms, and contribute to collective efforts aimed at addressing pressing societal challenges. However, alongside its transformative potential, the pervasive influence of mass media also raises concerns about its impact on cultural homogenization, commodification of information, and erosion of local identities. As media conglomerates wield immense power in shaping public discourse and shaping consumer preferences, there is a growing need for policies that safeguard media plurality, promote cultural diversity, and uphold ethical standards in journalism.

At the heart of communication for development theory lies the acknowledgment that effective communication is paramount for fostering development. Unlike classical theories that predominantly endorsed capitalism, this paradigm—also known as development support communication—entrusts the media with the responsibility of spearheading positive developmental endeavors, while concurrently adhering to state regulations and directives. By embracing the tenets of communication for development, the media assumes an active role in championing societal progress, transcending its traditional role of information dissemination to actively engaging in constructive developmental initiatives. This paradigm shift underscores the indispensable nature of communication in propelling holistic development efforts forward

## 2. METHODS

### 2.1 Study Population, Area and Sample

This study was conducted in Tanzania mainland where data were collected from 124 news items from print and electronics media. A total of 168 respondents were involved through survey to respond on the practice of development communication in Tanzania mainland and its challenges.

### 2.2 Data Collection and Analysis

Survey, interview, focus group discussion and content analysis were used to collect data from the field. Only lead stories covered between 1st to 31st August 2023 were used to analyze the practice of development communication in Tanzania mainland. Respondents from media houses (journalists, editors, reporters, producers and presenters), news consumers, journalism students and trainers/lectures were involved during data collection. Data were analyzed using SPSS tool.

## 3. RESULTS

This part presents result about the practice of development communication in Tanzania mainland and its challenges; this approach was a key guideline for the media system in Tanzania mainland soon after independence in 1961.

According to the facts presented above, the media plays an essential role in national development. According to the findings, 102 of the 102 poll participants perceive the media as playing a critical role in national development. Only one respondent claimed the media has a little influence, while 55 felt it is extremely significant. This response implies that media consumers and producers regard media as an important tool for national development, regardless of the media category, whether it is community media, commercial media, digital media or mainstream media. Those who believed that the media in plays a significant role in national development traced their agreement back to Tanzania's media history shortly after independence, when the Government of Tanganyika under Mwalimu Nyerere resolved to utilize media as a vehicle for peace building and African emancipation. Tanganyika's administration promoted the country's policies and ideas (socialism and self-reliance) through the media, particularly radio. "*Tanzania is stable with unity and peace because of how it used media to unite her people. The media was used to promote culture, particularly the use of Swahili as a national language, to unite people, and to promote peace*," one of the respondents stated in her response.

"In the twenty-first century, media on the Tanzanian mainland plays an important role in national development." It is a potent weapon for influencing different facets of a country's advancement and growth. It acts as a primary source of information by assisting in the dissemination of information through newspapers, television, radio, and digital media. It informs individuals about government policies, projects, and advancements in areas such as the economy, education, healthcare, and infrastructure." Mr. Elia Migongo, senior journalist and broadcaster at Africa Media Group in Dar es Salaam, said.

**Table 1. The perception towards development communication**

|  | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Valid Extremely important** | 102 | 63.4 | 63.4 | 63.4 |
| **Little important** | 1 | 6 | 6 | 64.0 |
| **Somewhat important** | 3 | 1.9 | 1.9 | 65.8 |
| **Very important** | 55 | 34.2 | 34.2 | 100.0 |
| **Total** | **161** | **100.0** | **100.0** | |

*Source Survey data 2023*

The majority of respondents saw how the government and all development actors and partners have used media to reach the target population and get favorable influence from community members. Citizens who are knowledgeable and well-informed are more capable of making decisions that have a positive effect on both their personal lives and the overall well-being of the nation. The government uses the media as a means to inform and enlighten the general public.

"The media has a crucial role in disseminating knowledge to the public on significant social issues, scientific progress, and cultural improvements. It has the potential to enhance knowledge and consciousness about health, environmental issues, and social justice causes, encouraging well-informed and accountable participation in society. Mr. Kwilasa Mbushi, a representative of Ebony Radio in the Iringa Region, stated.

A significant proportion of the respondents saw the media as a crucial instrument for fostering national progress, provided that all stakeholders in development are engaged at every step. The media plays a crucial role in informing the public about social, political, and economic events worldwide. "By incorporating the media into a development plan or project at the local level, a sense of ownership and collective identity may be fostered within the community." A participant in the survey provided.

Some individuals perceive the media and journalists as a means of holding the government accountable to the public. They view this as an essential function of the media in promoting the progress of the nation. "The role of the media is to provide society with accurate information so that individuals can make well-informed decisions. Additionally, the media should openly critique the actions of leaders when they are in the wrong. Furthermore, the media should objectively present the strengths and weaknesses of national policies in the economic,

social, and cultural domains." Said Mr Anikazi Kumbemba,a senior electronics media journalist.

Many governments, particularly those in developing nations, struggle to effectively communicate their goals and gain the support and engagement of their populations due to inadequate communication techniques. Ultimately, the execution was met with criticism from several sources. Conversely, others emphasized the importance of the media continuing to prioritize its watchdog role. "There is a prevalent issue with the deficiency of integrity and ethics among our leaders, particularly in the realm of politics and government. If the media neglects their watchdog duty, unscrupulous leaders will exploit our resources. The media should persist in pursuing and scrutinizing the misconduct of our leaders," expressed one of the participants through survey.

Advocates of the media's significant role in national development cite examples of how community media and state media have empowered communities by providing them with information about government activities and plans. Conversely, skeptics argue that local media, primarily driven by profit motives, allocate substantial resources to airtime and advertising space.

## 3.1 The Practice of Development Communication in Tanzania Mainland

The majority of the respondents expressing criticism towards the media for their perceived lack of support for national progress. "We are facing an issue with the abundance of local radio stations on the Tanzanian mainland. The content we receive primarily focuses on music and sports, lacking serious programs that educate people on how to effectively utilize the available resources," stated one of the participants in the focus group discussion.

The majority of the respondents criticized the local media for their news selection and framing, since they found that much of the news broadcast was unrelated to the community's concerns and challenges. "In our region, there are over 15 radio stations broadcasting live from Mwanza. However, the content being aired does not adequately address the preferences and requirements of Mwanza, unless it involves negative events such as accidents, deaths, demonstrations, or visits by top government officials. Otherwise, there is a lack of content related to Mwanza being broadcast." Samuel John, a journalist based in Mwanza City, Respondents expressed divergent opinions about the extent to which media outlets on the Tanzanian mainland are contributing to the promotion of development. Opponents argue that the media has not adequately contributed to the advancement of the nation. "While it is indeed accurate to say that the media in Tanzania contribute to development, I am hesitant to fully concur due to the media's partial failure in promoting developmental issues and advocating for the advancement of sectors that are not given priority by the government." said one of the respondents through a survey. The media on the Tanzanian mainland has been aligning with the government's objectives by showcasing the accomplishments of the administration across all areas. Various media platforms, including radio, TV, and print media, carry numerous programs, articles, and stories that aim to promote and garner public support for the government's initiatives. The Tanzanian media, on the other hand, makes an effort to fulfill this duty but ultimately acts as a medium through which the government communicates with the public. The primary objective is to disseminate information that the authorities consider essential for the general public to be concerned about.

In addition to failing to maintain a critical viewpoint in relation to certain objectives, across the Tanzanian mainland, most media outlets are, to varied degrees, aligned with the mission of the government. "The Royal Tour Project led by President Samia Suluhu Hassan exemplifies the significant role of media in promoting development by attracting investors and highlighting various opportunities for foreign investment," according to a participant in the survey. Tanzania has a significant presence of media outlets and journalists that engage in watchdog journalism, with the bulk operating within the commercial media sector. Their daily concerns revolve around government malfeasance, corruption, conflicts, resource mismanagement, accidents, and natural calamities like floods and droughts. Frequently, these media outlets and journalists have engaged in clashes with authority.

During an election campaign, the watchdog media focuses on highlighting conflicts between parties, candidates, or politicians. They also scrutinize the vulnerabilities in the election process and investigate instances of hate speech, sedition, and defamation. However, their primary focus is not on analyzing the content of the candidates' manifestos. The prominent headlines in print media, primary stories from radio and TV, and dominant debates on social media platforms are those that evoke dread, anxiety, and disillusionment. The lack of positive news during elections has led to voter apathy. In Tanzania, several media outlets and journalists hold the belief that positive events during elections are not newsworthy. Instead, they want to report on instances where the police employ tear gas to disperse protesters, and they desire the publication of images of injured or deceased individuals on social media platforms. Some social media journalists have encountered this issue.

The mainstream media adheres to strict guidelines outlined by the media council's Tanzanian journalism rules of conduct. These codes include concepts such as minimizing harm, avoiding offensive content, prioritizing national interests, impartiality, objectivity, child reporting, and public interests. Media and journalists in this category do not prioritize empowering individuals by providing them with new knowledge, innovation, and information. Instead, their focus lies on negativity and safeguarding the government, occasionally disseminating propaganda that favors the authorities rather than benefiting the public's well-being.

Others engage in neither PR nor journalism; their primary focus is on business, aiming to attract more advertisers and subscribers. They produce a significant amount of soft material, characterized by a dramatic style of writing and narration. There are several such entities on the Tanzanian mainland. Look at the quality of today's programs and news from most of the media and journalists; it is evident that a significant portion of them lack the necessary qualifications in the fields of journalism or media expertise." According to a respondent who

identified herself as a media consumer, It seems that commercial media platforms often have comedians and artists as hosts. The qualifications to work in these positions do not seem to require a degree or diploma in journalism. Instead, it appears that popularity and willingness to work without payment or contract are the main criteria. Hence, it is unreasonable to anticipate that these platforms will give priority to the national agenda. Some participants highly appreciate the relationship between media and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in producing valuable content and fostering the development of communication. "I appreciate a particular program on Radio Free Africa that focuses on the development of children aged 0–8. A Child in Crossfire (CiC) is the organization that sponsors this program. The journalist is knowledgeable, and the content and sources are both positive and conducive to development. I believe that we need similar programs on our radios in mainland Tanzania," expressed a participant from Misungwi through a survey.

Content about politics, sports, especially popular music known as "Bongo Flavour," love stories, the lives of celebrities, and life styles have been the dominant airtime and space for most of the private media on the Tanzanian mainland, not the content about agriculture, fishing, mining, etc. Since independence, the head of the state and the ruling party have used the state and public media as their mouthpieces, and now the state has extended its power to some of the private media. "Many media owners are politicians or have an affiliation with political parties or politicians; in one way or another, this has been affecting the editorial independence and content of many of the newsrooms and media houses on the Tanzanian mainland," said Mr. Moses Mathew, who is a senior journalist.

Because of their authority and influence in editorial choices, owners in Tanzania may easily guide editors, managers, presenters, producers, and journalists on what and how to publish or air information. Furthermore, the government wields authority and influence in newsrooms and editorial choices; it is not uncommon for all media outlets to cover the same topic from the same standpoint, with the same sources, and with the same treatment.

The majority of media outlets and journalists in mainland Tanzania have consistently exhibited a very despondent disposition, which is evident in the news they generate. Political topics are frequently presented in a pessimistic or skeptical manner, with headlines highlighting emotions such as anger, fear, disgust, and sadness. This trend is evident on the front pages of newspapers and in the lead stories of radio and TV news bulletins across most media outlets in mainland Tanzania. The news media, as an institution, has a crucial role in shaping politics and public life. Public criticism frequently accompanies this position. Occasionally, the journalists and media on the Tanzanian mainland fail to accurately report the news and may overlook significant perspectives and opinions. Certain news consumers have succumbed to the tendency and now find themselves irresistibly engrossed in doom scrolling. On digital platforms such as Twitter Spaces, forums, Clubhouse, Facebook, Instagram, and What Sapp groups, there has been a prevalent and prominent conversation centered upon negative information. This content has the potential to generate emotions such as rage, anxiety, tension, despair, disappointment, and occasionally even confrontation. One of the interviewees remarked that the front pages of our newspapers are predominantly filled with negative news such as conflict, death, accidents, inflation, corruption, riots or demonstrations, hunger, unemployment, and top-down directives or warnings from leaders. Additionally, stories featuring politicians and top leaders are given priority. Media on the Tanzanian mainland has always focused on highlighting negative aspects rather than positive ones, and this approach has been ingrained in the education of media students, from colleges to universities. The majority of narratives originating from the general public mostly focus on societal issues such as violence, starvation, floods, traffic congestion, and accidents, rather than providing insights on the optimal utilization of existing resources such as arable land, minerals, water, and so forth

## 4. DISCUSSION

The media landscape in Tanzania differs from that of China, as it is not uniform. Western journalism has influenced Tanzanian journalism, creating a diverse media environment. Public media outlets such as TBC (Tanzania Broadcasting Corporation) and TSN (The Standard Newspapers) have made significant efforts to inform the public about government policies, strategies, and plans. However, in order to cater to the media system, TBC has separate channels for news and education (TBC One and TBC Taifa), as well as an entertainment and

sports channel (Bongo FM), which is solely dedicated to entertainment, similar to stations like Clouds FM, EFM, and Wasafi FM.

"A good thing about Tanzania is that if you need content that educates people on how to do farming, fishing, or small business, there is a variety of programs and media to choose from." This is an opportunity, in my opinion. Even if you need religious content, there are specific media and programs for that content," stated one of the respondents.

"I believe the issue is one of audience needs and desires, as well as business concerns. Look at the media, which makes a lot of money from commercial commercials, their content is 90% entertainment and sports." (Ibid);

Newspapers have classified their pages in order to accommodate the requirements of their readers and meet marketing demands. There are sections for soft and hard news, editorial commentary, foreign stories, politics, business, the environment, science and technology, sports, and entertainment. There are other sports and entertainment newspapers. Newspapers have distinct columns for features that include thorough material including facts, cases, and references. The majority of these articles are developmental in nature, aiming to provide readers with new information and skills. The only issue with most daily newspapers is that the top stories are mostly negative or political in nature. The peak period for electronic media (morning, evening, and night hours) is somehow unique for informational and educational content. There is a debate in the so-called commercial media, most of which include 4-6 hours of sports material and 6-8 hours of music.

Unfortunately, local information is frequently more negative, but so-called worldwide news is typically good. "Even international stories, most of them are negative about Africa because we don't have the capacity to travel internationally searching for news; we get it from international media and news agencies, which most of the time are writing and reporting only conflict stories, hunger, poverty, and diseases in Africa, and when we take them as sources of news and writing without third eye, end duplication by amplifying the western propaganda through our own media house," he said of the respondents from the survey.

Due to the government's control over mainstream media in Tanzania, individuals now turn to social media to access alternative perspectives on government affairs, allowing them to openly challenge and criticize the administration. The open discourse challenging the administration takes place on social media platforms, particularly forums such as the Jamii Forum and the Mwanahalis Forum. Additionally, there are crucial conversations taking place both in club house and on Twitter, where scholars, politicians, and activists are actively questioning and confronting the regime.

The western media collaborates with local media in Tanzania to broadcast its material without consulting a local editor to ensure its compatibility with surroundings, norms, values, traditions, and culture as it is broadcasted live. Furthermore, several individuals have questioned the manner in which journalists have been presenting their news. Additionally, the music, which has been receiving preferential treatment, fails to promote cultural heritage. International sports material has received more comprehensive study than local content in the field of sports.

Additionally, there is a dilemma regarding the choice of sources; certain sources lack credibility, yet they receive sufficient exposure to scrutinize crucial matters. "I am profoundly dissatisfied with the manner in which journalists have chosen their sources to provide commentary or express their viewpoint. At times, one anticipates an individual with a deeper understanding of the pressing matter to acquire more information. However, it is disheartening to encounter journalists who invite sources that merely launch verbal assaults, instead of enlightening the audience," expressed a participant from the survey.

Furthermore, many journalists and media outlets resort to unethical news sources to propagate such objectionable content without duly considering its negative implications. "The portrayal of media and communication by certain media outlets, particularly social media platforms, is disheartening," expressed Mr. Isaack Wakuganda, the chief editor of MUST FM, situated in Mbeya City. He believes that the emphasis on views and subscribers has significantly altered the essence of media and communication."

Tanzania's government is compelled to establish legislation that regulates and oversees digital platforms due to the ethical and legal challenges

they provide. The statutes in question are the Cybercrime Act and the Media Services Act, which have faced opposition from journalists, attorneys, lawmakers, and activists. "In addition to positive regulations that enhance the dissemination and protection of free expression for citizens, these laws also include a negative provision that restricts the public's ability to engage in and participate in various matters." According to Mr. Odero Odero, an activist and the director of a civic and legal assistance group,. The Cyber Crimes Act of 2015 frequently uses the term "unlawful" (in Sections 4, 7, 9, 11, and 21), resulting in the establishment of offenses that lack a precise definition of the term "unlawful." By doing so, it creates the possibility for anyone, regardless of their innocence, to be considered a prospective offender for a cybercrime.

The development communication method emphasizes the allocation of airtime and space to facilitate the dissemination of information and increase community members' knowledge and awareness of available resources. Moreover, in a nation such as Tanzania, which adopts a political system influenced by the Western model, the media's responsibilities should extend beyond merely informing the audience and readers about the quantity of political parties, endorsing candidates and political parties, and awaiting the commencement of election campaigns and subsequent outcomes.

In development communication, the trend seems to be moving towards multi-method approaches. Instead of "what we believe," the focus is on what works" as the basis for drawing up practices, and lines between approaches are blurred. (Waisbord 2007.) Since audiences depend on the media for understanding the news, there is a direct relationship between what is broadcast on the media and audiences' behavior (Makrem, 2003; Zagheeb, 2006), with an indication that biased stories lead to public confusion (Farag, 2006). Al Dagher (2012) suggested in his study on Arab media that the media should raise citizens' awareness, establish values and principles that lead to social building, and encourage interaction with issues that are related to current issues [13-16]. Unprofessional news coverage is caused either by the political practices of supporting a specific agenda of news or by the economic pressures to shape messages in the media and increase the profits of business tycoons [14-19].

## 5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMEN-DATION

This paper has demonstrated a significant shift in the role of the media in Tanzania, transitioning from practicing development communication to embracing watchdog journalism. This shift occurred notably in 1992, coinciding with the country's adoption of the structural adjustment program advocated by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Consequently, media outlets have increasingly prioritized profit-driven motives and have become vehicles for political and governmental propaganda.

The primary focus of the media and journalists in Tanzania has shifted away from utilizing available resources for societal development. Instead, there is a prevalent emphasis on commercial interests and serving political agendas. This divergence from the original mandate of using media as a tool for fostering development has led to a disconnect between the media's role and the needs of the people and the nation.To address this pressing issue, it is recommended that media practitioners and academics undertake comprehensive studies on the media system in Africa. Such research endeavors should explore the evolving dynamics of media ownership, regulatory frameworks, and journalistic practices. Moreover, there is a critical need to investigate how media can effectively contribute to the development of both the populace and the nation as a whole.

By conducting rigorous research and fostering dialogue among stakeholders, media professionals and academics can identify strategies to realign the media's role with the developmental aspirations of Tanzania and other African nations. This may involve advocating for policies that promote media independence, ethical journalism, and public accountability. Ultimately, leveraging the power of media for societal development requires a concerted effort from all stakeholders to prioritize the public interest and foster inclusive growth

## COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

## REFERENCES

1. Anyanwu CN. Introduction to community development. Gabesther Educational Publishers; 1999.

2.	Stevenson RL. National development and communications. Encyclopedia of International Media and Communications; 2003.
3.	Mytoon G. Audience for International Radio Broadcast; 1976.
	Available:https://doi.org/10.1177/0267323188003004006
4.	Nyamnjohn FB. Media ownership and control in Africa in the age of globa lization. In P. N; 2004.
5.	Harcup T, O'Neill D. What is News; 2001.
	Available:http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full./10.1080/1461670X.2016.1150193
6.	Schudson M. The sociology of news (2nd ed.). W.W. Norton & Company; 2011.
7.	Xiaoge X. Development journalism. In The Handbook of Journalism Studies. Tyron and Francis; 2009.
8.	Odame H. Innovation and Policy Process; 2003.
	Available:https://www.researchgate.net/publication/262122524
9.	Rogers E. Communication and development: Critical perspectives. Sage Publications; 1976.
10.	Skjerdal T. Teaching journalism or teaching African journalism? Experiences from foreign involvement in a journalism programme in Ethiopia. Global Media Journal; 2011.
11.	Tshabangu T. Development journalism in Zimbabwe. Journal of Development and Communication Studies; 2013.
	Available:http://www.devcomsjournalmw.org
12.	Kazem ZM, Kohie K. The role of culture in the development of new means of communication, barriers and solutions. Cultural Research. 2010;210-184.
13.	Abdullah J. Constructive journalism for development communication in Zanzibar: Concepts and approach (PhD Thesis). Communication University of China; 2017.
14.	Bakhshandeh E, Khaniki H. Community development, translations, and culture. Journal of Translation Studies. 2007;5(18): 62-50.
15.	Deane J. Media, Democracy and the public sphere. In Hemer O, Tufte T. (Eds.), Media and Glocal Change: Rethinking Communication for Development. CLASCO. 2005;177-192
16.	Fair J. 29 years of theory and research on media and development: The dominant paradigm impact. Kluwer Academic Publishers; 1989.
17.	Manyozo L. Media, communication and development: Three approaches. Sage Publications India; 2012.
18.	Media Council of Tanzania. Election Media Report; 2016. ISBN 978-9987-710-60-7.
19.	Thomas Z. Nain (Eds.), Who owns the media: Global Trends and Local Resistances. Southbound. 2016; 119-134.