

**TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE ROLE OF COMMERCIALISATION  
IN PROGRAMMING AT THE MALAWI BROADCASTING CORPORATION  
FROM 1995 TO 1998: A CASE STUDY.**

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## ABSTRACT

Competition in many market-driven media systems in advanced industrial countries can sometimes compromise traditional public service broadcast values such as programming for diversity, citizenship, minority interests and national identity. This study investigates the presence and effects of commercial-logic in a state-owned broadcaster in a developing country: the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation. Using in-depth interviews and analysis of records on finance and programme schedules, the study finds overwhelming indicators of the presence of commercial logic, not driven by competition, but a commitment to provide a public service under deteriorating financial conditions. Distinguishing between the impacts of advertising and sponsorship markets on media output, the study finds contradictory effects of commercialisation. Some effects confirm some of the adverse effects of commercialisation such as heavy sponsor-influence on programme content, self-censorship among programme producers who avoid injuring sponsors and producers paying more attention to sponsored programmes at the expense of the quality of some non-sponsored public service programmes. However, effects are not always contrary to public service broadcasting but may indeed reinforce such broadcasting. Commercialisation in some instances has led to the sustenance of a range of non-sponsored public service programmes including programmes to promote culture and civic rights.

In general, this study highlights the need to focus on what is realistically possible within the dynamics of the Malawi Society as a precondition for a proactive and elaborate strategy for commercialisation of the country's public broadcaster.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter is a summary of the study. It sets out the background, context and rationale of this study. It also explains the purpose and methods used. At the end, there is an overview of the contents of this report.

#### **1.1. Context of Study**

Currently, Malawi has one national radio broadcaster, the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation (MBC), which is a statutory body. MBC remains the dominant mass medium in the country because of high illiteracy, urban-based newspaper circulation and limited geographical area within which another three radio stations operate. A national television service was established in March 1999, and 225,000 viewers within 80 kilometre radius from its Blantyre station are estimated to receive it (Tenthani, 1999).

MBC was established in 1964 with a public mandate to educate, entertain and inform (Uledi-Kamanga et al., 1992). When in 1994, the country switched from a one party to a multiparty system of government, nation-wide consultations were held to give MBC a legal framework for editorial independence (MISA, 1997). This debate has centred on editorial independence from political interference, a reaction to the sweeping powers over broadcast content that the MBC Act of 1991 bestowed on the minister of information and broadcasting. Power wielded by economic actors has consequently been neglected. This omission poses a potential danger of substituting political interference with the imperatives of a particular financial system.

From 1994, the economic policies of the country changed with the government adopting many open market policies such as privatisation of some statutory bodies. Parastatals were encouraged to rationalise their operations and move towards economic self-sustenance especially in the recurrent budgets. Government also adopted a cash-budget system in its remittance of subventions to parastatals such as the MBC. This meant that parastatals received money on a month-to-month basis.

The trend is part of a global move towards market-driven economics. It is pushing public service broadcasters towards privatisation or greater dependence on commercial



revenue as opposed to government funding only (Sheppard, 1996; Makin, 1996; Mpofo, 1996; Blumler, 1993; White, 1996; Phillips, 1996; Redekopp, 1996; Andersen, 1996; Blumler et al, 1986). This trend entails commercialisation because they strive for self-sustenance or generation of a surplus through orientation towards market discipline and introduction of business principles. (Keiran, 1996).

Research on the role of commercialisation in programming conducted in Western Europe and the United States has yielded different, sometimes contradictory results. McManus (1994) and Congdon et al (1992) observe that market-driven media fail to bring about programming for citizenship, cultural heritage and expression of national identity. However, this contention is challenged, arguably, by the high sense of national identity among United States citizens, whose media are highly commercialised.

As regards advertising in particular, scholars make different claims. Some claim that complete reliance on advertising is destructive to programme range and a threat to programme quality (Blumler et al, 1993). Hulten and Brants (1992) contend that advertising is inherently antagonistic to the public service mission because evaluation of programme quality and effectiveness is based on audience size and composition rather than the multidimensional aims of public broadcasting. They further argue that advertising privileges entertainment programming over others. On the other hand, Ettena and Whitney (1987) report that competition for advertising is ground for innovation. Frank and Greenberg (1980) contend that the diversity of audience interests due to social fragmentation and a divergence of life styles and leisure interests is better addressed as niche-markets. Thus as the number of available channels increases, niche-markets mean a plurality of programming. However, Neuman (1990) argues that even in a multiplicity of channels, common denominator, mass-audience programming prevails. That is, even programming for niche markets does not promote diversity. On the other hand, Sparks (1995) contends that most commentators are of the view that advertising-funded commercial channels enormously enrich public service broadcasting rather than destroy it. These claims highlight the potential roles that advertising may play on programming at MBC.

In some studies in Europe and the United States, sponsorship of programmes is blamed for killing adventurous and controversial programming, thereby leading to

consensual programming (Hulten and Brants, 1992; Blumler et al, 1986). However, some scholars like Elliot (1987) believe economic forces have little impact on media output because several organisational factors limit the power of outside economic forces and promote autonomy. What all these findings pose for MBC is the question of the place of commercialisation in programming.

While these research findings offer some insight into how commercial forces may impinge on media output, there is a problem of transferability of one study to a general principle because of the contradictory nature of the claims. It cannot therefore be predicted from these studies what role commercial activities will have in MBC programming. So far, I am not aware of any study that has been conducted to analyse how commercial activities relate to programme diversity, range and scheduling at MBC.

## **1.2. Purpose of Study**

This study is an analysis of the extent and role of commercial logic in programming at MBC during 1995 to 1998. Central to this is an aspiration to understand how, during this period, the quest for commercial revenue in recurrent expenditure affected programme range, scheduling and diversity. This is done by investigating the logic in programming decisions at MBC.

Having worked as journalist for eight years at MBC, I developed personal interest in public service broadcasting and would like to gain greater understanding of the forces that are shaping this type of broadcasting in my country. I also hope the study contributes to broadcasting policy towards determining an optimal funding system for MBC. Managers at MBC may also use this research as a basis for refining and formulating editorial policy, codes of standards for advertising or other insulation structures against undue pressures from the imperatives of a funding system. Findings of this research might also inform media theory on funding public service broadcasting in emerging capitalist environments, especially in poor African countries.

However, this research is not an exhaustive analysis of all issues surrounding commercialisation on broadcasting at MBC. Although, such a study would be very valuable, this study only offers partial understanding of the place of commercialisation in programming. As such, it does not offer moralistic judgement on what an ideal public

service broadcaster in Malawi ought to be, nor does it attempt to provide an appraisal of the feasibility of any alternate funding systems. These limitations are the results of resource limitations and the need for focus in this study.

### **1.3. Method of Study**

This study is largely qualitative. This preference is made in line with an observation Gephart (1978) makes about the capacity of qualitative research. He states that quantitative data and analytical techniques with a positivist paradigm have limited application because the data only provides awareness of macro-questions regarding organisations and thereby excludes a large range of important phenomena, due to failure to examine meanings of organisational members (cited in Lincoln and Guba, 1988). Qualitative research in this study has an advantage of focusing on respondents' interpretation or understanding of occurrences. Such an approach would therefore be appropriate for the understanding of the role of commercialisation in programming, as it allows for analysis of experiences and perceptions of programming personnel from their own point of view.

To collect this data, two principle techniques were applied: in-depth interviewing and analysis of documentation. In-depth interviewing is appropriate in some research situations because it has roots in the experiences of other people and the meaning they make of that experience. Cantrell (1993) says that interviews enable the inquirer to develop insights into how the participants interpret and make meaning of the world.

Purposive sampling was used to determine subjects to interview. These interviews involved middle managers because they are long serving members capable of comparing and contrasting situations before and during the period of study. They also supervise and authorise programme production among subordinates in addition to producing their own programmes, making them ideal candidates in terms of knowledge about production conditions in the corporation.

These interviews have yielded descriptive and explanatory data from the producers' own experiences and interpretations of commercialisation in MBC. Interview data were analysed through a meaning condensation technique in which natural meaning units (NMU) were identified. Then, through a deductive process, themes emerged. These

themes were then merged on the basis of dominance to determine producers' underlying perceptions and meanings on commercialisation at MBC.

Since interviews have a general weakness of high dependence on respondents' ability to recall, documentation as a data-gathering technique was also employed. A systematic analysis of documents and records related to programming, especially programme schedules, was conducted. Attention was focused on any trends in programme diversity, range and scheduling. Financial statements for the period under study were also analysed to find out any changes in funding ratios of government subvention and commercial income at MBC. These two sets of data were then matched with the underlying logic stipulated in an adaptation of McManus' market theory of news production.

This study is also informed by a detailed review of literature on world-wide debates about funding public service broadcasting. While no attempt is made to equate situations obtaining in other countries and Malawi, an awareness of what obtains in other countries and of scholarly debates around funding issues serves to highlight and contextualise the situation at MBC. This study covers the period from 1995 to 1998, when MBC was under pressure to move towards greater dependence on commercial revenue because of the introduction of the cash budget.

#### **1.4. Research Overview**

This study comprises seven chapters. This chapter is a general introduction to the whole report.

Chapter 2 is devoted to describing Malawi's broadcasting funding and programming before 1995. This is in line with the political economy approach, which stresses the importance of historical context to the understanding of media products.

Chapter 3 is a review of literature on debates surrounding funding of public service broadcasting. The discussion centres on theoretical and empirical arguments about the effects of commercialisation on public service broadcasting. It is observed that commercialisation is increasingly affecting public service broadcasting and it is high time its impact was studied even where state-owned broadcasting is not operating in high competition environments like Malawi. This chapter also points out that the study is

conducted within a political economy approach and adapts McManus' market theory of commercial news production as a benchmark for understanding the role of commercialisation on MBC programming.

Chapter 4 covers methodology. The discussion centres on the rationale for carrying out this study primarily within the interpretative research tradition and for using a case study method. Reasons for using interviewing and document analysis as data-gathering techniques are explained and so is the way a sample was obtained. The chapter also explains how data were analysed.

Chapter 5 is a report of data analysis from programme schedules. The first part, however, looks at the financial situation of MBC in order to establish the level of commercial activity during the study period.

Chapter 6 is also a report of the analysis of interview data. The data are analysed using a qualitative data analysis technique called meaning condensation.

In Chapter 7 there is a discussion of the findings presented in Chapters 5 and 6 in relation to the issues raised in the literature review. These findings are then matched with an expanded theory of McManus' market theory of news production. At the end, some recommendations are made in the light of these findings.

**CHAPTER TWO**  
**A BRIEF HISTORY OF FUNDING AND PROGRAMMING AT THE MALAWI**  
**BROADCASTING CORPORATION.**

**2.0. Introduction**

This chapter is devoted to explaining some background to funding and programming at the MBC. It is not a construction of a comprehensive history of funding and programming. It only serves to set a basis for discussing the findings of this research. In line with the political economy approach, the historical and economic contexts are a vital component to the understanding of the prevailing practices and structures in media institutions. Since data on MBC programming and financing is scanty, no attempt has been made to relate funding to programming in this chapter. While the section on funding gives a sketch of commercial sources of funding, the one on programming outlines some changes in programming as reflected in shifts in the national priorities from time to time.

**2.1. Brief History of Funding at MBC**

Malawi, then Nyasaland, began to make contributions towards the finances of public service broadcasting well before the establishment of radio broadcasting facilities on her soil. In the 1940's, Nyasaland, which had been under the British Protectorate since 1891, was contributing towards the operations of radio broadcasts emanating from Lusaka, Northern Rhodesia (Zambia). Head (1972) says when Northern Rhodesia could not afford the productions of African vernacular programmes, the administrations of Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and Nyasaland were persuaded to share in the operational costs of a radio station in Lusaka, Northern Rhodesia, while the British Government agreed to provide capital funds.

As such, from its inception radio broadcasting in Nyasaland began as a surrogate of other territories and was marked by government involvement.

Later, with the formation of the Central African Federation comprising the three territories, broadcasting became centralised. The broadcasting headquarters was in Salisbury (Harare), where most of the equipment and human resource were based. The Lusaka station became an African service of the Federal Broadcasting Corporations and

Nyasaland only got her first plant of broadcast equipment in 1960 with the installation of a relay transmitter installed near Zomba, Nyasaland's capital (Mackie, 1972). There were no production facilities in Nyasaland and programmes were relayed from Lusaka. When federal broadcasting ended in 1960, Nyasaland inherited impoverished federal broadcasting facilities on her soil. Mackie records that they consisted of a 20-kw short wave transmitter and a 250-w medium-wave transmitter. It has to be noted that since its inception the national broadcasting system in Nyasaland generated commercial revenue to supplement government subvention and donor-aid funds. Continuing the model of the Federal Broadcasting Corporation, the Nyasaland Broadcasting Corporation, and thereafter the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation, slowly developed some capacity to use commercial advertising and programme sponsorship as a supplementary source of funds for broadcasting.

In addition to inheriting poor broadcast infrastructure, Nyasaland suffered a further repercussion of seceding from the federation because all advertising contracts reverted to Southern Rhodesia, the headquarters of federal broadcasting. Nyasaland was left without any commercial income or commercial department. Nyasaland Broadcasting Corporation therefore had to depend heavily on government funding and external aid for the establishment and development of local radio services which began broadcasting in 1961.

The situation was aggravated by the economic structure created by the federation. Nyasaland was a net consumer of manufactured goods from other countries and a source of cheap labour for industries developed in Northern and Southern Rhodesia. Even after independence, indicators of a legacy of low industrial development and business base were present in Malawi. For example in 1970, advertising revenue was mainly generated through commercial contracts through agencies in Salisbury (Mackie, 1971).

Although advertising has remained the main source of revenue generated by MBC to supplement government budgetary allocations, other alternatives for generating income have been used in the past. In the 1970's, for example, MBC like its counterpart in Uganda, was reported to have its news bulletins as sponsorable (Head, 1972). Efforts to reduce the level of dependence on government support were diverse:

These included the sale of production services to agencies and to other broadcast services, commercial representation for Malawi's mobile cinema circuit, production of advertising films, selling of space in MBC publications and even the unusual expedient of leasing transmitter facilities during certain time periods to outside contractors. In July 1972, an American firm began an international service using MBC's 100-kw short-wave transmitter. The service called Lakeland Radio, broadcast daily musical programmes pre-recorded in the United States for one hour in the morning and one hour in the evening. (Mackie, 1972: 138-139.)

What is important to note as well is that while various means of increasing the revenue base of MBC were being exploited, another one was abandoned in favour of encouraging radio ownership among Malawians. In 1966, listener licence fees were abandoned in line with most other African countries' state-owned broadcasting policy in order to encourage citizens in newly independent states to own and access radio broadcasts (Katz and Wedell, 1977). This development points to the importance that newly independent states attached to radio broadcasting as a means for nation building. Another reason was the unpopularity of the fees, which had a colonial taxation legacy.

Revenue loss from the end of listener fees was cushioned by a strategy to attract more advertisements on MBC. A year later, MBC widened the base of entertainment programmes in order to encourage advertising (Uledi-Kamanga et. al, 1992). What is striking is that although efforts were made to reduce dependence on government support, contributions from commercial revenue remained low. In 1970, advertising revenue was approximately 35 percent and in 1988 it was 33 percent of the Corporation's total revenue (MBC, 1988 and 1970). There is no research that directly addresses the question of why the share of commercial revenue to the total budget of MBC remained low. Sydney Head in a study of broadcasting and commerce in Africa only gives speculative reasons.

He points to systems that divorce earnings from expenditure, perpetuation of civil service mentality in broadcasting, government interference, lack of advertising efficiency and limited revenue potential (Head, 1972). He also suggests a sixth factor: that state-owned broadcasting in most African States fails to take full advantage of commercial opportunities because their mentors, the Office de Radio diffusion-Television Francais (ORTF) and the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) were neither experienced in nor sympathetic to commercialism in broadcasting. This factor may partially help explain the



stagnation of commercial revenue some years after the establishment of MBC but it fails to account for low proportions of commercial revenue in broadcasting budgets beyond the 1980's. The same applies to the argument that civil servants turned into broadcasters brought with them a culture of laxity, sloppiness and indifference. This observation fails especially in the light of findings of the University of Missouri AID project to Malawi that the use of commercial elements in broadcasting served as motivators to quality output on MBC through talent fees for presenters, production fees for producers and commission for sales staff (Head, 1972).

Head's other factors such as lack of advertising effectiveness, government attitude to commercial activities and limited revenue potential are quite pertinent explanations for the Malawi situation. Prior to 1994, the advertising industry in Malawi was almost non-existent. When MBC could no longer contract advertising to agencies in Zimbabwe, it was faced with a narrow domestic advertising base. From about 1974 advertising was a relative monopoly of one media company, Blantyre Print. It was only with the liberalisation of the economy in 1994 that some advertising firms sprang up. As such an advertising industry that could research and produce for radio was not developed.

Government attitude to commercial elements in broadcasting may also be one of the major contributing factors because under a state-controlled broadcast system, politicians had overriding powers over radio programming. For instance, any contracts with advertisers or sponsors were easily flouted by political directives to change programmes during live coverage and evening rebroadcasts of almost all public presidential engagements in the 1980's (Nyámachelenga, 1997).

Finally, Head also proposes that limits on revenue potential played a part in the underdevelopment of commercial activities in broadcasting. This point is supported by many commentators on sustainability of a commercial press and broadcasting in Africa such as Article 19, Civil Liberties Committee (CILIC) and the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA). The general picture is that of pessimism to the effect that most public broadcasting in Africa cannot be self-sustaining if it depends on commercial revenue only, to the exclusion of government funds. The Media Institute of Southern Africa in its campaign for the liberalisation of broadcasting in the region unequivocally calls for continued government funding of public broadcasting services (Barker, 1998 and

CILIC, 1997). An exception is relatively developed in South Africa, where the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) has shown that it is possible to sustain itself as a state-owned broadcaster on commercial revenue.

The SABC is currently funded largely through advertising and the rest of its revenue comes from license fees, sponsorships and interest on investment. In the 1993/94 financial year the SABC achieved 74% of its annual income mainly from advertising revenue; licence fees made up 20% and other income contributed 6%. There was no direct state funding or grant and the corporation achieved a surplus of R106.2 million and generated a cash flow surplus of R77.8 million for the year. (Independent Broadcasting Authority, 1996.)

In an analysis of the economics of the press in Malawi, Hall (1994) observes that Malawi's advertising base is narrow because the country's predominantly rural and agricultural sector does not generate much advertising. He points out that although a small internal market for manufactured goods exists, it is characterised by monopolies, which need not advertise. He further notices that the Malawi business community in the early 1990's was cutting advertising budgets because of a deteriorating business environment.

These sentiments are echoed by Khoza (1997), when he argues that advertising cannot support commercial radio operations in Malawi because the country has a weak economic base. He points out that Malawi is fifth from bottom of the least developed countries. Khoza also projects that there would be little money in circulation to share among a multiplicity of radio operators given that even urban development is low with three of the major cities having a combined population of less than one million people. Although this study is not on the feasibility of commercial broadcasting, the above observations have a bearing on the output of MBC in as far as it operates within the said economic environment. This scenario differs from the economic environment in which public service broadcasters operate in developed countries.

## **2.2. Brief History of Programming at MBC**

MBC has deep roots in the broadcasting structure and ethos of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). Apart from MBC personnel being trained in London with the BBC, BBC personnel were seconded to MBC during its infancy. For example, it was only in May 1972 that the first Malawian director general was appointed to replace a

BBC officer on secondment at MBC (Head, 1972). Taking its character from the Federal Broadcasting Corporation, during the British colonial rule over Nyasaland, Southern Rhodesia and Northern Rhodesia, radio programming has played a political role. After World War Two, the Central African Broadcasting Station in Lusaka was used to disseminate war-related propaganda to Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia. Since the target audience was Africans, programmes were made in vernacular languages (Powell, 1972) leading to an African-orientated programming. Similarly, during the federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, radio was used as a propaganda tool to perpetuate the existence of colonial power. Programming then was characterised by suppression of all opposing political views especially from African nationalists (Nyimba, 1996). This propelled emerging African governments to take full control of broadcasting and use it towards their own ends. In Malawi, radio has been state-controlled and ruling parties' direct interference with editorial decisions at MBC has been well documented (MISA, 1995, MISA, 1997; International Freedom of Expression Exchange, 1993-99; Van Donge, 1995). Sections 31, 32 and 33 of the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation Act 1991 did provide sweeping powers to the minister responsible for broadcasting to include and exclude any broadcast material on any broadcasting station in the country. Politically partisan programming was also entrenched at MBC when in 1970 the country became a one party state. This meant programming was to conform to government views, leading to a top-down programme production style and radio becoming a government propaganda tool.

This evolved from noble aims among most African states to build nations immediately after independence. When MBC was established, it had similar programming ideals to those of the BBC, namely to inform, entertain and educate. However, MBC took on African features in addition to the Reithian ideal. The first major pre-occupations for MBC were to:

- (1) establish a unique identity as an 'African' radio, free of any influence from the colonial past, and
- (2) find ways of using radio as an important tool in the task of nation building (Uledi-Kamanga et. al, 1992: 1).

These priorities were also pronounced in many state-owned broadcasting institutions in newly independent states of Africa. Katz and Wedell (1977) argue that programming in

these states was driven by three types of policy concerns, which were at times contradictory. These concerns have traces in the history of programming at MBC.

The first policy concern was political integration in the young nations. In Malawi, programmes aimed at building an African national identity were introduced such as those detailing the country's history, plays by African writers, readings from African authors and emphasis on locally produced programmes (Ulendi-Kamanga et al, 1992). This concern was also reflected in programming when in 1968 the Chichewa language became a national language. Tumbuka language, which was previously used on radio together with Chichewa and English, was removed from radio broadcasts, purportedly to unite all Malawians under one language. It is very doubtful if national integration was achieved through such policies (Kishindo, 1993), but what is clear is the blatant abuse of this policy to suppress political opposition.

The second policy concern was social, economic and educational development. In Malawi, this was reflected in the pre-occupation with the use of radio as a tool for national development. Radio programmes were introduced to communicate national development goals and to fight the so-called 'three enemies of the nation: poverty, illiteracy and disease' (Nyamachelenga, 1997). MBC introduced agriculture programmes in attempt to improve the country's agriculture-based economy. Since few farmers owned radio receivers, programming targeted group listening. Farmers' forum listening groups were formed throughout the country. Similar programming emerged in 1965 when educational broadcasting began, aimed at class listening by pupils, distance education students and teachers.

The developmental goal is a reflection of the development media theory (Odhiambo, 1991). While it is beyond the scope of this study to discuss this theory, it will suffice to mention that the theory has been abused by authoritarian leaders to justify control of the media. Under the guise of acting in the interest of the nation to protect people from false propaganda, the need to inform people about government plans or programmes as well as the need to mobilise them for development, authoritarian leaders created monolithic political institutions and virtual monopoly of the mass media (Ansah, 1988 and Tomaselli, 1997).

In an attempt to preserve culture, programmes featuring traditional practices, songs and life were introduced. However, as President Kamuzu Banda's autocratic rule took grip traditional music meant political songs sung in his praise. This pushed MBC programming to introduce specific praise singing programmes under what was called a serious music section of MBC programmes department. MBC was not allowed to play any blues music as President Banda said it was a sign of cultural imperialism. Rock, pop and other Western music genres surprisingly were not banned and continued to form the bulk of entertainment music.

Initially, MBC programming was highly defined to suit distinct audiences. Programme scheduling was based on life styles of target audiences.

**TABLE 1: BLOCK PROGRAMMING AT MBC IN THE 1970s**

<b>TIME</b>	<b>PROGRAMMES</b>
Sign on to 8 am	Commercial programmes for general audiences
9 am to 12 noon	Schools broadcasting
12 noon to 1.30 p.m.	Commercials
1.30 p.m. to 4.15 p.m.	Village programmes
4.15 p.m. to 6.00 p.m.	Adult education and current affairs programmes for urban Africans
6.00 p.m. to 7.30 p.m.	News, public-service, and commercial programmes for general audiences
7.30 p.m. to 10.00 p.m.	Music, drama and variety programmes for European and English Speaking Africans

(Mackie 1972: 136)

Given the diverse nature of distinct audiences that MBC's single channel was to cater for, the broadcaster adopted a block-programming format. Block programming means that particular listeners were grouped together into a single time period whenever possible. Mackie (1971) gives an example of MBC block programming for the 1970s, shown on page 12 above.

This information shows that MBC programming had specific times of the day when commercials could be played in programmes and when sponsored programmes could be aired. These were clearly marked and blocked. What stands out is that village programmes, schools programmes and current affairs programmes, apart from news as observed above, were blocked out as non-commercial blocks. Programming with the target of suiting listeners' life styles and interests is evident. For example, the time chosen for village programmes was early afternoon when farmers returned to their homes to eat and relax after working in their gardens from early morning. When the number of farmers' listening groups increased, agriculture programming also increased from less than one-hour weekly in 1964 to four hours each week in 1966 (Uledi-Kamanga et al, 1992). As such, although commercial considerations in scheduling might have been made, much weight was placed on reaching target listeners with information considered valuable.

As regards the role of advertising in programming, two studies point in opposite directions. A study by the University of Missouri gives professional advantages of including commercial material in broadcasting while a study by Uledi-Kamanga and others claims listeners do not like commercial material on radio. While the two studies have a 12-year gap, the findings still give an indication on the potential role of commercial activity in programming even at the expense of dissatisfying listeners. The University of Missouri, Communication Project (1970), among other things introduced some standard motivators such as talent fees to MBC personnel involved in the dealing, presentation and production of commercial materials. It was observed in the study that there were immediate positive results to the broadcast output.

The fact that the presenter was in effect personally earning revenue for his organisation plus the variety of materials introduced by commercial operations lead to more professional standards of presentation. Staff members... displayed considerable more polish and skill in presentation when commercial elements were involved...it seemed desirable to exploit commercial possibilities as a motivational tool even when advertising revenue is not essential to the operation of communications service. (University of Missouri, 1970:8 quoted in Head, 1972: 337.)

While that study highlights the importance of motivation of broadcasters, the question now is whether such still holds after two decades.

The most recent study to link programming to commercial activities at MBC shows that radio advertising is generally unpopular among listeners. In the 1992 Listenership Survey, 64% of the sample indicated that there should be less advertising on radio and only 11% wanted more while 25% expressed satisfaction with the status quo (Uledi-Kamanga et al, 1992). The study however, does not state reasons behind the unpopularity of advertising although one might speculate that there was congestion on the single channel available at the time of study (Uta, 1997).

In 1993, Malawi changed from a single party to a multiparty system of government, along with a constitutional reform. Section 36 of the Republic of Malawi Constitution guarantees freedom of the press. The press (including radio and television) have the right to report and publish freely, within Malawi and abroad, and to be accorded the fullest possible facilities for access to public information. The country currently has two religious radio stations, one women's community radio station, two private commercial radio stations, a state-owned television station and two state-owned radio channels. The two private commercial stations and the state-owned broadcasters are stationed in Blantyre, Malawi's commercial city.

The changed political system brought a lot of expectations on the role of MBC as a national public broadcaster and led to a national campaign to overhaul MBC's organisational structure and legal frame in order to secure editorial independence (CILIC, 1997; Baker, 1998) This had been a reaction to the sweeping powers of broadcast content the MBC Act of 1991 provided to the minister responsible. During the period under study, this provision was still in force. However, the campaign has since culminated in a new Act, which focuses on independence of the state-owned broadcaster from political interference. Now that an 'independent' broadcast authority and editorial board for MBC have been provided for in the Communications Act of 1998, it is relevant to draw attention to the imperatives of a financial system.

### **2.3. Conclusion**

It is intriguing to note that although MBC has been generating funds from commercial sources for over 30 years the relationship between funding and programming has not been treated as a central issue for studies. But for observations made on the

impact of a 1970-Aid-Project to Malawi from the University of Missouri and a 1992 Listenership Survey, it would appear that no study has been conducted on how commercial activities in Malawi's public broadcasting relate to its output.

From this brief history, it is apparent that MBC has sought to generate its own revenue and advertising has been the significant source of commercial revenue. From a programming point of view, changes have been taking place dependent on priority set at particular times and prevailing social and political situations. What needs investigating is the current link between funding and programming at MBC, particularly in recent times when the corporation has faced increasing pressure to generate its own funds.



## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **3.0. Introduction**

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first is a literature review and the other is a theoretical framework. In literature review, I explore the different claims that have been made about the influence of commercial logic on the output of media institutions. I describe the state of public service broadcasting and demonstrate that the claims about the impact of commercialisation are so varied that one cannot develop a cast-iron model of what general statements can be made on the subject, let alone what the situation obtaining in Malawi would be by reference to the findings. However, very many findings are inclined towards positing adverse effects such as narrowing of product range, bias towards entertainment at the expense of informational output and the usurping of producer-power by financiers. In the theoretical framework, I argue that my research is best situated within a political economy approach. I then explain and adapt the tenets of the market theory of news production to my research. However, since the organisation under study is a public service broadcaster, attention is first focused on drawing a working definition of this kind of institution. The notion of commercialisation is also defined.

#### **3.1. LITERATURE REVIEW**

##### **3.1.1 Towards a Working Definition of Public Service Broadcasting**

There is no universally agreed concept of public service broadcasting and attempts to find an all encompassing or general definition to adequately characterise the notion often fail. This is largely due to differences in political, constitutional, cultural and social forces that shaped public service broadcasting systems as they evolved in different countries. MBC is modelled on the BBC, whose mandate is to educate, inform and entertain. However, this mandate is so broadly worded that it is very difficult to conceive any broadcast service which does not perform these functions.

Public service broadcasting is essentially defined in terms of two criteria: nationalised broadcast organisational level and distinctive concept in broadcast role and content. At nationalised level, it has been conceived as distinct from commercial

broadcasting as an organisational model of broadcasting. In this context, public service broadcasting is synonymous with the original West European broadcasting corporations which were set up as licence-fee funded monopolies in the inter-war period and were characterised by attempts to bring into being a culture and a shared public life to a whole population within a nation state (Mpofu, 1996). In these countries broadcasting was nationalised. In contrast is the commercial model of organising broadcasting in which market forces develop the broadcasting industry. The United States typifies this. Thus, public broadcasting is conceived as distinct from commercial broadcasting and as such the two are organised and managed differently. In this vein, public service broadcasting has developed its own ideology which is that “public service broadcasting is superior to commercial broadcasting because it is organised in a non-commercial way” (Mpofu, 1996: 8). However, this study does not define public service broadcasting as intrinsically tied to the organisation or management of broadcasting models at nationalised level.

Instead, this study finds merit in the view of public broadcast service in terms of the role and content. Because of the variations in the nature of public service broadcasting world-wide, this study adheres to the definition of an ideal public service broadcaster based on the BBC model, on which the MBC was cast. In Britain, the state defined broadcasting as a public utility and gave broadcasters the mandate for its development as ‘a national service in public interest’. Broadcasters came up with the tenets of public service broadcasting (Scannel, 1992). These principles were articulated and implemented by the first director general of the BBC, John Reith, and his followers.

According to Reith, broadcasting as a national utility and national service meant an ideal public broadcasting service should have three cardinal principles. First, public broadcasting must be a cultural, moral and educative force for the improvement of knowledge, taste and manners. Second, broadcasting had to play a role in the formation of an informed and reasoned public opinion as an essential part of the political process in a mass democratic society. Third, broadcast service should be universally available to all, providing a mix of programmes that caters for different needs and sectoral interests in a nation state. (Scannel, 1992).

Reith believed that a public service broadcasting system should not just be used for entertainment purposes, but rather that it “brings into the greatest possible number of homes in the fullest degree all that is was best in every department of human knowledge, endeavour, and achievement” (Scannel, 1992: 13). As such, broadcasting was meant to give a lead to public taste and to foster knowledge by performing an educative role. In addition, broadcasters were expected to maintain high standards and preserve a high moral tone.

As a national service, Reith advocated that broadcasters utilise the social and political potential of broadcasting to promote social unity by equalising public life through common access. Public broadcasters had to enable people to take an interest in what they were previously excluded from and at the same time provide them with facts and arguments for or against on matters of public interest so that the citizens could make informed decisions.

Universal availability of broadcast service was also a cornerstone in public broadcasting. It meant the signal should be available to as many people in a country as possible and that programmes on offer should be varied in range to cater for different needs such as education, entertainment, and information as well as different sectoral interests such as children, women and farmers.

From above, it is apparent that public broadcasting service is not defined as an institution but rather as role and content. As such, it is not adequate to merely equate public broadcasting to state-owned and state-funded broadcasting systems. In the United States, public service broadcasting is not state-owned and had for long been denied significant public funds. In Eastern Europe, state-owned and state-funded national broadcasters used to broadcast propaganda and despotic leaders used such systems to perpetuate autocratic rule. In either case, broadcasting cannot be said to be public service because it is not done in the public interest. What is at the core of public service broadcasting therefore is the commitment to a set of principles which place public interest at the centre of a broadcasting mission.

On the other hand, public service broadcasting should not be treated as synonymous with market competition, in which the prime orientation is profit maximisation for return on investment (Keane, 1991). As stipulated in the principles of the American Public Broadcasting Act of 1967, the “non-commercial character of public broadcasting, as well as its editorial integrity and independence, are critical to its public service mission” (Corporation of Public Broadcasters, 1995). Public broadcasters may engage in commercial activities but their primary goal is not profitability as any decisions on profitability must be subsidiary to other organisational goals (McLaughlin, 1986). In this case, commercial public broadcasters engaged in commercial activities may realise surplus, just like those that depend on full government funding may realise excess of receipts over expenditure. What is crucial is that public broadcasters cannot distribute such surplus to individuals who control them nor can they properly move into capital accumulation mode and utilise such money to make more money. The primary aim is to sustain adequate resources for effective operation or to finance growth in the demand of services and for new opportunities. The logic is therefore to broadcast and make money

so as to broadcast. Private commercial broadcasters invest money into broadcasting to make more money, part of which is reinvested to realise further profit margins. As such the primary goal is profit maximisation under the capitalist logic of material accumulation. Private commercial broadcasters may also carry public service broadcasts as long as such do not corrode their profitability. These broadcasts are done as a subsidiary to the profit maximisation goal.

A complication in defining public service on the grounds of primary operational logic involves community broadcasting because this is non-commercial as well. In the United States such entities are sometimes referred to as public service because they evolved as niche community stations filling in programming gaps left by profit-oriented broadcasters. In this case, they share one aspect of the broader public broadcast function. However, in many countries community broadcasting is distinguished on the grounds of small audience size, usually bounded by special interest or geographical location, the presence of the distinctive logic of community participation and local control of the station.

In most African states, public service broadcasting is state-owned, publicly funded and charged with responsibilities which initially included fostering national integration as well as social, economic and educational development. Recently, as some countries have adopted multiparty systems of government, multiplicity and balance of views as well as provision of information about a full range of human rights have formed part of the expectations from state-owned or publicly controlled broadcasting systems. The imperative for impartiality and independence among broadcasters has become more pronounced. Thus, public service broadcasting is a function, which may be defined within particular political contexts.

As Mpofu (1996) argues, public service broadcasting should be defined in terms of a commitment to a set of principles rather than in terms of ownership or financing. Thus the ethic of public broadcasting can be extended to private commercial broadcasters but that does not make them public service broadcasters *per se* since the prime goal of private commercial broadcasters is profit maximisation. Public service does not become their primary concern, as it is for organisations established with the express aim of public service.

In this case, I believe the ideal public service broadcaster should be committed to the following principles:

- Geographic universality of broadcast services.
- Universality of appeal through a wide range of programmes driven by higher aspirations than entertainment and programmes which also

cater for minority interests that are not serviced by profit-driven broadcasting.

- Facilitation of a commonwealth of forms of life, tastes and opinions so as to empower citizens to participate in political processes and local development initiatives.
- Reflection of the social, educational and cultural fabric of communities in a nation state.
- Maintenance of editorial integrity and independence in order to function as watchdog of government and informer of the public on matters of public interest.

Since these are the principles that public service broadcasting should be committed to, it is expected that journalists in public service institutions have the responsibility to execute them. In this study, public service journalism is taken to mean journalism committed to the principles of public service broadcasting. Broadcasters in public service are ideally bound to work within the mandate of public service broadcasting principles. In theory, in terms of deliverables, they have to produce programmes which in aggregate translate into the fulfilment of the set principles of public service broadcasting. However, public service broadcasting is responsive to various factors of change. One of the changes affecting the attainment of this public service broadcasting ideal is financing. Most public broadcasting institutions are commercialising. Commercialisation has acquired a variety of meanings. It is important therefore to define the term as used in this study.

### **3.1.2. Towards a Working Definition of Commercialisation**

In media studies, from critiques of mass culture to date, the term commercialisation has been used with negative connotations. It has been used by mass culture critics for abhorrence for trade by the bourgeois, and elitists used it to look down upon the masses. The term has also been associated with the critique of commodification in which cultural products are mass-produced and marketed as a commodity which is seen as conformist, standardised and amusement-oriented as opposed to the aesthetic or artistic value of high brow culture. As part of a free market arrangement it implies production of undemanding, escapist and superficial material due to high competition for large markets (McQuail, 1994).

The term is used here within the context of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation which have given preference to the private sector to drive economic and

technological development. The term has sometimes been used interchangeably with privatisation, as both are processes by which public enterprises are shifting towards market-orientated enterprises.

Privatisation is used in its most general sense to describe all forms of public intervention that increase the size of the market sector within the communication and information industries and give the entrepreneur operating within it increased freedom of manoeuvre (Murdock, 1990: 9).

In most cases, however, privatisation means selling part or all shares in public companies to private investors. Commercialisation on the other hand means:

orienting public bodies towards market discipline and business principles by among other things introducing efficient service, greater flexibility, expanded private sector roles and less dependence on public funding... Commercialisation is a continuum of options, which starts with the first step of moving from government department to corporation...Concession is the second step...and is followed only by complete privatisation (Keiran, 1996).

This means that until a public enterprise has been sold, any stage during which a public enterprise is being oriented towards market discipline and business principles is commercialisation.

Working with Keiran's terminology, orientation to market discipline can be taken to mean a public body that engages in competition and commodity production. The MBC faces minor competition from two private commercial broadcasting stations based in Blantyre City. MBC sells programmes to sponsors and audiences to advertisers. Business principles aim at maximisation of revenue and cutting costs. Such may also include the introduction of incentives, market share expansion and cost-benefit analysis in the overall operation of a public body. From this analysis, it can be seen that market discipline and business principles are distinct dynamics but may co-exist in commercialisation. Market discipline necessarily includes business principles but business principles can exist without market discipline, as would be the case in a monopolistic environment where competition is minimal. In this latter case, orientation of public bodies to business principles can still be designated by the term commercialisation. Bearing in mind that MBC is not operating under heavy competition the focus of this study is precisely on

commercialisation in regard to the business principles such as maximisation of revenue, cost-benefit practices and incentives. A third aspect of commercialisation that can be noted is the dynamic of capital accumulation. Typically, where commercialisation reaches the stage of privatisation, not only are market orientation and business principles important dynamics in a public body, so too is the generation of profit as an end in itself for the purpose of private investors. It is, however, quite possible to have a public body exhibiting business principles and even generating a surplus, without it adopting either market orientation or the profit imperative. In the case of MBC at this stage, its primary characteristic of commercialisation is the adoption of business principles, not yet even to make a surplus as to break even.

Market discipline, business principles and capitalist accumulation as analytically different notions have different logics, which are explained in section 3.2.2. below. As noted in the definition of public service broadcasting, orienting public bodies towards market discipline and business principles is a subsidiary objective to the primary aim of providing a public service. MBC like other public broadcasters is going through change resulting from adjustment in economic policies. One issue to consider in this investigation is whether the tail can come to wag the dog: that is where commercialisation becomes an end in itself and thereby transforms public broadcasting service beyond its intrinsic logic, priorities and functions. This is further discussed in 3.1.4.0 below.

### **3.1.3 Public Service Broadcasting in a State of Flux**

Public service broadcasting is undergoing continuous changes. As Tomaselli (1994) points out, the concept of public service should be conceived as changing and not as static. Blumler (1993) summarises the changes as transfer of power from public to private media, from normative to commercial goals, from political systems to market, from national to transitional operators, from creative personnel to owners and from administrators to advertisers. These changes are partially a result of technological developments such as satellite broadcasting and cable television that have made it feasible for a market-based organisation of broadcasting. Such technological advances have created new opportunities for competition since spectrum scarcity is no longer a limiting factor in broadcast transmission and in some cases consumers can be directly

billed for usage costs (Baker, 1996). Blumler (1992) observes that overcoming frequency scarcity has undermined the regulatory rationale as well as increased competition.

It is increased competition that has driven the recent commercialisation of public service broadcasting in Europe. While programming costs went up above inflation, governments, squeezed by budgetary constraints, have failed to make up for the declining real value of revenue income, forcing public service broadcasters to supplement their income with advertising revenue, programme sales and co-productions on the international market. In order to bridge the funding gap, public service broadcasters have to compete with private commercial broadcasters. They enter into a contest in audience building, where the audience becomes a product to be sold to advertisers (Newman, 1998). In the course of the rankings game, several values of public broadcasting come under threat of erosion. In Malawi, the MBC enjoys a dominant monopoly in broadcasting and faces minor competition from two private commercial radio stations. Thus, commercialisation at MBC cannot be due to increased competition as is the case in Europe but rather from changes in government funding policy.

The global trends in favour of market-driven economies justify competition on grounds of economic and political liberalism. Holmes (1993) argues that economic liberty is enhanced by abundance of channels and political liberty is advanced through a multitude of channels. Decline in state monopoly and regulation combined with the promise of television as a global medium, offers hope for export potential for programming and communications hardware and for ancillary media companies to gain better access to the international market (Blumler, 1992). This is reinforced by the adoption of a policy by the European Community to admit channels and services originating from member states if they conform to certain minimum standards. Lobby groups also push for liberalisation, commercialisation and deregulation of national broadcasting. This is facilitated by political pressure due to a post war shift from the confidence of welfare state and government institutions to market forces. This is taking place within what Karnik (1998) calls the "LPG" (liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation) philosophy, which has swept through the world after being triggered by Margaret Thatcher and reinforced by President Reagan in the 1980's.



In practically all developing countries, broadcasting is largely a monopoly of the state. To some extent, technology and globalisation are destroying the monopoly of the state by providing a choice through transitional broadcasts. At the same time, the philosophy of LPG with its active implementation by multi-lateral financing institutions, for example, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund through conditionalities, is forcing governments to cut spending, cut subsidies and commercialise most public service activities.

State broadcasting, traditionally heavily subsidised, is among the first casualties of budget cuts. The pressure to raise its own funds inevitably drives broadcasting towards commercialisation and public service becomes far less important than raising revenue. Equally important is the mindset brought in by the LPG philosophy. Quality, impact, social good, empowerment, etc are important if only they contribute to greater income. In a short period of time, politicians, bureaucrats and broadcasters begin speaking in the same language: profit (or revenue) maximisation (Karnik, 1998: 1).

From this point of view, it is apparent that economics are playing a more crucial role in the everyday operations of state-owned broadcasting than ever before. Of course, this is not to claim that economic factors are the only determinant of broadcast output. Other intervening variables such as politics and culture also come into play.

This observation is also made by the Independent Broadcast Authority (IBA) in South Africa (IBA, 1995) when it says that international evidence on funding public service broadcasting demonstrates a link between the type of service provided and the type of funding. The IBA concludes that public broadcasting services that substantially depend on voluntary donations lack a wide general appeal. Those that depend on government grants usually fail to keep up with broadcast needs and are prone to political bias. It says systems dependent on licence fees are associated with good quality programmes although other forms of funding are increasingly sought because licence fees are becoming less reliable and sufficient as a form of funding. Finally, the IBA says public broadcasters dependent on advertising revenue are in danger of compromising their editorial independence. However, the general trend globally has been commercialisation or privatisation of public service broadcasting.

Subsequently, these changes towards commercial methods of generating revenue

call to question the role of public broadcasting as it oscillates between public service and commercial compulsions (Pasquali, 1993). The question is whether public broadcasting can engage in commercial activities without compromising the public service mission. Purists argue that money is incompatible with the prime purpose of public broadcasters and “commercial activities are inherently subversive to them” (Blumler, 1993: 404). Pragmatists on the other hand contend that public service broadcasters will be “perilously enfeebled if they eschew all commercial earnings” (Blumler, 1993: 405).

The introduction of these commercial compulsions has varied in degree from one country to another. In 1997-98 the Australian government cut Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) funding by \$55million and a subsequent report recommended that the ABC out-source its television production with the exception of current affairs and news. The ABC complained that such a step would weaken its capacity to compete (Smith, 1997). In the Pacific, public broadcasters were told to earn their keep, with little notice that state funding would be stopped (Makin, 1996). The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation in 1997 was told that government was going to cut public funding for the corporation by one third, that is by 415 million Canadian dollars (Redeopp, 1997). The IBA gives examples of consequences of these developments.

In Singapore public broadcasting has been entirely corporatised, with public broadcasting relegated to an education and minority service station. In New Zealand the public broadcaster has been commercialised so that it is now overwhelmingly dependent on advertising. Some New Zealand commentators believe the drive to economic efficiency has been at the cost of quality programming. In Brazil unregulated private broadcasting has marginalised the public broadcasting to such an extent that it now commands only 1% of audience share (IBA, 1995).

The response of public service broadcasters to the changing environment has mainly taken three forms. Hulten and Brants (1992) point out that they have followed any of the following avenues: compensation, adaptation or purification. Compensation here means a broadcaster uses commercial methods to generate revenue which cross-subsidises marginalised cultural enclaves. The aim is to please and serve the audience without falling into the trap of commercialism. Others, although very rare now, have set on a purification course, where public service broadcasting has no commercial methods of generating revenue. In this case, there is often a broadcast restriction to public service

broadcasting and withdrawal from competition. Von Cuilenberge and Slaa (1993) call this a “forum model” of public service broadcasting in which the public broadcaster relinquishes entertainment to market forces and concentrates on democracy serving functions of information provision, opinion expression and political criticism. Experience, however, has shown that this model draws only small audiences thereby marginalising public service broadcasting in its role of civic communication (Blumler, 1992). Public broadcasters have also adapted to commercial pressures by competing with the same commercial logic as commercial stations. This response might bring dilution or abandonment of the traditional spirit of public service in favour of monetary goals (Duncan, 1999).

What is evolving is a different mix of public service funding systems. Brants and Suine (1992) recognise four types. These are: the pure public service broadcasting in which commercial activities are not allowed on broadcast channels and funding is from public finance; the mixed revenue type in which advertising and licence fees are a source of funding in addition to public finance on all available channels; the dual system in which public service and commercial channels operate separately, with the commercial channels generating revenue to subsidise the public service channels; and the pure commercial type in which public service broadcasters operate across the board to maximise profit.

While this typology gives a general view of the major funding systems, public service broadcasters have also raised funds from other commercial sources. The Corporation of Public Broadcasters (CPB) in the United States, for example, has ventured into ancillary revenue from programmes, spectrum sales or swaps, enhanced underwriting and transponder leasing as new sources of revenue. It has also introduced system-wide cost reduction, which includes mergers and consolidation of existing licences, joint operating agreements, greater automation, new technologies and general operating efficiencies. (Corporation of Public Broadcasters, 1995). There are a host of cost-saving measures introduced, including restructuring of public service broadcasting institutions. For example the BBC Worldwide, in addition to seeking 1.8 billion pounds from commercial sources, has taken an initiative for cost reduction and efficiency which includes: reductions in overheads throughout the organisation, elimination of surplus

capacity, contracting out non-core services and early retirement and natural wastage schemes (Phillis, 1997). All these changes have implications for the output of these broadcasting institutions.

#### **3.1.4.0. Implications of Funding Change for Programming**

Fears have been expressed that values that underlie public broadcasting as a public utility are being eroded by the advent of commercialism. The Euromedia Research Group (Blumler, 1986) found that public broadcasting dependent on advertising revenue is risky from a pragmatic point of view because of unpredictable fluctuations and insecure responses to business cycle developments. What is at issue here is not merely that public service broadcasters augment their incomes with, for example programme sales, co-productions or advertising revenue, but that in the face of competition, increased recourse to commercial revenue endangers fulfilment of their public mandate.

Most of the evidence on the impact of commercialisation was accumulated during a two-sided debate on whether the market-driven model (private commercial broadcasting) is a better alternative to state-intervention model (in a form of public service broadcasting) of organising broadcasting in nation states. While it is beyond the scope of this study to discuss the merits and demerits of the arguments from either side of the camps, it must be pointed out that empirical evidence strongly suggests that neither public broadcasting nor private commercial broadcasting organisational model alone is the best to serve the public. As such debate should focus on what is realistically possible within the dynamics of a given society. This section focuses on the implications of the advent of commercialism on programming.

It is worth noting at the outset that scholars have differed in their claims about the implications of commercialisation on media output. Although some of the arguments have been supported by empirical evidence, not all agree. Some findings are contradictory probably because of the time-differences between when one study and the other were conducted or because of variations in the social and political conditions prevailing in the countries studied. For instance, Elliot (1977) points out that advertisers do not influence media output because organisational factors limit the power of outside forces and promote autonomy. On the other hand, Blumler (1991) and Tunstall (1991)

found that advertisers have a lot of influence especially when they are a sole source of revenue in a competitive environment. McQuail (1994) also believes that the structure of media industries in capitalist society reflects the interests of advertisers in that media design, layout, planning and scheduling often reflect advertisers' interests. Generally, however, this study finds that evidence from research on the output of private commercial broadcasting indicates homogenisation and standardisation of media products as opposed to promise of diversification entailed in the justification of market-driven media.

#### **3.1.4.1. Loss of Some Traditional Public Service Values**

Extensive studies of values that underpinned the establishment of public service broadcasting in Western Europe show that market pressures can jeopardise many features of public service programming. The loss of values is a result of a homogenising effect of market forces as well as the neglect of groups and strata that have no market value. Most of the traditional public broadcast values are still used to defend the role of public service broadcasting in the face of failure of market-driven media systems to address some of these crucial areas. The values include integrity of civic education, welfare of children and juveniles and maintenance of national and cultural identity.

##### **a) Loss of Communication for Citizenship**

Public service broadcasting has some responsibility for the health of a country's political process and for public discussion it generates (Blumler, 1992). This stems from the need to have well informed and self-determining individuals who can make sense of civic education in decision making in their lives. In Europe, civic education has been so central to public service broadcasting that the value is ingrained in legal provisions and codes of conduct for broadcasters. In Germany, freedom of broadcasting includes freedom of recipients to inform themselves comprehensively (Hoffman-Rein, 1992). In Spain the public broadcaster (RTVE) is expected to identify with values of freedom, justice, political pluralism and equality (Hearsts, 1992). In Switzerland, broadcasting norms reflect the civil idea of a politically interested and active citizen (Saxer, 1992). The scholars cited, in connection to these countries, fear that this public service function of broadcasting is being eroded by the advent of commercialism in television production. The major threat is that priorities of providers and viewers are shifting from information

towards entertainment, not that entertainment has no value, but because broadcasting should not be confined to emotional satisfaction at the expense of cognitive needs.

News bulletins could concentrate on presentations of most dramatic and arresting events, short-charging analysis and discussion. Current affairs programmes could lose their cachet, and their producers could cater for viewers' spectator interests than their citizen roles. Political competition could increasingly be presented through horse-race models and chess-like scenarios. Slogans, images, and racy sound bites might take precedence over substance, information and dialogue (Blumler, 1992: 36).

There is ample evidence of this trend towards attention-catching programming in the United States. Jamieson and Kohrs observe that in the United States, news programming has become a lucrative source of revenue, generating between 30 to 50 percent of the profit of individual stations.

As a result, there is intense pressure to achieve and maintain high ratings. Such pressures contribute to the tendencies to dramatise and sensationalise news content (Jamieson and Kohrs, 1983:95).

Commercialisation is also said to threaten the integrity of civic education because it shifts the priorities of public service providers from using airwaves as a public utility to a resource for revenue generation at the expense of civic functions.

#### b) Disregard for children and juvenile rights in programming

Based on the assumptions that broadcasting has a role to play in the lives of children and juveniles, public service broadcasting has had a track record of production specifically for children. Public service broadcasting established a tradition of being a trustee for nurturing the development, quickening curiosity and meeting educative needs of children (Blumler, 1992). Blumler observes that in general there is a decline in the volume of programming for children. The decline in programming that stimulates, inform and broaden the horizon of children is tantamount to disregard for children's development and education rights.

In addition, Blumler says children's content on commercial channels are characterised by massive amounts of advertising in and around these programmes.

Commercial broadcasters also use a sophisticated link of leading programme characters and toys in shops. In this case children are regarded as potential customers and subjected to sophisticated advertising before they develop protective awareness to persuasion. Further consequences of commercialisation have been the exposure of children to adult fare. Due to the demands of the ranking-competition and scarcity of financial resources in public service broadcasting, public service to children is under threat.

### c) Erosion of Cultural and National Identities

On culture, McQuail (1992) believes commercialisation would subvert national communication systems with a bland and homogeneous international media culture. This, it is argued, would kill local industry that depicts a society's characteristics, role patterns, issue frames, social conflict and moral dilemmas.

Through its development stages, public service broadcasting has become a patron for culture. Public broadcasters have tapped society's cultural riches such as artistic expression, linguistic styles, social values and customs, and made them available to audiences. Given that the media are an integral part of a larger process of creating meaning in society, then they are central to how individuals and institutions in society define themselves and others.

Commercialisation of public service broadcasting poses a threat to the maintenance of cultural and national identities, notably outside the United States, because an influx of cheaply produced programmes from other cultural backgrounds would subvert national communication systems. In such circumstances it also becomes difficult to sustain indigenous productions when imported, cheap and popular programmes are available. Murdock (1990) observes that in addition to rapid expansion of commercial television which paved the way for a sharp rise on the amount of foreign programming, the proliferation of new distribution systems of media products outstrips the supply of nationally originated material.

It has to be pointed out, however, that contrary to the claims that commercialisation does not support cultural programming, the Euromedia Research Group (Blumler, 1986) found that in the United States sponsorship can sustain a number of cultural programmes, although sponsorship tended to bias towards non-controversial programming.

In addition, Burton (1990) draws attention to the notion of advertising as culture. Advertising is said to use key value messages such as status quo stereotypes of women and reinforces them. It promotes consumerism.

It's [advertising] used in maintaining and promoting beliefs central to a culture of consumption and materialism and the ideology behind it is that it is a good thing to buy and these goods make you happy and can enhance your status (Burton, 1990:121).

However, if advertising is a form of art within a culture, then it has reason for a place in public service broadcasting if the latter purports to be the patron of culture. As a powerful artistic and creative part of culture, advertising should not just be thought of as supporting the status quo as postulated by Burton, because it also has opposition influence when it challenges or contradicts some central values in society.

This study is, therefore, open to the varying significance on values of advertising and sponsorship in public service broadcasting institutions such as MBC.

#### **3.1.4.2. Discrimination on Grounds of Economic Status**

Commercialisation brings in discrimination in programming on grounds of economic status. Related to the hunt for audiences is the consequent polarisation of audiences. As public service broadcasters compete for audiences to sell to advertisers and sponsors, producers seek to programme for audiences of certain demographic composition. These turn out to be either small specialist productions for the wealthy or large mass audiences with purchasing power. This means the interests and tastes of the economically deprived are ignored or relegated to low priority even when their numbers are significantly large.

Even when the poor represent numerically minority sections of society, it is arguably unfair to neglect or marginalise minority tastes and interests in programming because they still form part of the fabric of the society in a nation state. In addition, giving people more of the same just because it is popular is a failure for producers in their duty to the audience because it is better to provide a choice from a diverse set than constrict the choice to a benchmark of popular emotional appeal. After all, the measure of



appeal called 'ratings' does not say anything about audience appreciation of a programme (Blumler, 1986).

Thus, the advent of commercial television also leads to a shift from principled to pragmatic pluralism (Blumler, 1992). By this is meant media output that would be in favour of forms of diversity that are likely to pay, thereby ignoring poorly placed segments of society such as children, the elderly, minority cultural interests and holders of less orthodox opinions.

#### **3.1.4.3. Reduction in Programme Diversity**

The commercial incursion into public service broadcasting is said to undermine public service aspirations through preponderance of standardised and homogeneous programming instead of guaranteeing diversity from which audiences would choose media products. In this regard, differences between what is aired by private commercial broadcasting and public service broadcasting stations are narrowing. Servaes (1992) found that the distinction between publicly owned television and enterprise run on private capitalist basis has disappeared. The Euromedia Research Group (Blumler, 1986) found that in most Western European countries programme profiles were narrowing. The tendency is that commercial television favours entertainment programming, which public service broadcasters move to when faced with competition.

In Europe, the market is developing into a system moving with great energy towards more programmes of fewer types. A tremendous diversification of distribution systems suggests abundance in programme output, which actually conceals a narrowing product spectrum (Kimmel, 1993).

Convergence of commercial and public broadcasting is a central issue in policy debates on the appropriate roles of private commercial broadcasting and public service broadcasting in view of changing economic, technological, political and social environments.

Competition sets public service broadcasters into a race for the largest possible audiences at least for some of their programming. The drive to meet the desires of the largest possible audiences forces programme producers to eliminate diversity and narrow each programme to appeal to the broadest tastes in the signal area. This results in mass-

produced programmes that are standardised, based on a popularity formula. A large body of rich and diverse tastes and interests are ignored in a bid to appeal to huge audiences. For example, Blumler (1993) observes that when public service broadcasters choose to generate revenue from sale of programmes on the international market, programmes intended for such markets must conform to cross cultural appeal.

#### **3.1.4.4. Reduction in Programme Range**

Commercialisation is inimical to programme range because commercial programming appeals to narrow satisfaction such as pass time, relaxation and escape. This claim is also supported by Brants and Suine (1992) when they point out that many authors have found that the ratio of 'serious' to 'popular' programmes on public service broadcasting stations is on average 55 to 45 percent whereas commercial broadcasters programme at a rate of 30 to 40 percent.

#### **3.1.4.5. Erosion of Producers' Autonomy**

Blumler et. al. (1986) found a connection between broadcast financing and producer autonomy. They claim that advertisers come to have rights to which a broadcast system becomes amenable and the creative community is merely co-opted to its goals of delivering maximum target audience through programmes. Financiers, especially sponsors, have several mechanisms for exerting control over programming.

First, sponsors may directly delete programme segments or refuse to buy programmes that adversely mention their products or services. This usually forces producers to operate programming to suit the interests of financiers. Western (1986) observes that producers of television programmes, for example, end up making value and life style in a show consistent with those of the advertiser or sponsor. The result is that a programme holds an ideal and suggests that purchase of a product will attain such an ideal.

Second, sponsors are said to avoid challenging and controversial programmes for fear of a backlash to their products or service. Consequently, producers are forced to come up with consensual programmes. In some studies in Europe and USA, sponsorship was blamed for killing adventurous and controversial programming, leading to

consensual programmes (Hulten and Brants, 1992; Blumler, Braynim and Nossier, 1986). In a study of public television in the United States, Eterna and Whitney (1982), however, found out that in competitive commercial environments, competition generated creativity and innovation.

Third, producers are also under pressure to avoid programming content that would place an audience in an unreceptive mood for a commercial. As an example, Western (1986) cites the need for producers of episodic drama series to structure programming development around scheduled programming-breaks. The plot development has to be fashioned to reach peaks before each commercial break in order to hold viewers' attention throughout the break.

Fourth, financiers also exert influence through structural regulations that dictate actual organisational processes and relationships with media institutions. For example, in the film industry, Blumler (1992) found that film producers in America spend a lot of time soliciting backing from would-be sponsors. He points out that this mainly poses danger, when certain programmes are designated as a matter of policy, as requiring sponsorship in order to be made.

However, Brants (1998) argues that these fears are based on dubious premises. In a study of trends in news coverage of politics, he found ambiguous, and often contradictory, claims about the effects of commercialisation on political news. For example, while acknowledging an increase in sensationalisation of political news he could not link it to commercialisation. In addition, coverage of political news is said to have increased in many European countries under competitive environments contrary to the claim that commercialisation depoliticises news.

#### **3.1.4.6. Summary**

Based on the findings on the impact of commercialisation on media output, it is difficult to predict with certainty the exact implications this process has for MBC programming because of the variations in claims and differences in socio-economic environments prevailing in the countries studied. While all findings agree that advertisers and sponsors have some influence on media output, fears of the erosion of traditional public service values can not be ignored. Although Brants (1998) contends that these fears are based on false assumptions, it is arguably myopic to ignore all the evidence

from research supporting claims that commercialisation in some countries had resulted in product homogenisation, discrimination on economic grounds and slant towards entertainment programming at the expense of information programmes. Among other things, commercialisation is argued to be a potential threat to communication for citizenship, children's rights as well as cultural and national integration in nation states. Given that financiers have some role in shaping media output, this study is conducted within a theoretical framework that highlights the role of the economics in media output.

### **3.2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This study is situated within a political economy approach to media studies through an adaptation of a market theory of commercial news production developed by American scholar, John McManus. A synopsis of pertinent characteristics of the political economy approach to this study are outlined before summarising key aspects of McManus' market theory of commercial news production.

As a general approach, political economy has roots in the management of the economic affairs of the state. It combines the political and economic in conceptualising aspects of social formation. One can identify two schools within the approach. The classical approach argues for the capacity of markets to regulate themselves, while the Marxist approach shows how powerful political and ideological forces originate in the dynamics of capitalist economics (Levine and Caporaso, 1992). While the former, in principle, treats the economic as separate from politics and ideology, the latter recognises the linkage between them. This study follows the Marxist school. It is an approach that places economic relations at the centre of analysis and sees ideology as subordinate (Murdock and Golding, 1977).

It should be noted at the outset that the political economy approach is only one of the many variants of Marxist approaches to media studies. Curran and Gurevitch (1982) identify three contending Marxist paradigms. The others are the culturalist approach and the structuralist approach. Structuralists deal with the articulation of signifying systems of the media (Curran and Gurevitch, 1982). In the culturalist approach, emphasis is on the actual experiences of subgroups in society as a complex expressive totality (Curran and

Gurevitch, 1982). While it is beyond the scope of this study to reiterate the merits and weaknesses of each paradigm, it is important to note that each of these competing paradigms concentrates on an important and a particular area of media studies which another approach may fail to adequately analyse. As such, taken as a totality all three generate a compendium of knowledge useful to the understanding of the media.

In the description of the political economy approach below, attempts are made to locate its relevance to this study. The political economy approach provides an appropriate framework for this study through its target of analysis, theoretical assumptions and explanatory adequacy.

### **3.2.1. The Political Economy Approach**

The linchpin of Marxist political economy is its subscription to Karl Marx's base/superstructure model and determinacy of the economic as base of the nature of the social environment. Although there are variations in the conception of the relationship of the base/superstructure among Marxists, including among some political economists themselves (Chandler, 1998), ideology (superstructure) is viewed by most political economists as subordinate to the economic (base). In this study, a somewhat different view of the base/superstructure relationship advocated by Garnham (1990) is upheld. He observes that conceiving the base/superstructure relationship as a binary polarity between the material (economic) and the ideological leads to "economic reductionism", or "idealist automation of the ideological level". Economic reductionists assert that the economic base determines everything in the superstructure including social, political and intellectual consciousness. That is to say that the superstructure is expressive of an economic base. On the other hand idealist conceptions proposing relative autonomy of the superstructure are arguing in tautological terms that "all phenomena of social formation are expressive of that social formation" (Garnham, 1990, 23). In contrast, Garnham postulates that the material, the economic and the ideological "are distinct but at the same time coterminous moments both of social practices and concrete analysis [and] marked by a series of shifting relationships between the economic and other instances" (Garnham, 1990: 23-24). Thus changes in the base structure or the

superstructure may have reciprocal impact on the other and their interaction can be uneven and contradictory.

This conception has two advantages for the theoretical conception of this study. First, it rejects idealism devoid of context in media analysis as characterised by works of most structuralists. Second, it provides for analysis of contradictions in a system. It avoids falling into a trap of viewing capitalists' use of economic power as a key factor in determining control of media messages to their own interests thereby creating hegemonic order. Instead it provides for characterisation of diversity and distinction in the media when the influences of financial actors, media owners, advertisers and politicians are conceived to "operate within structures which may constrain, facilitate or impose limits or offer opportunities" (Curran and Gurevitch, 1982, 15).

The conception of causal relations by political economists also makes the approach pertinent for this study. While accepting that the economic is determinant, this study does not believe in simplistic causal relations between financing and programming. Murdock and Golding (1977) point out that traditional historical materialism is economic reductionism because it fails to explain diversity as observed by Curran and Gurevitch above. They trace this weakness to a misunderstanding of Marx's postulate that economic relations condition intellectual and cultural life. They argue like Raymond Williams that the term determination should be understood "not in terms of simple causal relationships but rather as setting limits" (Murdock and Golding, 1977: 34). Political economy therefore asserts that the economic does not predetermine human action in any unilateral sense, but makes some courses of action more likely than others because there are material limits to the range of human action. In addition, humans learn from historical experiences which provide warnings against certain courses of action and thereby create habits and inertia (Garnham, 1990). Determinacy in this sense is not a fixed simple causal relationship as advocates of economic reductionism assert by contending that the economic base determines everything in the superstructure including social, political and intellectual consciousness.

Political economists also acknowledge the significance of ideology through the recognition of the role of the media as active meaning-makers rather than mirrors of reality. As signifying agents,

the media underwrite certain predominant values, beliefs and institutional procedures that benefit certain persons or groups at the expense of others (Murdock and Golding, 1977: 18).

However, as Curran and Gurevitch (1982) point out, political economy focuses on how “making and taking of meaning” are shaped by structural asymmetries in social relations and the play of power. They say it tries to show how the economic and the wider structures they sustain shape micro-contexts. This is in line with the support by Murdock and Golding (1977) for the incorporation of economic relations in the study of the media on the grounds that the basic relations of capitalism are the “structuring overall framework” within which intellectual and cultural life take place. This is an interpretation of Marx’s assertion that class control over production and distribution is encapsulated in and conditioned by dynamics that underpin the capitalist economy.

Since media institutions operating in capitalist economies are embedded in and conditioned by the structures underpinning such an economy, political economy examines the economic contexts within which control is exercised. This is in recognition of the fact that resources available to a media institution have a bearing on the work styles and practices.

Changes in the market situation can affect resources available to an organisation and the extent to which creativity is hedged about accountancy (Murdock and Golding, 1977: 35).

In this case, political economy upholds economic dynamics as playing a central role in defining the key features of the general environment in which the media operate. But there is also recognition that they are not a complete explanation of the nature of that activity (Curran and Gurevitch, 1982).

The political economy approach is therefore an appropriate perspective in the analysis of how economic relations structure the overall strategy of cultural enterprise and the concrete activities of cultural workers such as programme producers especially now that the LPG philosophy is dominant in world. The political economy approach is relevant to this research because it provides a conceptual link between economic structure and media production, which is the focus of this research. The aim of this research is to investigate how a commercial aspect of a funding system for public service broadcasting relates to its programming output.

The political economy approach is flexible in its application to different countries and situations. Although in the paradigm explicit mention is made of capitalistic forms, political economists do not regard capitalism as a social formation in an equilibrium and therefore static. They conceive capitalist economic forms as a

.... still incomplete process of capitalist development, a development which is not marked by the determinacy of capitalist economic forms (an expressive totality in that sense) but on the contrary by a series of shifting relationships between the economic and the other instances, each interacting with the other in a process of uneven and contradictory development. The totality of the social formation at any historic time is only expressive of the actual state of those shifting interrelationships (Garnham, 1990: 24).

The political economy approach can therefore be applied to any stage of an evolving capitalist formation because it conceives capitalism as dynamic. It acknowledges different stages in the development of capitalist formations and allows their analysis because it conceives capitalist formations as being constantly reproduced and altered through practical action. Curran and Gurevitch (1982) explain that the political economy approach aims to explain how structures are constituted through action and how action is constituted structurally. Thus the political economy approach is pertinent to analysis of structures of social relations at any point and level in the process of capitalist development even in countries like Malawi.

The political economy approach also places emphasis on historical contextualisation of analysis in media studies. It is interested in how events relate to the history of economic formations and systems of rule (Curran and Gurevitch, 1982). This study investigates the role of commercialisation in radio programming, in line with political economists' interest in the increasing dependence of individuals on mediated communication, domination by corporations in media industries through conglomerations, advertising or sponsorship and the changing role of state and government intervention in communication. While in general classical political economists argue for minimal public intervention and widest possible operational freedom to market forces, critical political economists are critical of distortions and inequalities of market systems and advocate remedies by public intervention (Curran and Gurevitch, 1982). Since MBC is a statutory body operating in a more liberalised market



than ever before, an understanding of the existing economic imperatives is best situated within a historical context (both international and local) of funding and programming in public service broadcasting. As explained in the literature review, public service broadcasting is continuously undergoing change and it is the aim of this study to investigate specific changes taking place in MBC programming output when globally public service broadcasting is in a state of flux.

In conclusion, the political economy approach is relevant to this study because its central postulates allow for application in different economic settings. Through its emphasis on structural factors and historical contexts of communication systems, it is also possible not only to demonstrate change, but also to understand how economic relations structure the overall strategies of radio productions and activities of programme producers. Analysis under the political economy approach has been conducted at several levels. Some studies have covered ownership and control of the media on a global scale, regional level or national level. Others have looked at influences of power-holders on media content and yet others have focused on a micro-scale such as analysis of structural influences on production within a media institution. This study looks at the influences of commercialisation on MBC programming. Since the focus is on programme producers and programming decisions, that is a look within an organisation, a market theory of news production has been chosen to guide the research.

### **3.2.2. McManus' Market Theory of News Production**

McManus attempts to include the concept of markets in news production after observing that most of the news consumed in America, Europe and Asia is produced by profit-making organisations. His theory points out that the goal of business is to maximise profit and that of journalism is to provide a public utility.

The market theory of news production is stated as follows:

The probability of an event/issue becoming news is inversely proportional to harm the information might cause investors or sponsors and...inversely proportional to the cost of uncovering and ...inversely proportional to the cost of reporting it and.... directly proportional to the expected breadth of appeal of the story to the audience advertisers will pay to reach (McManus, 1994: 87).

This theory is different from what McManus calls purely journalistic theory which states that:

The probability of an event/issue becoming news is proportional to the expected consequence of the story and ...proportional to the size of the audience for whom it is important (McManus, 1994: 87).

To broaden the market theory to cover all media production in the current study, the theory is restated as: the probability of a programme or an item to be included in programming is inversely proportional to the harm the information might cause investors or sponsors and inversely proportional to its cost of production and directly proportional to the expected breadth of appeal of the programme/item to audiences advertisers will pay to reach. This postulate is a guide to the examination of the extent to which commercial logic is the operational logic at MBC under changing financial conditions. This will be looked at in relation to the prevalence of the purely public service journalistic theory which in this study is restated as: the probability of a programme/item being included in programming is proportional to expected consequence of the programme/item and to the universal size or minority character of audience for whom it is important.

The market theory of news production is not completely incompatible with the public service journalistic theory because there are points of convergence. They both share a concern to maximise target audiences sizes although market-driven journalism seeks audiences who are potential customers to sell to advertisers while public service journalism seek audiences to maximise outreach of public service.

In terms of programme production, areas of convergence include occurrences which do not threaten the interests of advertisers and investors, are inexpensive to produce and have a promise of wide appeal to a wide audience. There are also possibilities of trade-offs between costly and cheap productions in an institution.

On the other hand, the market theory of production is different from and conceptually in conflict with the public service journalistic theory. The public service journalistic theory, unlike the market theory, does not contain elements of cost or payment. The market theory has words such as 'cost', 'pay' and 'harm'. Harm also implies cost.

The journalistic theory is silent on cost and presumes unlimited resources which is an ideal. This is why actual commercial news production requires some compromise of journalism ideals with business reality (McManus, 1994: 86).

This means the market approach requires that media content be biased in the interests of media firm's advertisers and investors. This is because of several related reasons. Advertisers do not only want to reach the right sort of audiences but they also want to do so in a good context. That is, programmes or items accompanying advertisements should not depress or distract audiences from wanting to buy. This approach also theoretically predicts that programmes that do not draw large audiences are not placed in prime-time slots and the availability of sponsors increases the probability of a programme being aired. However, notice must be taken of the possibility of media institutions to profitably produce some niche-interest journalism for those customers who are more able to discern such quality and are ready to pursue it. These are customers with more education and higher incomes and are likely to attract advertisers.

The journalism theory is based on the fundamental mission of journalism which is to maximise public understanding of the local environment and this entails independent scrutiny of the environment by journalists. This is usually expensive although some events which the public is most likely to learn from may also draw large audiences including the affluent. Some issues or events which may generate a lot of appeal may be inexpensive to cover. However, in regard to investigative journalism, as a general rule, McManus says that this is a risky strategy for maximising investment because of possible law suits, failure of some stories to span out public interest and the splash it may create in society by sometimes challenging accepted myths and prejudices. Media institutions governed by the journalistic model would allocate more resources to programmes covering the most significant events and issues within the target signal area. On the other hand, the market theory would predict that given scarce resources of time and capital, a commercial media firm would provide the least expensive mix of programming that is both hospitable to advertisers and sponsors and generates the largest target audience that advertisers and sponsors want to reach. Thus programming will be characterised by events and issues that can maximise return on investment. These are

programmes or items that have the greatest ratio of expected appeal to demographically desirable audiences to the cost of programming.

As such, the market theory posits that media output is dependent on a type of cost-benefit analysis that producers use at every stage of production. The cost-benefit analysis is said to be built into the organisational culture through set routines, rewards, toleration and punishment. Market-driven journalism can be at variance with public service journalism because market-driven journalism is driven by a primary goal of maximising profit for capital accumulation.

The expectation is that a public body that is commercialising has operational decisions guided by the commercial-logic. Commercial-logic is only one of the varieties of logic operating under media-logic. Dahlgren (1988) defines the concept of media-logic as referring to specific forms and processes which organise work done in a particular medium.

Media logic refers to institutionally structured features of a medium, the ensemble of technical and organisational attributes which impact on what gets represented in a medium and how it gets done...Media logic may also indicate cultural competence and frames of perceptions of audiences/users, which in turn reinforces how production within a medium takes place (Dahlgren, 1988:63).

He attributes variations in media logic to differences in medium and genres as well as social sites of media production and consumption. Thus, media logic is a broad concept that embraces both commercial, cultural and social forms and processes impacting on media work. Commercialisation as a process is only one of the many processes. Others for example may include nationalisation, acculturation and secularisation of the media. Consequently, there are many logics which impinge on work organisation in media institutions, such as public service broadcasting logic, developmental logic, propagandist logic and commercial logic or what is called commercialisation in this study. That is, with the exclusion of the social, commercial-logic encompasses compulsions in a system orientated towards market discipline and business principles. In this study, the term logic is used to refer to operational compulsions in a particular media system. Since there is a distinction between orientation towards market principles and business principles, the operational logics of institutions under either condition are bound to be different as well.

Market orientation-logic entails competition, while business-logic can exist outside competition.

Bearing in mind that commercialisation is associated with development of capitalist formations, it is worth pointing out that the two are not intrinsically synonymous. Capitalistic-logic necessarily refers to profit maximisation, capital accumulation and growth. Commercial-logic involves maximisation of revenue and cutting costs. Thus, capitalistic-logic is distinct from commercial-logic. Capitalistic-logic of necessity entails commercial-logic, but it is more than commercial-logic. By the same token, commercial-logic can exist up to a point, separately from capitalistic-logic. “Market-logic” is a term used by McManus to refer, implicitly, to capitalistic logic, which is a system that incorporates the combined logics of market orientation, business principles and capital accumulation. “Market-logic” in his use is therefore much more than the market-orientation logic discussed above. That McManus “market-logic” encompasses all three sub-logics is a result of the advanced capitalist broadcast environment which his theory attempts to explain. MBC, by contrast, exhibits, at this stage, just one of the sub-logics, that is business principles. It is therefore to be expected that his theory will accordingly have less predictive value in this context. The extent to which the McManus theorisation can highlight trends and consequences of commercialisation, primarily in terms of business logic, in Malawi is a key aim of this thesis.

In the current study, deductions are made from routines and practices as recorded in the experiences of programme producers and programme schedule changes in order to infer the underlying logics in MBC programming. Unlike McManus who uses participant observation as a principle technique to find the logic, this study uses interviews and document analysis to determine the extent of the drive towards market-driven journalism in MBC. These are equally appropriate methods of obtaining data that can be analysed for indicators of underlying or structural determinants of media output as they also fall under a qualitative tradition of research. This is covered in more detail in the chapter three on methodology.

### 3.3. Conclusion

While there are differences between the economic and social settings between Malawi and where McManus' theory was conceived to work, viz. commercial media institutions operating in highly competitive environments with a culture of market-based media, the theory should be applicable in Malawi if it is true that the world-wide application of the LPG philosophy is pushing the public broadcaster towards an underlying commercial logic in their operations. Being a theory that includes economics in what happens in the mass media industry, it is the conviction in this study that testing its efficacy in a different socio-economic environment and to a broader undertaking of mass media production, in this case radio programming, would enrich rather than disprove it.

From the literature review in this chapter, it is apparent that there are changes in media rationales as the LPG philosophy takes root in many countries. Public service broadcasters have to accept change and brace themselves to face the challenge of using more commercial revenue than ever before. Change is inevitable but what is urgent is the need to carefully examine and analyse consequences of the drive towards market-driven media institutions so that targeted intervention can be designed.

While these research findings offer some insight into how commercial forces impinge on media output, there is a problem of transferability of one study to a general principle partly because of the contradictory nature of the claims. It cannot therefore be predicted from these studies, what role commercial activities have in MBC programming.

Furthermore, these studies were conducted in developed countries, where public service broadcasters are operating in high competition with private broadcasters and the very role of public broadcasting is being questioned. MBC operates in a developing country with a very narrow industrial and commercial base and the role of public service is still ambiguous. The different types of media also throw transferability into question. Most of the studies cited here were conducted at television stations. This study has focused on radio. It also includes programme-making in addition to production of news, which has been the focus of most other studies. The aim is to get a holistic understanding of any changes that might be taking place in the total spectrum of MBC programming.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### METHODOLOGY

#### **4.0. Introduction**

This chapter focuses on methodological issues in the study. In order to facilitate common understanding, key terms in the study are defined before locating the study within the interpretative paradigm. The goal of the study is then spelt out. The rationale for situating the study within the interpretative tradition is explained and so are reasons behind the choice of a case study method. Details of data collection and data analysis techniques are then described as they relate to the goal of this study. The chapter also discusses the issues of generalisation in this study.

#### **4.1. Definition of Key Terms**

Since most terms used in the research might mean a variety of things to different people, it is important that they are defined as used in this study.

- Commercialisation is orienting public bodies towards market discipline and business principles which can help or hinder attainment of public service goals.
- Programming is to make programmes, schedule broadcast airtime or decide relationship among programmes.
- Programme schedule is a line up of programmes in terms of sequence of broadcast.
- Advertising is the commercial promotion of goods or a service on radio.
- Sponsorship is an indirect form of advertising where an advertiser is promoted in return for financially supporting the contents of a radio programme.
- Programme range is extent of programme types available for broadcast on a channel.
- Programme diversity is the proportions of significantly different programmes in the total schedule.

It is important to note that notions of programme diversity and programme range have been problematic to characterise because researchers operationalise them differently. Brants (1998) points out, in a survey of effects of commercialisation on news content, that the media convergence hypothesis is difficult to prove because programme range and programme diversity are conceived differently in various parts of Europe. As such the above definitions apply in this study and further research about these notions would be valuable.

#### **4.2. Goal of Research**

The goal of the study is to investigate the role and extent of commercial revenue in programming at MBC during 1995 to 1998. This is done through an investigation of the underlying logic in programming. According to public service journalistic theory, adapted from McManus (1994), the guiding logic for journalists is that the probability of a programme or an item to be included in programming is proportional to the conglomeration of news or other public service values contained in the piece. MBC is ideally a public service broadcaster and journalism values are expected to be guided by a commitment to the principles of public broadcasting as stipulated in the definition of the concept in chapter three. However, as demonstrated by findings from developed countries, market-driven journalism, which is getting global acclaim, has its own operational market-logic. This study is an attempt to find out the extent to which the ideals of market-journalism or public service journalism are prevalent in the programming decisions at MBC. To this end, analysis of data is focused on establishing trends in and reasons behind programming at MBC. These centre on programme diversity, range and scheduling. Propositions that guide this search are:

1. Commercialisation is becoming stronger at MBC and the institution is highly dependent on commercial revenue for its operations.
2. Since commercialisation entails revenue maximisation, cost cutting and cost-benefit analysis in an attempt to cover costs or realise surplus, MBC programming decisions are dominated by commercial logic.

The second proposition is based on McManus' market theory of news production. As shown in the literature review in chapter three, research on the influence of financing



systems on media production yield different, sometimes contradictory, results. It therefore becomes difficult to draw any concrete propositions based on such findings. This study recognises these findings as possibilities of what might obtain at MBC. The question of any specific impact of commercial activities on public service broadcasting at MBC can only be decided by data obtained at MBC.

#### **4.3. The Qualitative Research Tradition**

This study is conducted primarily within the qualitative research tradition. Gephart (1978) states that quantitative data and analytical techniques with the positivist paradigm have limited applications because data only provide awareness of macro-questions regarding organisations and thereby exclude a large range of important phenomena, due to failure to examine meanings of organisational members. This is not, however, to argue that quantitative research or the positivist paradigm has no place in social research. But as Lincoln and Guba (1988) and Cantrell (1993) observe, different research traditions are suited to different goals of research. The qualitative approach is appropriate in attempts to partially understand the role of commercial logic in programming because it allows for a more focused analysis of experiences, perceptions and records of programming personnel. This tradition is also appropriate because it allows use of versatile techniques to understand phenomena. Lincoln and Guba observe that qualitative methods are handy because they rely on the human being as the instrument of research.

Qualitative methods are extensions of normal human activities: looking, listening, speaking, reading and the like. We believe the human will tend, therefore, toward interviewing, observing and mining available documents and records (Lincoln and Guba, 1995:199).

In this study, interviewing and mining of documents were used to partially understand what the compelling logic is behind programming at MBC.

#### **4.4. The Interpretative Paradigm**

The interpretative approach was utilised to collect and analyse interview data in this study. Although there are some variations in what constitutes the interpretative

approach some of the commonly articulated assumptions as regards its characteristics according to Lincoln and Guba (1988) and Schwandt (1994) include the following:

- Knowledge and truth are created and not discovered by the mind, which means there are multiple and often conflicting constructions, all of which are meaningful.
- Truth is a matter of the best informed and most sophisticated construction on which there is consensus at a given time, which means that the question of whether constructions are true is socio-historically relative.
- Constructions are resident in the minds of individuals and are not part of some objective world that exists apart from their constructions.
- A researcher cannot be neatly disentangled from the researched in the activity of inquiring into constructions.
- Findings of an inquiry are themselves a literal creation or construction of the inquiry process because findings are a joint construction between the inquirer and respondent.

Given these characteristics, the interpretative tradition is appropriate for the interview part of this study because of several considerations. The researcher gains a subjective understanding of the actual life world of each participant in programming as well as a holistic understanding of the situation that shapes their work. It also enables events to be understood "through the mental process of interpretation which is influenced by and interacts with social context" (Cantrell, 1993: 83). This focus on respondents' understanding, meaning and interpretation of occurrences and social structures is central to this study. It is from these constructs, complemented by document analysis, that analysis of underlying logics is made.

The other consideration is that the paradigm emphasises use of methods and techniques of inquiry which involve interaction. Thus, apart from the researcher learning, it provides for joint construction of knowledge of reality between researcher and researched, thereby enabling participants to learn from the inquiry process.

Since knowledge is conceived to be context specific, an in-depth understanding of the situation as it obtains at MBC is of intrinsic value. It may be of practical use not only to the researcher but also to the institution and participants in the inquiry process.

The interpretative paradigm has mainly been applied to three different areas in media studies. According to Kevin Carragee (1990), interpretative approaches focus on

the interpretative processes employed by audiences in decoding of media texts, social uses of these texts and social settings that shape media consumption. Such approaches, however, are narrow in application when compared to how the interpretative tradition is applied to other fields of social science such as education and management. This study utilises the interpretative paradigm to study media workers' perception and experiences in order to determine their expressed views and constructions. The belief here is that since this logic lies deep in media workers' minds, studying the way individuals create, modify or interpret the world they live in can help reveal any underlying logic in programming.

Carragee (1990) also points out that interpretative mass communication research fails to place social actors within a broader historical, social and cultural context. This is because interpretative mass communication studies developed as an alternative to a deterministic behaviourist perspective on media effects and audiences.

#### **4.5. Case Study Method**

This study used a case study method. Stake defines a case study as a

study of a bounded system, emphasising the unity and wholeness of that system, but confining attention to those aspects that are relevant to the research problem at the time (Stake, 1994:236).

A case is therefore an integrated system with working parts towards a particular purpose, like MBC programming. Although it is at times difficult to draw lines of boundary around the case because it comprises a complex entity operating within a number of contexts and having subsections, as an integrated system its behaviour is patterned. As such consistency and sequence define a case (Stake, 1994). This study looks at the dominant patterns in programming decisions from 1995 to 1998.

The case study method has an advantage of setting limits of a case according to a research problem. This means case studies can range from simple to complex investigations of any specific system depending on the research problem. This flexibility in application tallies with the goal of this study to investigate the place of commercial revenue in programming at MBC. While recognising the role of other factors such as culture, politics and society demands, the focus of this study is limited to an economic perspective.

In addition, the case study method is favoured in most qualitative research because it brings out the intrinsic value of a social phenomenon under study. While it is possible for case studies researchers to have instrumental interest where a case is examined to provide insight into a general issue or refine a theory, intrinsic interest in case studies is equally valuable. Such a study is undertaken when a case itself is of interest (Stake, 1994). In this study, the main interest is not on trying to illustrate a particular trait or problem as typical or atypical of other cases but rather MBC presents, in all its particularity and ordinariness, a case of interest in its own right. Case study is also a favourite method because it enables the study of social phenomena in natural settings using natural (human-agent) techniques (Lincoln and Guba, 1988). This enables the researcher to have a holistic view of interplay of factors in the study area. Of course, this perspective is determined by the research problem and in the current study it is limited to an economic perspective. In this study, data collection techniques use the researcher as a research tool and data was collected directly at MBC offices, which is one of the working places for programme producers.

The case study method was also considered appropriate to this study because in studying the uniqueness of a situation, knowledge gained can be used to improve systems. Insights gleaned from case studies do not only offer a researcher an in-depth understanding of a specific system. They may also be useful to participants and other members of the researched system.

Case studies are a step to action. Their insights may be directly interpreted and put to use for staff or individual self-development, for within institutional feedback, and may contribute towards the democratisation of decision-making. (Cohen and Manion, 1994:123)

Case study also provides a researcher with an ability to study characteristics of a unit in order to probe deeply and analyse the multifarious phenomena that constitute the cycle of that unit (Cohen and Manion, 1994). As such, records, experiences and perceptions of media workers can be studied at the same time using this method.

Since the case study method holds such promise and has the descriptive and explanatory capacities required in the study, it has been considered appropriate for this research.

#### **4.6. Data collection techniques**

Two techniques of gathering data are used in this study, namely interviewing and documentation. Each is used as a primary data collection technique for its merits. Before using either of the two techniques, consideration was made as to the capacity of each technique to generate data that shed light on the research problem. As such, the capacity of these techniques to help answer the research question was paramount. Further, decisions were made on what documents to collect and who to interview to obtain such data. This brings in the question of sampling.

##### **4.6.1. Sampling**

The study used purposeful sampling, because it allows a researcher to focus in depth on issues important to a study. Purposeful sampling involves the selection of small, information rich samples. The logic and power behind this sampling is to have a manageable information rich sample, be it informants or documents (Patton, 1990). Although it is at the discretion of a researcher to identify appropriate informants, certain guidelines apply to make the selection systematic and effective in generating data that sheds light on a research problem. This study follows Morse's guidelines in this regard.

A good informant is one who has the knowledge and experience the researcher requires, has the ability to reflect, is articulate, has the time to be interviewed, and is willing to participate in the study (Morse, 1991:128).

There are varieties of purposeful sampling strategies such as theoretical sampling, emergent sampling, maximum variation sampling, criterion sampling and opportunistic sampling (Cantrell, 1993 and Morse, 1994). This study opted to use typical case sampling because of the focus and context of study. The reason for this choice was to avoid rejection of information on the grounds of deviate cases. Since the purpose of this study was to find out the dominant trends in the decisions behind programming, focus is not on

instances of deviance or variance. Participants and documents were therefore selected for their ability to generate typical situation data.

The study identified middle managers in charge of programming as an ideal set of informants to form a sample for interviews. They are information-rich in the sense that they are middle managers. They are long serving members (over ten years working experience) capable of comparing and contrasting the state of broadcasting prior to and during the study period. They supervise subordinates in the production and broadcast of programmes on the network. As middle managers they draw budgets for their departments, sit on programme-committee meetings and act as top management delegates. They each have a set of programmes which they produce. The interviewees were chief producer for drama and short stories, chief producer for youth and gender programmes and chief producer for current affairs. Chief reporter and chief editor (English-desk) were also interviewed because they hold the similar responsibilities to chief producers as regards output on the network.

However, when it was noted during fieldwork that some sections of MBC programming had nobody designated at the rank of chief producer, other informants were identified and interviewed. These were principal producers, a rank below chief producer. They were principal producer for special events and principal producer responsible for training. The director of Channel Two and his assistant were also interviewed upon recognition that the first set of managers had their responsibilities mainly tied down to programming on MBC Channel One.

In the course of the research the rule of data saturation or redundancy was applied to define the sample size for interviewing (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982; Lincoln and Guba, 1988; Patton, 1990; Morse, 1994). The rule states that sampling is complete when no new information is forthcoming. This view is also supported by Kvale's advice to researchers when he says "interview as many subjects as necessary to find out what you need to know" (Kvale, 1996:141). In this research, all people in the sampled category were interviewed except one who passed away. Interviews with the MBC director general and principal marketing officer were not part of the sample but only served to buttress background information requirements. They were also used to pilot test an interview schedule. Data was also collected from MBC records.

#### 4.6.2. Documentation

Documentation refers to 'paper' data such as records, correspondence and statements of accounts. Lincoln and Guba (1985) point out that documents are an important source of information because they may accurately reflect a situation that occurred at some time in the past. MBC has some documents that record details of programming decisions, which were of interest to this study. They are important because they retain a permanent record of programming activities and reflect MBC policy. They have an advantage over interview data because they are less susceptible to alteration. Their analysis or re-analysis also does not alter them in the interim. They also comprise thoughtful data because informants take time compiling them (Creswell, 1994). Atkinson and Coffey emphasise the use of this type of data in researching organisations.

Textual communicative practices are a vital way in which organisations constitute 'reality' and other forms of knowledge appropriate to it. They are 'social facts' in that they are produced, shared and used in a socially organised way. (Atkinson and Coffey, 1977:47)

Since documents contain such valuable knowledge, this study does not treat documents as surrogates of other kinds of data. They form a set of data that warrants analysis in its own right. Documents here are treated as social facts in the sense that meaning does not reside in the text but in the writing and reading of the text (Derrida, 1978). As such, recognition is made of possible variations in meanings derived from reading the documents in different historical or social contexts because "there is no original or true meaning of a text outside specific historical contexts" (Hodder, 1994: 394).

In this study, documentary data were obtained by reading from sampled MBC files, which were made available by the programmes and finance departments. Most data collection involved taking brief notes from documents. In instances where a record of an incident was described in detail, notes were made copiously in order to retain context for analysis purposes. Only in very few cases, such as programme schedules and statements of accounts, were photocopies of documents or carbon copies obtained.

The same principles of sampling used in the determining interviewees were applied in the collection of documentary data. The most important considerations were

that records must be reliable and information-rich to help answer the research question. Adjustments had to be made during fieldwork, whenever expected records could not be supplied by MBC. Three sets of records spanning 1995 to 1998 were collected namely: all MBC reports and accounts for 1994/5 to 1997/98, all files for alteration to schedule, and all available programme schedules for Radio-One and Radio-Two. While initially the study decided to analyse minutes of programmes committee meetings and any records of programming proposals during the study period (1995-98), emphasis had to change as these records could not be traced in a three month search. As such, Programme Schedules, which are normally issued once a year and Change-to-Programme Schedule Notices, were found to be the most information-rich documents available on programming change. However, the non-availability of minutes of programme committees deprived the study an opportunity to study actual motivations for programme changes as recorded by MBC staff. That notwithstanding, programme schedules and alteration to schedule records provided a reliable record from which trends on programming decisions were deduced. The research also envisaged a study of correspondence between MBC and its business clients but found that apart from drawn contract correspondence, communication was oral. The other, documentation, utilised MBC Report and Accounts and Quarterly Management Reports to the Office of President and Cabinet. These sources were tapped to help describe MBC financial situation. Specific costs of every programme production were not available to enable analysis of funding preference for different programme types.

#### **4.6.3. Interviewing**

Another corpus of data was collected through oral face-to-face interviews. Semi-structured interviews were used. Kvale defines a semi-structured interview as one "whose purpose it is to obtain descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena" (Kvale, 1996: 9). Such an interview is a 'middle of the road' approach between structured interviews, in which questions are set prior to an interview based on a pre-conceived framework or definition of problem, and unstructured interviews, in which the interviewer converses with a respondent who determines the structure and definition of problem (Cantrell, 1993). As a



researcher using a semi-structured interview technique I had a sequence of themes to be covered as well as suggested questions as shown in Appendix I. These were informed by a literature survey, which revealed possible effects of commercialisation. Some of the themes as discussed in section 3.1.4 included: commercialisation impacts on programme content, commercialisation leads to reduction of programme diversity and commercialisation leads to discrimination on grounds of economic status. In such interviews, a researcher, however, has freedom to change the sequence or form of the questions when probing or following up on answers (Kvale, 1996). Apart from this flexibility of semi-structured interviews, other considerations were made in the selection of this data collection technique.

Semi-structured interviews fitted this study because of an acknowledgement that meaning is socially constructed. In this study both the researcher and the interviewee shaped the outcome of an interview event. Although as an interviewer, I had a set of questions based on set themes, the interviewee was at liberty to reconstruct experiences and views within the set frame. Having previously worked with the respondents, they were at ease although at times they assumed I already knew some of their experiences. This sometimes required different levels of probing. Holstein and Gubrium summarise this value when they argue in favour of viewing an interview situation as a social encounter for constituting meaning.

Treating interviewing as a social encounter in which meaning is constructed suggests a possibility that the interview is not merely a neutral conduit or source of distortion, but is instead a site-of, and occasion for producing reportable knowledge itself. (Holstein and Gubrium, 1977:114)

It is the belief in this study that interviewees and the researcher are deeply involved in creating meaning in the sense that respondents are not just repositories of knowledge to be mined by the researcher. Rather, interview data are unavoidably collaborative because they are generated through active intercourse during an interview encounter. As such, in this study, semi-structured interviews were utilised because they combine the merits of both unstructured and structured interviews by balancing the powers of the interviewer and interviewee in a data collection process. Structured interviews give total power to the

researcher to determine interview outcomes by exploiting interviewees and unstructured interviews give total power to the interviewee to determine the content and course of what is to be researched. This is to agree with Kvale (1996) when he points out that an interview is an inter-view. It is also to acknowledge as Briggs does that

social circumstances of interviews are more than obstacles to respondents' articulation of their particular truths. Like all other speech events, interviews fundamentally, not incidentally, shape the form and content of what is said. (Briggs, 1986:144).

As such a balance of power between the interviewee and interviewer brought optimal results from an interview encounter. What is being argued for here is not symmetry of power between interviewee and interviewer as would be expected in a conversation between equals because in a semi-structured interview I defined the situation, introduced topics of conversation and steered the course of the interview. Rather, emphasis is placed on openness by both the interviewer and interviewee to each other's interest, as well as avoidance of interviewer dominance and respondent's acquiescence in the encounter.

Related to this consideration, is the interest of this study to get the lived experiences of programme producers. Semi-structured interviews enable interviewees to relate their experiences, perceptions and understanding of their lived world in their own words. They enable the researcher to view the world from the eyes of the interviewee. It is one of the aspirations of this research to view the results of commercialisation on programming from the perspective of programme producers themselves. The study also looks at documentation.

#### **4.6.4. The interview procedure**

Interviews were conducted in a period of 30 days, from 29th December 1998 to 28th January 1999. In accordance with research protocol in Malawi, permission was sought from the director general of MBC. The purposes of the study and data collection requirements were explained. MBC management informed participants in the study about the research.

Seidman (1991) advocates a three-stage interview procedure which this research took up. Individual contacts were made with each participant during which the purpose of

research, field of interests and use of data collected (as purely for academic purposes) were explained. This served to give respondents a general picture of the areas of research interest and set them thinking about it. This helped in the recall process and organisation of thought as well as established the necessary rapport for the actual interview. They were encouraged to ask questions for clarification. Each was asked whether they were interested to participate in the interview and a date for the interview was set with each participant. They all agreed but most asked for anonymity in the reporting of the results because less than a month prior to the interviews 13 employees were dismissed for taking part in a strike in which they were demanding improvement in working conditions.

They were assured of anonymity in the reporting of the study in accordance with research ethics, which espouse the need to safeguard research subjects from suffering harm or embarrassment as a consequence of research (Punch, 1994; Seidman, 1991). Punch also emphasises the need for informed consent in which the subjects of research understand that they are being researched, the nature of research and their right to withdraw from the research project at any time. This study undertook to get participants' consent as of primary importance to comply with this research ethic.

Prior to the interviews, pilot interviews were conducted with two principal producers in order to evaluate the effect of the interview schedule. Afterwards the schedule was revised for questioning sequence, questioning style, clarity of questions and language precision level. The revised interview schedule was tested in interviews with the director general of MBC and the principal-marketing officer.

Interviews were conducted separately and privately with each participant in their workplace, MBC offices. Each interview session began with a brief reminder of the purpose of the study and what the findings would be used for. Each interviewee was also asked for consent to have the interview recorded on tape and then reassured of the researcher's pledge to anonymity in reporting the study. Interviewees were encouraged to relate their experiences, perceptions and views freely and told these that were paramount in the investigation. This served to build rapport as advocated by Kvale (1996) because most participants realised that they were an important component in the research process. Each interview lasted about 45 minutes, about half of the period recommended by Seidman (1991) who says such interviews should last at least 90 minutes. For purposes of

this study, since most of the participants were experienced communicators adequate information was obtained in this period.

However, it must be noted that there were variations in the individual duration of interviews because some respondents were so detailed in their responses that little if any probing was required, while others required follow-up questions and time to clarify their points. As observed above, each interview process ended up being determined by the respondent's and researcher's interaction. However, these variations were relatively constricted because the interview questions were structured around the same predetermined themes about commercialisation.

The interviews were transcribed verbatim and a third meeting was set with each participant during which they were asked about their general perception of the issues raised in the interview. This served to confirm what they had said in the recorded interview and increased reliability of the data as reflecting their perceptions and experiences.

#### **4.7. Data Analysis techniques**

As is characteristic of most qualitative research, the line between data collection and analysis is very thin. While data was being collected, a general picture and some themes had already started to emerge giving credence to the assertion that data collection and analysis can be conducted simultaneously in qualitative research (Creswell, 1994; Lincoln and Guba, 1998). However, more systematic data analysis followed an inductive processing technique in which data was reduced and interpreted using meaning condensation techniques. Kvale (1996) outlines how the technique works and it is this analysis technique which was used in this study. It is called meaning condensation by Kvale (1996), reduction by Creswell (1994) and unitising by Lincoln and Guba (1988).

##### **4.7.1. Meaning Condensation**

According to Kvale, meaning condensation is

a technique of analysing interview data by abridging the meaning expressed by an interviewee into shorter more succinct formulations. (Kvale, 1996: 196)

Meaning condensation is applied to this study by following five steps stipulated by

Kvale:

- First, the whole interview text was read through to get the general sense of the whole.
- Second, natural meaning units as expressed by the interviewees were determined by the researcher.
- Third, the themes emerging from a natural meaning units were stated in simple terms while bearing in mind that the aim was to reflect the interviewees' viewpoint.
- Fourth was interrogating the meaning natural units in terms of the specific purpose of this study.
- Fifth, essential, non-redundant themes of the entire interview are tied together into a descriptive statement (Kvale, 1996: 197).

The unit of analysis here is the natural meaning unit (NMU). An NMU according to Stones is:

A statement made by an interviewee which is self-definable and self-delimiting in the expression of a single, recognisable aspect of the [interviewee's] experience (Stones, 1988:194).

As an aid to systematic analysis, interview data was broken down into NUM's and coded as X1, Y1, P1, Q1, R1, S1, T1 and extending in number according to research participants. The letter stands for a particular respondent and the number marks a particular theme. Themes emerging from each participant were described with reference to these codes. They appear as Appendix II at the end of this report.

These descriptive statements were then interpreted according to emerging themes. Interview data was formulated into a condensed form of what the subjects themselves understand to be the meanings of their work in the current economic situation. This involved an interpretation of their self-understanding of the experiences and meaning about the role of commercial activities in programming at MBC. Attempts are also made to bring in a critical common-sense understanding. It involves being critical of what was said by focusing on the content of statements and measuring it against general knowledge

of production in public service broadcasting. Finally, results from this data analysis are matched against a theoretical framework (adaptation of McManus' market theory of news production) in order to gain theoretical understanding of what the role and extent of commercial logic are on MBC programming.

#### **4.7.2. Analysis of Documentary Data:**

On the other hand, data from documentary sources was treated differently from interview data. The analysis involved calculations and determination of trends or patterns based on frequencies and programme characteristics. As noted in section 4.1, categorisation of programmes is problematic because there are no steadfast rules for classification. Berger (1999) also notes the difficulty of defining communication functions as they relate to journalism. Brants (1998) observes in a survey of programming changes in Europe that operationalisation of programme categories varies from country to country and study to study. In this study, programme categorisation was based on three criteria. The function the programme is expected to perform in terms of education, entertainment or information. The second was target audience, with special attention paid to economically low status groups. The third criterion was subject of a programme such as agriculture, health and civic education.

Inferences were then made about the logic behind the identified patterns or trends in programming decisions. For financial data, calculations centred on comparisons and contrasts of funding levels between public funds and commercial revenue to determine the financial situation in which MBC operated during the study period.

#### **4.8. Generalisation of study**

Qualitative research has often been criticised for lack of generalisability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Kvale, 1996; Barker, 1990; Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; Janesick, 1994). Maxwell defines generalisability as:

The extent one can extend the account of a particular situation to other persons, times or settings than those directly studied.  
(Maxwell, 1992: 89).

While it is beyond the scope of this study to fully discuss issues of generalisability as applied to qualitative social research, the notion is so important to this research that it

warrants some attention. In this study, a case study approach, using interviews and documentation as data collection techniques, is situated within the interpretative paradigm. The question is whether findings from this study can be transferred to other situations. Unlike some qualitative researchers who claim generalisation is a positivist legacy and dismissed its applicability to qualitative research, this study holds that it is possible to generalise in qualitative research.

The notion of generalisability should not be viewed in the same way as it is used in quantitative research to be an aspiration towards universal applicability. Yin (1984) contends that generalisability in qualitative research is based on the assumption that theory generated may be useful in making sense of similar situations rather than an explicit sampling process or drawing conclusions about a specialised population through statistical inference. As such, in qualitative research generalisation takes place through development of a theory that makes sense of a particular situation and at the same time admits that in a different situation the same process can lead to different results (Becher, 1990). On the other hand Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that the generalisability should be equated to the notion of relevance. As long as a study is relevant to a particular situation it can be generalised to that particular situation.

Yin (1984) argues that there is need to distinguish internal from external generalisability. Internal generalisability is applied within a studied community through a group not directly studied, while external generalisability is applied to other communities. He points out that in qualitative research, like this study, internal generalisability is more important than the external generalisability. Further evidence for the centrality of generalisability in qualitative research can be inferred from emphasis on generating research findings that reflect the participants' perspectives.

The avowal to see through the eyes of one's subjects can be interpreted to imply the need to attend to the question of typicality of the eyes through which he or she is seeing.  
(Bryman, 1996: 117)

In this study, sampling the information-rich respondents and documents was aimed towards this typicality or internal generalisation. In addition, to enhance the internal generalisation of the study, method triangulation as advanced by Denzin (1978)

was used. In this case, results from the two methods of data collection and analysis were compared and contrasted, wherever possible. Denzin purports that the use of multiple methods reduces the flaws of one method and builds on the strengths of the other. However, unlike other conceptions of triangulation presented as a technical solution to data collection and analysis problems, this study believes as Mathison (1988) does that triangulation can provide a rich and complex picture of some social phenomenon being studied. The complexity of social phenomenon can emerge from accepting three possible outcomes. First, data may show convergence to reinforce agreement. Second, there may also be inconsistency through a range of perspectives or data that does not confirm a single proposition. Third, data may also present a contradiction where data present opposing views of a social phenomenon (Mathison, 1988). In all these cases, results remain important. Thus, triangulation is used here to add perspective to the understanding of the role of commercial activities on MBC programming.

In addition, emphasis is placed on internal generalisability because as it has been postulated by Stake, people have a natural tendency to learn from cases.

Naturalistic generalisations develop within a person as a product of experience. They derive from the tacit knowledge of how things are. They seldom take the form of predictions but lead regularly to expectations, they guide action, in fact, they are inseparable from action (Stake, 1994: 282).

Although multiple interpretations are expected from readers of this study report, it is hoped that every reader, interpellated by this text, will find relevance spots and be capable of learning from the situation at MBC. Readers may learn from the context-specific knowledge generated in this report through what they find relevant about the role of commercialisation in programming in this study.

This study agrees with those who advocate that generalisation should be a feature of qualitative research in this reconstituted form. Janesick points out that the traditional view of generalisability is constricting to intellectual advance:

The traditional view of generalisability limits the ability of the researcher to re-conceptualise the role of social science in education and human services...the value of a case study



is its uniqueness. Consequently, reliability in the traditional sense of replicability is pointless. (Janesick, 1994:217)

Consequently, as argued succinctly by other advocates of qualitative research, generalisation in the sense of universal applicability is a myth. Lincoln and Guba (1985) summarise this myth by stating that the only generalisation possible is that there is no universally applicable generalisation in social research findings. If generalisability in quantitative research is limited, it is arguable that the limit can be anywhere as long as it is relevant.

On the other hand, in addition to internal generalisability, this study also tests external generalisability of an adaptation of market theory of news production to state broadcasting in Malawi.

#### **4.9. Conclusion**

It has been argued in this chapter that using a case study method under the interpretative research tradition and document analysis can help towards an understanding of the role of commercialisation on programming at MBC. In addition to obtaining understanding and context-specific knowledge about prevailing programming decision at MBC under changed financial circumstances, the case study method also offers insights into possible areas of improvement of the institution. Thus, internal generalisation is possible due to purposeful sampling, which settled for information-rich sources, as well as rigorous data analysis techniques. These techniques aim for participants' perspectives to prevail which were then assessed for deeper logics. With the merits of semi-structured interviews complemented by documentation, this study brings to the fore the underlying operational logics in MBC programming decisions. While internal generalisation is at the centre of this study, external generalisability is also applied to John McManus' market theory of news production by testing it against the situation at MBC, which differs significantly from the situation in the United States where the theory was mooted.

**CHAPTER FIVE**  
**COMMERCIALISATION AT MBC**

**5.0. Introduction**

In this chapter an attempt is made to relate how MBC is commercialising based on available records at MBC. This is done by giving a synopsis of the funding system and briefly describing its financial situation from 1995 to 1998. Then, trends in programming as evident in programme schedules and circulars during the entire study period are outlined. Changes in Radio-One and Radio-Two are described separately for clarity of analysis since they have different characteristics and histories.

**5.1. MBC Financing**

MBC is a subsidised parastatal. It receives money as appropriated by Parliament through the Ministry of Finance. Under section 15 of the MBC Act of 1991, MBC is permitted to receive private donations as well as generate funds from commercial advertising, fees, charges and sale of any property. In addition, MBC may borrow money for its operations subject to approval by the Minister of Finance. This means the Minister can veto the right of MBC to borrow money or any transactions involving financial loans. While government subvention and commercial advertising fund recurrent expenditure, government and other donors wholly fund capital expenditure. MBC also has a financial duty of ensuring that the organisation is on a sound and self-sustaining financial base. The change of government in 1994 brought in change in the country's economic policies. The new government embraced principles of a liberalised economy. These included commercialisation and full privatisation of some statutory corporations. This included rationalisation of operations to make them cost-effective and financially self-sustaining. From 1995, MBC underwent structural changes to meet this goal. These changes included merging presentation and production departments and redeployment of personnel. In addition, implementation of the establishment of a commercial radio channel, Radio-Two, got underway. According to MBC Director General, Sam Gunde, the spirit behind Radio-Two and the current MBC management philosophy is " in the long run to have MBC contribute two-thirds to the recurrent budget and eventually do away with government funding in recurrent expenditure". Although Gunde says it is

impossible to completely divest from government funding, MBC has been aspiring to increase its own revenue generation capacity to reduce dependence on public funding.

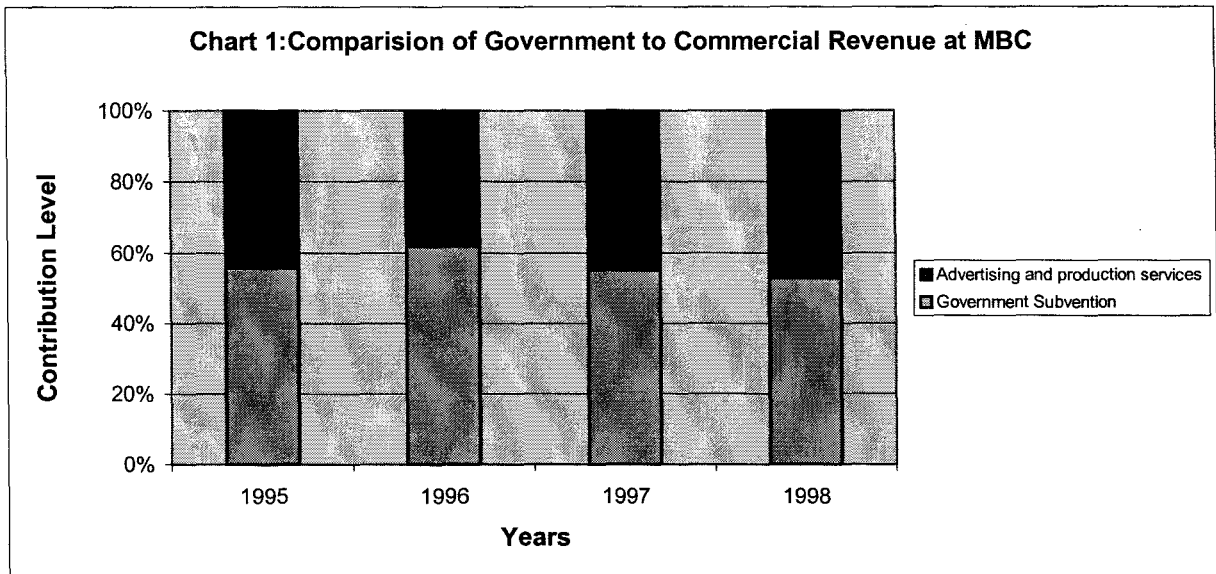
Data from MBC Reports and Accounts from 1995 to 1998 (Appendix III) strongly indicate an increase in commercial activities at MBC. Revenue from advertising and production services increased by 65 % between 1995 and 1996, a further 53% in the next year and 80% between 1997 and 1998. This represents an average growth of 66 % within four years. While part of the increase in the amount of revenue collected might be attributed to upwards adjustments in advertisement rates in October 1995 and April 1997, better debt collection and the introduction of Radio-Two in July 1997, the rate of growth still strongly suggests an intensity in commercial activities at MBC. Further evidence can be deduced from the increasing number of commercial contracts between MBC and various firms. The number of contracts increased from 280 in 1995/96 to 315 in 1996/97, representing an increase of 12%. Even billings in these years increased by an annual average of 62 % as demonstrated by the following tabulation.

**Table Two: Quarterly 1996/97 and 1995/96 Billings**

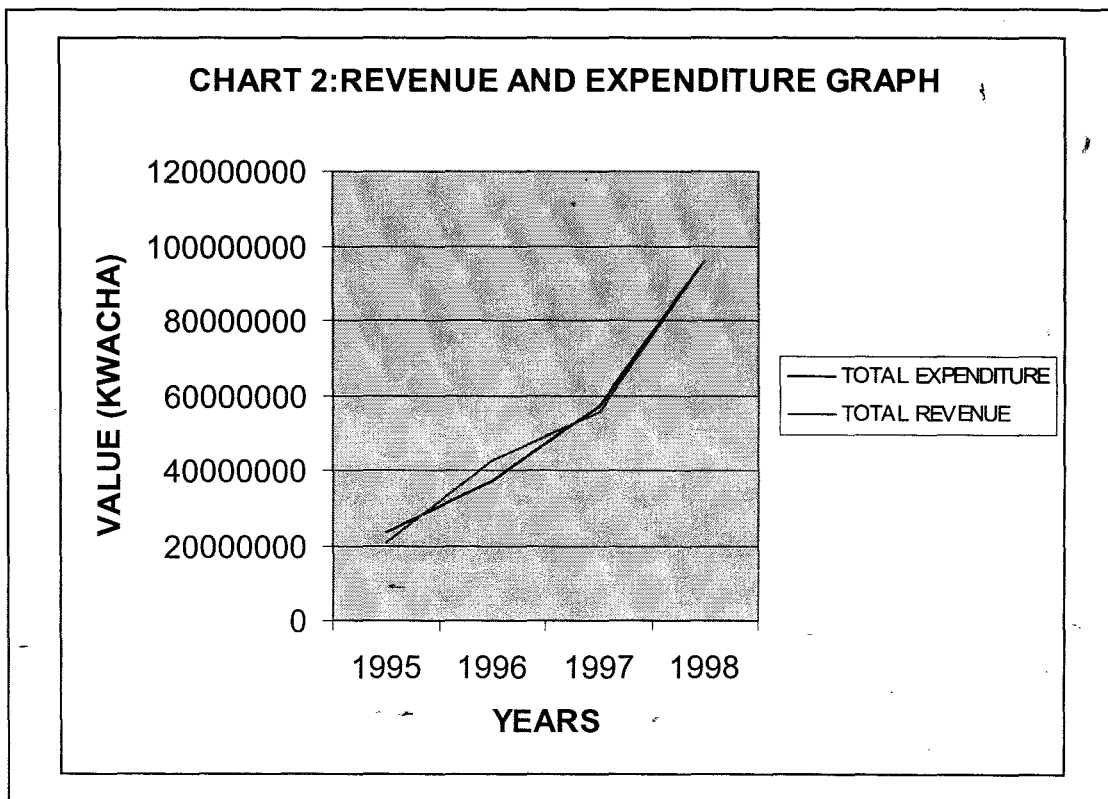
Quarter	1996/97	1995/96	Percentage Change
1st	K5,173,739	K3,029,418	70
2nd	K6,311,599	K4,343,107	45
3rd	K7,573,727	K3,534,557	114
4th	K6,00,097	K4,605,994	30

Source: MBC, 1997.

A comparison of the contribution of public funds and commercial revenue for recurrent expenditure clearly shows a steady increase in self-generated finances as shown in chart 1. Although on average Government contribution to MBC has remained above 50%, the general trend is gradual increase in the proportion of revenue MBC generates towards meeting recurrent expenditure. Although in 1996 MBC met only 36 percent of its recurrent expenditure, the general trend has been a rise in the ratio. In 1995 it contributed 44%, in 1997 the figure rose by one percentage point and in 1998 this stood at 47 % shown in Chart 1.



The necessity to generate huge amounts of revenue from commercial advertising is also evident in the financial conditions within which MBC operated during the said period. Although government subvention to MBC has been on the increase, operational costs have also gone up such that gains in volumes of revenue generated by commercial activities were dwarfed as shown in chart 2.



Whereas government subvention doubled between 1995 and 1996, it increased by only 15% the subsequent year and after the introduction of a new channel, it rose by 64%. In the 1996/97 financial year, MBC had a deficit of K1, 303,162 being 0.3% of total expenditure. The increasing levels of financial hardship relating to recurrent expenditure are vividly reflected in the growth of money due to commercial banks as interest on overdrafts in recurrent expenditure. There is an increase of 61 % from 1996 to 1997 in overdrafts. This then rose from K157, 633 in the 1996/97 financial year to about K1.6 Million in the 1997/98 fiscal year. As reflected in the 1996/97 Draft Estimates, MBC has been forced into commercial borrowing to keep afloat.

Funds provided by government in the present financial year are far from adequate and the Corporation for the first time after a long spell has resorted into unavoidable overdrafts which are costly. Interest rates are very high and therefore overdraft servicing is an expensive undertaking (MBC, 1996).

During the period under study, MBC has had to generate additional revenue through commercial advertising also because of the introduction of a cash-budget system of remitting subsidies. Money is released from Government Treasury depending on how much revenue is available to government. The system affected MBC operations.

The 1996/97 draft estimates are being presented when the financial position of the Corporation continues to deteriorate due to many factors. Paramount of these is the cash budget which calls for monthly government subvention, which, in broadcasting situation, brings more problems in financial management due to the fact that technical equipment (always bought or procured from abroad) cannot be paid for at monthly intervals. (MBC, 1996)

From the foregoing it is apparent that MBC has been commercialising in an attempt to remain operational. Such is also inferred from the difficult financial situation that forced MBC to borrow from commercial banks and intensify business activities. At the same time, MBC management has embarked on commercial operations backed by a commercial channel, Radio-Two. The general motive behind this is gradual reduction of financial dependency on government subvention in recurrent expenditure.

## **5.2. Trends in Changes to Programming**

Ideally, for any programme to get introduced and transmitted, there ought to be some prior planning and debates about whether it should be made, for what reasons and how it should be made. In addition, decisions ought to be made about serialisation of production through the development of a fixed schedule. Programme planning in this case becomes important because it normalises output and gives a radio station character. At MBC, programme changes mostly occur in three instances. The first instance is during national events, known at MBC as special events. These include presidential functions, commemorative events of both national and international acclaim and any event deemed necessary for special coverage. Second are routine changes in the broadcast schedule following periodic assessment by MBC personnel on programming. Third is when clients, both from the private and public sectors, request broadcast airtime and pay for it.

### **5.2.1.0. Radio-One**

It is noted that there are many factors that influence decisions about programme schedule changes. Because of the competing demands, priority trends became established as decisions are made over time. Since Radio-One pre-existed Radio-Two, change trends are more pronounced on Radio-One.

#### **5.2.1.1. Prominence of Politics in Special Events Programming**

MBC Change-to- Schedule- Files indicate a very high volume and frequency of alterations to fixed schedule resulting from presidential functions coverage and commemorative programming especially to mark international and national days. In 1995, about 50 percent of the recorded alterations to schedule involved commemorations and presidential functions. This shifted to 66 percent in 1996 and 70 percent in 1997. In these years, while commemorative events almost remained the same, there was a 25% increase in presidential engagements which MBC covered between 1995 and 1996. Presidential functions covered by MBC doubled the 1995 frequency in 1997 and almost tripled in 1998. During this period, the frequency of live sports coverage decreased by a third. All live sporting events rely on sponsorship to be broadcast.

Some commemorative events involved special programme productions for an entire day while in other cases one or a number of commemorative programmes are

slotted into a day's fixed schedule. Most of such programmes have been phone-ins, panel discussions and occasionally documentaries. Apart from commemorations of national events, most international commemorative events accord MBC an opportunity to generate funds as co-ordinators of such events usually buy airtime for special programmes. One example is the International Day of Children Broadcasting, when in 1997 UNICEF bought almost the entire day's broadcast time for children to broadcast their own programmes and a major soccer competition in the country was not covered live although sponsorship of the game was available.

As regards presidential functions, any public engagement involving the president of the country is broadcast live beginning with the President's arrival and sustained through until his departure. The entire event is also re-broadcast in the evening of the same day after the 8 o'clock news bulletin. The effect to a fixed schedule of the day is that all programmes scheduled are either cancelled or rescheduled for broadcast at other times of the day. Most of the rescheduled programmes are sponsored programmes. Non-sponsored programmes are usually cancelled. The importance attached to sponsored programmes is exemplified when MBC failed to broadcast *Sports Special* and *Nkhani Zamasewero* on Saturdays and Sundays due to presidential functions being re-broadcast in the evening. The Acting Head of Production circulated a memorandum to correct the situation. " I feel this is most unfortunate because these two programmes are sponsored, and failing to air them is a loss to our much needed revenue. In this respect, please inform the producers of these programmes that whenever we have other broadcasts, in future, on Saturday and Sunday which will go into these programmes, then the programmes will be rescheduled as follows: Saturday will be broadcast at 19:30 Hrs taking the *Newsroom Malawi* slot and on Sunday at 18:30 hrs in place of *Pabwalo*" (MBC, 1995). The two programmes, *Pabwalo* and *Newsroom Malawi* were not sponsored. Thus sports news received preference over a weekly news round up production, *Newsroom Malawi*. Although sponsored programmes receive preference over non-sponsored ones when alterations to schedule are being made, live presidential functions have an overriding privilege to be broadcast over and above any sponsored programmes (or programmes in which advertisements can be aired). For example on 14<sup>th</sup> February 1997, Lever Brothers Limited had sponsored a programme, *Valentine Special*, slated to start at 20:10 Hrs,

which is usually time for presidential events re-broadcast. A circular about the programme stated: "In view of the current visit of President Chiluba of Zambia, we might have to reschedule the programme to accommodate presidential speeches".

Other special events MBC covers include daily programmes on parliamentary sessions and political debates by contending candidates in parliamentary by-elections. While the latter get some financial injection through the Journalists Association of Malawi, the former are covered using MBC's own revenue and lasts for the entire sitting of parliament. When programmes covering parliament are running, there were changes to the fixed schedule. Since these programmes are broadcast during evening prime time, all sponsored programmes between 19Hrs and 21Hrs are rescheduled for broadcast earlier that evening. Non-sponsored programmes, especially between 17Hrs and 18Hrs are either taken off air for the entire duration or slotted into ordinary air time which begins about 21Hrs. This has an effect on revenue generated from advertising as the slots for programmes that would carry adverts are taken up by rescheduled sponsored programmes. Revenue from prime time fixed-time adverts, which have a 5% mark up over ordinary time adverts, is consequently lost.

Another significant trend is the increase in the number of press conferences aired by MBC. While some press conferences were part of commemorative events, an increase of 43 percent in the frequency of press conferences broadcast between 1995 and 1998 was largely due to a rise in demand for airtime to explain change in policy and vision for the country following change of government in 1994. Every press conference requested by clients has to be paid for. Almost all press conferences are aired during evening prime time, from 20:10Hrs. The tendency has been that when press conferences are requested during seating of parliament, the conference is broadcast immediately after parliamentary reports. In this case parliamentary proceedings take precedence over paid for press conferences when scheduling within prime time.

#### **5.2.1.2. Short Entertainment Programmes for Commercial Sector**

Apart from special events programming, other alterations to schedule are usually fixed. These include MBC taking off air some programmes and introducing new ones or other parties requesting MBC to start a new programme with their support. Such parties



can broadly be categorised as government, private sector (both business and non-governmental organisations) and international agencies. From a list of new programmes introduced on Radio-One from 1995 to 1998 (Appendix IV), most programmes originated from parties outside MBC. MBC originated 31% of the new programmes introduced on the network. Of the programmes initiated by MBC personnel, 47% were talk programmes and 35% were musicals. Four programmes can be said to promote culture: *Kalondolondo* (tracing places and issues of historical importance in Malawi), *Aluso Ena* (Portrait of little known artists), *Kaimbani Amalawi* (contemporary local music supported by guitars) and *Mlakatuli* (poetry recitals in Chichewa). Two of these programmes found sponsors during the study period. There were also two discussion programmes on topical issues one in English and the other in Chichewa, namely, *Talk of the Nation* and *Tiyankuleni*. One programme, *Tili Pantchito*, deals with labour issues. Unlike programmes introduced under sponsorship, most programmes initiated within MBC are long, usually at least a quarter of an hour duration. Worth pointing out is the absence of new programmes specifically targeted at children and women on MBC Radio-One. Only one programme dealing with child welfare was introduced. Others dealt with family planning *per se*.

The public sector also introduced programmes with a longer duration mode than those initiated by the private sector. Most programmes were 15 minutes long and they were contracted to run for a period of 13 weeks to a year. Government and its agencies contributed about 25 % of the number of new programmes between 1995 and 1998. While this percentage is high, note must be made that when MBC demanded that government ministries and departments pay all debts and pre-pay for any programmes they intend to have on MBC, the duration of some agriculture programmes was reduced and in 1998 schools programme broadcasting was closed. This meant a loss of more than 12 hours a week of educational broadcasting for the farming community, the youth and teachers, and farming community also lost service.

In general, programmes initiated by the public sector focus on social mobilisation for development through provision of information on environmental management and investment opportunities. A landmark directive by government was the introduction of other Malawian languages on the network. While Chitumbuka was re-introduced in June

1994, government in 1996 directed the introduction of news bulletins in three other languages namely Yao, Lomwe and Sena. In 1997, Tonga was also introduced. These are five-minute bulletins. The introduction of other languages other than the national language, Chichewa, can be viewed as contributing to the preservation of the country's cultural diversity.

However, the highest percentage of programmes is initiated by the private sector. Of the new programmes, 33% are a direct request from the business and non-governmental sectors. These take up 39 % of the airtime allocated to new programmes. Those initiated by government make up 19% of the airtime and programmes initiated by MBC personnel comprise 41 %. However, these programmes are relatively of short duration, usually 5 to 10 minutes, and had the shortest contract span, about four programmes only. This explains why the time-weighted percentages of programmes show a lower volume compared to those initiated by MBC personnel. The business community and indigenous non-governmental organisations usually initiate programmes whose primary interest has been to promote a set of products or commercial services through programme content. Dramatisation of promotional material is the form of most of such programmes. Examples are *Universal's Choice*, *MUSCO Comedy*, and *Candlex Comedy Corner*. Non-governmental organisations on the other hand have introduced advocacy programmes furthering the cause they stand for such as consumer rights, family planning and knowledge for development.

International agencies have also been behind some programmes introduced on MBC. These are usually long programmes ranging from 10 to 30 minutes. The area of interest has mainly been in reproductive health, AIDS prevention and sex education for the youth. Some organisations such as UNICEF have introduced programme production with the involvement of target groups in programme production. For example *Straight Talk* is a sex education programme for youth produced and presented by the youth themselves.

#### **5.2.1.3. Sponsored Programmes Replace Non-sponsored Programmes**

When these new programmes are introduced on the network, some old programmes are either taken off air or altered in terms of scheduling or duration.

Commercial factors play a crucial role in programming decisions. The general pattern has been for live non-sponsored programmes especially those broadcast during prime time to be taken off air or altered. Programmes initiated by parties outside MBC usually lead to existing non-sponsored programmes being truncated in duration or rested. For example, when *Zam'banja*, *Maganizo a Omvera* and *Mayi ndi Mai Mzake* were phased out of the network in 1997, MBC management reported that the move was to cut down on expenses and avoid programme content duplication. Examples are abundant on the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation programme Schedule Revised-1<sup>st</sup> January 1996 (See Appendix VI). The first consideration in programme revision is to identify sponsored and non-sponsored programmes. This is evident in the notations *yes* for sponsored programmes and *no* for non-sponsored programmes in the appended document. For example, on Monday the *Morning Basket* was reduced by 5 minutes to accommodate a sponsored programme by MASAF and *Listeners' Views* (listeners' feedback programme) was taken off air to make way for *Candlex Comedy Corner* (commercial products promotion) and *You and the Environment* (environmental awareness programme sponsored by Ministry of Research and Environmental Affairs). On Tuesday evening, *Kwanu Nkwanu* (request and news reports for Malawians in foreign countries) was reduced by 10 minutes to accommodate *Candlex Comedy Corner* and the *Moneymen Corner* (a programme detailing what the National Bank of Malawi does). No evidence was found of any sponsored programme being taken off air because of a new non-sponsored programme. Only in cases where the sponsorship contract period elapsed (for programmes initiated by sponsors) are non-sponsored programmes introduced to fill up the sponsored programmes slot. An example is the introduction of *Titsitsimuke* (a religious musical programme) when the Ministry of Agriculture reduced the frequency of their programmes from three to two a week. Personality shows when schools are in session have replaced broadcasting to schools because the Ministry of Education failed to pay over K1.3 Million debt to MBC for previous programmes aired and also because of the subsequent dissolution of the ministry's distance education system.

#### 5.2.1.4. More Campaign and Entertainment Programming

The Malawi Broadcasting Corporation weekly programme schedule for 1995 shows that MBC entertainment programming comprises 48% of the air time while the other two functions, education and information, cover 32 % and 20 % respectively. When new programmes are categorised according to the three functions, 30 % are entertainment, 11 % are educative and 59 % are informative programmes, mainly of a campaign nature and aimed at social mobilisation. The educative programmes are not education programmes because they are not based on any formal education curricula as was the case with the schools broadcasting which have been taken off air. Most airtime for new programmes is devoted to information programmes. In this category of programmes, infotainment is conspicuously on the increase. This is where information programmes are fused with entertainment elements or commercial elements are presented as information matter.

In other words, new forms of commercials are on the increase on Radio-One. Infomercials, which are typically a long form of, or programme-length, advertisement which may be as long as 30-minutes, are on the increase. Out of the total broadcast space for new programmes, between 1995 and 1998, 14 % are infomercials in the form of sitcoms. Examples include *Universal's Choice* and *Lever's Golden Show*. In most cases, these are slotted within peak listening hours and they lead to truncation of non-sponsored programmes even when the latter carry more information. For instance, Appendix VI shows that on Wednesday, *Financial Review* had to give way to *Candlex Comedy Corner* at 18:10 Hrs.

In addition, documericals are also getting popular. These are typically non-commercial content programmes that are produced to create a demand for a commercial product or service. For example, *Knowledge for Development* and *Frontline Training Associates* purported to inform about values of particular research and expertise but were covertly advancing the need for the public to patronise their consultancy services. Thus, there is a blurring line between programming for commercial interest and typical programming for public interest. These programme length commercials are designed primarily to promote sale of a sponsor's service or product rather than service the public by informing, educating or entertaining.

### **5.2.2.0 Radio-Two**

Radio-Two was established on 17<sup>th</sup> July 1997 to relieve congestion of programmes on Radio-One and to run on an almost wholly commercial basis. Its programme format is different from Radio-One in that programmes on Radio-Two are music intensive. Music consists of 85% of the output and the rest is short talk programme. In addition, most programmes are presented live, unlike Radio-One which predominantly broadcasts pre-recorded programmes. Live programmes are flexible for placement of advertisements and easy to alter to accommodate any sponsored programme slots. Radio-Two has computerised workstations which facilitate accounting of commercial spots aired, unlike the analogue system for Radio-One.

#### **5.2.2.1. High Programme Turnover**

Radio-Two has a high turnover of programme changes to fixed schedule, although it does not carry live presidential engagement broadcasts or re-broadcasts and parliamentary coverage. Between its inauguration in July 1997 and August 1998 three major changes had been made to the schedule. New programmes were introduced and some old programmes rescheduled, altered in duration or rested. Less than 15 programmes were taken off air during this period. However, over 50 programmes were introduced between 1997 and 1998. The general trend has been to reduce the lengths of some live musical shows to accommodate new programmes.

#### **5.2.2.2. Civic Rights Programming**

Changes in programmes have been within the set policy of 85 percent music and 15 percent short talk programmes. However, from the list of new programmes it is apparent that in terms of sheer numbers, there are more talk programmes being introduced than musical ones. About 84 percent of the new programmes were talk programmes. Among the new programmes, is a programme slot for the disabled who comprise 5% of the Malawi population. The 15-minute programme, *Disability Forum*, discusses issues about disability. There is also a 20-minute slot on human rights, *Your Rights*. These programmes are new to MBC history.

### **5.2.2.3. Commercial Content Programming**

On the other hand, the trend of introducing programmes with purely commercial content is more marked in the third and fourth revisions of Radio-Two Schedule, where programmes such as *Bwezi la Alimi*, *The Mobile Phone*, *Power's Show* and *Level Brothers Mphoto Zongomwaza* went on air. Although these comprise about 13% of the total number of programmes introduced, their appearance on the schedule is conspicuous because the same trend is noted about programmes on Radio-One. In fact, some of the programmes are either imported from or a replica of similar ones on Radio-One.

### **5.2.2.4. Format Programming**

One characteristic of Radio-Two programming is the seamless flow of music which means one does not have to be present at the beginning of a programme to follow its contents. Listeners can therefore easily join in or leave a channel at any point. These new programmes, however, are mainly in English. On the network 61% of programmes are in English and only 15% of the new programmes on Radio-Two are in the national language, Chichewa. No other local language is used on this channel.

### **5.2.2.5. Low Production Cost Programmes**

In terms of programme diversity, Radio-Two hardly broadcasts, feature, magazine or panel discussion programmes. Since most programmes are live, phone-ins are more popular. Current Affairs programmes include news flashes, human-interest news bulletins and press reviews. Women's programmes are rare on the network. Except for Women's Forum there is no other specific programme targeting women. Children have a *Kids News*, *Kids request*, *Kids Phone In* and *Tikule Bwanji*. There are more kids programmes on Radio-Two than on Radio-One in this case. The major difference between children's programmes on Radio-One and Radio-Two is that broadcast materials for children's programmes on Radio-One are collected by producers who visit different parts of the country, while on Radio-Two, letters and telephones are major ways of obtaining broadcast material as producers are based at the broadcast station.

### **5.3. Conclusion**

From the foregoing, it is evident that MBC is being pushed towards large-scale commercialisation because of pressures on government revenue and rising cost of broadcasting operations. For example, Radio-Two is from inception designated as a commercial channel characterised by mostly entertainment programming rather than informational and educational programming. However, even Radio-Two has a number of talk programmes aimed at civic education and more programmes for children than Radio-One. While some of these programmes are sponsored by their initiators, the commercial channel still broadcasts and supports some of these non-sponsored programmes. It has also been noted that programme turn-over is high and the commercial channel utilises the most inexpensive ways of collecting broadcast material since it is mostly dependent on live musical programmes. However, there is a general trend that programmes initiated by Government agencies and Non-governmental organisations are longer and richer in public information than programmes initiated and sponsored by commercial enterprises. Most commercial enterprises prefer sponsoring short entertainment programmes such as drama and musicals to talk or educational programmes. In terms of scheduling there is adequate evidence that non-sponsored programmes are most likely to be altered, rescheduled or phased out when sponsored programmes are introduced on both channels. In this case, some of the claims made about the role of commercialisation on programming appear to be supported while others are rejected. The next chapter looks at the role of commercial logic in programming from the perception of media workers.

**CHAPTER SIX**  
**PERCEPTIONS OF AND EXPERIENCES WITH COMMERCIAL ACTIVITIES**  
**IN MBC PROGRAMMING**

**6.0. Introduction**

This chapter is a description of the perceptions and experiences of middle managers on what they consider to be the role of commercial revenue in programming at MBC. It begins by looking at what they consider to be commercialisation and its implications for MBC output. Changes they believe commercialisation has brought to their general working environment are presented. Then an attempt is made to describe, from the interviewees' perspective, the influence of commercialisation on programme diversity, range, scheduling and content. Effort has been made to quote interviewees and some of the descriptions are referenced by a letter and number of natural meaning units (NMU). These NMUs are detailed in Appendix II.

**6.1. Perceptions of Commercialisation**

Generally, there is a negative attitude towards the present system of funding MBC among programme producers. There is a strong feeling that the financial situation of the Corporation is deteriorating and producers view the situation with desperation. There is an acceptance that commercialisation is an inevitable course to follow for MBC but they suggest a more systematic and elaborate approach to commercialisation.

To most producers, commercialisation entails financial autonomy from government through total dependence on commercial revenue (R21, P1, and X24). They accept that MBC is commercialising although government has not explicitly written any policy towards commercialisation of MBC. There is a general feeling that the mere fact that Government has encouraged MBC to find additional money to meet any government-funding shortfall is enough to indicate intent to commercialisation. This conception assumes complete divestiture from government which may not necessarily be the case because government still controls commercialisation financially. In view of provisions in the 1998 Communications Act, one producer believes MBC cannot be autonomous from government because the Act still puts MBC under the control of a cabinet minister and Head of State rather than parliament (X31). Another even contends



that MBC is not commercialising because all MBC is doing by generating commercial revenue is helping government run the station (X24). The producer here assumes that there is a contradiction between commercialisation and government control, which according to the definition of commercialisation is not necessarily so. There was consensus, however, that in the current financial situation, MBC had to intensify commercial activities to survive.

What emerges from these conceptions of commercialisation is that some producers think commercialisation is inherently contradictory to government control. The belief that commercialisation entails financial autonomy from government and the assertion on the other hand that since the MBC Act puts MBC under the control of a cabinet minister, is a bigger issue than the general conception of commercialisation. Certainly, an absence of government funding does not necessarily mean an absence of control over commercialisation even if imperatives of commercialisation may reduce or temper the range of such control. Perhaps, producers' belief, that commercialisation entails financial autonomy from government, is an indication of their wish to be more autonomous from government control in programming.

Producers also point out that there is lack of proper direction in the current commercialisation of MBC. They espouse the view that for MBC to systematically commercialise, it has to start charging commercial rates for its airtime and production service (T10), be on sound financial footing rather than debt-ridden as is the case now (P1), and ensure that only effective cost-cutting measures are introduced (S1). Among the cost-cutting measures is the retrenchment of some members of staff (R22). This would call for specialisation among MBC employees especially producers (T20). One producer believes that even the mindset of MBC personnel has to be orientated towards a spirit of self-sustenance from having been passive recipients of money. "If I were chief executive of this place, I would say to hell with any money from government because I believe we can make more money than we need. MBC has no competitor in Malawi and the culture that government will give us money is spoiling us. We have a dependency syndrome" (T18). These perceived conditions for a successful commercialisation include suggestions for a clear government policy on commercialisation, which is still lacking to date. It is

also suggested to clearly separate MBC Radio-One from Radio-Two as public and commercial broadcasting channels (R23).

As regards opportunities commercialisation would offer, autonomy from government control is prime. There is also optimism that a systematic and elaborate approach to commercialisation would bring a lot of money to MBC (S10), not just for self-sustenance but also to enable expansion of services such as the introduction of new programmes (Z22).

Threats posed by commercialisation include the insecurity of dependence on Malawi's narrow revenue base. While it is noted that MBC has no competitor at national level, competition is setting in especially in urban centres where private radio stations are being established. This is cause for caution raised by some producers. One producer believes there is no hope for a purely market-driven public service broadcaster. "The market is too narrow with the coming in of other radio stations, everybody is scrambling for the same market. MBC will survive [only] because of government subvention." (X25) As such, she believes a step-by-step strategy to commercialisation would help MBC rather than wholesale or ad hoc commercialisation. She is of the opinion, however, that competition will lead to a better service for the listeners. "In terms of output, I think there will be a big battle, because you need to have good producers who are creative. Whoever gets good producers will have a good advertising market. This will not lead towards entertainment, because it is easy to reach the top but it's difficult to stay there. Whoever goes for cheap things will not last" (X26, X27).

In addition to a threat posed by a narrow revenue base, MBC autonomy for its own sake was also singled out as a potential danger of commercialisation. Fear is expressed that if MBC is fully commercialised, it would become too independent and treat listeners primarily as products to sell to sponsors and advertisers. "Commercialisation is a threat to service the public because we are serving the commercial interest of people with money. Public broadcasting is about a common man in rural areas and he is not targeted in these commercially sponsored programmes because he does not have the money" (R24).

Nonetheless, for most, full commercialisation of MBC is viable without compromising its public service mandate. While they think the current mandate to

educate, inform and entertain is adequate, most producers point out that MBC could do better in fulfilling this mandate. They accept that MBC should broadcast a diversity of programmes that involve all sections of society (X13, P7, and Y33). One producer adds that MBC should be an integral part of the Malawi society. "MBC mission is to save the masses, educate them, inform them and give them entertainment. To some extent take them on board because they own the organisation by virtue of it being a public utility" (P7).

However, in the current set-up, there is a feeling that MBC programming is slanting towards pleasing advertisers and sponsors, including government departments, rather than being listener-centred (R1, R19, R24, X30, Y14, Y19, Z7, Z18, T13, V4, Q3, Q7). Some producers think the voice of the common-person is not being heard enough on radio because of political rather than business interests. They think there is too much top-down communication in which the common-person is besieged with messages and given little, if any, chance to articulate her own aspirations, views and ideas on pertinent issues affecting her daily life. While such situation might be explained by lack of means of transport for producers to go out and record countrywide, there is a common feeling that this is a direct result of a systematic strategy to bury the voices of the common-person (X30, Y33, Q7, R24). Such observations are epitomised in sentiments about the need to intensify the bottom-up communication system as a broadcasting strategy. "The current set-up is just geared towards just dishing out information to the people out there. If for example you take news bulletins, it's MP so-so has called upon... the president has asked people to... the chairman of so-so has urged people to... You will hardly hear that village headman X has implored government to do so-so. From a programme point of view, there was a programme called *Fumbi Ndiwe Mwini* in which people in rural areas were articulating their views, talking freely, castigating their members of parliament and this did not go well with government. I wish we had programmes like that where people would table their day-to-day problems, aspirations and needs" (P8).

A different view, however, suggested that MBC can only be listener-centred if there is programming-needs research prior to the introduction of programmes (Y 32, V5, T11). Such listener-centred and researched programmes are expected to attract the business community for sponsorship and advertising. It is contended that the business

community would not shun any programme that is popular for carrying the representative views of the common-person but would be attracted instead. "I feel companies can sponsor programmes where people articulate their views if MBC shows resolve that these are the people's views and rural people are interested in these issues" (P10).

This suppression is also said to prevail through greater emphasis on education rather than information programming. "We are not doing the informing so that people know. We are doing a lot of educating because the democracy is young and there is a lot of political interference. There are no go areas, yet there are lots of things people must know" (X30). From the perceptions of producers, it is clear that such some producers view commercialisation as an opportunity for autonomy from government control in general and political interference in particular. They would also prefer a systematic approach and they believe the listener stands to benefit from commercialisation.

## **6.2. Producers' Suggestions on Funding of MBC**

Most producers are dissatisfied with the current funding system and make suggestions on alternative ways of funding MBC. They note that the cash-budget system of remitting subvention makes planning for a broadcasting system very difficult. What stands out is the need for MBC to diversify its revenue generation-base to include sale of media products rather than airtime to advertisers or sponsors (Y36, Z26). Such products include audiotapes, MBC paraphernalia, dubbed local music, transcripts of current affairs and information programmes, as well as introduction of fun-clubs. It is also suggested that MBC should seriously consider establishing an MBC Enterprise Limited to market and sell programme materials such as in-house publications. Another suggestion is on the possibility of going into joint ventures with the private sector for the promotion of productions including compact discs and radio manufacturing. One producer believes MBC should invest in new broadcasting technologies and strengthen its human resource base in order to be highly competitive (P6). This suggestion complements a suggestion that MBC should improve on the production of commercials in order to attract more revenue (X28). From the foregoing, it is apparent that MBC middle management is not completely resigned to the fate of the current financing system since some producers seem to envision alternative financing strategies for the Corporation.

### **6.3. Perceived and Experienced Changes in the Work Environment**

The general consensus among producers is that they are working in a changing economic and political environment. Data indicate a strong perception among producers that they are working in worsening economic conditions than ever before. They indicate that while money generated from commercial activities is helping the organisation in its operations, such funds are not adequate to cover the shortfall from public funding. In general there is a feeling of deteriorating conditions and desperation to save the organisation from eventual collapse (X2, R 20, T2, P12). One producer clearly describes this condition. "We are in more financial problems now. Despite having more adverts on radio, MBC has an overdraft of close to 4-Million Kwacha, which shows that commercial revenue is not working" (Y1). Aware of such financial conditions, MBC personnel are developing a mindset for the promotion of commercial material on radio in order to sustain the operations of the organisation even when implementation of such goes against their professional ideals. This situation has led to several changes in practice of programme productions at MBC.

#### **6.3.1. Incentive**

Since editors, presenters and producers of sponsored programmes receive talent fees for each sponsored programme, they claim that the presence of commercial elements in programmes is an incentive. The extra-income is said to encourage hard work (Y4, Z6, X1). Such an incentive comes within a context of economic hardships as one producer stated. "Everybody is complaining about not getting enough money and the talent fees and production fees I am talking about are like an extra income so everybody tries to work hard" (X4). In some cases such incentives lead to the production of programmes that attract sponsorship (X6, X7, V12). However, producers point out that in some cases, a desire for additional personal income leads to unethical practices among producers. MBC does not charge purely commercial rates for airtime and as such even the production and talent fees are below commercial rates. "Our commercial rates are miserable. I prefer talking to clients myself to negotiate my package. For example, I was supposed to get K400.00 [\$10] for producing a programme and this would be taxed. I have negotiated that I get the cheque directly from the client, tax-free" (T8). Although

direct dealing between producers and clients is in principle prohibited and considered unethical, the low rate talent fees and production fees are leading some producers to similar deals (X10, Z8).

### **6.3.2. Erosion of Producer Authority**

Most producers feel that sponsors are usurping their authority in programming. They speak of sponsors of programmes dictating which presenter or producer should handle a programme they sponsor (X5, Z7, Q4, and R13). "Therefore you find just a few presenters presenting sponsored programmes. This de-motivates others. Now some producers and presenters have a workload which is too much to handle and programme quality goes down." (Z7). As a result even allocation of programme responsibilities becomes problematic as a mismatch between producer competence and programme demands develops. "You find some producers cannot handle certain types of programmes but we are forced to allocate them these programmes because other producers are overloaded" (Z9). Typical of this scenario is drama, where a producer says the situation has almost become chaotic. "In drama, there is no control over content and production skills and I wonder if some of the dramas are really communicating. MBC has two drama producers and you find that in a week they have to come up with ten productions. Drama is not produced, people just get into the studio and do what they think is radio drama. Such situation is made worse by the demands of sponsors that a particular drama producer produces their dramas or sponsorship will be withdrawn" (R13).

### **6.3.3. Preference for Sponsored Programmes**

In addition to choice of personnel, producers feel sponsors rob them of their professional authority when sponsors make demands about content or format of some programmes (Y35, Z17 and X9). One producer summarises this perception when she says, "The biggest change due to use of commercial revenue is that we are no longer adhering to our mission as a public service broadcaster. We are more dictated by clients who bring what they want on radio" (R1). These experiences demonstrate that to some extent, sponsors have 'acquired' some rights and producers are merely co-opted towards

meeting their ends. They are taking advantage of the difficult financial situation in which MBC finds itself.

An indication of a mindset that is orienting towards promotion of commercial activities is evident in the testimonies of producers about how they handle sponsored and non-sponsored programmes (Y16, Q 24, and R 19). The general practice is for producers to give better attention to sponsored programmes than non-sponsored ones. This is a result of the direct financial benefit producers and presenters get and the persistent monitoring of programmes by sponsors. In addition, producers still regard sponsored programmes as extra-work to their normal duties. For example, one producer said sponsored programmes give her additional pressure. "They are not our traditional schedule and we do not have vested interest ourselves. As a public broadcaster, I would love to concentrate on other areas, but I am pressured to do these campaign programmes" (T9). This suggests a dichotomy between what is perceived as the producers' role as a public service broadcaster and their activities in programming under difficult financial conditions. Producers regard programmes initiated by MBC personnel as more public service than those initiated by outsiders, especially the private sector.

#### **6.3.5. Pawn for Increased Vulnerability:**

Considering that sponsorship of programmes as well as advertising comes from both the public, non-governmental organisations and private sectors, it is striking to note that even increased recourse to commercial revenue has not freed MBC from political dictates. According to programme producers' experiences, the prevailing financial conditions have made MBC increasingly susceptible to political manipulation. They were unanimous in rating political influence as more powerful than influence from programme sponsors or advertisers. They observe that since government continues to provide subvention to MBC, political influence is rife. "The mere fact that government ploughs money to us makes government think they must have 60 or 70 percent of the voice on radio. The Minister [of broadcasting] makes these statements when he says MBC is fully funded by government and whether one likes it or not government has a stake in what happens on MBC" (P3). Vulnerability to political manipulation is said to stem from insecure revenue sources as government remits money on a monthly basis subject to

amounts available in Treasury, and commercial revenue is dependent on prevailing economic conditions or annual business cycles. Some producers are convinced there is no way out of government control. "This radio station is a mouthpiece of government and government need a mouthpiece. So where does government go if all radio stations were independent? Until our democracy matures, I do not see us being independent" (X33). The feeling that ruling party politicians hold an upper hand in relation to the business community is typified by the most cited example of presidential outside broadcasts which sometimes last four to five hours irrespective of any commercial contracts MBC has with her clients (P4). This is a continuing legacy of the one-party system of government. "As a programme maker, there is a song out there that we are freer than before. However, I do not think things have changed in this building. This is my 15<sup>th</sup> year. There are things I would have loved to do but I do not. For example, presidential re-broadcasts take a lot of airtime and it is professionally notorious. To begin with, we have live outside broadcasts, which disturb the schedules and revenue collection. Nonetheless, we cannot do anything, let alone suggest that engagements of the president be reported in packages in order to save time" (T14). Data also suggest that revenue from commercials is used to sponsor partisan political activity coverage especially presidential engagements (X2, Q 8, and Q9). "Covering the president live is deadly expensive but our managers argue that it does not have any negative impact on our budget. I do not share that view" (T 15). In view of high political influence (S7), one producer proposes the establishment of an effective body to look after the interests of journalist's (T13).

#### **6.4. Perceived Role of Commercialisation in Relation to Programme Range and Diversity**

Programme producers at MBC have different views as regards the role of commercial activities in programme range and diversity. While most speak of the programme range and diversity as narrowing over the three year period under study, two contend that the desire to generate revenue through commercial activities enabled MBC programming to broaden through openness to a variety of sources from which programme ideas originate.



#### a) Programme range and diversity broadening:

One producer points out that because of the need to generate revenue, some sections of the Malawi population whose cultural tastes were hitherto not catered for in programming have been included on radio. An example is programming for the minority such as the Asian and White communities, introduced on Radio-Two. While part of the rationale behind such programming was an aspiration towards inter-cultural relations (V3), at the same time the economic power of these communities was a major determining factor. "This [programme for Asian Community] was also aimed at attracting sponsorship from the Asian community by embracing them in the station's main live programmes...You know the Asian community has got money, they run the economy of this country so to speak" (V4). The community was given the privilege to produce and present the programme with a view to attract sponsorship from this affluent society by appealing to their distinctive cultural tastes.

Programming on MBC Radio-Two, however, is not just characterised by niche-audience programming but also by programming for the masses. According to one manager, the principal target audience for Radio-Two is the youth (V2), who she claims constitute 65% of the Malawi population. [These are probably 14 to 25 years old]. Programming for the majority and the minority within one channel points to polarity of programming, which partially indicates a widening of programme range.

Another producer believes MBC is opening up to the public and the business community for programme ideas. She says instead of producers dictating what goes into programming, sponsors often come up with programme ideas which MBC producers never planned to introduce. "As a public radio, we have made a lot of people aware of the services we can offer. So we have a lot of companies and government departments with ideas on programmes that have gone on schedule" (X 14). Consequently, it is argued that since programme ideas flow into MBC from a diverse base programme diversity is broadening.

#### b) Programme range and diversity narrowing

However, most producers observe that due to commercial influences on programming, MBC programme range is narrowing and so is programme diversity. They point out that MBC has become so heavily dependent on commercial revenue for the

introduction of new programmes and collection of broadcast materials that programmes that are not sponsored or lack the promise of sponsorship are hardly introduced on the network. This is commonplace during prime time listening periods. It is argued that although the source base for programme ideas has widened to accommodate more ideas initiated by people other than MBC personnel, programme range is narrowing. "I think MBC programming is narrowing instead of diversifying because we broadcast any programme a client wants and these are usually similar programme types" (R10).

Some producers cite instances of most commercial enterprises preferring to sponsor entertainment programmes. Such programmes include musical shows, request programmes and comedies. On Radio-Two, which is a commercial channel, the rationale for programming hinges on revenue generation. "The nature of programmes is affected. Sponsors favour musical and request programmes. That is we have more entertainment programmes. Entertainment programmes attract more listenership than talk educational programmes. This is why Radio-Two has emphasis on musical programmes" (Z11). This trend is also noted in drama productions. "I think we are going towards didactic drama where you just spoon-feed people or we are going towards entertainment only. Either way is not effective because we need edutainment where education and entertainment combine" (R8). On the other hand, government departments, statutory bodies and non-governmental organisations are regarded as introducing a lot of talk educational programmes on the network (Q18). These are said to be in a form of awareness campaign projects. "MBC is getting more campaign programmes than before.... There is too much talk on radio. For example from five to six in the evening on Saturday, there is a flow of talk programmes" (T 5).

Most programme producers see narrowing of programme range as leading to ineffective communication strategies. They decry ad hoc introduction of programmes. "MBC programmes are made without prior research on a problem that the programme purports to answer. We are like chatterboxes on a campaign for what we perceive to be the need in society. We are just noisy gongs just because somebody has money to make us sing" (T11). The shrinking programme range is also blamed for erosion of producer creativity. It is argued that since sponsorship of programmes has become a principle determinant in the introduction of and maintenance of programmes on the network,

producers exert their minds less to creative programming. "We have a lot of ideas [about new programmes for the network] but we are failing to implement them due to lack of resources. For example we would like to have live coverage of some social events such as music festivals and beauty contests." (Z15).

It is difficult from the accounts presented by programme producers to determine whether programme range or diversity has narrowed or widened. Producers in most cases found it difficult to substantiate their claims and let alone differentiate between programme range and diversity. However, this problem is not limited to respondents because Brants (1998) points out that operationalisation of these two terms in convergence hypotheses studies in Europe are so varied that it becomes difficult to compare findings from one study to another. A separate study consisting a comprehensive and functional content analysis of programming at MBC would help determine the direction of programming diversity and range. Inferences from programme schedules and experiences of programme producers, though not definitely conclusive, indicate strong traces of homogenisation of programming, especially towards entertainment.

#### **6.5. Perceived Role of Commercialisation in Relation to Programme Scheduling**

In terms of scheduling of programmes, data suggest strongly that increased commercial activity at MBC leads to high programme turnover and congestion during prime time slots. All producers testified that sponsored programmes are given preference over non-sponsored programmes when scheduling during prime time. This, they claim leads to unprofessional scheduling of programmes and an unpredictable schedule.

Producers point out that programme scheduling has become unpredictable at MBC because of the need to accommodate as many sponsored programmes as possible to make money. "It is not a schedule we looked at a few years ago. For instance this is December, if you came back in August, I would still be able to say on Mondays from sign-on to sign-off, we have these programmes. But now the programme schedule changes very frequently as new programmes are coming and others rested. Some programmes will run for four weeks" (X15). This is a reflection of change in MBC policy relating to programme sponsorship. Prior to 1995, clients who intended to start a programme and sponsor it were allowed a minimum of thirteen weeks. However, the

minimum has come down to four programmes. As such programme turn over has increased as the minimum programme life span on the network has been reduced by one third. The move was meant to attract as much sponsorship as possible, when MBC raised its airtime rates. According to programme producers, this has also led to programme schedule congestion especially during prime time programming. "Once upon a time, MBC made programme schedules from sign-on to sign-off according to how it thought a programme fits the audience. Now there is a clamour for prime time, between six and eight in the evenings and sponsored programmes are crammed in this slot" (Q19).

Worth pointing out is the loss of power by programme producers to schedule programmes according to effective communication strategies. Most producers testify to heavy and direct demands by programme sponsors to have sponsored programmes aired during prime time. The result is that priority is given to introduction of sponsored programmes over existing non-sponsored programmes. This also applies when it comes to changing broadcast time (R9, Y14, and T4). They testify that a programme initiated by an MBC producer is usually kicked out when someone with money demands the slot. A current affairs programme that reviews major news activities for the week *Tiyeni Tionenso*, which as aired on Saturday afternoon, has been displaced by a health campaign programme sponsored by the European Union. A producer for Radio-Two gives another typical example. "I just got a telephone from the business department that the Malawi Bureau of Standards wants a slot between six and eight in the evening. I have looked at the schedule and the only slot I have identified is one for *Dinnertime Listening* where we play cool music for listeners who are dining. I have got rid of *Dinnertime Listening* in favour of the Malawi Bureau of Standards talk programme. Imagine people are eating and you are giving them a talk programme. I don't think it's ideal but because we need the money, I was forced to get rid of an appropriate programme" (R15). In some cases such ad hoc scheduling leads to duplication of programme types (T5, T6). "I have noted that there are too many comedies on the network now. You find seven or eight comedies sponsored by different organisations using the same pair of comedians (Q4). In other cases programmes, which were originally meant to run back-to back, have been separated to make way for sponsored programmes. An example is the separation of a current affairs production, *Press Review* and its Chichewa version, *Zomwe Manyuzi Pepala Alemba*, in

which the Chichewa version goes on air about an hour after the English edition defeating the original plan to provide listeners with an opportunity to listen to either programmes within prime time listening (Y14).

Use of commercial revenue is also said to lead to truncation in the duration of most non-sponsored programmes. Programme producers say they are forced to shorten the duration of some existing programmes because a sponsor had demanded that slot and MBC needs the money (Q3, Q17). Because of the numerous demands on limited airtime, programme duration is shortened and in almost all cases time slots for sponsored programmes are obtained by reducing duration of non-sponsored programme slots. Worth noting is an observation made by two producers that while the proportion of non-sponsored to sponsored programmes may appear static over the duration under review, commercial activities on MBC have created more pressure during prime time scheduling than ordinary broadcast times (Q20, R18). This is to assert that since there is no expansion in prime time any increase in the demand for airtime exerts pressure on prime time slots.

What is absent from MBC scheduling is watershedding of programmes or advertising messages for specific age groups. For example, there is no set time when adult fare programmes can be broadcast. Producers point out that any advertising message can go on air at any time irrespective of whether such messages are not suitable for children (V8). Apart from what one manager called "control over use of explicit language in broadcasting" (V9), there is no guideline to direct protection of children and youth from exposure to adult fare material. From producers' experiences, they cite cases of the young being exposed to adult fare materials. "On Saturday and Sunday there are two programmes at noon which are sponsored by [competing] local breweries. They sometimes appeal directly to youth to drink their traditional brew in order to be tough. I think the money here overshadows the moral aspect of our broadcasting. I can also imagine Christians coming home on Saturday or Sunday and as they settle for lunch, they are bombarded with messages about the advantages of drinking traditional brew. But what can we do? We are looking for money" (Z18). The situation is compounded by the fact that the programmes in question are produced and presented live by jockeys of the

sponsor's choice. They are not MBC employees and all MBC did was to audition them (Z9). This means MBC has no control over broadcast content.

A related case is that of sponsored news bulletins (Y11). Such bulletins are two minutes shorter than non-sponsored bulletins. This cut makes way for freighting of sponsor's messages during a news bulletin. While producers differed in their opinion on the cut, the general inclination was that it is not necessary to play commercial messages within a news bulletin when the same messages would be equally effective if played as a news-adjacency adverts. "I think news is serious thing and it's enough to put an advert at the beginning and end not in the middle of a bulletin. After all, you capture the same audience" (R27). It is also observed that sponsorship of news leads to reduction in news content. This is because two minutes of a ten-minute news bulletin is devoted to adverts. "Non-sponsored news bulletins carry more content because in news two minutes is a lot of time" (Y18).

Apart from reduction in news content, there is a worry that running advertising messages within news bulletins compromises the credibility of news. News it is argued is watered down especially when a presenter reads an advertiser's sponsorship credit at change over cue. "Some advertisements contain factually incorrect material and these are brought together with news. For example, the National Bank of Malawi claims that it is the first bank to be on the Internet, which is factually incorrect" (Z30). However, there were other producers who see no problem with news sponsorship as it exists at MBC. One said sponsorship of news bulletins is alright because sponsors do not dictate the content of news bulletins and notes that this practice is prevalent on many radio stations around the world. Another points out that discerning powers of a listener should never be underrated. "The advertiser message is also most part of a news bulletin because it is inter-spaced with the news bulletin. But I think people have now got used to it and they know how to separate news from advertisements" (Y12). But as explained later in the perceived role of commercial activity on broadcast content, arguments for news sponsorship based on non-interference with news content are challenged on the grounds of self-censorship. It also requires a separate study to verify that listeners receive news differently from advertisements.

## 6.6. Perceived Role of Commercialisation on Programme Content

There is a general consensus among programme producers that sponsors do not have direct influence on news content decisions. Data, however, strongly suggest there is some indirect influence in news and current affairs programmes from sponsors. In news bulletins, direct sponsor influence is said to be almost negligible because it is the business department which deals with sponsors and news editors rarely come into contact with sponsors. In addition, as one producer observed, MBC carries very little local business news (Y19) thereby minimising the chances of adverse news coverage that would affect a particular sponsor. The fear of losing a sponsor due to adverse publicity is minimal but not absent. "Fortunately, most sponsors of news do not make news. Malawi Railways is the only one I find problematic because they try to persuade [advertise to] people to use their facilities when their services are poor" (Y8). This case, like one cited above (Z30), demonstrates the conflict between media workers' commitment to stating what they perceive to be true and the imperatives imposed by financiers for favourable publicity. In addition, since advertisements are contracted out and drafted by MBC commercial section, news department has no say as regards the content and form of advertisements in sponsored news bulletins (Y9).

Experiences among journalists shows that interference by sponsors is not present in news and current affairs, although some speak of (separate) political interference (X22, Y31, Q12, P3, P4, T14). At the time of conducting this research there was no sponsored current affairs programme and producers believe it is a blessing in disguise not to have sponsors. "Lack of sponsorship for current affairs programmes is good for us because we have freedom to select and include any current affairs issue without dictates from a sponsor. I remember one sponsor wanted us to interview people on the advantages of products advertised and this was not relevant to the current affairs programme" (S4).

However, some news bulletins are sponsored and sponsor influence is related to censorship among journalists. Reporters, who collect broadcast material for both current affairs productions and news bulletins, confess to working under very hard economic conditions. Lack of means of transport from workstations to the field is said to be the root cause of journalistic compromises. The news section does not have a car of its own and has to depend on the pool fleet to cover news in the country. Its members say that

reporters usually spend most of their time in the office because they have no means of transport to travel out and conduct community surveillance for news (S3, P15). In most cases, news discovery is passive. "We depend on telephones and we rely on the goodwill of newsmakers or agents to collect news. It is unhealthy because when a reporter decides that the event is not news worthy it makes life difficult. At times reporters have to conduct empty interviews, which are then aired" (P14). Apart from the economic situation forcing reporters to collect and air material that they would have otherwise not considered news, reporters have problems in coming up with balanced and comprehensive reports about issues and events because of lack of means of transport to particular sites. "The situation is bad when one wants to come up with eyewitness reports. You cannot rely on the use a telephone to [collect information and] describe damage caused by floods" (P2). The situation is aggravated by what one producer calls problems in prioritising expenditure. "MBC has problems prioritising expenditure. Instead of putting priority on programming, all departments are treated as being at par and even sections which need heavy funding like news and current affairs are equated to administration sections. When I submit a request for transport to cover an event, I am told there is no money. Yet within the same week an administrative member of staff is placed in a hotel which costs MBC 40,000 Kwacha" (P13). These experiences suggest that news content is greatly influenced by set priorities of MBC and consequent dependence on transport sponsorship by newsmakers and their agents. This means that some events that are likely to be covered as news are not necessarily those that would maximise public understanding of the local environment, but those which benefactors make possible to cover within available resources. In addition, reporters who are sponsored to cover news events by newsmakers or agents are unlikely to report anything critical or negative about the sponsor. At times, as noted above, they have to craft news from what they consider non-news events as a reciprocal gesture to sponsors. Comprehensive coverage of issues is also limited to areas covered by telephone lines. In Malawi, only about one percent of the total population is connected to a telephone service.

Apart from the role that sponsors play in enabling reporters cover some news events, which they otherwise would not have covered because of lack of means of transport, sponsorship of news also plays on the minds of news editors. News editors



receive extra-money for sponsored news bulletins. A designated amount is added to every editor's salary at the end of the month depending on the number of sponsored news bulletins in a particular month. While allocating a flat rate to every editor was meant to minimise competition among editors working on sponsored and non-sponsored news bulletins, there is evidence of self-censorship when handling sponsored news bulletins. Sponsored news bulletins are said to get more editor attention than non-sponsored ones. Since sponsored news bulletins are two-minutes shorter in content than non-sponsored ones (Y18), this time reduction is said to reduce work per bulletin (Y6) resulting in more editor concentration than when they prepare a ten minute bulletin (Y17). In addition, sponsored news bulletins are an incentive to editors. "Sponsored news bulletins get more attention from editors because they know they are benefiting from the work they are doing" (Y16). Consequently, editors are very cautious not to injure the sponsor (Y26). To keep memories of who sponsors which news bulletin live, sponsors' names are posted on notice boards. As pointed out above (Y8), although cases of self-censorship are rare because sponsors for news bulletins are rarely covered in news, there are cases when editors have to compromise their journalistic ideals and censor some items. "Malawi Railways is in financial problems and we have had stories showing the negative impact of these difficulties but you consider that these people are sponsoring that lunch bulletin. So there is no way we write something contrary to what the advertisement says and place it in the same news bulletin"(Y7). This experience suggests that in the event of a conflict of interest between the journalistic ethos and the wish not to antagonise a sponsor, the sponsor's interests take precedence. A compromise is sometimes reached when the story is not completely dropped but used in other programmes on the network. "Normally reporters do their own job and bring stories which editors decide where an item goes. Where sponsors are [negatively] involved, an item is sometimes pushed to other magazine programmes on the network" (Y15).

In other programmes, the role of commercial activity at MBC is also marked in programme content. Programme producers speak of such role being pronounced during discovery, collection, selection and packaging of broadcast material. They cite examples in which they were either directly influenced by sponsors or indirectly influenced by consciousness about sponsorship.

At the initial level of making a programme, several considerations are made before any programme is introduced on a radio network. What is conspicuously absent from factors they consider important when making decisions about a new programme is its cost. Except for one producer, the rest dwell on acceptability of content material by top MBC management and the audience. They point out that when a programme idea is conceived, the procedure is that the idea is spelt out in writing, sent to top management for appraisal and, if accepted, a dummy programme made before final approval. This suggests that at face value, producers rarely think of cost implications when they attempt to come up with new programmes on the network. One producer however, alluded to the importance of cost considerations by mentioning that she takes into consideration sustainability of the programme especially as regards collection of broadcast materials from the field. "We consider whether we can manage to have adequate material for the proposed programme and whether the audience would accept the programme." (S5).

However, in their accounts of experiences with the introduction of programmes on the network, there is consensus that the capacity of a programme to attract sponsorship is one of the major considerations. As indicated above, the higher the probability of a programme to attract a sponsor the higher its chances of being introduced on the network. Such a trend appears to have crept into information programmes such as news at MBC, where there are two types of news bulletins on Radio-Two (Y27). "Now that it [human-interest news bulletin] has found a sponsor, I am proud because someone is interested. In my opinion, I feel it's ok since we are getting more and more business-orientated and news can become part of business" (Y28). These bulletins usually comprise bizarre and odd stories about weird family conflicts, witchcraft, court cases, road accidents, suicide reports and other social drama. This type of news exemplifies a move towards drawing on emotional or entertainment appeal more than on informational appeal. News is usually sought to satisfy a cognitive need for orienting oneself to an environment rather than for emotional satisfaction only.

In addition, there are programmes that are initiated by sponsors such as campaign programmes from the private and public sectors. In most of these programmes the sponsor determines content. Producer experiences vary from instances where a sponsor unilaterally decides what goes into a programme to cases of consultation and possible

compromises between the two sides. However, most producers feel their professional role is under threat from the dictates of sponsors. Producers say, from their experiences, where a stalemate is reached during consultations between producer and sponsor, it is the wishes of the sponsor that prevail in many cases. "In terms of programme content, a client's request to include material of their own choice is viewed in terms of whether it is in line with my programme outline and aim. If it is outside, I reject it. However, there have been cases when material of a programme is against a commercial content. That I censor. An example is when a church minister talked about youth morality through abstinence from sex and the sponsor of the programme was a distributor of condoms whose adverts promoted the use of condoms. I did not use the item in the programme" (Z17). While this appears to demonstrate an occasional case, there appears to be a powerful subliminal force of influence in the minds of producers when they work. One producer put it succinctly: "When I produce sponsored programmes, I know at the back of my mind that there is a watchdog out there. Those who sponsor programmes want value for money. On the other end, it forces us to throw professionalism out of the window as we try to please the sponsor. I remember producing a safe motherhood programme sponsored by a company which sells tinned milk. I could not talk about breast feeding as the best for children, let alone the dangers of bottle feeding because the sponsors were advertising baby milk products and therefore encouraging bottle-feeding" (Q25). Thus, even at the stage where producers are conceiving ideas about what to include in their programmes, they are conscious about focusing on material that would not harm a programme sponsor.

At the same time since collection of broadcast material is highly dependent on availability of sponsors, broadcast output is also affected. Most producers say that money from commercial activities has helped MBC sustain operations in general and the programme making process in general. As one producer points out, without commercial revenue MBC would have poor programmes due to inadequate funding from government. Programme sponsorship has included provision of means of transport for producers to travel to the field to collect broadcast material (T10). "I am comfortable when sponsors provide that I go out to collect material because I know MBC would only manage to take me to areas around the city of Blantyre. Going around the city of Blantyre is not

professional" (T17). Thus, programme producers are more able to travel far afield to gather broadcast material under sponsorship than under the regular MBC budgetary allocations. Some producers point out that many informational or educational programmes which are not sponsored suffer from lack of professionalism as collection of fresh material covering the entire country is almost impossible without the direct prop-up from sponsors. Producers no longer have countrywide recording tours because of shortage of funds and means of transport (Q11) and stockpiling of programmes is almost impossible (S2). The result is programmes are filled with cheap-to-source broadcast materials especially from places near the broadcasting station. "Sometimes I go out to town, record interviews with two people to fill a 30-minute programme yet professionally an insert should not be more than three minutes long. But in our circumstances what do I do? Any good speakers fill airtime." (Q13). The situation reduces opportunities for countrywide surveillance of issues, views and opinions. Fair and balanced coverage of information or opinions is also in jeopardy as views and conditions near the broadcasting station get the prominence in broadcast.

On the other hand, some producers find it constricting to operate under sponsors in the process of collecting broadcast material because some sponsors dictate what to cover and whom to interview. Even conditions journalists are subjected to during some of these sponsored recording tours have been cause for complaint. "I do not like to be used in what I call cheap programmes. As producers, we get peanuts for the work we do. I am not happy when a producer goes out in a tattered car, is booked in low rate accommodation and given meagre allowances." (T7).

Influence on content also appears to be pronounced when sponsors are directly involved in the selection of materials which producers work with. In drama for example, some sponsors veto scripts before these are passed to a producer. "Some organisations engage a writer to write these plays for them but when it comes to my desk, I find that the script is not good enough. Yet I am forced to produce it because project owners have accepted the content". (R14). This producer finds this arrangement an obstacle to maintaining her professional standards not only because sponsors appear to influence the content selection of the programme but also due to ineffective communication skills by writers contracted by sponsors. "I produce a civic education drama programme called

*Sikadzakokha*. In between the scenes, I am supposed to play a jingle about human rights. I wonder why the author does not build these messages [in the jingle] in the plot of the drama. At the end [of the play] the narrator also summaries the lesson from the play. It means the writer is failing to say what he wants in drama content. Although I am still fighting against it, if the client says 'that is what we want', what powers do I have when the corporation needs money?" (R17).

In other cases, a sponsor solely determines programme content. It is noticeable in commercial product or service promotion programmes. Any company may buy airtime to talk about its services or products. In such cases, the entire programme content is promotional material tailored by the sponsor. Commenting on such programmes, one producer says the only guideline is not to 'overkill'. "We are not selective about who comes to advertise. In sponsored programmes, whose whole programme content aims at promoting sales of a sponsor's product, we try not to overkill. For example in a programme like *Nokia Telephones*, we avoid saying Nokia every five seconds." (V6). Another producer points out that the decisions of whether any service or product are allowed promotion on air is dependent on what MBC management decides is of national interest (X13). That is anything which is conceived to be of interest to the whole nation can be included as programmable material for broadcast although religious groups are prohibited from advertising on Radio-Two (V10).

Programme content is also affected by commercial activities when advertisements are placed in programmes. Programme producers have no say in what advertisements are placed in their programmes (Y9, Y10, X11). It is the commercial department which arranges which advertisements are aired during a particular programme. This has led to listener complaints about too many advertisements on radio. Programme flow is said to be disturbed by too many advertisements in a programme (T1). As one producer noted, there have been instances where laid down standards on amounts of advertisements in a programme have been flouted. "Standards stipulate that a 30-minute sponsored programme will carry three one-minute spots. In a 60-minute programme, we are supposed to have six one-minute spots. But what did we see? Maybe ten spots" (X12). Programme standards are in this case lowered by overloading programmes with more commercials than those stipulated in the standards book. A similar observation is made

about drama productions, where a producer challenges the standards book, as restricting creativity in production. She thinks pre-determined break intervals for commercial slots in drama programmes reduce creativity as plot development has to revolve around and climaxes worked towards these intervals. "I wish it was possible for producers to go out and look for sponsors because they would be able to explain the best format of advertising in a programme so that you bring in advertising without affecting the professional shape of the programme as is happening now. For example, instead of six adverts in a 30-minute programme, three would be effective if placed where there is conflict or any attention catcher." (R16).

However, advertisements have also been identified as an effective source of variety in programme content. While congestion has been a concern, one producer points out the value of commercial material in broadcasting when she laments about Radio-Two not having attracted as many advertisers as expected. "Announcers need time to have a breather not just talk, play music, talk, play music... It gets monotonous. But we like to talk, play music and play commercials, giving us time to think what to next." (Z5). In this case commercial materials in live programmes are professionally functional because they enable a programme presenter to think while at the same time they break a monotony of talk and music by bringing in variety. In addition, one producer is of the opinion that commercial activity does not substantially change programme content. She argues that since it is professionally produced programmes that attract sponsors, an increase in commercial elements in MBC programmes is a positive indicator of professionalism' (X11).

As regards the role of commercial activities in local cultural content on MBC, data suggests minimal positive impact. As observed above, countrywide recording tours by producers are rare, and almost confined to presidential engagements. This has led to a constant recycling and repetitions of broadcast material, as fresh material is hard to obtain. The most affected in this regard are programmes which feature various traditional practices, music and customs from different parts of the country. Commercial musicians, dramatists and other artists have received a boost as more recording studios became established in the country. However, the bulk of music played on MBC, especially Radio-Two, is foreign. "We are trying to push local music from 5 percent to 10 or 15 percent

because these days Malawians favour Malawian music” (Z14). Although dominance of foreign music might be attributed to lack of recording facilities in the past, the boost in recording local music has not been embraced with the same enthusiasm as the strong support for foreign music on Radio-Two, which has an entertainment and commercial orientation.

### **6.7. Conclusion**

Data on the experiences and perceptions of programme producers at MBC support the assertion that MBC is commercialising although this is being done without proper policy direction from government or MBC management. As such, the process is characterised by significant attempts to survive a deteriorating financial situation. A monthly remittance of government subvention backed by an unpredictable flow of commercial revenue makes financial management difficult for the Corporation. This has affected producers' work environment and MBC output. Commercial revenue has supported programme production through availability of back-up finances and transport for producers to collect broadcast material. Producers have a feeling that MBC is abrogating its responsibility of serving the common person by being at the service of sponsors and advertisers. Some attributes have been recounted in favour of commercial activities in programming. On the other hand, there are also direct dictates from commercial players as well as indirect psychological pressures on producers. There are many experiences of prevalence of low community surveillance, poor mobility and loss of power to decide programme content or scheduling among programme producers. There is also a general inclination to believe that MBC production is getting more of the same product even though the programming- decision-base has widened to include commercial groups. This assertion however, requires a separate study to prove as most claims are based on perceptions.

Producers are, however, of the opinion that commercialisation is an inevitable cause for MBC in the current economic situation. However, a more systematic and considered strategy is what they want. They see systematic commercialisation as offering hope towards autonomy from government or political control. There is a strong feeling

that properly executed commercialisation would promote rather than undermine the public service mandate of MBC.



## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION**

#### **7.0. Introduction**

This chapter is a discussion of findings of the study in relation to other scholarly findings (as deliberate in chapter three) on the role of commercialisation on public service broadcasting. The findings are analysed for logics behind programming decisions. The logics are matched with an adaptation of McManus' market theory of news production.

The market theory states that the probability of a programme or an item to be included in programming is inversely proportional to the harm the information might cause to investors or sponsors and inversely proportional to its cost of production and directly proportional to the expected breadth of appeal of the programme/item to audiences that advertisers will pay to reach. This theory therefore predicts several things about public service broadcasting when it commercialises. However, not all claims have been analysed in this study:

1. Producers avoid using information which might cause harm to advertisers or sponsors of a programme.
2. Producers prefer means of making inexpensive programmes over expensive ones in order to increase surplus margins.
3. Producers provide the least expensive mix of programmes in order to increase surplus margins.
4. The availability of a sponsor increases the probability of a programme being aired.
5. Producers avoid risky experimental programming which may not maximise return on investment.
6. Producers air programmes which maximise audience size or appeal to wealthy niche audiences.

Prediction 5 and 6 form part of McManus theory but would require further research to establish and this study does not cover these aspects.

The establishment of commercial logic in public service broadcasting has implications for programming. These include loss of traditional values of public service such as universality of appeal through wide programme range which include interests of low-income groups such as rural children, the aged and linguistic, gender and cultural minorities. Commercial logic advocates for programming that draws audiences with disposable incomes in this view. Another lost public broadcasting service value is said to

be programming for citizenship, which mostly involves discussion of controversial issues and commitment to impartial, comprehensive and balanced provision of information. Commercial logic promotes non-risky, inexpensive and consensual programming, which mostly calls for entertainment programming. Commercialisation also has implications for editorial integrity and independence which are vital values in ideal public service broadcasting. Public broadcasting logic is also educational, which gets sidelined if there is no profit to be made in it. Broadcasting institutions may operate on various logics such as commercial logic, public service logic, developmental logic or propagandist logic. Where commercial logic prevails, this rationale espouses bias in favour of sponsors and advertisers.

### **7.1. Correspondence of interview and documentary data**

Interviews and documentation have yielded data that correspond in some areas but cannot be compared in other aspects because of the different capacities of each of these data collection techniques. For example, while interviews brought out perceptions and experiences of programme producers on changes in the work environment in programme content, data on financing levels at MBC was only obtained from documents. However, there is correspondence in data on changes to programming. The two sets of data highly cohere on the role of commercial revenue in programming.

### **7.2. Role of Commercialisation on Programming**

Levels of commercial activity in MBC programming, between 1995 and 1998, have risen considerably. MBC has an almost wholly commercial channel. Programme producers testify to their increased involvement with sponsored programmes. They observe that there is usually congestion of advertising material in programmes especially during prime time. However, there is no explicit government policy to the effect that MBC is commercialising and as such the process is ad hoc resulting more from pressures to sustain operations rather than deliberate policy. The result is an apparent loss of direction among staff when decisions have to be made in the event of a conflict between public service and commercial compulsions. While most producers attest to incidents of loss of professional integrity due to political and commercial pressures, contestation for retaining their integrity and independence is also evident in the type of programmes they initiate on the network. There is advocacy among producers for bottom-up communication, improved surveillance of issues throughout the country, programming for varieties of tastes and needs as well as for fusion of entertainment with education and information to deliver effective communication.

Use of commercial revenue has enabled MBC to sustain programme production. In some instances sponsors have included a term in the contract to offer means of transport to producers to enable them collect broadcast material. Sponsors have also consulted with producers on sources of broadcast material and availed such to producers.

Sponsorship is also said to increase the base for programme ideas as anybody with money and a programme idea can introduce it on radio. There are many civic, health and other social mobilisation programmes on radio that are on air because of the availability of sponsorship. These actually target the poor. In other words some sponsorship helps maintain public service programming within the current mix of programming at MBC and relieves the public broadcaster of the financial costs that would otherwise be borne by public finance.

However, the general belief among programme producers is that programme diversity and range are narrowing, despite MBC opening up to outside initiative to programming. The argument is that although the volume of programmes introduced on the network by groups outside MBC is higher than that of programmes initiated by MBC personnel, programmes introduced are mainly of the same type. This contention is difficult to demonstrate based on inferences from producer experiences and programme schedule records. Moreover, MBC as a whole continues to broadcast a variety of programme genres.

Nevertheless, there are many traces of an inclination towards entertainment programming. Even the introduction of another channel has not brought wide variety. Since Radio-Two is designated as an entertainment channel, with a music-talk programme ratio of 17:3, opportunities for diversification or widening the programme range are heavily limited by this programming policy which favours entertainment. On the other hand, Radio-One which is supposed to emphasise education and information is heavily laden with official government publicity and political broadcasts. The propagandist logic is very pronounced. Most of the changes to fixed programme schedule are a result of political coverage rather than programme sponsorship. However, when sponsored programmes are introduced on the network, they are either talk programmes for social mobilisation or entertainment programmes. The talk programmes are initiated by advocacy groups and government institutions while the private sector favours sponsoring entertainment programmes such as musicals, music request shows and drama. These findings do not fully confirm the assertion that commercialisation leads to entertainment programmes. There is need to qualify the assertion that commercial dependence on outside enterprise sponsorship would lead to entertainment programming. In the case of Malawi, government and non-governmental organisations are major

sponsors of programmes and they favour talk programmes. Malawi is principally an agricultural country with 80% of its population in rural areas and the industrial base narrow. As such, government and non-governmental organisations are the major sponsors and advertisers on radio. This partially explains the sponsorship tendency towards the introduction of more talk programmes than musical programmes on Radio-Two.

Sight should also not be lost of some innovative programmes that have been introduced on the network. Such include a programme for the disabled and a live-phone-in programme according Malawians an opportunity to discuss issues of national interest as discussed in section 5.2.2.2. In addition, news is broadcast in four Malawian languages and the number of children's programmes has increased through new programmes on Radio-Two. Nonetheless, these programme changes are a result of political decisions, initiative by MBC producers and advocacy by non-governmental organisations. None comes from the private sector. Yet, given the low funding level from government, it is very unlikely that MBC would have been able to broadcast news in four languages. Income from the private sector and non-governmental organisations must have helped.

Although the private sector has sponsored some cultural programmes such as *Kalondolondo*, and *Mlakatuli* it would be an overstatement to argue that private enterprises are supportive of cultural productions on MBC because a large portion of cultural programmes are not sponsored. While the abundance of foreign music on Radio-Two supports the assertion that commercialisation favours imported cultural products, it has to be noted that apart from inserts into non-music programmes all such programmes broadcast on MBC are locally produced.

Polarisation of audiences is also evident in the data. Sponsored programmes are usually crammed in prime time slots so that advertising messages have maximum audience reach. As such, programmes are meant for the largest audience possible. However, niche programming has emerged on Radio-Two where the Asian community has a programme because of its economic power. The use of English in most programmes on Radio-Two in a country, where about 60 % of the population has no competence in the English language points towards programming for a prosperous segment of the Malawi population, especially in urban centres.

Data from the two sources also agree that sponsored programmes get more priority when decisions on alterations to fixed schedule are made. As such, non-sponsored programmes, apart from news and political programming, are frequently rescheduled, taken off air or reduced in duration without much regard for the appropriateness of such decisions to the target audience. As regards the probability of a

programme being introduced on air, sponsorship is one of the prime considerations. Such sponsorship now includes provision of means of transport and logistical support.

Absence of written codes of practice or standards in relation to producer relations with sponsors or advertisers was confirmed by both sets of data. There are no guidelines on control of advertising content or watershedding to protect juveniles from exposure to adult fare or sophisticated advertising.

From the two sets of data it is evident that the commercial logic is playing a central role in programming at MBC. In this regard, it is pertinent to highlight some evidence of the presence of commercial logic in programming decisions.

### **7.3. Commercial Logic in Public Service Broadcasting**

Data match both the public service deliverables and commercial logic indicators. As shown in Appendix V, there is commercial logic in public service broadcasting at MBC:

#### Commitment to Public Service

MBC has not lost its public service mission while it embraces many facets of the commercial logic. Producers believe in professionalism in programme production and emphasise the need to serve the listener more than advertisers or sponsors. They perceive themselves as being at the service of the entire nation and believe that MBC should be listener-centred by among other things improving the communication strategy towards a bottom-up approach. Their concept of public service broadcast is therefore not the promotion of a high-brow culture or education to fight the legacy of one-party political ideology, but rather the facilitation of dialogue between those in power and the ruled. They advocate public service to be in concordance with the current political ideology of diversity and plurality in views as well as social and political impartiality. However, while they hold these ideals about the role of public service broadcasting, they are highly constrained by the political and economic situation in which they operate.

Data also support the continued role of public service through the large volume of non-sponsored programmes MBC continues to broadcast. The network, including the commercial channel, has a large volume of programmes that fill airtime without sponsor (or advertiser) financial backup or rationale. On Radio-One, expensive-to-produce programme types are broadcast such as magazine, features and documentary programmes. These however remain a small portion. It is characteristic of public service to produce a variety of programmes genres for a diversity of needs and interests in different communities of a nation state. MBC also continues to play a role of equalising

public life through common access especially in politics and social mobilisation. Although most of the social mobilisation programmes are sponsored, MBC can still be said to play a part as a purveyor of such programmes. In politics, although data point to partisan party politics dominating airwaves, the fact that any function deemed national is broadcast live when it involves the president is testimony to the aspiration of MBC to bring into being a shared public life within the country. Another political example, in which MBC shows its commitment to public service, is the coverage of parliamentary debates. In addition, in spite of economic hardships, MBC continues to introduce programmes for poor sections of society. MBC has introduced more children's programmes and programmes that promote culture and civic rights. These programmes were initially not sponsored, demonstrating the commitment of MBC towards serving even the interests of segments of society without economic interests. When some of the programmes were finally sponsored, the original programme ideas did not change.

#### Evidence of Presence of Commercial Logic

While MBC remains committed, in principle and in some programming practices, to public service, there is overwhelming evidence of the presence of commercial logic. While direct political interference in programming has been ranked by producers as stronger than the economic influence, structural constraints created by the economic situation outweigh political imperatives.

Since Malawi embraced principles of a liberalised economy in 1994, it has been under constant pressure to move away from a welfare state to a market-driven economy. The cash-budget system is a business discipline in government to spend within the limits of revenue government generates. Government is therefore pressured by this economic consideration when remitting subsidies. In turn as MBC operates within a commercial-oriented public sector and operational costs have risen with inflation, it is squeezed to supplement income with more commercial revenue in order to bridge the funding gap. As such MBC production routines engender the promotion of commercial activities in programming.

Data reveal that a reward system for all personnel dealing with commercial material in broadcasting. Producers receive production fees, presenters get talent fees and sales persons claim sales commission in addition to their salaries. The incentive system generates a competitive spirit among producers and presenters in order to get management and sponsor recognition about their (media workers') competencies to produce or present sponsored programmes. The system is also evident when new programmes for the network are being considered. Programmes with a potential to attract

sponsorship stand a better chance of being introduced than those which will run on MBC regular budget. In addition, collection of broadcast material is highly dependent on sponsorship. As a result the mindset of producers is being oriented towards commercial considerations. They attest to giving priority to sponsored programmes over non-sponsored ones in the production process.

Some observations in this study strongly underline the need for a cautious strategy to reduce adverse effects of commercialisation. MBC has little control over content of advertising; has no watershed rules for advertising to protect children from adult fare; allows outsiders to produce and present (live) programmes they sponsor; and has no written code of conduct or standards on how broadcasters ought to relate to sponsorship and advertising. Although, in principle, producers are not expected to have direct monetary dealings with advertisers and sponsors, the system allows clients to directly pay or provide direct logistical support to producers.

The reward system is reinforced by dominant trends in programming decisions, which can be said to be getting institutionalised in the organisational culture. For example, priority is given to sponsored programmes when alterations to schedule such as truncation of programme duration, termination of programmes and rescheduling are made. Since MBC would rather not breach contracts with clients than inconvenience a regular audience for a non-sponsored programme, it is obvious that economic considerations override public service considerations in such instances. In other words, the commercial logic is consciously becoming a norm in programming decisions.

MBC also has a high preference to air programmes which maximise audience size or appeal to wealthy niche audiences. Programming on Radio-Two is meant to generate revenue. The strategy used is to have 85% music and 15 % short talk programmes, mostly presented in English. Emphasis here is on satisfying the emotional needs rather than informational needs of the target audience. In addition, an attention catching news slot has been introduced on Radio-Two. This vindicates what McManus (1994e) considers one of the social impacts of market journalism. He claims that consumers are likely to learn less from market-driven journalism. In attempts to maximise audiences, there is affinity towards entertainment and emotional arousal. Bearing in mind that availability of sponsorship increases the probability of a programme being aired, the inclination towards entertainment programmes remains strong especially in the absence of the ameliorating tendency of government sponsored programmes which are mostly talk.

Presence of commercial logic is also evident when producers testify about making programmes from the least expensive sources possible. Because of financial problems

producers say broadcast material is recorded around Blantyre City and reporters rely on telephone interviews to write news. In addition, producers attest to being jacks of all trades where they collect material from the field, edit, package, present and self-record the programme. The logic behind this is to minimise cost within MBC budgets even when technical quality of a programme or professional norms of programme making degenerate. In addition, commercialisation is also encouraging provision of the least expensive mix of programmes. Unlike Radio-One, on Radio-Two, most programmes are live phone-ins in order to cut costs of travelling nationwide to collect broadcast material. In this case the caller bears the cost. There are also few documentaries, magazines and feature programmes which in most cases are information rich and are expensive to produce in terms of time and monetary resources required. Format programming on this channel also bears testimony to an aspiration to reduce costs and maximise revenue generation.

Commercial logic also prevails over editorial integrity and independence at MBC. Apart from the structural influences sponsors have on production, there are numerous examples of sponsors directly inducing change in programming decisions. Producers mention incidents of self-censorship in order to avoid harming sponsors of programmes. They also speak of sponsors dictating names of presenters and producers for their sponsored programmes, including at times threats of sponsorship withdrawal. In terms of programme content, some sponsors direct producers as to who should be interviewed in their programmes and what areas to be covered. This is more pronounced in publicity and social mobilisation programmes. While there is nothing intrinsically wrong with sponsors advising on programme content, dictation has raised concerns among producers who point out that the practice sometimes leads to compromise in professional integrity and independence. This trend shows that dependence on commercial revenue leads to sponsors having rights to which a system becomes amenable and the creative community is merely co-opted to its goals of delivering maximum audience through programmes.

#### **7.4. Conclusion**

In short this study has demonstrated that, while MBC is committed to the principles of public service broadcasting, political and commercial compulsions are so strong that the organisation needs effective means for insulation against undue influence for editorial integrity and independence to prevail. MBC would therefore be accorded the autonomy it needs to play a role of ensuring political and social impartiality as a patron of arts and culture, keeping balance of tradition and innovation, safeguard common values, and provide diversity (Wedell, 1995). It is evident that in some cases such as facilitation



of collection of programme material, introduction of different programmes, and financial support to MBC, commercialisation is vital. Commercialisation also appears inevitable given the economic pressures on government budget and public mandate of MBC as the sole national broadcaster at present. As the commercial logic gets more and more established in the programming practices at MBC, attention should be focussed on how commercialisation can be used as a means to an end, which is efficient provision of broadcasting as a public service. This study supports many of the claims of McManus' theory of market journalism, indicating that the theory should not only be limited to capitalist societies characterised by very high competition. Even in evolving capitalist formations, commercial logic can be introduced inadvertently by the need to survive when governments reduce levels of funding to public broadcasting service. In addition, introduction of commercial logic does not necessarily lead to an emphasis on abrogating public service goals because commercialisation has a mixed role and significance for public broadcasting. In some cases commercialisation supports the values of public service and in other instances, it undermines these values.

The McManus model, as evidenced here, needs to distinguish sponsorship and advertising within the market logic. In this study, MBC is seen to be principally involved in selling programme content and airtime directly to sponsors. This has profound impact on programming because the objective of MBC is to directly sell content for cash, resulting in more direct involvement of funders than is the case, usually with advertisers. McManus on the other hand concentrates on advocating that market-driven journalism is guided by the objective to produce content to attract specific audiences who can then be sold to advertisers. According to McManus, market-driven competitive environments attract the largest possible audience advertisers will pay to reach. In this case, the impact of commercial compulsions is more indirect than in the case of sponsor-dependent market-driven journalism. Although in both cases the same operational principle may operate, advertiser-supported journalism differs significantly from sponsor-supported in terms of the impact on programming. This study demonstrates this distinction by the higher level of programme producers' recall of evidence about sponsor involvement in programming, as compared to advertising. On the other hand, mention must be made that while a comparison of revenue generated from advertising and revenue from sponsorship would have given an indication of the dependency levels of MBC on either source, MBC documents conflate the two. Due to limitation of time, it was not possible to compile these from MBC revenue receipts, but further research in this area would be valuable.

The findings offer important insight into the mixed role of commercialisation on programming at MBC. While these finding cannot be simply generalised to other public

service broadcasters, they offer context-specific knowledge on MBC programming. Since emphasis was on establishing trends in programming decisions with the intent of inferring deeper logics, findings of the study have internal generalisability. Although deviant cases are reported, the study mainly focused on dominant themes and trends based on an information-rich sample. In terms of external generalisability of McManus' market theory of news production, my findings strongly suggest that there is need to draw a distinction between market logic operational in institutions dependent on sponsorship revenue and those dependent on advertising revenue because the implications of either on media output are different. It has also been found that commercial logic can be present even in public service institutions without necessarily compromising the public service mission to the extent that it is lost or even reduced to a minor role.

## **7.5. Recommendations**

### **1. Additional Research:**

This study is limited to giving an overview of the role of commercial logic in programming at MBC. The social impact of commercialisation on audiences has not been investigated. Since public broadcasting is not an end in itself, there is a need to investigate the social implications of commercialisation for example on minority interests, the poor, juveniles, formal and informal education. Such research might include a study programme content per se, listener perceptions and needs, advertiser needs and Malawi's commercial revenue-base potential.

This study only offers a partial understanding of the role of commercialisation on programming at MBC. There is a need for further research to investigate all aspects of commercialisation at MBC including a detailed feasibility of alternative funding systems and reevaluation of whether the current mix of Radio-One and Radio-Two programming and commercial involvement is appropriate.

### **2. Public Service Broadcasting Policy**

There is a need for a comprehensive and widely consulted public service broadcasting policy in Malawi. Given the provisions of the 1998 Communications Act, which provides for the reconstitution of MBC, establishment of a Malawi Communications Regulatory Authority and a publicly accountable MBC Board, formulation the country's broadcasting policy in general and MBC editorial policy, in particular, should be guided by public service principles. Commercialisation is crucial to the survival of MBC and other private broadcasters. In the case of MBC, the principle behind commercialisation should be the facilitation of effective communication among various communities in Malawi.

### 3. MBC Commercialisation Strategy:

There is a need for systematic and research-informed commercialisation strategy for MBC. Commercialisation on an ad hoc basis as is currently the case brings management problems as there is no vision or target. MBC needs insulation from undue pressures from a financing system in order to plan and manage broadcast services. A researched and considered strategy for commercialisation would necessitate a redefinition of the role of MBC within the context of emerging competition from private broadcasters. This would include re-appraising the mandate, broadcasting functions, financing system and management structures.

An explicit editorial policy to guide conduct in relation to commercial material and clients in broadcasting should be written. At the same time a code of advertising standards to guide advertisers and sponsors on ethical and fair advertising practices in public media should be developed and enforced by an independent and publicly accountable body.

### 4. Place of Public Service Broadcasting in Broadcasting Policy

In view of the global changes affecting public service broadcasting, there is a need to strategically assess the long term roles and revenue sources of private broadcasting and public broadcasting. Such an assessment should not only consider national interests, but regional and global dimensions as well.

## 7.6. Summary

This study is an investigation of the role of commercial logic on programming at MBC. The investigation is conducted in the context of world-wide commercialisation of public service broadcasting and it explores how this increase in dependence on commercial revenue is affecting media output. Situated within the political economy approach, in which the economic is the determinant, the market theory of news production was adapted to programme production. This study has found overwhelming evidence of commercial logic overriding public service obligations in programming decisions at MBC. However, the commercial logic has not changed the prime goal of MBC, that of providing a public service. Revenue generation is a subordinate aim to the prime goal. Since commercialisation at MBC appears more ad hoc than a deliberately planned policy, caution has to be taken that the subordinate aim does not erode the primary goal of MBC. As such recommendations have been made in order to maximise on the potential commercialisation offers to public service broadcasting when governments cannot cope with funding obligations.

## Appendix I

### Interview Schedule:

Q1. Have you experienced any changes in programming due to use of commercial revenue at MBC over the past four years?

*If yes, probe for changes in content, style, format, scheduling.*

*If no, explain.*

Q2. What is your opinion about these changes?

Q3. What do you think about programme diversity over the past four years?

Q4. What do you think about programmes that solely promote a particular commercial product or service?

Q5. When you want to introduce a new programme on the network, what are some of the major considerations you make?

Q6. In terms of initiating new programmes on the network, where do you think most ideas is coming from?

Q7. Why have some programmes been retained on the network for so long?

Q8. For what reasons are some programmes removed from the schedule?

Q9. Do you, as producers, go out looking for sponsors?

Q10. If yes, what are your experience with sponsors?

Q11. Do you produce any sponsored programme?

*If yes, probe for experiences with sponsors as regards content, format of presentation, time of programme broadcast, choice of presenters, choice of interviewees and meaning of a to a producer.*

Q12. What guidelines do you have about adverts which can be used in you programmes?

Q13. Do you have the power to reject sponsorship on placement of an advert in your programme?

Q14. In terms of freedom in your work, what has been the state in the past four years?

Q15. When you look at government and the business community who has more influence on your output?

Q16. What do you understand by commercialisation?

Q17. What are its implications? *Probe for benefits, threats, problems and opportunities*

Q18. What is your opinion on the current funding system of MBC?

Q19. What would be the ideal way of funding MBC?

Q20. What is the mandate of MBC in your opinion?

Q21. Is commercialisation helping in its realisation?

Q22. If MBC relied fully on commercial revenue, do you think MBC could remain a public service broadcaster?

Q23. What is there to insulate you as producers from undue influence from commercial players?

Q24. What's the way forwards for MBC, in your opinion?

**Appendix II: Interview Analysis**

<u>Natural Meaning Units</u>	<u>Themes</u>
<p><b>Interview X</b></p> <p>X1. It is an encouragement on the part of us producers and presenters because on the contracts there are things like talent fees and production fees which go to the presenters and producers</p> <p>X2. Money we get from government is not enough so this money helps us in a number of ways like right now we have a lot of travels covering presidential functions.</p> <p>X3. On the trips I gain a lot of experience. You work extra hard. You know the teams that go out to cover events are not exactly the same people and the corporation selects the best from the staff</p> <p>X4. Everybody is complaining about not getting enough money and the talent fees and production fees I am talking about are like an extra income so every body tries to work hard.</p> <p>X5. You know sometimes sponsors choose producers or presenters for their programmes. So in that way it is an incentive so every body works hard to have his programmes sponsored</p> <p>X6. We do not compromise standards. It's the professional way of producing programmes, which attracts sponsors.</p> <p>X7. It is the professional way of doing things like introducing conflict in programmes, the way you play around with language, your accuracy, creativity, the way you pronounce your words the way you balance</p>	<p><b>Interview X</b></p> <p><i>She thinks commercial revenue contributes to worker motivation through financial gains</i></p> <p><i>She believes commercial revenue supports the operations of MBC including political coverage</i></p> <p><i>She believes opportunities availed by events supported by commercial revenue introduce competition and hard work among producers</i></p> <p><i>She says commercial revenue provides extra-income to merge salaries.</i></p> <p><i>She says producers compete to get sponsor attention to their programmes</i></p> <p><i>She believes professionally produced programmes stand a better chance of being sponsored</i></p> <p><i>She defines professionalism as including creativity, use of language and accuracy</i></p>

<p>X9. I have argued that we know the professional way of producing programmes and we know who can handle the kind of programme you are looking for. So it's not always that we bow down to clients' requests unless we agree with their choice as good in our eyes as professionals. When we feel he is not the right producer, we always advice the client that we cannot have that. But that's the much we can do. If they insist, we back out.</p>	<p><i>She believes MBC should have the ultimate power of deciding a producer of a programme rather than clients. She says while MBC has done this at times, it backs off when a client insists</i></p>
<p>X10. Sometimes we have found out that they [producer and client] had a private conversation because of close relationship between the two. We have discouraged that.</p>	<p><i>She says some producers make private arrangements for sponsorship of programmes. This is unethical.</i></p>
<p>X11. If someone came to me and said I want to advertise, I'll tell him to go to the business department to meet our sales representatives, who are going to tell him what happens for him to enter into contract with MBC. But when it comes to things like actual production of programmes then that is left to the producer.</p>	<p><i>She follows the right procedures when handling clients by limiting her scope of dealing to production</i></p>
<p>X12. I have noted that at one point we were bowing down to clients and that resulted in lowering of our standards. For instance, standards stipulate that a 30-minute sponsored programme will carry three one-minute spots but we ended up having four or five spots. In a 60-minute programme, we are supposed to have six one-minute spots, but what did we see, may be ten spots.</p>	<p><i>She says programme standards are lowered by overloading programmes with more commercials than stipulated by the standards.</i></p>
<p>X13. MBC mission statement says we are here to educate, entertain and inform and some of these firms come with material to educate about their firm. I think it's in line with our mission statement. This is a national radio station and programmes, which involve the whole nation, should be</p>	<p><i>She believes that any client whose material involves the nation should be allowed to publicise or sell on MBC.</i></p>

<p>allowed.</p> <p>X14. As a public radio, we have made a lot of people aware of what services we can offer. So we have a lot of companies and government departments with ideas on programmes that have gone on schedule.</p> <p>X15. It is not a schedule we looked at a few years ago. For insistence this is December, if you came back in August I would still be able to say on Mondays from sign-on to sign-off. We have these programmes. But now the programme schedule changes because programmes are coming. Some programmes will run for 4 weeks.</p> <p>X16. I think it's [programme changes] a welcome development because MBC makes money and people like new things</p> <p>X17. I think we are broadening [programme diversity]. There are many things taking place, which we are covering as a service to listeners.</p> <p>X18. I think that if you stick to what you have been doing in your programme I do not think sponsorship is going to change anything in your programme except that you will listener to messages from the sponsor.</p> <p>X19. Most programme ideas especially project programmes mainly come from outside MBC and we have had very little input from producers because we have a terrible shortage of staff. This retards creativity.</p> <p>X20. Some programmes have been retained for long on the network because they are interesting, they involve the listener by presenting facts and let the listener form his own judgement.</p>	<p><i>She thinks MBC has opened up to public and private institutions to bring programme ideas for broadcast.</i></p> <p><i>She says programme turnover is so high that one cannot predict which programme comes when as was the case in the past.</i></p> <p><i>She thinks high turnover of programmes is a positive development because it brings novelty and money for the corporation.</i></p> <p><i>She thinks MBC programming base is diversifying as a variety of programmes get introduced.</i></p> <p><i>She believes introduction of commercial material in programmes does not significantly affect a programme apart from listeners receiving additional messages from sponsors.</i></p> <p><i>She says people outside MBC initiate most programmes introduced on the network because MBC producers are understaffed. This she thinks retards creativity among producers.</i></p> <p><i>She observes that interesting programmes that involve a listener are retained on the network for long.</i></p>
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<p>X21. Those which have been removed, its because they had no interesting subjects or were badly produced or there was nobody to produce or present them.</p>	<p><i>She observes that programme are rested because they are boring, badly produced or without producers.</i></p>
<p>X22. I think freedom is decreasing because we still have interference especially in current affairs programmes, but for the musicals and features, there has not been any change.</p>	<p><i>She thinks political interference is high in current affairs programmes</i></p>
<p>X23. Economically there has not been much interference like political.</p>	<p><i>She thinks political interference is more intense than influence from programme sponsors</i></p>
<p>X24. I do not think MBC is commercialising, because a commercial radio station will strictly depend on commercial revenue, while MBC is just trying to help government to run the national station.</p>	<p><i>She thinks commercialisation is total dependence on commercial revenue</i></p>
<p>X25. The market is very narrow with the coming in of other radio stations; everybody is scrambling for the same market. MBC will still survive because of government subvention.</p>	<p><i>She thinks the source of commercial revenue is too small to sustain many commercial radio stations</i></p>
<p>X26. In terms of output, [in the context of this competition] I think there will be a big battle, because you need to have good producers who are creative. Whoever gets good producers will have a good advertising market.</p>	<p><i>She thinks competition for commercial revenue will lead to a contest for good producers</i></p>
<p>X27. This will not lead to bias towards entertainment, because it is easy to reach the top but its is difficult to stay there. Whoever goes for cheap things will not last.</p>	<p><i>She thinks the cheap will not drive out the good because listeners will support the good</i></p>
<p>X28. I guess we have to work harder to make commercials and make good money for MBC to be sustainable</p>	<p><i>She believes MBC staff should work harder to attract advertisers and sponsors</i></p>

<p>X29. Using the same mission statement MBC should think more about the listener and what he wants.</p>	<p><i>She wants MBC to be more listener centred than now</i></p>
<p>X30. We are not doing the informing so that people know. We are doing a lot of educating because the democracy is young and there is a lot of political interference. There are no go areas, yet there are lots of things people must know.</p>	<p><i>She wants MBC should concentrate on the function of information than education and entertainment</i></p>
<p>X31. I think it [full commercialisation} is not possible because the new Act still puts us under the control of a minister and head of state. Even if we went fully commercial we will still be under the control of government</p>	<p><i>She believes MBC cannot be autonomous from government control even after full commercialisation</i></p>
<p>X32. Government is too much in control. For example, licenses recently issued have been issued so that there is no local news broadcast on commercial stations.</p>	<p><i>She thinks Government is controlling broadcasting to its advantage.</i></p>
<p>X33. This radio station is a mouthpiece of government and government needs a mouthpiece. So where does government go if all radio stations were independent? Until our democracy matures, I do not see us being independent.</p>	<p><i>She believes government use of MBC as a mouth-piece is justified in a young democracy</i></p>
<p><b>Interview Y</b></p>	<p><b>Interview Y</b></p>
<p>Y1. We are in more financial problems now. Despite having more adverts on radio MBC has an overdraft of close to four Million Kwacha, which shows that commercial revenue is not working</p>	<p><i>She thinks recourse to commercial revenue has not improved the financial standing of MBC</i></p>
<p>Y2. Most people don't want to advertise of Radio-Two because it is confined to confined to specific areas which radio-one can reach</p>	<p><i>She believes advertisers want maximum reach</i></p>
<p>Y3. Major advertisers are big companies, which manufacture detergents which are normally used in rural areas.</p>	<p><i>She believes advertisers target rural population</i></p>

<p>Y4. It has encouraged news writers because at the end of the month they claim some money for all sponsored news bulletins</p>	<p><i>She says commercial revenue offers financial rewards to news writers</i></p>
<p>Y5. Adverts placed between news bulletins are time consuming in that news is reduced from ten minutes to eight minutes</p>	<p><i>She observes that news sponsorship has reduced new-time by two minutes</i></p>
<p>Y6. Time reduction for news means less work</p>	<p><i>She thinks news writers have less time to work on a sponsored news bulletin</i></p>
<p>Y7. Sponsor's names are posted on our notice boards and every editor knows which news bulletin is sponsored by who Malawi Railways is in financial problems and we have had stories showing negative impact of these difficulties but you consider that these people are sponsoring that lunch bulletin. So there is no way we write something contrary to what the advertisement says and place it in the same news bulletin</p>	<p><i>News Editors are conscious not to offend news sponsors with stories that contradict sponsorship messages.</i></p>
<p>Y8. Fortunately, most of sponsors of news do not make news. Malawi Railways is the only one I find problematic because they try to persuade people to use their facilities when their services are poor.</p>	<p><i>She thinks news censorship due to fear of losing sponsors is occasional because most sponsors are not in the news bulletin.</i></p>
<p>Y9. There are no guidelines on what advertisements in the news should be. The sales department works it out and we are just told this bulletin has been sponsored by such and such.</p>	<p><i>Personnel in the news department do not decide who is to sponsor news and form of advertising</i></p>
<p>Y10. I do not recall of any sponsor whose adverts have been rejected. What we are made to believe is the corporation has no money and that we need money.</p>	<p><i>She says it is instilled in her that the organisation requires money and she is not aware of any advertiser who has been turned down.</i></p>
<p>Y11. For news bulletins there is a commercial spot at beginning of the news and another at the end and on changeover</p>	<p><i>She says a news reader also reads an acknowledgement of sponsorship half-way</i></p>

<p>cue the presenter says” this news bulletin is brought to you by such and such who do this and this.</p>	<p><i>the news bulletin</i></p>
<p>Y12. The advertiser message is almost part of a news bulletin because it is inter-spaced with the news bulletin. I think people have now got used to it and they know how to separate news from advertisements.</p>	<p><i>She thinks listeners may mistake an advertising message for news when a newsreader also reads sponsorship acknowledgements within a bulletin.</i></p>
<p>Y13. We have maintained the same old style of presenting news. We want to start a new style where interviews and presentation of news are inter-linked rather than separated. However, there is some officialise before we start.</p>	<p><i>She says the news format has not changed although there are plans to do so.</i></p>
<p>Y14. Some of our programmes have been affected by commercial activities. For example, we had Press review and its Chichewa Counter-party, Zomwe Nyuzipepala Zalembe coming back to back. But they have been separated by a sponsored programme and the Chichewa edition comes after nine in the evening when most people are asleep. I think this is bad because when we were planning the programmes we had in mind listeners should not be delayed much to listen to either version of the problem</p>	<p><i>She says some commercial programmes have displaced current affairs programmes on the network</i></p>
<p>Y15. Normally reporters do their own job and bring stories which editors decide where an item goes. Where sponsors are involved, an item is sometimes pushed to other magazine programmes on the network.</p>	<p><i>She says news items that might be offensive to a sponsor are slotted into other current affairs programmes not sponsored by that particular sponsor.</i></p>
<p>Y16. Sponsored news bulletins get more attention from editors because they know they are benefiting from the work they are doing.</p>	<p><i>She gives more attention to sponsored news than unsponsored because of financial gains.</i></p>
<p>Y17 Since these [sponsored news bulletins] are reduced in time, editors concentrate more than when they have to prepare a ten-</p>	<p><i>She says reduction in news content enables her concentrate more on sponsored bulletins than unsponsored.</i></p>

<p>minute bulletin.</p> <p>Y18. Non-sponsored news bulletins carry more content because in news two minutes is a lot of time.</p> <p>Y19. We do not have specific bulletins of financial or economic news. We include such items as they come into the bulletin. When we started a programme called news desk we had a segment for business news but since Reuters and the internet are down, it has been difficult to get the kind of literature.</p> <p>Y20. Programme proposals are read by my boss who forwards it to management who scrutinise it and when it is accepted you are required to prepare a dummy and after listening to it is given a go ahead.</p> <p>Y21. Most of our programme ideas are copied from other radio stations</p> <p>Y22. I have never gone out looking for sponsors. We rely on the business department.</p> <p>Y23. We cannot longer rely on government funding</p> <p>Y24. Commercialisation involves government giving in some money and giving an organisation instructions to find its own additional money to meet any short fall.</p> <p>Y25. One of the benefits is that when you are financially independent you might be told one or two things but government control will lessen.</p> <p>Y26. There has been no impact on our operations except that one has to be cautious about who is sponsoring what.</p>	<p><i>She thinks sponsorship of news is a compromises news content</i></p> <p><i>She says the commercial sector is rarely in the news and there is no special slot for local business news.</i></p> <p><i>She says there is a standard procedure for initiating programmes on MBC</i></p> <p><i>She says most programmes on MBC are a replica of programmes on other outside stations.</i></p> <p><i>I follow standard procedure. I don't look for sponsors.</i></p> <p><i>She realises that government subsidies are an unreliable resource of revenue for MBC</i></p> <p><i>She thinks commercialisation involves government instructing an organisation to beef up its financial requirements from commercial activities.</i></p> <p><i>She thinks commercialisation would bring more autonomy from government.</i></p> <p><i>She thinks in news productions, sponsors have little more influence than a conscious not to harm them by negative items.</i></p>
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Y27. We have separate news types on radio-two. One comprises human-interest stories. At first we included presidential stories in Nkhani Zammaboma [human interest news] then we felt we were over publicising the president on the network with every news slot carrying his item in addition to live coverage of his engagements and then a re-broadcast in the evening. So we decided the slot should not deal with politics

*She says human-interest stories attract more listeners than political ones and sponsors are keen to advertise in human story news bulletins.*

Y28. Now that it [human-interest news] has found a sponsor, I am proud because someone is interested. In my opinion, I feel its ok since we are getting more and more business orientated and news can become part of business.

*She thinks news should be used to generate mass listenership to attract advertisers.*

Y29. Sponsors have not influenced choice of presenters or editors. It is only instances of sponsor-related items that I have noted open consciousness not to injure a sponsor.

*She says direct sponsor influence in news is not there apart from a consciousness not to offend them.*

Y30. I think government wants MBC to generate its own funds rather than depend on tax payers' money that's why they [MBC] have opened to anyone who wants to sponsor a programme.

*She thinks sponsorship is open to everyone because government wants MBC to generate its own funds.*

Y31. In news, there is more interference from government than sponsors. With sponsors, you might agree on one or two things and they do not demand too much as long as their adverts are aired accordingly and they monitor.

*She thinks political interference in news productions is more than that of sponsor, who she says are contented when their advertisements are aired according to contract terms.*

Y32. I have been told that the public mandate of MBC is to educate, entertain and inform. But since we do not have feed back, we don't know which programmes people may not want

*She feels that programmes are aired without proper audience research.*

Y33. In news our audiences are diverse and

*She believes news should cover issues in*

some people especially the elite complain that we are too local. But we know that for a rural Malawian to hear about a meeting his Member of Parliament addressed in his area covered on radio is big news.

Y34. If MBC was fully commercial it would be too independent and it would tend to impose ideas on people. That is a danger. For example if sponsors want a programme not favoured by your audience, you have no say because you are dependent on commercial revenue.

Y35. In most cases advertisers try to dictate how you air your programmes or how to shape a programme so that it attracts more customers. That is not always good. An example is our own news bulletins which are two-minutes shorter than before in content because of sponsorship.

Y36. MBC for the future should have more activities to generate funds of its own because government has become very unreliable in funding this organisation. Sometimes they give us less than what we are supposed to get for a specified period. For example MBC should launch fund raising activities such as selling of audiotapes, dub local music, transcribe current affairs programmes and sell elsewhere.

#### **Interview Z**

Z1. Use of commercial revenue has had an impact because the bulk of our resources comes from commercials as compared to government

Z2. I am disappointed that Radio-two is not getting as many commercials as I am though. I think clients are still gauging whether their adverts can reach target

*the local environment of a rural Malawian.*

*She thinks commercialisation of MBC would lead to prevalence of sponsors' interests than listeners'.*

*She feels advertisers and sponsors are usurping the powers of producers by dictating programme content and scheduling*

*She thinks MBC should continue to commercialise but source most of its funds from sale of media products rather than audiences to advertisers.*

#### **Interview Z**

*She thinks commercial revenue has played a financial role in supporting MBC operations*

*She is disappointed that what is designated, as a commercial channel is not attracting as many advertisers as expected.*

<p>audience.</p> <p>Z3. I would like to have competition programmes on Radio-Two. Several which were there have been withdrawn and one producer even wanted to use his own money to buy prizes.</p> <p>Z4. We are trying to attract sponsors in our programmes and we find that most sponsored prefer the evening times when we have more listenership than during the day</p> <p>Z5. Announcers need time to have a breather not just talk, play music. It gets monotonous. But we like to talk, play music and play commercials to give us time to think what to do next.</p> <p>Z6. Sponsored programmes are an incentive because one gets more money</p> <p>Z7. One thing I have not liked is that some sponsors suggest to us which presenter they want and therefore you find just few presenters presenting sponsored programmes. This de-motivates others. Now some producers and presenters have a workload, which is too much to handle, and programme quality goes down and we lose clients.</p> <p>Z8. Some producers have gone out looking for sponsors. I remember one did so and demanded too much money and we only knew about it when the sponsor raised a query that money demanded was more than MBC rates stipulate.</p> <p>Z9. When sponsors dictate names of producers, presenters, or programmes they want to sponsor, it affects the distribution of programmes responsibilities. You find some producers cannot handle certain types of programmes but we are forced to</p>	<p><i>She wants sponsorship in terms of prizes in programmes</i></p> <p><i>She says sponsors are only interested to buy slots that fall within prime time listening hours</i></p> <p><i>She says commercial materials in live programmes are professionally functional because they enable a programme presenter to think and they break a monotony of talk and music.</i></p> <p><i>She likes sponsored programmes because they bring her extra income.</i></p> <p><i>She observes that since sponsors want good producers and presenters for their programmes, good producers are overloaded and poor ones de-motivated</i></p> <p><i>She observes that a quest to woo advertisers has led to unethical behaviour by some producers who demand more money than MBC rates stipulate</i></p> <p><i>She observes that demand for particular producers or presenters from sponsors leads to a mismatch of producer competence and programme demands in programme allocation to producers.</i></p>
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allocate them these programmes because other producers are over-loaded.

Z10. The nature of programmes is affected [by client dictations]. Sponsors favour musical and request programmes. That is we have more entertainment programmes.

Z11. Entertainment programmes attract more listenership than talk educative programmes. This is why Radio-two has emphasis on musical programmes

Z12. Radio-two has 85 percent music. It's not one type of music. We cater for all age groups, so that we are assured of a wider listenership. We have music of the 60's, 70's, 80's, reggae, African music, and Malawian music.

Z13. Most of our talk programmes are aimed to age groups above the age of 17 because topics can involve politics.

Z14. Most music on radio-two is foreign but we are trying to push local music from 5 percent to 10 to 15 percent because these days Malawians favour Malawian music. If you walk every street, you find people playing Malawian music. Even our local bands are now moving away from foreign music, and we want to reflect that on radio.

Z15. We have a lot of ideas [about new programmes for the network} but we are failing to implement them due to lack of resources. We would like to have live coverage of some social events such as music festivals, beauty contest and even have five-minute snap live reports of sporting events over the week end. The problem is sponsors are very difficult to get because of the bad economic situation.

Z16. I remember during entertainers of the year, some sponsors withdraw sponsorship

*She notes that MBC is getting more entertainment orientated than before because sponsors favour musical and request programmes.*

*She notes that Radio-Two is musical in order to attract more listeners.*

*She points out that Radio-Two musical programming caters for diverse musical tastes*

*She points out that Talk programmes on Radio-Two are mainly targeted at age groups above 17.*

*She says less than 10 percent of the music on Radio-Two is local Malawian music.*

*She says new programme ideas which are not backed by sponsorship are not being implemented*

*She says in hard economic times, even traditional sponsors of programmes*

of their time slots and prizes to best entertainers last minute. These are big companies like Level Brothers, Southern Bottlers and Carlsberg Malawi Breweries who have been sponsoring us for years.

Z17. In terms of programme content, client's request to include material of their choice, is viewed in terms of whether it is in line with my programme outline and aim. If it is outside, I reject it. However, there have been cases when material of a programme is against a commercial content. That I censor. An example is when a church minister talked about youth morality through abstinence from sex and the sponsor was a distributor of condoms whose adverts promoted the use of condoms. I did not use the item in the programme.

Z18. On Saturday and Sunday there are two programmes at noon which are sponsored by local breweries, they sometimes appeal to the youth to take traditional beer in order to be tough. I think the monetary is, here overshadows the moral aspect of our broadcasting. I can imagine Christians coming home from church on Saturday or Sunday and as they settle for lunch, they are bombarded with messages about the advantages of drinking traditional beer. But what can we do. We are looking for money.

Z19. These programmes [local breweries] are not our programmes; they are imposed on us. We don't have any say. They even chose their own presenter from outside MBC. Our role was just to audition them. You must know that these shown are live and the presenters produce their own shows.

*withdraw sponsorship*

*She weighs any sponsor requested programme content against the programme objectives. I reject any material that is not in line with programme objectives. I censor material that would injure my programme sponsor.*

*She thinks monetary priorities are beginning to overshadow moral aspects of programming to the extent that little thought is given about listeners' response to such broadcasts.*

*She observes that there is live sponsored programme by a local brewery in which the sponsor has full control of programme production, presentation and content.*

<p>Z20. Programme turn over on radio-two is very high because we remove any programme, which do not meet the target audience. Some have been removed to avoid duplication of Radio-one programming. Some of them were misallocated. For example, there was a jazz programme on Saturday afternoon. Noon is prime time and jazz is a minority programme. Although it appeals to the affluent, it is a minority taste so we removed it.</p>	<p><i>She says motivation for programme changes on Radio-Two include the need to air different programmes from Radio-One,</i></p>
<p>Z21. Some programme changes come from listeners who demand a particular programme.</p>	<p><i>She says listeners' views are incorporated in programming changes.</i></p>
<p>Z22. To my understanding, Radio-two is commercial so that ultimately we must be independent of government subsidies. I am disappointed this is not working and there are more competitors entering the market. The other problem is that most of the clients has contracts with radio-one and its like we are competing among our selves.</p>	<p><i>She understands that Radio-Two must eventually generate all funds for the operation of MBC.</i></p>
<p>Z23. Apart from educating, entertaining and informing, I think MBC should assist the business community. We should work in partnership so that they sell their goods and services through advertising with us.</p>	<p><i>She wants MBC to support the business community to grow so that MBC gets adequate revenue in return.</i></p>
<p>Z24. Emphasis on radio-two is entertainment. The other two functions are left for radio-one.</p>	<p><i>She notes that radio-two is principally an entertainment channel.</i></p>
<p>Z25. Commercialisation would help us raise money so that we introduce more programmes.</p>	<p><i>She thinks commercialisation would facilitate introduction of more programmes.</i></p>
<p>Z26. MBC must diversify its fund raising sources to include fun-clubs and sell of MBC paraphernalia such as pens and T-shirts.</p>	<p><i>She wants MBC to expand the revenue base to non-programme related activities.</i></p>

Z27. I am not aware of any written code of practice for producers. We use memos in order to maintain standards. As a national broadcaster, we need to maintain standards.

Z28. We value our culture and use of explicit language is forbidden. I remember a youth programme produced and presented by the youth used words like pubic hair and genital organs. We told them to tone down.

Z29. I think news should not be sponsored because it is serious and advertising reduces credibility. News is watered down especially when the newsreader reads an advertiser's message at change over cue.

Z30. Some advertisements contain factually incorrect material and these are brought together with news. For example, the National Bank of Malawi claims it is the first bank to be on the internet, which is factually incorrect.

**Interview Q.**

Q1. Changes are not coming from MBC but from outside, from people who are coming to introduce programmes

Q2. They tell us how they want their programmes to run and as producers we advise and meet them half way because we are cash strapped.

Q3. We have been forced to shorten the duration of some of the existing programmes, (which may be equally important to the nation) because a sponsor has demanded that slot and we need to generate money for MBC.

Q4. I have noted that there are too many comedies on the network now. You find seven or eight comedies sponsored by

*She says she is not aware of any written code of practice for programme producers at MBC.*

*She says MBC upholds moral standards in language used on radio*

*She believes sponsorship of news affects credibility.*

*She observes that advertising messages are sometimes factually inaccurate.*

**Interview Q.**

*She says changes in MBC programming are a direct result of external influences.*

*She says initiators of programmes bring in conditions upon which their programmes should be produced. Sometimes these are discussed and compromises arrived at but the wish of the client usually prevails.*

*She says decisions to shorten duration of some existing programmes are sometimes forced by monetary considerations.*

*She observes that MBC has more comedies*

<p>different organisations using the same pair of comedians. Listening to comedies is ok but I doubt if people really take the messages behind the laughter seriously. I think they laugh and lose the meaning of the message</p>	<p><i>than ever before and wonders if they are effective tools for communication.</i></p>
<p>Q5. The ideal should be that we have our own programmes and we ask clients to sponsors them or introduce artists like the comedians</p>	<p><i>She wants MBC producers to lead in initiating programmes, which would then be sold to clients or artists.</i></p>
<p>Q6. We also have soap operas and the writers are not experienced enough to give us what a soap opera is. If these programmes were not sponsored, I doubt if they would still be on the network.</p>	<p><i>She believes some soap opera have outlived their usefulness but continue running because there is a sponsor behind them.</i></p>
<p>Q7. I remember we had a programme like Listeners Views which gave feedback to us about our programmes and issue in the country but it was phased out to make way for a sponsored programme.</p>	<p><i>She recalls that some useful programme have been removed from schedule to give way to sponsored programmes.</i></p>
<p>Q8. When we went into a multiparty system of government, I thought MBC programming would be flexible but we are still dictated by the MBC act and I do not see aggressive programmes. Although programmes are not singing praise for the ruling party, but still they lean too heavily towards government.</p>	<p><i>She observes that MBC programming is still politically biased towards the ruling party</i></p>
<p>Q9. Given a choice, I would say programmes introduced by outsiders are better than the dictates from government. Press conferences are politically motivated, our news is a catalogue of events for political and government officials, outside broadcasts are political. The funders are calling the tune.</p>	<p><i>She thinks programmes initiated by sponsors are more valuable than politically charged programmes.</i></p>
<p>Q10. MBC cannot be self-sustaining because it has a huge overdraft in the banks</p>	<p><i>She thinks MBC is not a sound financial</i></p>

<p>because of the cash budget and the introduction of radio -two without a matching subsidy from government makes it even worse. I also believe MBC mismanages funds.</p>	<p><i>footing to start on a course of economic self-sustenance.</i></p>
<p>Q11. In the past, it was easy to go out on a recording tour covering the whole country. We do not do that any more because there is no money and cars to do so.</p>	<p><i>She says countrywide collection of materials is seldom due to lack of transport facilities.</i></p>
<p>Q12. The calibre of people who have recently been recruited is low resulting in too few people doing work while others loiter. I know of a producer who has seven programmes to produce a week.</p>	<p><i>She thinks recruitment is not based on merit at MBC and programme production suffers</i></p>
<p>Q13. Sometimes I go out to town; record interviews with two people to fill a thirty-minute programme yet professionally an insert should not be more than three minutes long. But in our circumstance want do I do; any good speakers fill airtime.</p>	<p><i>She says to fill airtime, interviewees who are eloquent and from near the station are chosen because MBC cannot afford to send producers long distances.</i></p>
<p>Q14. Standards have gone down because good producers are promoted and they concentrate on administrative jobs. programmes are produced by mediocre personnel</p>	<p><i>She believes producers should be promoted to continue production work rather than to administrative positions.</i></p>
<p>Q15. Standards have gone down. As producers in a third world country, I am supposed to be a jack of all trades. I initiate programme ideas, record in the field, edit and even self-record my programmes</p>	<p><i>She thinks lack of specialisation contributes to low standards in programme production.</i></p>
<p>Q16. The standard procedure for introducing programmes is that a programme idea in put on paper sent to your boss who might change or pass it they you introduce a programme on air.</p>	<p><i>She says there is a standard procedure for introduction of programmes within MBC.</i></p>
<p>Q17. With most of programme ideas coming from outside MBC, we have had to</p>	<p><i>She says duration of some programmes has</i></p>

<p>cut most of our programmes to accommodate numerous demands for airtime.</p> <p>Q18. Most of the new programme [introduced by outside initiative] are educational programmes not entertainment</p> <p>Q19. Once upon at time MBC made programme schedules from sign-on to sign-off according to what how it thought a programme fits the audience. Now there is a clamour for prime time, between six and nine in the evening and sponsored programmes are crammed in this slot.</p> <p>Q20. Some programmes like <i>Pamtondo</i> have survived for long not because people like them but because they are slotted at awkward times between two and four in the afternoon and many sponsors are not keen on to sponsor such slots.</p> <p>Q21. Most of the programmes that have been rested have made way for sponsored programmes</p> <p>Q22. Most of the new programmes are talk programmes. I know people need education but too much is tiresome. Although we try to make it infotainment, information and entertainment, people get bored with these patronising programmes. It brings boredom interspersed with comedies which I believe are not effective.</p> <p>Q23. I cannot risk having any of my productions on Saturday or Sunday afternoon because any time there is a sporting event and its sponsored my programme will not go on air. Priority is given to sponsorship.</p> <p>Q24. There is a tendency among us producers that when we are handling a programme that is not sponsored we do it</p>	<p><i>been reduced to make way for new sponsored programmes.</i></p> <p><i>She observes that educational programmes are most initiated by (MBC) outsiders.</i></p> <p><i>She observed that currently the programme turn-over is so high that there are many programme schedule changes and most of these changes are concentrated between six and nine in the evening when listenership is highest in a day.</i></p> <p><i>She thinks some old programmes still remain on the schedule because no sponsor is interested in the time slots they are placed.</i></p> <p><i>She says some unsponsored programmes have been rested just to make way for sponsored programmes.</i></p> <p><i>She thinks there are there is an overload of talk programmes and comedies aimed at educating the listener.</i></p> <p><i>She says priority is given to sponsored programmes over unsponsored ones.</i></p> <p><i>She gives more attention and time to sponsored programmes than those not</i></p>
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<p>half-heartedly. A sponsored programme is given extra attention and more time.</p> <p>Q25. When I produce sponsored programmes, I know at the back of my mind that there is a watchdog out there. Those who sponsor programmes want value for money. On the other end, it forces us to throw professionalism out of the window as we try to please the sponsor. I remember producing a safe motherhood programme sponsored by a company which sales tinned milk. I could not talk about breast feeding as the best for children because my sponsors were advertising baby milk products and therefore encouraging bottle-feeding.</p> <p><b>Interview P</b></p> <p>P1. Commercialisation entails some financial autonomy of an organisation. First an organisation has to be on sound financial footing which gives it some kind of autonomy</p> <p>P2. I would prefer that MBC should be autonomous from government but given the present financial situation, getting something from government and something from commercial revenue is good for us.</p> <p>P3. The mere fact that government ploughs money to us makes government think they must have 60 or 70 percent of the voice on radio. The Minister makes these statements when he says MBC is fully funded by government and whether you like it or not government has a stake in what happens on MBC.</p> <p>P4. Government has an upper hand than the business community. Take for example outside broadcast, four or five-hours of broadcast whether you have any commercials or not. Any presidential function or any function deemed state-</p>	<p><i>sponsored.</i></p> <p><i>She has a conscious about sponsor expectations when producing sponsored programmes and this leads to inclusion of material against my moral conscience.</i></p> <p><b>Interview P</b></p> <p><i>She defines commercialisation as entailing financial autonomy</i></p> <p><i>She wants MBC to be autonomous from government but at present public funding is still necessary.</i></p> <p><i>She observes that subsidies from government are a source of control over MBC productions.</i></p> <p><i>She feels there is more influence from government than the business community who finance MBC.</i></p>
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<p>function takes precedence over commercial slots.</p> <p>P5. If we sit down and develop strategies across the board, MBC can be economically independent of government.</p> <p>P6. One problem is that MBC is over employing and 40 percent of financial resources goes to salaries. If we can invest in technologies, strengthen the human resource base and devise cost saving measures MBC can stand on its own.</p> <p>P7. MBC mission is to save the masses, educate them, inform them and give them entertainment. To some extent take them on board because they own the organisation by virtue of being a public utility</p> <p>P8. The current set up is just geared towards just dishing out information to the people out there. If for example you take news bulletins, its MP so-so has called upon; the president has asked people to; the chairman of so-so has urged people to... You will hardly hear that village headman X has implored government to do so-so. From a programme point of view there was a programme called <i>Fumbi Ndiwe Mwini</i> in which people in rural areas were articulating their views, talking freely castigating their members of parliament and this did not go well with government. I wish we had programmes like that where people would table their day today problems, aspirations and need.</p> <p>P9. MBC can be a public broadcaster when it is commercial because most of our audiences are in rural areas and these are the very people advertisers want to reach</p> <p>P10. I feel companies can sponsor programmes where people articulate their</p>	<p><i>She is optimistic that MBC can attain economic independence from government.</i></p> <p><i>She believes MBC should invest in new technologies, streamline operations and reduce staff.</i></p> <p><i>She thinks MBC mission should be people/listener-centred.</i></p> <p><i>She thinks MBC is characterised by top-bottom communication and there is need to intensify the bottom-up approach.</i></p> <p><i>She believes that MBC would still be people centred when fully commercial because the majority of the people who are targeted by advertisers and sponsors live in rural areas.</i></p> <p><i>She thinks if MBC demonstrated to be a</i></p>
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<p>views if MBC shows resolve that these are the people's views and rural people are interested in these issues.</p>	<p><i>people-centred utility sponsorship of programmes that debate issues of rural people would be sponsored.</i></p>
<p>P11. There are three players here, the politicians, business people and the average Malawian. It's the politicians who think programmes are sensitive. I don't think business people would even think of such programmes [rural issue productions] as controversial.</p>	<p><i>She thinks politicians are more sensitive to popular criticism and controversy than the business community.</i></p>
<p>P12. Use of commercial revenue has not had any impact on our operations. The problem is that when revenue is collected it is handled like an ordinary budget of MBC and given its own priorities my section has not benefited.</p>	<p><i>She feels MBC should introduce an accountability accounting system.</i></p>
<p>P13. MBC has problems prioritising expenditure. Instead of putting priority on programming all departments are treated as being at par and even sections which need heavy funding like news and current affairs are equated to administration sections. When I submit a request for transport to cover an event, I am told there is no money. Yet within the same week an administrative member of staff is placed in a hotel which costs MBC 40 thousand Kwacha.</p>	<p><i>She feels MBC should set funding priorities to departments that have direct bearing on out-put.</i></p>
<p>P14. We depend on telephones and we rely on the good will of newsmakers or agents to collect news. It is unhealthy because when a reporter decides that the event is not news worthy he feels it makes life difficult. At times reporters have to conduct empty interviews, which are then aired.</p>	<p><i>I depend on telephones to collect news or the good will of newsmakers and agents to travel for reporting purposes.</i></p>
<p>P15. Since we do not have transport to go out current affairs producers have inadequate material for their programmes and they fill airtime with empty interviews.</p>	<p><i>I find some of the interviews that go on air devoid of any substance and balancing of views is difficult without means of transport.</i></p>

P16. The situation is bad when one wants to come up with eyewitness reports. You cannot use a telephone to describe damage caused by floods

*I have difficulties writing first witness reports or on-sight reports let alone surveillance of community issues using a telephone as a primary tool.*

P17. I think sponsorship of news bulletins is all right because sponsors do not dictate on content. It is a world trend and I have been to radio stations where this is also happening

*She thinks content of news bulletins is not influenced by sponsors.*

P18. Even in case of a negative news event against a sponsor, I would not have any problem carrying it in the bulletin. We have carried stories about people complaining about prices of Level Brothers products when they sponsored news. Sponsorship was withdrawn but I doubt if it was because of our news items.

*P18. She believes MBC can, as has sometimes done, carry a negative news items against a sponsor of a news bulletin without fear of financial loses. Although one sponsor, who has stopped sponsorship, she doubts it was a result of that item.*

#### **Interview R**

R1. The biggest change due to use of commercial revenue is that we are no longer adhering to our mission as public service broadcasters. We are more dictated by clients who bring what they want on radio.

#### **Interview R**

*She says increased use of commercial revenue has lead to sponsor dictates to programme producers at the expense of serving the listener.*

R2. The past three to four years has seen increase in drama programmes because they believe drama is the best way to communicate. We have for example within three hours three to four drama programmes.

*She observes an increase in drama programmes in the network.*

R3. We accept because we want money otherwise it does not make scheduling attractive to our listeners.

*The power of a producer to schedule programmes according to communication principles has been reduced by demands from clients to schedule their programmes within prime time.*

R4. Our mandate is to cater for the rural person in terms of development programming. In other countries, they have

*She believes MBC should concentrate on*

<p>radio stations addressing rural broadcasting. But we combine rural broadcasting and commercial broadcasting</p> <p>R5. Some programmes are formatted the way clients want them not the way we as broadcasters think would be best for communication.</p> <p>R6. In drama, there is no control over content and production skills and I wonder if some of the dramas are really communicating. MBC has one or two drama producers and you find that in a week they have to come up with ten productions. Drama is not produced, people just get into a studio and do what they think is radio drama.</p> <p>R8. I think we are going towards didactic drama where you just spoon-feed people or we are going towards entertainment only. Either way is not effective because we need edutainment where education and entertainment combine.</p> <p>R9. If I had a bright idea about a programme whose target audiences listens between six and nine in the evening, which does not have commercial benefit but has educational and informational benefit, I would not be able to do so because the slot is dominated by clients who want to put across their messages.</p> <p>R10. I think MBC programming is narrowing instead of diversifying because we broadcast any programme a client wants and these are usually similar programme types.</p> <p>R11. I think clients come to radio-two not because they think its effective-but because Radio-one is congested. For example Rãdio-two targets the youth and the youth in Malawi do not have disposable incomes.</p>	<p><i>producing development programmes for the rural persons</i></p> <p><i>She observes that sponsors sometimes dictate programme formats to producers.</i></p> <p><i>She says producers at MBC have lost control over content and production skills due to involvement of sponsors in production process.</i></p> <p><i>She observes that drama is moving towards mere amusement or moral or information spoon-feeding.</i></p> <p><i>She says new non-sponsored programmes hardly find a time slot during evening prime hours regardless of value.</i></p> <p><i>She thinks MBC is producing more of the same programmes because sponsors favour certain types of programmes.</i></p> <p><i>She believes Radio-Two as a commercial channel is targeting a population with low disposable incomes.</i></p>
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We are luck that many people are attracted by music and radio-two is 80 percent music

R12. In my work, use of commercial revenue has affected me negatively in terms of aesthetic, beauty and professionalism. There was a time I used to produce one drama programme a week and we even got international awards. But today I producer three a week. That's not a joke. Even if I was good producer I don't think I would be doing a good job to all three.

R13. Ever organisation that is bringing a drama programme is putting a condition that I produce their programme. MBC being cash strapped is being forced to accept those conditions I have too many drama programmes to produce. I cannot put in every thing.

R14. When I talk about professionalism, I talk about the write. Some organisations engage a writer to write these plays for them but when it comes to my desk I find that the script is not good enough but I am forced to produce it because the project owners have accepted the content.

R15. The impact from outside is greater than what producers are giving. What happens is that once you start a programme initiated by an MBC producer and someone with money demands your slot, you kick out the programme initiated by a producer to facilitate the coming in of sponsored programmes. For example, I just got a telephone from the business department that Malawi Bureau of Standards wants a slot between six and eight in the evening. I have looked at the schedule and there is a slot for Dinnertime Listening where we play cool music for listeners who are dinning. I have go rid of dinnertime

*I can no more produce work with beauty, aesthetic and professionalism because I am overloaded with programmes.*

*I am forced into productions by conditions from sponsors that I produce or no sponsorship.*

*I produce drama from sub-standard scripts because sponsors of the programme vet the script before I see it.*

*She says priority is given to introduction of sponsored programmes over existing non-sponsored programmes even when it comes to changing broadcast time.*

listening in favour of the Malawi Bureau of Standards talk programme. Imagine people are eating and you are giving them talk programme. I don't think its ideal but because we need the money, we are forced to get rid of an appropriate programme.

R16. I wish it was possible for producers to go out and look for sponsors because they would be able to explain the best format of advertising in a programme so that you bring in advertising without affecting the professional shape of a programme as is happening now. For example instead of six adverts in a 30-minute programme three would be effective if placed where there is conflict or any attention catcher.

R17. I producer a civic education drama programme called Sikadzakokha. In between the scenes, I am supposed to play a jingle about human rights. I wonder why the author doe not build these messages in the plot of the drama. At the end the narrator also summaries the lesson from the play. It means the writer is failing to say what he wants in drama content. Although I am still fighting, if the client says that is what they want, what powers do I have against corporation that need money?

R18. In terms of volume sponsored and unsponsored programmes balance out because quite a balk of unsponsored programmes come late in the evening where no sponsor is willing to buy such slot.

R19. Sponsored programmes get better attention because they are produced. What happens is that if I have six programmes in a week and three of them are sponsored, I will start with the three sponsored one and handle the rest later However, because we have too many programme both suffer.

*She thinks producers would strike more professional deals with advertisers or sponsors if they were given opportunity to look for sponsors for their programmes. She feels in drama pre-determined break-intervals for commercial slots, reduce creativity as plot development has to revolve around and climaxes worked towards these intervals.*

*She feels soap opera present problems to many writers who opt to use narration instead of build a message into a drama plot.*

*She thinks the balance in the volume of non-sponsored and sponsored programmes is a result of a large volume of non-sponsored programmes in slots not favoured by advertisers and sponsors.*

*I give first attention to sponsored programmes although I believe both sponsored and non-sponsored programmes suffer because of production overloads placed on me.*

<p>R20. For us to exist we have to bring in commercialisation. With the cash budget, it makes it very difficult for an organisation like MBC to plan.</p>	<p><i>She believes commercial revenue offers a more secure complement to monthly remittances of subvention.</i></p>
<p>R21. I would opt to completely go commercial and get away from government. This would attract more advertisers who shun us because we are a government arm.</p>	<p><i>She thinks complete commercialisation will remove political attachment from MBC.</i></p>
<p>R22. For this [Commercialisation] to happen many people have to be declared redundant. A workforce of over 500 is too much considering the number of hours we broadcast</p>	<p><i>She feels MBC is overstaffed and commercialisation should entail retrenchments.</i></p>
<p>R23. We should divide ourselves so that radio-one is public and radio-two is commercial and make sure there is professional handling of programmes. I am not saying Radio-one should be dull. We need edutainment</p>	<p><i>She thinks MBC should separate the commercial channel from public service</i></p>
<p>R24. Commercialisation is a threat to service the public because we are serving commercial interest of people with money. Public broadcasting is about a common man in rural areas and he is not targeted in these commercially sponsored programmes because he does not have money.</p>	<p><i>She believes MBC is serving the interests of sponsors and advertisers more than the common person in the rural areas.</i></p>
<p>R25. The benefit of commercialisation is that we survive and are still employed.</p>	<p><i>She says commercial revenue is keeping the organisation financially afloat.</i></p>
<p>R26. We need to sit down as management to see how to insulate ourselves from undue pressures. Unless we see it as a problem even a written code of conduct will not work</p>	<p><i>She thinks MBC producers must acknowledge that sponsors are exerting pressure on programming.</i></p>
<p>R27. I think news is a serious thing and it's</p>	

<p>enough to put an advert at the beginning and end not in the middle of a bulleting. After all, you capture the same audience.</p>	<p><i>She feels advertising within a news bulletin is over-killing, news adjacency is enough.</i></p>
<p><b>Interview S</b></p>	<p><b>Interview S</b></p>
<p>S1. During weekends, I have to use public transport to come to work yet I still see MBC vehicles ferrying people in town. What costs are being cut here?</p>	<p><i>She feels some cost cutting measures at MBC are ineffective and inconvenient to producers.</i></p>
<p>S2. In programming we are failing to improve because there is no money to enable us stockpile programmes. We depend on sponsors to go the field to collect material.</p>	<p><i>She says lack of transport facilities hampers production work.</i></p>
<p>S3. Because of lack of transport reporter, upon who we depend for programme material input, just seat in the office</p>	<p><i>She says collection of programme material is a problem because of transportation problems.</i></p>
<p>S4. Lack of sponsorship for current affair programmes is good for us because we have freedom to select and include any current affairs issue without dictates of a sponsor. I remember one sponsor wanted us to interview people on the advantages of products advertised and this was not relevant to the current affairs programme.</p>	<p><i>She thinks lack of sponsorship for current affairs programmes enables her to produce programme without sponsor influences.</i></p>
<p>S5. We consider whether we can manage to have adequate material for a proposed programme and whether the audience would accept the programme. We do this by soliciting listeners' views</p>	<p><i>She says availability of adequate programme material and listener acceptance are major factors considered before a programme is introduced.</i></p>
<p>S6. However, what is happening now is that when a producer comes up with a programme proposal, funding to implement the idea is a problem.</p>	<p><i>She observes that producers are reluctant to propose new programme because funding is a major determinant to implementation.</i></p>
<p>S7. Producers also fear politicians and internal censorship is the result.</p>	<p><i>She says internal censorship is high among producers because of political interference.</i></p>
<p>S8. We don't have economic news slots</p>	



<p>because most of the reporters are not comfortable with economic news.</p> <p>S9. I fear that if we have a lot of sponsored programmes we are going to lose direction because most of the sponsors dictate what we should do. For example, one client who bought airtime to promote a school walks around the studio when you are broadcasting his programme.</p> <p>S10. The advantage of Commercialisation is that MBC will have money</p> <p><b>Interview T</b></p> <p>T1. Commercials are bringing an overload on our schedule. Listeners have complained that it disturbs the flow of programmes</p> <p>T2. Although our revenue collection has improved, we are worse off because MBC cannot sustain operations from a cash budget system.</p> <p>T3. The relationship between production and commercial section is poor. We separate things For example I do not expect sales people to tailor messages for target audiences. And the result is flaws in English and vernacular language.</p> <p>T4. MBC is getting more campaign programmes than before. The problem is priorities in scheduling. For example, a health programme sponsored through the European Union has taken the place of a current affairs programme that reviewed activities for the week.</p> <p>T5. There is also too much talk on radio. For example from five to six in the evening on Saturday, there is a flow of talk programmes. This is overloading the ear</p> <p>T6. I would like to point out that in the course of introducing sponsored</p>	<p><i>She says MBC has no business reporters.</i></p> <p><i>She fears that full high dependence on commercial revenue would bias MBC to interests of sponsors.</i></p> <p><i>She says commercial revenue is helping MBC break even.</i></p> <p><b>Interview T</b></p> <p><i>She observes an overload on MBC programming schedule due to commercial material.</i></p> <p><i>She says the cash budget system is undermining gains from commercial revenue.</i></p> <p><i>She believes producers should design commercial materials for broadcast.</i></p> <p><i>She thinks priority is given to sponsored programmes when scheduling programmes.</i></p> <p><i>She thinks there is an overload of talk programmes initiated by sponsors.</i></p>
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<p>programmes there is a lot of duplication. We need to streamline. For example, there should be a central producer for drama. I do not mind the sponsorship but there must be some kind of control over how messages come through.</p>	<p><i>She observes that handling of programming on an ad hoc basis has resulted in duplication.</i></p>
<p>T7. I do not like to be used in what I call cheap programmes. As producers, we get peanuts for the work we do. I am not happy when a producer goes out in a tattered car, booked in low rate accommodation and given meagre allowances. I know GTZ and ADMARC do this.</p>	<p><i>She thinks production fees and talent fees are below market value and MBC personnel are subjected to unfair treatment when left in the hands of sponsoring organisations.</i></p>
<p>T8. Our commercial rates are miserable. I prefer talking to clients myself to negotiate my package. For example, I was supposed to get K400.00 for producing a programme and this would be taxed. I have negotiated that I get the cheque directly from the client, tax-free.</p>	<p><i>She negotiates directly with sponsors to get higher returns for producing sponsored programmes. Even if this means tax evasion.</i></p>
<p>T9. I demand payment because these programmes give us additional pressure. They are not our traditional schedule and we do not have vested interest ourselves. As public broadcaster, I would love to concentrate on other areas, but I am pressured to do these campaign programmes.</p>	<p><i>She regards programmes initiated on the network by sponsors as external to her normal work.</i></p>
<p>T10. Without commercial revenue, we could have poor programmes. I remember there was a time when I would hardly be in the office. I was always out there to collect material from one end of the country to another. That is hardly possible today. For the last six months, our department has not sent out producers to collect material in the field on the traditional vote of MBC.</p>	<p><i>She says sponsorship of programmes has helped in information gathering processes</i></p>
<p>T11. MBC programmes are made without prior research on a problem that the programme purports to answer. We are like chatterboxes on a campaign for what we</p>	<p><i>She believes MBC should intensify audience research in order to serve</i></p>

<p>perceive to be a need in society. We are just noisy gongs just because somebody has money to make us sing. For example, the Public affairs Committee would like us to sing sings of political campaign on radio, not necessarily because there is need established from research that people need those messages.</p>	<p><i>listeners better.</i></p>
<p>T12. I would prefer that a client spells out a need for a programme to a producer and a producer verifies the need through research and then comes up with a communication strategy to meet that need. I noted this at the BBC.</p>	<p><i>She believes that producers should only execute programme ideas after careful research and strategic planning.</i></p>
<p>T13. I dint think we are playing our rightful role as producers in public broadcasting. I appreciate that like every where, our profession is subjected to political and economic pressures. We need a regulatory body to protect the interests of journalist.</p>	<p><i>She wants an effective advocacy body to protect interests of journalist</i></p>
<p>T14. As a programme maker, there is a song out there that we are freer than now than before. However, I do not think thing have changed in this building. This is my 15<sup>th</sup> years. There are things I would have loved to do but I do not. For example presidential re-broadcasts take a lot of airtime and it is professionally notorious. To begin with, we have live outside broadcasts which disturb the schedules and revenue collection. Nevertheless, we cannot do anything let alone suggest that engagements of the president are reported in packages in order to save time.</p>	<p><i>She feels constrained to make suggestions for improvement because of strong political influences at MBC.</i></p>
<p>T15. Covering the president live is deadly expensive but our managers argue that its does not have any negative impact on our budget. I do not share that view.</p>	<p><i>She thinks MBC spends and loses too much money on covering presidential engagements.</i></p>
<p>T16. Sponsored programmes get preference among producers. The language of today is</p>	

money. It's not that I just want money. But I want something a little more organised and organisation calls for some money. For example when the material I recorded for some programmes has been exhausted, I would like to have the freedom to go out in the field to collect fresh material.

T17. I am conformable when sponsors provide freedom that I go out to collect material because I know MBC would only manage to take me to areas around the city of Blantyre. Going around the city of Blantyre is not professional.

T18. If I were chief executive of this place, I would say to hell with any money from government because I believe we can make more money than we need. MBC has no competitor in Malawi and the culture that government will give us money is spoiling us. We have a dependency syndrome.

T19. MBC mandate is to serve the people by doing what they feel is good for them. I don't think we are doing this because we are not based on research.

T20. Commercialisation would bring in specialisation. Today producers and presenters are jacks of all trades leading to areas of conflict. For example a voice that does religious programmes was heard advertising condoms, Its professional indecency. But I do not think we can avoid it in the present circumstances.

#### **Interview V**

V1. Lets face it, advertisers want maximum mileage and our transmission range on radio two is smaller than radio-one.

*She says producers' mindset is concerned about accumulating money. She says money is necessary for sustenance of production.*

*She says sponsorship enables collection of broadcast material from further afield than MBC can afford.*

*She thinks there is a legacy of relying on government subvention among staff at MBC, which blinds them from realising that MBC can be economically independent of government finances.*

*She thinks MBC could serve the public better by basing programmes on proper audience research.*

*She observes that lack of specialisation some times compromises the integrity of radio personalities.*

*She thinks Radio Two is not attracting as many sponsors as expected because of low catchment area.*

<p>V2. Target audience for Radio-two is the youth who constitute 65 percent of our population. We however, also try to cover for various age groups.</p>	<p><i>She says Radio-Two targets the youth, who are in majority in Malawi.</i></p>
<p>V3. Radio-two audiences include groups such as the Asian Community and White Community particularly in urban areas. Realising the sizeable Asian Community, which is an integral part of the Malawi population, two hours of programming a week were designed to cater for this groups distinctive musical taste through the medium of music inter-spaced with relevant cultural, entertaining, informative and educational short talks. This aspect was aimed at encouraging inter-cultural relations.</p>	<p><i>She says programming on Radio-Two is also targeted at minority communities to encourage intercultural relations and their participation.</i></p>
<p>V4. This [programme for Asian Community] was also aimed at attracting sponsorship from the Asian Community by embracing them in the station's main live programmes. We have not been successful. You know the Asian Community has got money, they run the economy of this country so to speak</p>	<p><i>She says niche programming on radio-Two was in anticipation of financial gains MBC would get from programme sponsorship, although this has not yet materialised.</i></p>
<p>V5. In the absence of any audience research, it's hard to find out why the Asian Community is not supporting the programme. It's presented by one of their own people and they play their own music but it has not attracted sponsorship.</p>	<p><i>She thinks audience research is important In order to identify the needs of different audiences.</i></p>
<p>V6. We are not selective about who comes to advertise. In sponsored programmes whose whole programme content aims at promoting sales of sponsor's product we try not to over kill. For example in a programme like Nokia Telephones, we avoid saying Nokia every five seconds.</p>	<p><i>She says apart from common sense standards against over-advertising, anybody has freedom to advertise and promote products through special programmes</i></p>
<p>V7. Although in some countries one finds advertising bureau commissions to regulate</p>	<p><i>She thinks regulatory bodies on advertising are not powerful enough to regulate set</i></p>

<p>amounts of advertising in programmes, these bodies are weak in terms of enforcing content restrictions on promotions</p> <p>V8. Advertisers and sponsors are allowed to buy any airtime on radio-two. I would have no problem with a beer brewing company that wants to sponsor a children programme.</p> <p>V9. We control every thing we broadcast. Any thing contrary to cultural norms we do not allow on air. Explicit language such as " I will take you to bed" is not allowed and this also applies to music that would degenerate our nation.</p> <p>V10. Radio-two does not allow religious bodies to put their messages on air because we don't know what they propound.</p> <p>V11. The programme turn over on Radio-two is very high. Any programme that is not appealing is struck out. We ask people to write in as part of feed back.</p> <p>V12. I think by coming up with very attractive programmes sponsors get interested. An example is " Call the Doctors" which was not sponsored initially but when people patronised it by calling live to consult a doctor in the studio, a sponsor came up.</p> <p>V13. I don't think the advert of private commercial radio poses any threat to MBC because their coverage is limited and we have a long-standing reputation. Of course, a few sponsors owe us money and they have gone to the other stations.</p>	<p><i>limits to amount of product promotion in a promotion programme.</i></p> <p><i>She believes Radio-Two should not have regulations on advertising or sponsorship.</i></p> <p><i>She believes cultural norms have to be upheld in all productions.</i></p> <p><i>She says Radio-two does not allow programme sponsorship by religious organisations.</i></p> <p><i>She says Radio-Two is listener sensitive.</i></p> <p><i>She believes that it is programmes appealing to audiences which attract sponsorship rather than sponsorship attracting audiences.</i></p> <p><i>She is confident that MBC can use long relations with clients to dominate the commercial market.</i></p>
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**APPENDIX III: THE MALAWI BROADCASTING CORPORATION WEEKLY PROGRAMME  
SCHEDULE: 1995**

Name	Frequency	Duration (Minutes)	Language	Broadcast Time*
<b>CURRENT AFFAIRS</b>				
Newsreel	5	50	E	PN
Zoonjezelapo	5	50	C	PN
Voices in the news	5	20	E	PE
Kalowa Kayaza	5	50	C	PE
Newsroom Malawi	1	27	E	OA
Tiyeni Tionenso	1	20	C	OA
Nkhani zaku ndi uku	3	45	C	OM
International Cross Roads	1	30	E	OE
What's On/ Kulinji (sports magazine)	1	12	C+E	PE
Saturday Sports Dairy/Kulinji	1	10	C+E	PN
Africa Sabata Ino	1	12	C	PA
Tiyeni Tinonenso	1	20	C	PA
Here and Beyond	1	45	E	OE
Saturday Sports Speacial/ Nkhani Za masewero	1	20	E+C	OE
Kodi Mwanva	1	10	C	PE
Spotlight on Africa	1	20	E	OE
<b>NEWS</b>				
Headlines	84	168	E+C	O. TIME
Bulletins	56	560	E+E	P. TIME
<b>WOMEN'S' PROGRAMMES</b>				
Zokonda Amayi ( Women's' Musical Request)	3	71	C	OM
Mayi ndi mayi Mzake (Women's Discussion)	1	15	C	OM
Pantondo (Women's" talk)	2	60	C	PA
Women's' World	1	25	E	PA
Mmera mpoyamba (For perents)	1	30	C	OA
Zam'banja (Family)	1	15	C	OM
<b>EDUCATION</b>				
Dokotala Wapa wailesi (Health)	2	10	C	OM
Road safety	1	12	E	PE
Malangizo a Panseu	1	12	C	OA
Writers' Corner	1	20	E	OE
University Magazine	1	20	E	OE
Schools programmes	5	148	E+C	OM
Upgrading talks for teachers	2	30	E	OE
Sukulu Zakwacha	1	15	C	OF
Kalondolondo	1	15	C	PE
Top of the Class	2	100	E	OE
<b>AGRICULTURE</b>				
Ulimi Wamakono ( Modern farming)	3	150	C	OA
Bwalo la Alimi	1	50	C	PN
Nkhani Za Alimi Athonje	1	5	C	OA
Ulimi MMAestiteti	1	50	C	PA
Zokomela Alimi (Farmers Musical Request)	1	50	C	OA
<b>CHILDREN PROGRAMMES</b>				
Nthawi ya Ana	2	54	C	PA
Panazale	1	27	C	PA
<b>YOUTH PROGRAMMES</b>				
Nyimbo Za Achunyamata	1	50	C	OA
Chuma Cha Mwanawanga	1	27	C	OA

Name	Frequency	Duration (Minutes)	Language	Broadcast Time*
<b>SOCIAL MOBILISATION PROGRAMMES</b>				
Progress in Development	1	30	E	OE
Dokotala wapa Wailesi	1	5	C	OM
Fumbi ndiwe Mwini (Self-help)	1	27	C	PA
Mwatiyendera (Self-help)	1	30	C	OA
Kulera (Family Planing)	1	15	C	OA
Mtundu Wathu	2	10	C	OM
<b>Cultural Programmes</b>				
Nyimbo Za Mabandi	2	54	C	OA/OE
Tidziwane ndi Oimba ( Musician Portrait).	1	42	C	OA
Zam'maboma	4	168	C	OA
Nzeru Nkupangwa	1	50	C+E	PE
Pabwalo (Discussion).	1	30	C	PE
<b>GENERAL ENTERTAINMENT PROGRAMMES</b>				
Tadzuka (Morning Show)	6	300	C	PM
Morning basket	6	300	E+C	PM
Hits of the 80's	1	50	E	OE
City To City	2	100	C	OE
Zatsopano (New albums)	1	15	C	OA
Top Tunes	2	105	E	OA/OE
African beat	2	105	C	OA
Jazz Beat	1	25	E	OE
Mwatandala (Sundowner)	2	40	C	OA
Saturday Special	1	30	E	OE
Personality shows	5	740	C	OM
Country Music	1	55	E	OE
Half Hour Show	1	30	E	PE
Pop Sounds	1	42	E	PA
Greetings by Post card	1	55	E	OE
1:20 Show	1	40	E	PA
Your Choice	1	60	E	PA
Saturday Night dancing party	1	55	E	OE
Zamchipatala	2	60	C	OM
Whitex Club	1	30	C	OM
Sunday Morning Show	1	50	E	PM
Sundown reggae	1	30	E	PE
Song book days	1	42	E	OM
Morning Star	4	180	E	OM
Tikuyankhani (Q&A)	1	15	C	OE
Muzikonderanji? (Request)	1	30	C	OA
Zamake Dzana ( Old Music)	1	30	C	OE
Kale Langa (Old Songs)	1	50	C	PN
Zimene Mwatipempha	9	325	C	PN
Za Asikilali	1	58	C	PN
Sewero la Sabata Ino (Drama)	1	30	C	PE
Pamajinga (Drama)	6	60	C	PE/PM
<b>OTHERS</b>				
Prayers	10	234	E+C	O TIME
Spirituals	3	115	E+C	O TIME
Stock Brooking	1	5	E	OM
Wakutsina Khutu ( Counselling)	1	15	C	OA
Kwanu n'kwanu (request for citizens abroad)	2	64	C	PE
Guest of the Week	1	30	E+C	OE
Mixed Bag	1	30	E+C	OE
Maganizo A Omvera ( Listeners Views)	1	35	E+C	PE

**\*LEGEND FOR LISTENING TIME**

OM: ORDINARY MORNING (5-6, 7-12 AM)

PM: PRIME-MORNING (6-7 AM)

PN: PRIME NOON ( 12:00-1:30 PM)

OA: ORDINARY AFTERNOON (1:30-2PM, 5-6 PM) PA: PRIME AFTERNOON (3-4 PM)

OE: ORDINARY EVENING (8PM- MIDNIGHT) PE: PRIME EVENING (6-8 PM) Source of legend: MBC, 1992



APPENDIX IV: SUMMARY OF PROGRAMME CHANGES AT MBC RADIO-ONE: 1995-98

NAME	DESCRIPTION	DURATION	SPONSORSHIP
MASAF	To make communities aware of self-help project funding facilities on any developmental projects	5	Malawi Social Action Fund (project)
Khembo Private Secondary School	Promotion of a secondary school	30	Khembo private Secondary School
Level's Golden Show	Promotion of Level Brothers Products	5	Level Brothers Ltd.
Candlex Comedy Corner	Commercially orientated comedy to promote Candlex Limited Products		Candlex Ltd
Inu ndi Chilengedwe/Yo u and the Environment	Sensitising listeners on environmental issues and solutions		Ministry of research and Environmental Affairs (project)
Kulera	Family planning Awareness campaign		Banja la Mtsogolo (NGO in family planing initiatives)
Business Spectrum	Dealing with business issues	15	Commercial Bank of Malawi
Mdula Moyo	Musical programme directed at AIDS issues	20	Project Hope (NGO)
Titsitsimuke	Religious music		None
Privatisation/Zog ulitsa Makampani a Boma	Sensitisation and mobilisation of public to government privatisation programme		Privatisation Commission ( project)
Kodi Mwamva?	Stories about the bizarre, odd in social and scientific world.		None
Science in development	Research and science issues in Malawi		None
Kale Langa	Musical programme on individual's favourites		None
Kaimbani A Malawi	Contemporary local music supported with guitars		None
Tsogolo La Atsikana	Promotion of girl education		Gable (project)
Straight talk	Youth related issues	30	UNICEF (project)
Business Zing'ono zing'ono	Promotion of small scale business enterprises		NAHIBA
Ulimi Wa M'maestate	Estate farming especially tobacco		ARET
Usodzi wa Lero	Deals with fisheries resources in Malawi		GTZ (project)
The Pride of Malawi	Awareness of Malawi's tourism potential	30	None
Malawi: The Warm Heart of Africa	Awareness of Malawi's tourism Potential		Ministry of Tourism
Takulandirani	Awareness of tourism potential in Malawi		Ministry of Tourism
Ndife Anzanu	Sensitisation on Police reform programme	15	Malawi Police Force

NAME	DESCRIPTION	DURATION	SPONSORSHIP
Music parlour	Heavy rock music		none
Vision 2020	Community participation in the formulation of the country's vision	15	Vision2020 (Project)
Zimachitika	AIDS Soap Opera	30	UNICEF
Kalondolondo	Traces history of places and issue of interest	15	none
On the Powerline	Promotional programme for ESCOM	10	ESCOM
Water Comedy	Water conservation	10	Yes
Reggae Time	Music	30	none
Announcer's choice	Music	10	none
Mlakatuli	Poetry recitals	15	Population Services International
Consumers' rights	Awareness campaign on right of consumers	15	Consumer Association of Malawi.
News in Chitumbuka, Chilomwe, Chisena, Chitonga	News	5 minutes each	non
Tirele	Family planning messages	10	Banja La Mtsogolo (NGO)
Joyce Banda Foundation	Promotion of a girls' secondary school	15	Joyce Banda Foundation
Focus on the Nation	Phone-in discussions on national issues	30	none
Telephoni yoyenda nayo	Promotion of cellular phones	15	yes
Tsogolo la Ana athu	Counselling on child care	15	none
Window on Health	Deals with health issues	15	yes
Tiyankhuleni	Phone-in	20	none
Titukule Ulimi	Modern farming practices	15	Ministry of Agriculture
Stock market Update	News from stock exchange	15	Stock brokers
Universal's Choice	Promotion of company products	5	Universal Industries Limited
Tiri Pantchito	Labour issues		
Investment corner	Investment promotion in Malawi	15	Malawi Investment Promotion Agency
Moneymen Corner	Promotion of Banking facilities	5	National bank of Malawi
Frontline Training Associates	Promotion of training facilities	5	Frontline Training Associates
Knowledge for Development	Promotion of consultancy services	10	Think Tank NGO (yes)
Tikambilane	Discussion on family planning	15	Banja La Mtsogolo
Drama	Conservation of natural resources	5	Adventist Development Relief agency
Stagecoach	Promotion of Stage Coach bus services		Stage Coach Ltd.
Aluso Ena	Discussion with little known artists	15	none
Bwezi la Alimi	Promotion of trading facilities of ADMARC	15	ADMARC
Constitution Comedy	Dramatisation of constitutional rights	5	GTZ
Chatsitsa Dzaye			

NAME	DESCRIPTION	DURATION	SPONSORSHIP
MUSCCO Comedy	Promotion of co-operative banking system	5	MUSCCO
Samala Moyo	Promotion of reproductive health	30	Ministry of Information
Moyo Saika pa Chiswe	Promotion of safe sex and reproductive health	15	Ministry of information
Solidarity/Mgwir izano			
Sikadza konkha			

**APPENDIX V: TABLE MATCHING OF PREDICTIONS OF AN ADAPTATION OF McMANUS MARKET THEORY OF NEWS PRODUCTION AND FINDINGS FROM MBC \* :**

THEORY PREDICTIONS	FINDINGS FROM MBC
Producers avoid using information which might cause harm to advertisers or sponsors of a programme.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-censorship to avoid harming sponsors.</li> <li>• Sponsors dictate names of presenters and producers of programmes</li> <li>• Sponsors dictate programme content and format.</li> </ul>
Producers air programmes which maximise audience size or appeal to wealthy niche audiences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Producers give more attention to sponsored programmes than non-sponsored ones.</li> <li>• Programmes for the rich minority (Asian Community and Rich) programmes for mass audience (youth).</li> <li>• English dominates programmes on commercial channel Move to increase local music content on commercial channel because such music is popular. 85% music on commercial channel. Introduction of attention catching (emotional appeal) news slot on the commercial channel.</li> </ul>
Producers prefer means of making inexpensive programmes over expensive ones in order to increase profitability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Format programming.</li> </ul>
Producers provide the least expensive mix of programmes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Live phone-in programmes to cut costs of travel to collect broadcast material (caller bears the cost). Thus, few feature, documentary and magazine programmes.</li> </ul>
The availability of a sponsor increases the probability of a programme being aired.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Availability or potential for sponsorship increases the chances of a programme being aired.</li> <li>• Collection of broadcast material is highly dependent on sponsorship Priority accorded to sponsored programmes during prime time scheduling of programmes.</li> <li>• Priority given to sponsored programmes when alterations to schedule such as truncation of duration, taking programmes off air and rescheduling are made.</li> </ul>
Producers avoid risky experimental programming which may not maximise return on investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No evidence</li> </ul>
Producers prefer consensual programmes to controversial or adversarial programmes which may create a splash in society.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No evidence</li> </ul>

**\* EVIDENCE OF PRESENCE OF PUBLIC SERVICE JOURNALISM AT MBC:**

- Belief that professionally produced programmes can attract sponsorship.
- Concern that programming is serving the interests of advertisers and sponsors.
- Producers persistently resisting dictates from sponsors.
- Sustenance of a range of non-sponsored programmes on the network including features, documentaries and magazine programmes.
- Programming for a nation-wide variety of needs and interests such as news in a variety of languages.
- Broadcast of national and international events such as presidential functions, parliamentary debates and news.
- More children's programmes on a commercial channel.
- Introduction of programmes that promote culture and civic

~~APPENDIX VI~~  
MALAWI BROADCASTING CORPORATION PROGRAMME SCHEDULE  
REVISED - 1ST JANUARY, 1996

MONDAY

- 04.53 : Call Sign <sup>News Headlines</sup>
- 04.55 : Pemphero la M'mawa
- 05.00 : News Headlines and Nkhani Mwachidule
- 05.05 : Programme Parade (in Chichewa up to Closedown)
- 05.10 : M.B.C. Morning Star (No)
- 05.55 : Dokotala wa pa Wailesi (Yes)
- 06.00 : Nkhani (Bulletin)
- 06.10 : Makani
- 06.20 : Tadzuka (Yes)
- 07.00 : News Bulletin
- 07.10 : ~~Morning Basket~~ <sup>MASAI</sup>
- 07.15 : ~~MORNING BASKET~~ (Yes)
- 08.00 : Nkhani Mwachidule
- 08.03 : Zokonda Amai (Yes)
- 09.00 : News Headlines
- 09.03 : Schools/Personality Show
- 10.00 : Nkhani Mwachidule
- 10.03 : Schools/Personality Show
- 11.00 : News Headlines
- 11.03 : Schools/Personality Show
- 11.45 : Mai ndi Mai Mnzake (No)
- 12.00 : Zimene Mwatipempha (No)
- 12.27 : Programme Parade (in Chichewa and English up to 18.00)
- 12.30 : News and Newsreel
- 12.50 : Nkhani ndi Zoonjezerapo (No)
- 13.10 : Ulimi wa Makono (Yes)
- 14.00 : News Headlines
- 14.03 : Za M'maboma (No)
- 14.45 : Umoyo ndi Chitukuko M'Malawi (Beethes)
- 15.00 : Nkhani Mwachidule

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BROADCASTING CORPORATION PROGRAMME SCHEDULE REVISED	
15.03	: Chuma Cha Mwana Wanga (Ns)
15.30	: Pa Mtondo (No)
16.00	: News Headlines
16.03	: Mabandi Athu (No)
17.00	: Nknani Mwachidule
17.03	: Likaomba Otheratu (No)
17.45	: Pamajiga (Yes)
17.57	: Programme Parade (in Chichewa and English up to 20.00)
18.00	: News Bulletin
18.10	: <del>Magazino a Omvera/Listeners' Views</del> MOREA (No)
18.15	: <del>Magazino a Omvera/Listeners' Views</del>
18.45	: Kalondolondo (Yes)
19.00	: Nkhani (Bulletin)
19.10	: Makani (No)
19.20	: Kalowa Kayaza/Za Nyengo (ZA KUNYUMBA YA MALAMUKU) (Yes)
19.30	: Kulera (EU)
19.45	: Business Spectrum (CBM)
19.57	: Programme Parade (in Chichewa and English up to closedown)
20.00	: News Bulletin
20.10	: Voices in the News and Weather Report (Today in Malawi)
20.30	: Progress in Development (Yes) - (Two weeks)
21.00	: Nkhani (Bulletin)
21.10	: M'dula moyo (Project Hope) yes
21.40	: Zimene Mwatipempha
22.00	: News Headlines and Nkhani Mwachidule
22.05	: Zimene Mwatipempha (No)
23.00	: News Headlines and Nkhani Mwachidule
23.05	: Hits of the 80's (No)
00.00	: News Headlines and Nkhani Mwachidule
00.05	: Epilogue
00.10	: Closedown (National Anthem)

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MALAWI BROADCASTING CORPORATION PROGRAMME SCHEDULE REVISED  
- 1ST JANUARY, 1996

TUESDAY

- 04.53 : Call sign
- 04.55 : Pemphero la M'mawa
- 05.00 : News Headlines and Nkhani Mwachidule
- 05.05 : Programme parade (in Chichewa up to Closedown)
- 05.10 : MBC Morning Show
- 05.40 : Dokotala wa pa Wailesi
- 05.45 : Pamajiga
- 06.00 : Nkhani (Bulletin)
- 06.10 : Makani
- 06.20 : Tadzuka (Yes)
- 07.00 : News Bulletin
- 07.10 : Morning Basket
- 08.00 : Nkhani Mwachidule
- 08.03 : Personality Show (No)
- 09.00 : News Headlines
- 09.03 : Schools/Personality Show (No)
- 10.00 : Nkhani Mwachidule
- 10.03 : Schools/Personality Show (No)
- 11.00 : News Headlines
- 11.03 : Schools/Personality Show (No)
- 11.45 : Nkhani za Uku ndi Uku (Yes) Campus
- 12.00 : Zimene Mwatipempha (No)
- 12.27 : Programme Parade (in Chichewa and English up to 18.00)
- 12.30 : News and Newsreel
- 12.50 : Nkhani ndi Zoonjezerapo
- 13.10 : Titsitsimuke (No)
- 13.45 : Privatisation
- 14.00 : News Headlines
- 14.03 : Za M'maboma (No)



14.45	:	Umoyo ndi Chitukuko
15.00	:	Nkhani Mwachidule
15.03	:	Nthawi ya Ana (No)
15.30	:	Phukusi La Moyo (No/Yes)
16.00	:	News Headlines
16.03	:	Tidziwane ndi Oyimba (No)
✓ 16.45	:	Ulimi M'maestate
17.00	:	Nkhani Mwachidule
17.03	:	Likaomba Otheratu (No)
17.40	:	Nkhani za Alimi Athonje (No)
17.45	:	Road Safety (Yes)
17.57	:	Programme Parade (in Chichewa and English up to 20.00)
18.00	:	News Bulletin
18.10	:	Nzeru Nkupangwa (Yes)
18.45	:	INVESTMENT
19.00	:	Nkhani (Bulletin)
19.10	:	Makani
19.20	:	Kalowa Kayaza/Za Nyengo (Za Kungumba ya malankhondo) (Yes)
19.25	:	<del>Qwano Nkwano (No)</del> <sup>country programme</sup>
19.30	:	<del>National Bank (F. Mkweluba)</del>
19.57	:	Programme Parade (in Chichewa and English up to 20.00)
20.00	:	News Bulletin
20.10	:	Voices in the News and Weather Report (Today in Parliament)
20.30	:	Guest of the Week/Tikudziweni (No)
21.00	:	Nkhani (Bulletin)
21.10	:	Spotlight on Africa (No)
21.40	:	Zimene Mwatipempha (No)
22.00	:	News Headlines and Nkhani Mwachidule
22.05	:	Zimene Mwatipempha (No)
23.00	:	News Headlines and Nkhani Mwachidule
23.05	:	Mabandi Athu (Repeat of Monday) (No)
00.00	:	News Headlines and Nkhani Mwachidule
00.05	:	Epilogue
00.10	:	Closedown (National Anthem)

Remains the same

WEDNESDAY

- 04.53 : Call Sign
- 04.55 : Pemphero la M'mawa
- 05.00 : News Headlines and Nkhani Mwachidule
- 05.05 : Programme Parade (in Chichewa up to closedown)
- 05.10 : M.B.C. Morning Star
- 05.55 : Umoyo wa Mtundu Wathu
- 06.00 : Nkhani (Bulletin)
- 06.10 : Makani
- 06.20 : Tadzuka (Yes)
- 07.00 : News Bulletin
- 07.10 : Morning Basket (Yes)
- 08.00 : Nkhani Mwachidule
- 08.03 : Zokonda Amai (Yes)
- 09.00 : News Headlines
- 09.03 : Schools/Personality Show (No)
- 10.00 : Nkhani Mwachidule
- 10.03 : Schools/Personality Show (No)
- 11.00 : News Headlines
- 11.03 : Schools/Personality show (No)
- 11.45 : Nkhani za Uku ndi Uku (Yes)
- 12.00 : Zimene Mwatipempha (No)
- 12.57 : Programme Parade (in Chichewa and English up to 18.00)
- 12.30 : News and Newsreel
- 12.50 : Nkhani ndi Zoonjezerapo
- 13.10 : Zokomera Alimi (Yes)
- 14.00 : News Headlines
- 14.03 : Kaimbani AMALAWI
- 14.45 : Tigawane
- 15.00 : Nkhani Mwachidule

MALAWI BROADCASTING CORPORATION PROGRAMME SCHEDULE REVISED

15.03 : ANU Panazale

- 15.30 : Pa Mtondo (EU)
- THURSDAY
- 16.00 : News Headlines
- 16.03 : Top Tunes
- 17.00 : Nkhani Mwachidule
- 17.03 : Likaomba Otheratu (No)
- 17.45 : Pamajiga (Yes)
- 17.57 : Programme Parade (in Chichewa and English up to 20.00)
- 18.00 : News Bulletin
- 18.10 : ~~(Financial Review)~~ *Candidex programme*
- 18.15 : *YOU AND THE ENVIRONMENT*
- 18.30 : Takulandirani
- 18.45 : Tsogolo la Atsikana (yes)
- 19.00 : Nkhani (Bulletin)
- 19.10 : Makani
- 19.20 : Kalowa Kayaza/Za Nyengo (*ZA KUNYUMBA YA MALAMULO*) (yes)
- 19.25 : ~~Kwanu Nkwanu~~ (No)
- ~~19.30~~ 19.30 : *Straight Talk*
- 19.57 : Programme Parade (in Chichewa and English up to 00.10)
- 20.00 : News Bulletin
- 20.10 : Voices in the News and Weather Report (*Today in Parliament*)
- 20.30 : Nyimbo Za Makedzana (No)
- 21.00 : Nkhani (Bulletin)
- 21.10 : Mixed Bag/Top of the Class (Yes)
- 22.00 : News Headlines and Nkhani Mwachidule
- 22.05 : Zimene Mwatipempha (No)
- 23.00 : News Headlines and Nkhani Mwachidule
- 23.05 : African Beat (No)
- 00.00 : News Headlines and Nkhani Mwachidule
- 00.05 : Epilogue
- 00.10 : Closedown (National Anthem)

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MALAWI BROADCASTING CORPORATION PROGRAMME SCHEDULE REVISED  
 --1ST JANUARY, 1996

THURSDAY

- 04.53 : Call Sign
- 04.55 : Pemphero la M'mawa
- 05.00 : News Headlines and Nkhani Mwachidule
- 05.05 : Programme Parade (in Chichewa up to Closedown)
- 05.10 : M.B.C. Morning Star
- 05.40 : Umoyo wa Mtundu Wathu
- 05.45 : Pamajiga (yes)
- 06.00 : Nkhani (Bulletin)
- 06.10 : Makani
- 06.20 : Tadzuka (yes) 6:30-6:45
- 07.00 : News Bulletin
- 07.10 : ~~Morning Basket~~ MASA:-
- 7.15 : Morning Basket (No)
- 08.00 : Nkhani Mwachidule
- 08.03 : Personality Show (No)
- 09.00 : News Headlines
- 09.03 : Schools/Personality Show (No)
- 10.00 : Nkhani Mwachidule
- 10.03 : Schools/Personality Show (No)
- 11.00 : News Headlines
- 11.03 : Schools/Personality Show (No)
- 11.45 : Nkhani za Uku ndi Uku (yes)
- 12.00 : Zimene Mwatipempha (No)
- 12.27 : Programme Parade (in Chichewa and English up to 18.00)
- 12.30 : News and Newsreel
- 12.50 : Nkhani ndi Zoonjezerapo (No)
- 13.10 : Kale Langa (No)
- 14.00 : News Headlines
- 14.03 : Za M'maboma (No)
- 14.45 : Umoyo ndi Chitukuko M'Malawi (

*Tiriga Investment  
 Zofa Thachi - 13 wks  
 97*



MALAWI BROADCASTING CORPORATION PROGRAMME SCHEDULE REVISED  
- 1ST JANUARY, 1996

FRIDAY

- 04.53 : Call Sign
- 04.55 : Pemphero la M'mawa
- 05.00 : News Headlines and Nkhani Mwachidule
- 05.05 : Programme Parade (in Chichewa up to closedown)
- 05.10 : Spirituals
- 05.40 : Umoyo wa Mtundu Wathu
- 05.45 : Pamajiga (yes)
- 06.00 : Nkhani (Bulletin)
- 06.10 : Makani
- 06.20 : Tadzuka (yes) CBM
- 07.00 : News Bulletin
- 07.10 : Morning Basket (yes)
- 08.00 : Nkhani Mwachidule
- 08.03 : Zokonda Amai (yes)
- 09.00 : News Headlines
- 09.03 : Schools/Personality Show (X6)
- 10.00 : Nkhani Mwachidule
- 10.03 : Schools/Personality Show "
- 11.00 : News Headlines
- 11.03 : Schools/Personality Show "
- 11.45 : yes ~~more~~ MOREA [Investigation] ZA KUGULISA MALUMPA  
A BOMBA
- 12.00 : Ziwene Mwatipempha (No) to
- 12.30 : News and Newsreel
- 12.50 : Nkhani ndi Zoonjezerapo
- 13.10 : Bwalo la Alimi (yes)
- 14.00 : Mapemphero (Muslim)
- 14.30 : Umoyo ndi Chitukuko M'Malawi

		TODAY'S SCHEDULE REVISIONS	
14.45	:	Sukulu za Kwacha (No)	
15.00	:	Nkhani Mwachidule	
15.03	:	Fumbi Ndiwe Mwini (Yes)	Sponsorship Suspended
15.30	:	Pa mtondo (No)	31/1/97 (Ndula Moy)
16.00	:	News Headlines	
16.03	:	Pop Sounds (Yes 15' only)	
16.45	:	Usodzi wa Lero (Repeat of Thursday)	(Yes)
17.00	:	Nkhani Mwachidule	
17.03	:	Likaomba Otheratu (No)	
17.45	:	Malangizo a pa Msewu (Yes)	
17.57	:	Programme Parade (in Chichewa and English up to 20.00)	
18.00	:	News Bulletin	
18.10	:	Comment	
18.13	:	Friday What's on/Kulinji (Yes)	
18.30	:	MBC Half Hour Show (Yes)	
19.00	:	Nkhani (Bulletin)	
19.10	:	Makani	
19.20	:	(Ndensayo) Kalowa Kayaza/Za Nyengo	
19.25	:	Candlex	
19.30	:	Big Ten (Yes)	
19.57	:	Programme Parade	
20.00	:	News Bulletin	
20.10	:	Voices in the News and <sup>es</sup> wather Report	(Today's Parliament)
20.30	:	The Pride of Malawi ( <del>Yes</del> ) (No)	
21.00	:	Nkhani (Bulletin)	
21.10	:	Theatre of The Air (No)	
21.40	:	Zimene Mwatipempha (No)	
22.00	:	News Headlines and Nkhani Mwachidule	
22.05	:	Zimene Mwatipempha (No)	
23.00	:	News Headlines and Nkhani Mwachidule	
23.05	:	Country and Western Music (No)	
00.00	:	News Headlines and Nkhani Mwachidule	
00.05	:	Epilogue	
00.10	:	Closedown (National Anthem)	153

MALAWI BROADCASTING CORPORATION PROGRAMME SCHEDULE REVISED  
- 1ST JANUARY, 1996

SATURDAY

- 04.53 : Call sign
- 04.55 : Pemphero la M'mawa
- 05.00 : News Headlines and Nkhani Mwachidule
- 05.05 : Programme Parade (in Chichewa up to Closedown)
- 05.10 : Spirituals
- 05.45 : Pamajiga (yes)
- 06.00 : Nkhani (Bulletin)
- 06.10 : Makani
- 06.20 : Tadzuka (yes)
- 06.55 : ~~Universal's Choice~~ (29/6/96)
- 07.00 : New Bulletin
- 07.10 : Morning Basket (No)
- 07.45 : ~~Stock Broking~~ MARKET UPDATE (yes)
- 08.00 : Nkhani Mwachidule
- 08.03 : Mapemphero
- 09.00 : News Headlines
- 09.03 : Science in Development (No)
- 09.30 : Whitex Club (Tatiuzani) (yes)
- 10.00 : Nkhani Mwachidule
- 10.03 : Song Book Days [Privatisation] ZOGULITSA NA KO. A BOMA
- 10.18 : ~~Song Book Days~~ (No)
- 10.45 : Upgrading Talks/Song Book Days
- 11.00 : News Headlines
- 11.03 : Zimene Mwatipempha (No)
- 12.00 : ~~Ministry of Health Campaign~~ Za Asilikali (No)
- 12.58 : Programme Parade (in Chichewa and English up to 18.00)
- 13.00 : News Bulletin -
- 13.10 : Nkhani (Bulletin)
- 13.20 : Saturday Sports Diary and Kulinji (Bata)
- 13.30 : Nyimbo Za Aanyamata ACITINY AMATA (Crown Fashions) (yes)
- 14.20 : Tinkanena (Repeat of Thursday) (yes)



- 15.00 : Muzikonderanji (No)
- 15.30 : Kumudzi (No)
- 16.00 : News Headlines
- 16.03 : Africa Sabata Ino (No)
- 16.15 : Saturday Special (No)
- 16.45 : ~~Chiri~~ ~~MASAF~~ MASAFA
- 17.00 : Fumbi Ndiwe Mwini (Yes) ~~as from 15/10/97~~ Kamboni Amalawi Tiri Pa ntchis
- 17.25 : MASAF
- 17.30 : Tiyeni Tionenso (No)
- 17.50 : ARA
- 17.57 : Programme Parade (in Chichewa and English up to 20.00)
- 18.00 : News Bulletin
- 18.10 : Tikuyankhani (Yes)
- 18.30 : Sewero La Sabata Ino (Yes)
- 19.00 : Nkhani (Bulletin)
- 19.10 : ~~Kalowa Kayaza~~ Makani ~~(Yes, Lowel)~~ Other Languages Bulletins
- 19.20 : Kodi Mwamva (Yes)
- 19.30 : Newsroom Malawi (No)
- 19.57 : Programme Parade (in Chichewa and English up to closedown)
- 20.00 : News Bulletin (weather)
- 20.10 : ~~Voices in the News and Weather Report~~ (-)
- 20.15 : Here and Beyond (Yes)
- 21.00 : Nkhani (Bulletin)
- 21.10 : Sports Special and Nkhani za Masewero (Yes)
- 21.40 : University Magazine (No)
- 22.00 : News Headlines and Nkhani Mwachidule
- 22.05 : Greetings by Postcard (No)
- 23.00 : News headlines and Nkhani Mwachidule
- 23.05 : Saturday Night Dancing Party (No)
- 00.00 : News Headlines and Nkhani Mwachidule
- 00.05 : Epilogue
- 00.10 : Closedown. (National anthem)

HSE

MALAWI BROADCASTING CORPORATION PROGRAMME SCHEDULE REVISED  
1ST JANUARY, 1996

SUNDAY

- 04.53 : Call Sign
- 04.55 : Pemphero la M'mawa
- 05.05 : Programme Parade (in Chichewa up to Closedown)
- 05.10 : Spirituals
- 05.45 : Sunday Service
- 06.00 : ~~Makani~~ Nkhani (Bulletin)
- 06.10 : Lemekezani Mulungu
- 06.30 : 3-way Zimene Mwatipempha (No)
- 07.00 : ~~Makani Nkhani Lemekezani Mulungu Nkhani~~
- 07.10 : 3-way Zimene Mwatipempha (No)
- 08.00 : News (Bulletin)
- 08.10 : Sunday Morning Show (?)
- 09.00 : Mapemphero
- 10.00 : Nkhani Mwachidule
- 10.03 : Zam'chipatala (No)
- 11.00 : Tiimbire Chauta
- 12.00 : News Headlines
- 12.03 : Nthawi ya Anyamata (No)
- 12.57 : Programme Parade
- 13.00 : News Bulletin
- 13.10 : Nkhani (Bulletin)
- 13.20 : One Twenty Show (yes) [palmolive]
- 13.30 : ~~Zatsopano Ulimi wa sime Estate~~
- 13.35 : ~~Ulimi wa sime Estate~~ Zatsopano
- 14.45 : ~~Wakutuwa Khutu~~ Wakutuwa Khutu ndi Nansi
- 15.00 : Your choice (yes) Candex/Robray
- 16.00 : News Headlines
- 16.03 : Mwatiyendera (No)
- 16.30 : M'mera Mpoyamba (No)
- 17.00 : Sundown Reggae (No)

TST

- File
- 17.30 : Ndife Anzani (yes)
- 17.45 : Mlakatuli (?)
- 17.57 : Programme Parade (in Chichewa and English up to 20.00)
- 18.00 : News Bulletin
- 18.10 : Weather Report
- 18.15 : Kodi Mwamva (?)
- 18.30 : Pabwalo (yes)
- 19.00 : Nkhani (Bulletin)
- 19.10 : Makani
- 19.20 : Mapemphero
- 19.57 : Programme Parade (in Chichewa and English up to closedown)
- 20.00 : News Bulletin
- 20.10 : Top of The Class (yes)
- 21.00 : Nkhani (Bulletin)
- 21.10 : Sports Special and Nkhani za Masewero (yes)
- 21.40 : Writers' Corner (No)
- 22.00 : News Headlines and Nkhani Mwachidule
- 22.05 : Chorus for Sunday (No)
- 23.00 : News Headlines and Nkhani Mwachidule
- 23.05 : Musical Parlour (No)
- 00.00 : News Headlines and Nkhani Mwachidule
- 00.05 : Epilogue
- 00.10 : Closedown (National Anthem)

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