

Media – Ethical policy summary

The ethical dimensions of investment in media related companies are becoming increasingly important especially as the use of electronic media pervades our lives. The lines between different types of media have become blurred as the world of television, newspapers and the internet increasingly overlap. It is particularly important that the CFB has a consistent methodology to apply to this area as at least 30% of the UK market is in some way media related.

Ethical themes

It is recognised that certain aspects of the media have positive ethical influences on society (e.g. freedom of information). However, a number of negative ethical themes were identified in a paper produced by the CFB in March 2000 and by the Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment in October 2000.

1. Sexual imagery
2. Violence
3. Abuse of power
4. Links to product marketing
5. Invasion of privacy
6. Promotion of inappropriate lifestyles(at variance with the Christian message)
7. Deception
8. Racism
9. Blasphemy
10. Religious intolerance

Questions to be considered

1. What is the Biblical interpretation and Church teaching on a particular subject?
2. How should the output under review be classified on a scale of concern ranging from extremely harmful to merely mildly offensive?
3. How accessible is the output under review, particularly to vulnerable groups?
4. Is the company under review proactive in commissioning product or merely passive in allowing its services to act as a conduit for others?
5. How important is the company under review to the production or distribution of questionable output?
6. How important is the questionable output to the company under review?
7. Can principles drawn from previous decisions be used as a guide in assessing the subject under review in order to ensure a consistent approach?

Policy

1. A distinction between the production of product and its distribution may be appropriate in many circumstances.
2. An attempt will be made to differentiate the level of ethical concern attached to any activity under review.
3. Consideration will also be given to what weight should be attached to positive influences.
4. There are likely to be certain activities to which any exposure will be unacceptable. In such cases companies involved should be avoided.
5. Limits on acceptable exposure to questionable activities will be decided on a case-by-case basis and by reference to previous decisions taken.
6. Given that for the majority of companies, exposure to questionable activities will be a very small proportion of the total business, a policy of constructive engagement will be the most common approach.

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