

THE BRITISH MEDIA

The British media landscape is extremely diverse with a large numbers of providers for radio, television and written press with groups playing a role across more than one medium. For example, the BBC, the public broadcaster, is present across television and radio with multiple channels, and accounts for over 50% of the share of the radio audience. Other include Rupert Murdoch, part-owner of BSkyB and owner of News International.

However, the most diverse medium in the United Kingdom is the written press with over 10 000 titles available, perhaps unsurprisingly as 60% of British people read a daily newspaper.

The daily and Sunday press, some existing for over 150 years, generate most of the sales for the written press and is separated along socio-economic and party political lines, and also format. Indeed, the popular press uses a tabloid format while the quality press generally uses a broadsheet format. Tabloids are more likely to be read by working class people and traditionally reports gossip stories as well news. The most read tabloid is "The Sun" and its best-known feature is the picture of a topless girl on page three.

On the other hand, higher quality newspapers, such as the Times or the Financial Times, have a more limited circulation but are more likely to attract upper-class readers. In terms of political party, most of the titles promote a centre-right approach with notable differences on Europe.

One of issues is the decline in readership. Most of the papers have developed websites to compete and bring news faster. The decline in paper readership is leading to a search for the next scoop or the next gossip, which can lead to some excesses. Indeed, the News of the World was closed recently due to the scandal surrounding phone hacking from employees. One way to make money is to have a subscription service for their website but the model has not been followed by every paper.

All this is a far cry from what Milton was pleading for. Freedom of speech and freedom of the press have led to a different outcome as he was hoping with more celebrity gossip published rather than opinion pieces. Just as newspaper move from their historical Fleet Street home, they depart from the ideals of Milton.

