

NEW MEDIA A POTENT TOOL TO ACHIEVE SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL INDIA

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Abstract

This paper investigates whether issues of social development are linked to a given globalized world. Further, it focuses on the growing media influence on both the people's psyche and the dominance on the markets through its persuasive approach. The study engages with the emergence of a distinct phenomenon in the globalization process of media expansion and the social development. There are growing forces making the process of life almost impossible to attain or maintain, even for the wealthy. By positioning at the interdisciplinary fields of International and Development Communication, intersecting with Management, and Economics, this paper provides analyses the global advancement of equity and justice in media and development communication practices.

Introduction

One has to grapple these days to verify whether the new media can be of some use to usher in the issues of social development. There is a general charge against media that it has promoted consumerism with the dominance of its reach and access across the masses all over. Consumerism is economically manifested in the chronic purchasing of new goods and services, with little attention to their true need, durability, product origin or the environmental consequences of manufacture and disposal. Consumerism is driven by huge sums spent on advertising designed to create both a desire to follow trends, and the resultant personal self-reward system based on acquisition. Materialism is one of the end results of consumerism. Consumerism interferes with the workings of society by replacing the normal common-sense desire for an adequate supply of life's necessities, community life, a stable family and healthy relationships with an artificial ongoing and insatiable quest for things and the money to buy them with little regard for the true utility of what is bought.

An intended consequence of this, promoted by those who profit from consumerism, is to accelerate the discarding of the old, either because of lack of durability or a change in fashion. It is an often stated catechism that the economy would improve if people just bought more things, bought more cars and spent more money. Financial resources better spent on Social Capital such as education, nutrition, housing etc. are spent on products of dubious value and little social return. In addition, the purchaser is robbed by the high price of new things, the cost of the credit to buy them, and the less obvious expenses such as, in the case of automobiles, increased registration, insurance, repair and maintenance costs.

Many consumers run out of room in their homes to store the things that they buy. A rapidly growing industry in India is that of self-storage. Thousands of acres of land good farm land are paved over every year to build these cities of orphaned and unwanted things so as to give people more room to house the new things that they are persuaded to buy. Does these serve any purpose of promoting social development or for that matter can it settle down any responsibility of any of the traditional or new media tools, is a big question to answer.

Can we examine the presence of Social Development issues in Media Today?

To all my learned experience of Traditional and New Media, it puts me in great difficulty to squeeze out specific and particular examples. Commerce, business and profit making are the chief objectives. Yes, true, but there has to be some sense of responsibility to which we need to pay attention to the un-equal world. One cannot restrict the growth engine of mediated products. The rampant expansion of companies created new levels of communication and culture interconnectedness that affects membership of nations and local cultures as well. Profit orientated free market systems gain space around the world. While crossing national boundaries and cultures, transnational corporations seek to increase the number of consumers in order to maximize profit and gain market share. Even socio-economic or healthcare development projects are tainted by the interest of these large conglomerates. Thus, this global inter-relatedness of firms, nations, and cultures calls for new adaptations in a fast-changing world. Although digital media provides space and allows the creation of new culture sites, it is mostly the large media corporations that change cultures around the world. Converged to large media empires a few strong oligopolies such as Disney, News Corporation, BBC, Vivendi SA, Bertelsmann AG, or Sony, among others, provide a growing number of countries with mass media content creation and distribution that affects national cultures. Based on power inequality, they reinforce culture homogenization. The growing opposition to such one-sided homogenization process results in constant search for alternative ways of globalization. Due to power differences, globalization results in differential advantage and disadvantage for the involved cultures that perpetuates a cycle of culture domination. This paper interprets power dialectically as a relational product and process in a socio-cultural context. As such, power is the immanent social relation exercised between dominant and inferior. It describes the systemic advantage of a particular group as opposed to the relative disadvantage of outsiders of the group. Power is enacted through communication. This paper concentrates on power and culture in the context of international and development communication. Thus, the central question of this study is: Premised upon a competitive and free market system, in the context of media convergence how a method of “inter-localization” might offer a more equitable relationship for the participants of different cultures? In order to unfold this central question, the study seeks to answer to following three related questions: How does “inter-localization” differ from other types of globalization such as glocalization? Based on family ownership and profit maximizing objectives, can any evidence be observed for “inter-localization” in international commercial media? How and in what ways “inter-localization” play a significant role in the empowerment model of development communication? Do they all still cater to the needs of the people and the related corporations? And if so, who is held responsible for this entire muddle. Let us then shun the ideologue of social responsibility theory and democratic media participation theory.

Can mainstream Media corroborate the response of Globalization?

Mainstream media must have some purpose of social response and must relate it to social reality. This is very harmful if, one can play with authoritarian model of development and practice the profiteering algorithm. Arguments are flowing thick and fast for the verifiability and validation on the response of globalization effect through media means. There are mixed debates about the process and impact of globalization. Some scholars argue that the term globalization can even replace concepts such as modernity and post modernity. The various social science disciplines interpret globalization quite differently. For example, referring to business disciplines, Eliers states that, in a “more restricted sense; we talk about globalization as an expression for new ways of interrelation between financial markets and business undertakings beyond nations and continents”. On the other hand, emphasizes the importance of media in globalization defining it as the global interconnectedness of politics, economics, cultures, and society through mediated communication.

Moreover, scholars also debate whether globalization refers to a process, outcome, or condition. Capitalism relies on private property rights and competition while aiming at profit growth. Economies of scale a term that describes “a range of production in which long-run average cost declines as output increases,” in production and profit gain through expanding export markets pushed companies across borders. Space and time were redefined with the rapid advance of transportation and communication technology. As Heidegger urges: “All distances in time and space are shrinking. Man now reaches overnight, by places, places which formerly took weeks and months of travel”. As a result, aspects of the international interconnectedness became far more complex, and globalization gained new dimensions in economic and socio-cultural contexts. McKenzie defines globalization as a “worldwide climate in which people, industries, governments, and countries across the world are being propelled into closer political, economic and cultural unions.” He also identifies four factors that stimulate the globalization of communication processes: increased international travel, communication technologies with cross-border interconnectedness, global media conglomerates, and audience curiosity in foreign countries. Nevertheless, this global interconnectedness of economies, societies, and cultures, provoked resistance from local communities. Due to its cultural ties, this changing media industry plays a particular role in the fast- growing interconnectedness of nations.

The accelerating media convergence and internationalization calls for the analysis of culture and power aspects in mediated communication where the local and global constantly collide. While the economic growth of some geographically well-defined leading nations is strongly bound to and driven by active media globalization, less dominant communities put special effort into culture identity preservation. A growing body of research put emphasis on the tension created by the opposing forces of global and local media. The goal of this glocalized business strategy is to acquire sufficient knowledge of the local culture in order to successfully reach new customers, extend markets, and increase market share. If a company sufficiently adapts its products or services, it can appeal more to local consumers and can be sold more successfully. The effect on local culture is not of concern in this profit maximization process. Multinational corporations simply create new consumers and do not worry about the change their activity or product initiated in a culture. Critiques of glocalization often point out this potentially harmful aspect of the process. Among them is the Polish sociologist, Zygmund Bauman. Baumann agrees that one of the important factors of glocalization is the new communication technology – mainly telecommunications – that allows the interconnectedness of the global and local. The extended use of these new technologies initiated a “geographical re-organization of core economies”. But this reorganization does not result in equal distribution of wealth, or equal opportunity for all cultures and people. According to Bauman, glocalization does not provide solution for the negative hegemonic effect of globalization. While Friedman classifies glocalization good and bad according to the conscious understanding of the global’s effect on the local, it is polarization that Bauman is concerns with: The freedom of purchase should not be confused with freedom of the individuals and free choice of culture. Through global commerce and international mass media, it is the effect of dominant culture groups on local cultures that worries scholarly critiques of globalization or glocalization. Development model here must specify the local aspirations rather than preach the classical models of success stories.

Alluring Media Formats Vs Dry Issues of Development

How can there be a comparison where the commercial interest reins supreme over the dry and uneconomic development issues. Of course there must be an attempt where the media must make the development issues look more concerned and at the same time efforts must be made by media formats to bring some life to those issues which will revolutionised the way we all think and

practice. There is a great shift of arguable sense in comparison to the commodities and media products. Educators of developed countries were more wary of the rise of mass mediated culture than those in developing ones. Pointing to the enormous popularity of the cinema and animated comic productions, it was proposed to have a prophylactic cultural pedagogy that would teach the masses to better discriminate cultural tastes and resist the commercial rhetoric of popular culture. Inspired by this phenomenon, many educators believed that cultural literacy was the best defence against the incursions of commercialized culture. Although commercial television expanded rapidly in the 1950s in the UK, British policy makers established quality standards in the public interest and mandated the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) as an educational broadcaster to prevent a cultural wasteland. Richard Hoggart argued that defending literacy called for a broader rethinking of public education. He recognized that many highbrow works of poetry and prose on the curriculum served only to marginalize and demean working class students. Because the levelling aspirations of the mass literacy movement required a broader cultural pedagogy to replace the snobbishness of traditional educators" he argued for a critical cultural pedagogy that strongly opposed the trivialization, the fragmentation and the opinionation encouraged by popular providers. His advocacy for critical cultural studies provided the impetus for media literacy pedagogy in Britain and elsewhere. The idea of a democratizing potential for critical cultural studies inspired many teachers who practised analyzing popular music, movies, and television with students to teach them to understand differences between the progressive and regressive dimensions of cultural ideology. Len Masterman consolidated these ideas into a formal critical pedagogy which taught "ideological deconstruction" to protect younger students from commercial manipulation. His critical media education curriculum called for the empowerment of students through a demystification of popular texts, especially news and advertising. His pedagogy used literary, ideological, and semiotic analysis to encourage a reflective questioning stance towards the forms and contents of print and electronic media. His critical pedagogy has influenced teachers around the world, but especially in Canada where this pedagogy helped launch media education among Ontario and British Columbia teachers. Many teachers found that media studies provided excellent leverage for broadening the scope of the English curriculum beyond the great works. The British Film Institute (BFI) took the lead in a broader view of cultural criticism, promoting film studies through a schools outreach initiative that taught film as parallel cultural text. They developed course materials focused on the appreciation of filmic language to promote visual literacy skills. Can we, then, here recognizing the importance of social and developmental issues like film and television as building blocks of youth, can be a good experiment in itself. What so, if that fails, but can that be not tired at all? These initiatives engaged through desire rather than condemn is the primordial thinking process which can be carried out to woo the target group. This can be a nation a society or a specific netizen population. The grammar of it must be popularise for inclusive issues of social development.

Media, Social Development and Responsibility

Let us put an effort to relate these three iconic words with one another. According to Henry, "the 'globalizers' almost inevitably provoke 'moralizers,' who seek solutions in cultural authenticity, affirming a religious or ethnic identity, or in at least reaffirming traditional nationalism". Due to the cultural aspects of mass communication, international communication scholars look into this culture interconnectedness and identity change critically. Boyd-Barrett claims that two concepts, "competitization" and democratization had major impact on the uneven growth of media globalization. Both tendencies reinforce the gap in the power relations of international communication. My conceptualization of inter-localization is connected to the critical view of globalization, particularly cultural hegemony and media imperialism. As explained earlier, glocalization still contains the element of (mostly hidden) hegemony or cultural exploitation by dominant groups in "the world of which 'goes without saying'". On the other hand, Ogan (1988)

posited that "Third World consumers of foreign media products will be influenced by the values inherent in that content, the values of an alien and predominantly capitalist system". Cultural imperialism has an almost tangible form in global media. Boyd-Barrett defined media imperialism as "the process whereby the ownership, structure, distribution, or content of the media in any country are singly or together subject to substantial external pressures from the media interests of any other country or countries, without proportionate reciprocation of influence by the country so affected".

Glocalization in the media industry can quite successfully cover the imperialistic effect of large media groups as their product adapted to local acceptance. Thus, glocalization still contains the hegemonic effects of globalization. Although first observed in mass media, inter-localization is not restricted to the communication industry. It occurs in very different sectors from arts to industry, from politics to the fields of development communication. I would like to provide just a few examples. a. *Process*: Inter-localization as the occurrence of global interconnectedness among various cultures without power differences can be present in the culinary industry. Anyone who travels to different countries can easily observe that some cultures are represented in a large number of countries through their food. As such, there are a growing number of individually owned (family ownership) Chinese and Middle-Eastern restaurants in the Western countries. Although each establishment can use the glocalization approach while they adjust their menu and quality to local taste, the restaurants themselves cannot be considered as a glocalized phenomenon. They do not represent the dominant power of a multinational corporation that would jeopardize local cultures through drastically changing local food taste. Telecommunication and media industry deals with culture products. Thus, the quality of the industry gives space for the possible practices of inter-localization as a more equitable form of globalization. Moreover, minority-owned communication companies have rather particular experience while trying to preserve their cultures. Based on their accumulated experiences in majority-minority struggle, ethnic and minority media companies learn to appreciate other cultures. Large media corporations that originated from powerful national cultures and represent the majority in power, tend to use a generic view of their consumers: they look at their audience as culturally neutral. Ok, that may be true for some time, some place and under some circumstance. Can that be generalized? Is a big question to answer? Media appreciation can be indifferent and elusive thus make things more complex.

Conclusion/Discussion

There is a debatable conflux between the terms social development, responsibility and media. As globalization greatly affects every nation around the world, scholars from various fields such as sociology, economics, business administration, or communication studies, often debate its concept and practices. Centered on communication studies, this research crossed over to other disciplines such as management and economics while trying to explore alternatives in globalization practices. Resulting from power differences, globalization causes advantage and disadvantage for the participants. This study viewed the dialectics of the globalization process critically while intending to effectively meld views from the field of communication studies with political economy, and cultural studies. With reference to mass communication imperialism and the empowerment paradigm of development, my focus on the local-global debate was not so much on the aspect of dominance as on the alternatives to it. I consider that inter-localization, as a new globalization form, is a growing phenomenon. The future decides if this phenomenon remains marginal in the globalization process, or it can gain further space and relevance as a more just internationalization. Searching for the limits of the inter-localization phenomenon, some could ask questions such as: Is the method of inter-localization limited to minority-owned media internationalization? Can the inter-localization method be extended to large media corporations? How do cultural hybridity,

digital virtuality, and de-territorialization interact with inter-localization? How does inter-localization relate to globalization and other forms of globalization? Can international press agencies use inter-localization as tool in their effort for equity-based news reporting? Does inter-localization strengthen or weaken nation-states? Future studies should try to find answers to these questions. As of now, I can foresee that with the strengthening resistance of the developing nation's media against Westernization, and the expanding use of participatory communication in development projects, the inter-localization phenomenon can become an acceptable alternative. I tend to think, that if inter-localization becomes more widely used, it might contribute to the formation of new socio-political structures that are not based on countries but cultures. As such, it might aid the reorganization of human social groups through cross-border cultural unification. This local-to-global discussion can lead to a major change in the content of unity in diversity. Although many new aspects of these globalised consumerist attitude are to unravel the media scenario which can be helpful in better understanding of the topic. The developing economies are greatly affected as they cannot catch up with the modernity of the media products and its influence is so great and irresistible. Things are now going from bad to worse as far as social development is concerned. Who will shoulder the huge responsibility to scratch out the commercial aptitude these media formats have donned?

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