

ROLE OF MEDIA IN BUILDING THE BETTER SOCIETY

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Abstract

The world today is dominated by media which has caught the imagination of not only one generation but of all the generations together. Since the beginning of the 21st century due to the advance of technology, media and its influence on the societies, has grown exponentially. Initially, there was the telegram (till 2013), then the print media gained a grip over the audience - the newspaper, magazines. Recently with electronic media – from the radio, television and now the internet and the new media including palmtops, cell phones, kindle, etc, the whole scenario has under gone a change.

Objective : Before discussing the influence of mass media on society it is imperative to explain the three basic functions of mass media; as providing information, entertainment and education. Since, there are both positive and negative influences of mass media, the aim of our paper is to focus on the responsibility of media in constructing a better society.

Keywords: Media, social leisure, public opinion, political agenda.

A very famous American singer, writer - Jim Morrison once rightly said

“Whoever controls the Media, controls the Mind”

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INTRODUCTION

The word 'media' is derived from the word medium, signifying mode or carrier. Media is intended to reach and address a large target group or audience. The word was first used in respect of books and newspapers i.e. print media and with the advent of technology, media now encompasses television, movies, radio and internet. In today's world, media becomes as essential as our daily needs. Media of today is playing an outstanding role in creating and shaping of public opinion and strengthening of society. Media is the sword arm of democracy. Media acts as watchdog to protect public interest against malpractice and create public awareness. As the fourth pillar of democracy along with judiciary, executive and legislature, media of today has an all embracing role to act against the injustice, oppression, misdeeds and partiality of our society. From the days abode, media has remained an integral part of the human civilization. From the days of Vedas and Upanishads to edicts of kings and emperors like Chandragupta, Asoka to the medieval Indian mass gatherings to the modern day's audio video and print media, media has always taken a pivotal role in shaping our society. During the days of freedom struggle newspapers like Tilak's Maratha, Mahatmaji's young India acted as a platform to place the demands of common Indian and to express solitude with freedom fighters. Indian media in post independence era has grown up phenomenally and today comprises of more than 50,000 newspapers, hundreds of television and radio channels. Media is and has always been one of the most powerful tools of communication in the developing countries, as well as, in the developed countries. It can aid in promoting the right things at a right point of time, or can make use of any situation to create disturbance around the people or in the society. Media helps to provide a strong message to the world about what is right or wrong.

Review of Literature:

Psychologists say the function of media entertainment is "the attainment of gratification." Zillmann(2000). According to Zerang (2001) the basic idea behind entertainment is the commercialization of the pursuit of happiness. In other words, he feels that in modern times entertainment implies not only activities that provide happiness but activities put on display. Today people define their roles and relationships by their attitudes and behaviours.

When we talk of the electronic media, especially the social networking sites, we see it is possible to characterize the social structure of social groups by the interaction and relationships

established by individuals through it. Basically social interactions can be of two types – competitive or antagonistic ones (e.g., aggression) and cooperative, positive or affiliative ones (Beck, 2004). Competitive relationships are the result of fights or disagreement among two individuals. Social relationships get affected by the degree of competition. Competition can also occur between groups. To be a part of a group action or experience, one must cooperate with the other members of the group, which means either following the traditions that have been passed on, the instructions of their parents or participating in the group's processes of decision-making. Group processes depend upon communication, cooperation and shared responsibility. Through media being in a social group teaches the members how to be a part of something that is larger (Beck, 2004). Later it is through dating that one does learns what traits are most valued by one's peers, to name some characteristics of popularity such as - pleasantness, cheerfulness, sense of humor, naturalness, etc.

Dating maybe a form of courtship permitting unmarried persons to associate with each other for the purpose of selecting a mate. The social media sites are facilitating it. During adolescence, various behaviors may serve to promote an individual's normal heterosexual adjustment, one of the most important being the practice of dating. (Rogers, 1972). But of late dating is not limited only to the teenage, it has taken an important place as a leisure activity.

Based on the criterion of the need for physical and mental fulfillment experienced by individuals, leisure is classified by Dumazedier as: physical leisure eg travel and vacations, artistic leisure, practical leisure eg pottering, gardening, intellectual Leisure and **social leisure** through **mass media** plays an important part in the life of humans.

MEDIA IN THE PAST

Old media are the mass media institutions that predominated prior to the Information Age: particularly print media, film studios, music studios, advertising agencies, radio broadcasting, and television. Old media institutions are centralized and communicate with one-way technologies to a (generally anonymous) mass audience.

Though with the new inventions and improvement of technology, the preference of people to other modes of media has changed yet it won't be any lie that people in rural India still prefer these old means of media to stay connected to the world. The first Indian media were established in the late 18th century with the newspaper *Hicky's Bengal Gazette*, founded in 1780. Auguste and Louis Lumière moving pictures were screened in Bombay during July 1895; and radio broadcasting began in 1927.

Not just television and radio as mass media but print media also has a strong impact on the Indian population till date.

The traditional print media, but also the television media, are largely family-owned and often partake in self-censorship, primarily due to political ties by the owner and the establishment. However, the new media are generally more professional and corporate-owned, though these, too, have been acquired or affiliated with established figures. At the same time, the Indian media, viewed as "feisty," have also not reported on issues of the media itself.

MEDIA IN THE PRESENT

In this era of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation(LPG), the world has reached our drawing room thanks to media. Since the introduction of television in our country in late 70's visual media becomes a very potential tool in informing the current news to the society, entertaining the people and shaping up of public opinion.

The World Wide Web and web 2.0 technologies have given rise to electronic media where even a common man can express views through blogs, website posts, facebook and twitter like social media.

Coupled with traditional print media all these audio video and social media caters to a richly diversified media industry in India. Media helps in fighting against corruption, nepotism, cronyism of institutional machinery and carrying out relentless campaign against them. Way back in independent India from the Mundra case to the jeep scandal to the hawala case to the

kickbacks received in different defense deals- Indian media performs commendably in exposing the corrupted highly placed statesman.

In recent scams from commonwealth to 2G, exposed thanks to television and print media, media acted as a catalyst to government action compelling government to swing into action including suspending ministers and putting ministers into jail. Who can forget the crusade taken by Indian media in the Nirbhaya rape case and shaping the public opinion in one of the most heinous crimes the world has ever witnessed. Without media, the news of government schemes and benefits would have never reached the target audience.

Media is the cheapest means of mass education. In a remote village a single radio set can spread the words of education. Through the V-Sat initiative education can be spread out to the remotest corner of India. To reach the Millennium Development Goal in respect of literacy, role of media is very significant. The power of mass media, especially the visual media, is so powerful that nobody, however possible he may be, can escape from its iron grip.

Theories

There are many relevant theories which support that there exists a definite relationship between mass communication and social change. Such as - **The cultivation theory** developed by Gerbner in 1967 is based on the assumption that mass media have subtle effects on audiences who unknowingly absorb the dominant symbols, images, and messages of media. He calls it “cultivation of dominant image pattern”. **Social Learning Theory** suggests that media are active but subtle educators in teaching readers, viewers, listeners about the world from observations alone. **Agenda Setting Theory** coined by Maxwell McCombs and Donald L Shaw in 1972 in the context of election campaign. This theory tries to explain a process known as Gatekeeping, agenda and it also “predicts” how a particular news item is presented frequently by the press so that the public starts believing it to be important. And the last is Uses and Gratification Theory (1959) which assumes that audiences are active and willingly expose themselves to media and are dependent on the perception, values, beliefs and interests of the people.

IMPORTANCE OF MEDIA

It gets your message across to a wider audience.

The various forms of media – primarily television, newspapers and radio – spread and disseminate information. Getting your information into the media will spread your group's story further than it could be spread without media coverage.

It can help you target your message to the people you want to hear it.

The media is so varied that a community group or organisation can closely target almost any sector – and through them, almost any section of the public - by looking closely at where it is directing its media focus.

For example – a small, locally-based community group would probably look at concentrating on its efforts in local newspapers, radio and (if applicable) television. A bigger event or bigger community organisation could look further afield – to major daily newspapers and commercial radio and television. And then there's the Internet, which continues to emerge as a component of the media.

It provides free publicity and exposure for not only your news, announcement, event or request – but for your group or organisation as well.

A big benefit when it comes to news media coverage is that it is free – a factor of major importance when it comes to community groups or organisations with tight budgets! And only does your event or news receive free publicity or new coverage, your group is bound to receive a boost through this coverage as well. It is important to remember though that while your group won't have to pay for this coverage, it will have to work for it in other ways – building relationships with the media, preparing information and releases for them, being willing to speak to them or be interviewed by them, etc. Without putting in this type of work, your group will not reap the benefits of "free" media coverage.

It can help establish your group as "legitimate", and its activities as important or notable.

Gaining coverage in the media is a great way of providing your group and its activities with greater credibility and that has a lot to do with the thought processes of the public which monitor and "consume" the media each day. Readers, listeners and viewers who find out about something or read/hear/see something in the media automatically place a greater level of credibility to it than if they saw it in a paid ad. The attitude of most media consumers is: if the story is gets into the pages of the newspaper, on the air or on TV, then it is "important" and worth taking notice of. So, if your story is among those that make the grade, then it is "important" enough to be on the news and therefore worth taking notice of.

It can increase your profile among the general public.

Media coverage can build your profile in the community, which means may be able to attract more members, donors, fundraisers, supporters, helpers, etc. Not only this, but a raised profile through media exposure will also shore-up and strengthen the support you already have among existing members, donors, supporters, helpers, etc. It also builds brand definition for you – setting your group apart from other groups operating in the same space.

It can sway opinions.

One of the most significant powers the media has is that of being able to shape opinions. For your community group or organisation, this presents great opportunities to get more people thinking positively about you after hearing positive news coverage of your group and what it is doing.

Because of this, your group should actively seek out positive publicity through positive media coverage. But your group should also remember that any positive opinions generated from positive media coverage can be blunted or reversed by negative opinions generated through negative media coverage.

FUNCTIONS OF MEDIA

Almost everyone gets his or her information about world, national, and local affairs from the mass media. This fact gives both print and broadcast journalism important functions that include

influencing public opinion, determining the political agenda, providing a link between the government and the people, acting as a government watchdog, and affecting socialization.

Public opinion

The mass media not only report the results of public opinion surveys conducted by outside organizations but also increasingly incorporate their own polls into their news coverage. More important, newspapers and television help shape public opinion as well.

Political agenda

The term *political agenda* is broader in scope than the term *public opinion*, and it refers to the issues that people think are the most important and that government needs to address. A person's perception of matters such as crime, civil rights, the economy, immigration, and welfare are affected by the manner and extent of media coverage. Studies indicate that a correlation exists between the significance people assign a problem and the frequency and amount of space or time newspapers, magazines, and television give to it.

Link between the government and the people

The mass media is the vehicle through which the government informs, explains, and tries to win support for its programs and policies. Prime Minister MR NARENDRA MODI has started with a radio show "MANN KI BAAT" which he addresses the people of the nation on All India Radio, DD National and DD News. In fifteen addresses of *Mann ki Baat* broadcast so far, more than 61,000 ideas have been received on the website and 1.43 lakh audio recordings by listeners have been received. Each month, some selected calls become a part of the broadcast. The programme has been well received by the target audience, especially the urban masses residing in metropolitan cities across the country.

Government watchdog

From muckraking early in the century to today's investigative reporting, an important function of the mass media is to bring to the attention of the Indian people evidence of corruption, abuse of power, and ineffective policies and programs.

Socialization

The mass media, most significantly through its news, reporting, and analysis, affects what and how we learn about politics and our own political views. Along with family, schools, and religious organizations, television also becomes part of the process by which people learn society's values and come to understand what society expects from them. In this regard, the impact comes primarily from entertainment programming. Television's portrayal of minorities and women, family relations, and the place of religion in Indian life is considered to be a powerful influence on our attitudes. If television wasn't enough, now the time is again changing and another important element of mass media has gained more attention – the INTERNET. The influence internet has had over the couple of years has surpasses the effect of newspaper, radio and even television.

INFLUENCE OF MEDIA

Mass media have made profound impact on societies and their culture. It ceases the boundaries of different societies among the individuals and creates 'Globalization.' The globalization is a decent case to delineate the friendship of media, since people can witness what is happening in different nations or how they dress up and what their way of life is. Subsequently, they typically mirror what others do.

Media influence is the actual force exerted by a media message, resulting in either a change or reinforcement in audience or individual beliefs. Media effects are measurable effects that result from media influence or a media message. Whether that media message has an effect on any of its audience members is contingent on many factors, including audience demographics and psychological characteristics. These effects can be positive or negative, abrupt or gradual, short-term or long-lasting. Not all effects result in change: some media messages reinforce an existing belief. Researchers examine an audience after media exposure for changes in cognition, belief systems, and attitudes, as well as emotional, physiological and behavioral effects.

Furthermore, media are a storehouse of information. It educate individuals about day to day occasions or new revelations. This data some of the time is utilized to change individuals' sentiment. For instance, in race of president, the devotee of candidates publicize in media such

as, TV or the web for them, and ingest consideration regarding choose any individual that they need.

No one can deny the blessings of media in today's world. The mass media helps people to remain informed and updated about the various news, events, social activities, lifestyle, entertainment, and advertisements irrespective of the geographical barriers. For example, while sitting in India, one can get all latest news and events of UK, or USA. Like, even while sitting miles away, one got the breaking news of Barack Obama winning the Presidential election. He became the first African American to hold the office. Thus, it can be concluded mass media have a powerful influence in shaping a persons' lives.

MEDIA : THE GOOD AND THE BAD ASPECT

Mass media can have both positive and negative impact on the lives and on the minds of the people. It depends on the mindset of the people, as to which side they look for. Media can help to create awareness among the people faster than any other thing. In fact, mass media can have a great impact on peoples' lifestyles and culture. For example, girls living in a conservative country or girls who are growing up in a conservative culture can be prompted and motivated to wear short dresses by watching TV shows or by following another country's culture. They might consider by wearing short dresses they can become cool just like the TV personalities they admire.

While the above point stresses on the negative impact of TV, it also have made some positive impact for the society. Through television, one can create social awareness about many social and economical issues like AIDS, Child Abuse, Female Foeticide, and so on which are For example, television channels organizes TV shows like "Satyamev Jayate" which focuses on making people aware of the harsh realities of life. It mainly discusses and provides possible solutions relating to the various social issues of India. It aims to empower citizens with informations. Hence, through this type of shows, many NGOs comes up with the social causes and holds campaigns, demonstration, and protests in order to demand justice.

Even, National TV channels like Doordarshan, DD National used to air shows like “Bharat Ek Khoj” which was an Indian historical drama based on the book ‘The Discovery Of India’ written by Jawaharlal Nehru that covers a 5000-year history of India from its beginnings to the coming of independence in 1947. Hence, media also played an educative role by hosting programs like “Bharat Ek Khoj” in order to enlighten people about their country’s struggle to freedom.

Some Indians believe that people, especially children, imitate behavior observed in media communications. They are, therefore, concerned about the quantity of sex and violence on TV. This theory of behavior may be naive, and certainly it lacks consistent or weighty scientific evidence.

CONCLUSION

The role of the media, the Fourth Estate, as an influencer of public opinion has always been recognised by governments. Media freedom is generally accepted as a corner stone of modern democratic society.

In the past, media was considered champion of the rights of the oppressed-of principles of morality and justice. They worked for some noble causes. Now newspapers give doctored news analysis to influence the minds of the readers. The¹ editorials have so strong influence on the readers that they can make or mar the prospects of politicians. Thus, it is the need of the hour to provide fair judgement on issues covered in the newspapers. They should maintain their sanctity and social responsibility.

The role of media is very significant in a democracy. It is the guardian of public interest. Thus, media should focus on performing the noble role of enlightening people, broadening their vision and making them vigilant towards the larger goal of creating a civilized and prosperous society.

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