

Role of Media in Social Change in Global Perspective

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Abstract

Media is considered as "mirror" of the modern society.

In the world of today, media as necessary as food and clothing. The word "media" is the plural of medium. The influence of the media on society has for a long time preoccupied researchers in the field of communication.

Key Words - Communication, Social Change

Introduction

The media is an important social institution which caters social and economic needs of wider social groups and it has been playing vital role in developing countries like India. Especially in the post globalization era, media has to educate people for changing their traditional attitude to suite the modern progressive needs.

Media can be vehicle of social and cultural change. Nair and White have observed that "Socio cultural change is the goal of development communication. At present media has to face many challenges in bring social change. Sahoo has observed that "Interest in sustainable development and reduction of poverty has grown along with the spread of globalization."² In agro based society in India media can educate people for bringing awareness regarding sustainable development. However, the role of media can be effective and supporting

When good governance is attained. It has been noted that "Dreams will be realized only when honest, efficient and foresighted selfless governance is manifested in all fields and all states."³ In India socio economic development programs are more in number but their faster implementation alone can bring change.

In the 1950s and 1960s, the wave of decolonization in the developing world created a need for nation-building and social, political, and economic development. It is in that context that development communication emerged as a strategy to use the mass media to foster positive social change, which, in turn, was believed to enhance the socioeconomic development of a country. Among the pioneers in development communication was Daniel Lerner and Wilbur Schramm. Lerner's *The Passing of Traditional Society* (1958) and Schramm's *Mass Media and National Development* (1964) were founding texts of development communication, and they have had a defining influence on the paradigm since their publication. Their basic principle was that desirable social change could be produced by scientifically designed and executed communication campaigns.

In the British period very limited transfer of power was made. In so called decentralization, Britishers it was merely an arrangement to suit their imperial requirements." Now in Gram Swaraj in India local self-governments are focusing on reflecting hopes of villagers through Gram Sabhas.

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Various normative, social scientific and critical communication theories have addressed how media influence social change. Early media effects theories assumed a direct and unmitigated influence of media on individuals and society. Later research questioned the assumption of all-powerful media effects, launching what became known as the limited-effects tradition. From those early days of communication research, there has been a constant ebb and flow of theories and empirical research attempting to understand the real effect of media on social change.

Media and Social Change in a Global Perspective is a cross-disciplinary course which takes you behind the scenes of recent social movements and explores in particular, the way that these movements make strategic use of the media. The phenomenon of social movements using social media and journalism is rapidly growing. From Africa, the Middle East to Europe, discontented

people have gathered through media platforms, making it possible for a larger than ever group of people to collaborate; publicize their cause and set in motion different levels of social change at a historical speed. These social movements have not been created through random connections, but by using the media strategically. Through case studies from around the world, such as the Occupy Movement, the Arab Spring, and the London Riots, this course will critically examine the contemporary interrelationship between media, journalism and social change.

Media, either it is printed, electronic or the web is the only medium, which helps in making people informed. It also helps in entertaining the public, educate and make people aware of the current happenings. Media has today become the voice of our society. There is a variety of media platform that has stimulated the thoughts of the young generation and other sections of our society, more eloquently. Today people are just a click away from any and every information that is available on the internet. There are various forms of media that help to inform, educate and entertain our society. Media can be in print form that is through newspapers, books, magazines etc. Media includes an electronic form for spreading information which is one of the most used media of mass communication. With the help of radio and TV, listeners and viewers not only get updated but it also creates an understanding of current happenings. Radio being an audio medium helps in disseminating information to every nook and corner of our country. Radio has also played a vital role in creating a platform for imagination. The reach of this audio medium is not only limited to urban areas but it has covered a wide range even to the remote areas of our country.

The people living in rural parts of the country are getting more benefits from the audio medium of mass communication.

Initially, Television in our country was introduced for education purpose. But later as time passes the objective of educating people turned into imparting information and entertaining masses. Today Television has become an important part of our daily life. It covers a vast section of programs like daily soaps, news, movies, reality shows, sports, weather forecast, religious programs, music etc.

Social media is becoming one of the most popular and most accessed media of communication these days.

Social media is one of the medium which has brought different people from the different geographical area on one platform on which they can share their feeling, ideas, emotions, information and much more. The Manifold social networking sites like Facebook, What Sapp, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google +, and others open the door to share ideas, views, and thoughts on the same platform. With the advancement of science and technology, the world has come close to each other. Today people don't have to wait for the dissemination process but the condition is such that every social media user has become a source of information on their own. The daily news and views to which the media user

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comes across cover a wide range of topics. These topics or subjects are related to the happenings of our surrounding.

People can like, show emotions through the list of emoticons or even comment accordingly. The social media act as an umbrella that constitutes a variety of interesting features that have our life very easier. Features of tagging friends, location sharing, photo and video uploads, message chatting, video calling, searching friends etc have made our life more engaging.⁶

Using media, people's attitudes and habits can be changed. For example all of us have mistaken or wrong notions about various diseases like leprosy or HIV/AIDS. Many of us think that by touching people suffering from these diseases we would be infected. You might have heard on radio or watch television programmes or read messages which tell us that by touching an HIV/AIDS patient we do not get infected. Similarly, for eradicating polio there are special programmes and messages disseminated through the media.

They inform people about the need for giving polio drops to children and about the day that is declared a polio day." Special arrangements are made to give polio drops to as many children as possible on polio day. Change would also mean things for the better. The concept of development of a country is again a matter of change, when old practices and equipment are changed and new, better and more efficient means are being used. Mass media play an important role in communicating this change. By giving the necessary information, and sometimes skills, the media can help bring about this change. You may ask how media can impart skills. Mass media like television can demonstrate and show how things work. You would have seen on television how a certain dish is cooked using modern kitchen equipment.

Social Impacts of Media

The mass media occupy a high proportion of our leisure time: people spend, on average, 25 hours per week watching television, and they also find time for radio, cinema, magazines and newspapers.

For children, watching television takes up a similar amount of time to that spent at school or with family and friends. While school, home and friends are all acknowledged as major socializing influences on children, a huge debate surrounds the possible effects of the mass media and findings both in favour and against effects are controversial.

Type of Media Is Used:

- Computers
- Texting
- Facebook
- YouTube
- Smart phones with apps
- ipads
- Television
- Movies
- Tweeting
- Watsup etc.

Functions the Media

Media is a tremendous source of information for individuals as well as society. We know a bit about the role of mass media in a democracy. Let us now see how the media perform their functions to

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bring about changes.

- ♦ Media have made the World Smaller and Closer: The speed of media has resulted in bringing people across the world closer. Let us take an example. When you watch a cricket match between India and another country in England, Australia or New Zealand, live on television, you feel you are part of the crowd in that stadium. Events, happy or sad, happening anywhere can be seen live. Sometimes we feel that the entire world is one big family. You might have heard the term “global village”. It means that the whole world is shrinking and becoming a village. Wherever we go to any part of the world, we see the same products such as soft drinks, television, washing machine, refrigerator etc. and the same type of advertisements. Similarly, the world wide web and internet have brought people and countries much closer.
- ♦ Entertainment and informative: Mass media is one of the best means of recreation. Television, radio, internet are the best means of entertainment and extremely informative. Social media keeps us up to date with the happenings around the world.
- ♦ Media Promotes Distribution of Goods : Mass media are used by the consumer industry to inform people about their products and services through advertising. Without advertising, the public will not know about various products (ranging from soup to oil, television sets to cars) and services (banking, insurance, hospitals etc.) which are available in the market as well as their prices. Thus mass media help the industries and consumers.
- ♦ Media helps a democracy function effectively. They inform the public about government policies and programmes and how these programmes can be useful to them. This helps the people voice their feelings and helps the government to make necessary changes in their policies or programmes.
- ♦ Media improves governance by monitoring the actions of those in power and alerting the public to corruption or abuse of trust.
- ♦ Media leads to increases in awareness and changes in behavior across social issues⁷ Numerous studies over the last 40 years from around the world have provided evidence of the catalytic role played by the media in providing information that influences public opinion leading to social change.
- ♦ Access to information helps citizens hold their governments accountable: By providing easy access to information to users of public services, the media empowers citizens to demand quality and accountability from their governments.
- ♦ A plural media improves government responsiveness by giving a voice to the vulnerable⁸ There is a robust link between media development and government responsiveness especially to the poor, who have numerical strength in a democracy but are often ignored by politicians. A media sector that reaches and gives voice to the vulnerable can create informed citizens that can better monitor the actions of incumbent politicians and use this information in their voting decisions
- ♦ It helps to educate the public at large.

Conclusion

The influence of the media on society has for a long time preoccupied researchers in the field of communication. Various normative, social scientific and critical communication theories have addressed how media influence social change. Early media effects theories assumed a direct and unmitigated influence of media on individuals and society. Later research questioned the assumption

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of all-powerful media effects, launching what became known as the limited-effects tradition. From those early days of communication research, there has been a constant ebb and flow of theories and empirical research attempting to understand the real effect of media on social change.

The line between regarding individuals as either consumers or citizens in campaigns focusing on promoting positive social change is understandably difficult to draw. Theories of media and social change have tremendous potential, but they also have serious limitations.

Research has attempted to move beyond previous models of social change and has advocated more interactivity, transparency, and sensitivity to context in using media for social change.

Even if the influence of the mass media is indirect and difficult to monitor, measure, and understand, the media are an important instrument to be used in continuous efforts to improve people's quality of life.

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