Addressing Cultural Change Through Mass Communication

Subhash Gupta Professor, Department of Media and Mass Communication, Graphic Era Hill University, Dehradun Uttarakhand India.

Abstract

The mass media has become an integral element of modern society and is often regarded as one of the most powerful cultural transformative forces. As a result, it is widely acknowledged that it influences how and what people believe via the many channels made possible by the information technology revolution. Additionally, it has reshaped societal ideals and perspectives. This chapter conceptually bases itself on McLuhan and Cultural Imperialism to trace the impact of the media on cultural shifts in Kenya and the rest of Africa. As a result, it's apparent that exposure to the media has altered the cultural practices of almost every sector of Kenyan society. The chapter argues that Kenyan society exemplifies the second phase of colonialism experienced by African societies: the media.

Keywords: mass media, culture change, technological revolution, African cultures, cultural imperialism, Kenyan culture.

Introduction

It would be foolish to discount the impact that the media has on society at large. The media have become increasingly powerful as a result of the proliferation of fresh information, particularly in the twenty-first century. The media plays a crucial role in helping people get the information they need and want. According to Mehraj et al. (2014), people spend a great deal of time interacting with various forms of media. The public's actions and choices are influenced by the news that is reported in the media. However, Nity & Singh (2017) believe that society really does affect the media. Many people believe

that the media speaks for society as a whole. Considering these factors, it's evident that the media significantly contributes to cultural shifts, as well as economic and political progress, in a society. As an example, Nyabuga and Otieno (2013) state that the media plays a crucial role in society because of its ability to articulate ideas and influence perceptions and attitudes. Mass media and journalism, they continue, serve as mirrors of public opinion in democracies by bringing attention to issues of concern and informing citizens about government policies and significant international and cultural developments. In Kenya, for instance, Vernacular-language radio stations provide as a forum for community-oriented discourse.

The ancient Greeks had the first discussions on how cultural narratives affected everyday living. The classical concept of art, which Plato established in The Republic, is that it should attempt to teach and elevate its audience. He was concerned that the general public may confuse art and reality while viewing performances that glamorized evil.

The Role of Mass Media in Society: John Dewey, writing in Democracy and Education more than a century ago, argued that all forms of communication not only underpin society but also encircle it. Dewey reaffirmed the observations of philosophers and researchers throughout centuries: the functioning of small groups, bigger communities, and enormous organizations all depend on the quality and quantity of communication inside and between these entities.

There are several methods of interaction. Communication, in its widest sense, is the sharing of information between individuals via the use of shared symbols. Words spoken aloud and written down are the most frequent symbols humans use, but there are numerous more nonverbal modes of communication, such as American Sign Language. Similarities between sign language, spoken language, and written language lie in their use of abstract symbols to communicate meaning. There is no difference in meaning between spoken "thank yous," written "thank you" cards, and nonverbal "nods" when expressing gratitude.

Influence of Mass Communication on culture: The cultural and social climates of a society are impacted by mass media. The legal framework

governing a society's media system is indicative of the way that society functions. Society is shaped and organized through many types of communication, including messages in the mainstream media. In addition, the global dissemination of cultural information and creative creations is facilitated by mass media. People's cultural preferences are reflected in the media they choose to consume, but large media conglomerates have a lot of sway over which stories get told and promoted, especially when it comes to high-budget productions like feature films, video games, and international news services.

Mass media do more to spread culture than any other medium. It also aids the effort to comprehend institutional society and the performance of its institutions.

The Origins of Mass Communication : John describes the novel ways in which enormous institutions were brought together by the advent of mass media in the early 20th century. The invention of the telegraph and the widespread dissemination of newspapers greatly increased the output of mass media communications. Beginning in the middle of the 1800s and continuing into the early 1900s, the expansion of telegraph technology enabled a worldwide network for the virtually immediate transfer of information. Advances in telegraph technology were crucial to the expansion of newspapers.

Time efficiency is a key feature of the worldwide network of mass communication. The public has a dual demand to be entertained and informed about current events. Electronic communication networks throughout the world reduce the time and distance it takes to convey a message compared to traditional methods.

The relationship between modern society and the media is a product of the evolution of that relationship throughout the course of the twentieth century. At the tail end of the nineteenth century, electrical speeds were introduced to communication flows. While there was a rise in the breadth of knowledge, experts were quick to point out that communication and knowledge are not the same thing.

Dewey hoped that by putting an emphasis on education, individuals might better adapt to societies that are increasingly influenced by interconnected digital technologies. He believed that the purpose of life was to educate others and that the Internet should be used for that purpose. Although many of us still have faith in Dewey's pedagogical ideals, the development of ICTs over the last century or so has made it evident that the presence of global mass communication networks is no guarantee that people will learn to live together peacefully and productively.

It wasn't long after the telegraph, radio, broadcast television, and public internet access were widely available that utopian visions of perfect communication began to take shape. Through its transmissions, the telegraph effectively shrank the universe. Rapid, widespread communication was made possible by radio. Access to the internet empowered people to be information senders, rather than simply receivers, while television enabled live pictures to be broadcast from one side of the world to the other for even greater mass audiences. As progress was made, so were people's hopes and imaginations, yet tensions between different groups of people remained. It is possible to employ communication systems as weapons. The history of mass media is the narrative of enhanced ability to accomplish the same good and terrible things inside and across communities that have always been done by humans.

We are left with a laborious but enormously significant task once we get beyond the concept that new technology (especially ICTs) would lead to increased social awareness and better circumstances for the world's population. We need to figure out how to live in harmony with different cultures while being vigilant against risks that may have always been there but are now easier to see.

It may be useful to study the historical development of various types of mass communication if we are to maximize the potential of our digital global communication network. Even though the telegraph and the Internet were both mentioned briefly, ink on paper was the first mass media.

Cultural Aspects of the Impact of Mass Communication: The effects of culture have been discussed and debated since the time of the ancient Greeks. For instance, current disputes on the impact of contemporary media, such as the Internet and social media, are heavily influenced by Plato's thoughts on the topic. (Wolf,2000)

The stakes are much bigger now. The media industry has been substantially impacted by technological advancements. It has made information more readily available and quicker to retrieve. There is a lot of debate over the impact of social media and its many iterations. Before the rise of niche newspapers and customized channels, people would talk about their favorite radio or TV personalities and the latest significant news topics over coffee or

in the backyard. A large portion of the public is becoming dissatisfied with the quality of much popular culture today and anxious about the deluge of data at their fingertips.

Even the computer, touted as the solution to all of children's educational woes, has backfired. When children of today say, "I'm on the computer," their parents may question whether their children are doing homework, playing a game, chatting with strangers online, window shopping for shoes, or even seeing pornographic content. To wit: (Campbell et al., 2007).

When it comes to fostering social progress in Africa, the mainstream media has performed well, far above initial projections. Communities and people alike are inundated with advertising from a wide variety of media, including television, billboards, magazines, newspapers, and social media. Not only are items, but also feelings, perspectives, and priorities, are promoted in these communications.

While the good effects of mass media are widely recognized, it is also often held responsible for cultural imperialism. The information-flow problem is the most crucial facet of cultural imperialism. Similar to their criticisms of Western industrialized nations in international news, developing countries have voiced concern about the influence of Western media culture on their own values and norms.

The argument here is that the media's pervasive presence in ordinary African life has led to a watering down of traditional African values in favor of those of the West. Although Africa is now free from colonial rule, its people are not yet prepared to celebrate their culture fully in the wake of their independence. During colonization, Africans were taught that their way of life is archaic and undeveloped. To better fit in with western society, many Africans abandoned traditional beliefs and customs in favor of those of the West. And it's via the media that Africans are exposed to and eventually adopting Western cultural norms. This suggests that the developed nations continue to have an impact on the actions of the emerging ones.

The Agenda Setting Theory agrees with the Cultural Imperialism Theory that people cannot make their own decisions about how they will feel, what they

will do, or what they will think about their lives. Both hypotheses hold that audiences respond to media content when they have nothing better to compare it to than their own lives, which are often depicted as inferior. In addition, the media will play a significant role in altering behavior since the public cannot independently evaluate the veracity of the information it receives.

When we consume media from Kenya and across the world, it is frequently impossible to tell which is which. That is to say, most things are eerily similar to one another. When people aren't talking about politics, crime tales tend to be the topic of conversation. According to Agenda Setting Theory (McCombs and Shaw 1972), this means that the media has influenced the thoughts of people everywhere. In addition, the media has a history of portraying Western culture as elite while degrading African culture to that of a common culture. Not only Kenya, but all poor nations face this problem.

Dominance of the Western Nations: According to the Cultural Imperialism Theory, the widespread influence of Western media has a negative impact on the indigenous cultures of developing nations like Kenya. This happens because Western perspectives are imposed on these societies, which eventually leads to the erosion of indigenous traditions. In movies like the Mexican soap operas that have grown popular in Kenya, we see these perspectives played out, and this has an effect on how people date, how they dress, and the values they hold dear in their interpersonal interactions. Many Kenyan TV stations have recently begun airing singing contests and reality programs, which may not be representative of traditional Kenyan culture but are seen favorably simply because they are not from Kenya. The frameworks of these contests (including "America's Got Talent," "Britain's Got Talent," and "Big Brother") are eerily similar to those of other popular reality series.

The hypothesis also notes that Western Civilization generates much of the media (film, journalism, comics, etc.) because they have the economic strength to do so. Therefore, the rest of the world buys such products rather than making their own since doing so saves money. Therefore, people in developing nations are exposed to Western values and beliefs via the media. Because of

this, people in the developing world begin to yearn for and practice Western cultural norms inside their own nations.

To paraphrase Mushi (1966: 13), "one could hardly envision the existence of a country without society or, if such a country were to arise, it would just be a disunited group of individuals living jointly because there existed physical borders and some political power was able to control the ones above" (Fortner, 1993).

Colonial Aspects of Mass Communication: Many of the current African nations were established by European colonialists setting artificial geographical borders at the outset of colonialism. Tribal animosities, linguistic disparities, and socio-cultural motion that impeded these processes following independence (Schiller, 1973) often led to severe difficulty in establishing potent political structures, implementing sound economic growth projects, and creating relevant national social policies.

Culture begins with the people as makers of themselves as transformers of their environment," it reads in one cultural manifesto approved in Africa (Fortner 1993). It is via culture—in its broadest and most inclusive sense— that men are able to give form to their lives (Dumila, 1976, p. 2). However, developing country leaders struggled to imagine how culture, in the sense outlined by this declaration, could flourish in societies that were inundated with Western cultural imports such as movies, TV shows, music, newspapers, and magazines.

This is complicated by the fact that Western industrial nations, notably the United States, control the vast majority of the world's media and cultural distribution networks. When it comes to movies and TV shows, most people think of Hollywood, but Nigeria also has its own film industry, known as Nollywood. In addition, MTV, the American music television channel, is the primary source of music for young people in Kenya today, surpassing even South Africa's efforts to promote indigenous music. Because of this, some young people have taken up criminal behavior after seeing it on these sites in an effort to emulate their idols, many of whom come from privileged backgrounds. Because of this, many emerging nations, including Kenya, have adopted new cultural norms and values. It's also easy to see that the vast

majority of online content and, by extension, the majority of periodicals sold on the streets of Nairobi originate from the West. However, knowledge seldom travels from underdeveloped nations to those that are more advanced.

As a result of these factors, we can safely say that most Kenyans, for example, have abandoned their traditional dressing codes in favor of embracing foreign modes of dressing popular in the West and other developed countries via the mass media and communication technologies. Commercials on Kenyan television and the internet promote products and services that promote western ideals. Advertisers of cosmetics like Nivea, for instance, use models that promote the western standard of beauty in their campaigns. In contrast to the traditional African ideal of beauty, which prioritizes dark complexion, a modest height, and sometimes even a little of extra weight, the models here are tall, thin, and white. As a result, modern Kenyan women often resort to extreme measures, such as starvation diets or the use of harmful chemicals, in order to achieve their beauty ideals.

There has been a substantial shift in how Kenyans see their religious identity as a result of the influx of hegemonic material from the West. The majority of modern Kenyans claim Christian beliefs, however their faiths are as diverse as the country itself. The influence of previous European missionaries, who traveled to Africa and persuaded locals to leave their old faiths on the grounds that they were "barbaric and demonic," is just part of the explanation. The majority of Christian believers in the world today are found in the Western Hemisphere, and this is especially true for Pentecostal and evangelical Christians. Religious networks may also wire its contents that support the western religious perspectives to connected local religious networks; for instance, TBN, a gospel media channel in the US, can transmit all over the globe through satellite, and Kenya's Family Media is a product of TBN. Furthermore, anybody window shopping in Kenya's capital city would see that the religious market is flooded with Western-produced materials including books, CDs, periodicals, and gospel music.

The Power of Search Engines : Cultural imperialism may also be addressed in the classrooms of Kenya. Because of colonialism and western missionaries, education is a result of cultural imperialism. Western civilization is shown by

the widespread use of non-traditional educational models. Furthermore, there are several instances of middle-class Kenyans praising the educational systems of the West over the country's own. Schools like Braeburn, Braeside, Potter's house, Brookhouse, and Khalsa, to mention a few, have used the International General Certificate of Education (IGCE) and International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSSE) from the start. Adding this to an already unstable school system that is struggling with resource shortages in the majority of public education system is a formula for generating inequities in cultural identity. Even if this is a matter of personal preference, such a stance runs counter to the community values that underpinned traditional African societies.

The origin of knowledge is another illustration from the realm of education. There is a glaring imbalance between the number of books published in the developed world and those published in the developing world in Kenya's national and institutional libraries, and this was true long before Google, an internet search engine developed in western nations and now used by a majority of Kenyan researchers as well as students, became popular. This is because emerging nations often consider Western-obtained information to be superior. Decolonization of thought is being promoted at South African universities, which is important. For a very long time, no one from Africa has ever dared to criticize the thinkers of antiquity.

South Africa and Nigeria, two of Africa's most populous nations, have increasingly asserted their cultural dominance over the rest of the continent via their dominance in the film, television, and music industries.

According to Genner and Süss (2017), socialization is "the lifelong process by which people learn and engage with the values and social norms of a particular community and culture." In addition, the media is often regarded as the most influential force in defining contemporary society. The primary forces of socialization in the past were the household, the classroom, and the church. The media has become a human companion for Kenyans, and as a result, time spent with these agents is now restricted and sometimes costs sacrifice, giving the media greater ability to influence one's behavior. Most individuals would rather spend their time interacting with people all over the globe than with

those right in their own backyard. In addition, the advent of social media is one of the new avenues of communication that has opened up in the last thirty years, resulting in more meaningful contacts between individuals than in the past. In addition to its many other applications, like e-mail, chat rooms, and so on, the Internet enables people to easily communicate with one another.

Because of this shift in media influence, Kenyans now rely more on electronic devices for social interaction than on in-person meetings.

The repercussions of the widespread use of modern communication technologies in Kenyan society have already been apparent. Western media such as soap operas, online films, TV shows, and music have had an impact on African culture and society. Time spent with family and neighbors was highly valued in ancient African society. Women traditionally took up the role of caregiver for their families, but with the spread of feminist ideas from the West, they are now entering the workforce in equal numbers to men and often outperforming them. More importantly, they are maturing into fully capable adults. The impact of the media on cultural shifts is also seen in the entertainment industry. For instance, rather of spending time together as a family and discussing important matters, we may all retreat to our own electronic devices. A Kenyan father may be seen watching football on Super sport, a foreign channel, while his wife watches the newest episode of her favorite soap opera, his daughter uses Facebook or WhatsApp, and his son plays video games—all thanks to technology imported from the West.

Media Representation of individuality: The ideals around marriage are another aspect of culture that has been influenced by the media. Divorce was much less common in African community settings but has become more common as a result of changes in the context of personal relations such as marriage, possibly as a result of changes in perspectives of one's own identity engendered by western schooling, the influence of media portrayals of individuality, and modern lifestyles as again shown in depictions in western-influenced media outlets.

The globalization of Kenyan culture is another consequence of the media. McLuhan was right when he said that the globe has become one community because of the influence of mass media on civilizations, leading to changes in

how societies see and interact with the world around them. What this means is that people and communities now have easier access to cultural practices from throughout the world. Media outlets in Kenya, as in other developing nations, have made room for foreign networks that may be seen as airing western perspectives on global issues, such as CNN from the United States and Deutswelle from Germany. The result for Kenyan society is the same as it is for societies in other developing countries: increased access to information about events in other parts of the world at the "push of a button." Information may now be obtained before it is disseminated by media outlets because to the proliferation of social media made possible by widespread access to computers, the internet, and other electronic devices. All of these things are now considered standard in Kenyan society, and they have completely changed the way Kenyans connect with one another, allowing them to do so without interrupting their daily routines.

It has been stated that the character of crime in emerging nations is an example of a cultural shift brought about by the spread of mass media. Some parts of criminal behavior have also altered, though subtly, as the aforementioned shifts take hold in society. The sex trade, which relies heavily on the internet, is a prime example of one of the most widespread cybercrimes. These include everything from escorts and mail order brides to prostitutes to film celebrity pornography (DeCurtis, 2005). Western visitors make up the bulk of these prostitutes' clientele. When these vacationers go online in search of travel-related details, the world wide web hooks them (Barrack & Fisher, 2005). They are either duped into visiting sex tourism locations or are literally given sex tours as an inducement to go (www.worldsexguide.org).

Altitudes Towards Seeking Information: Researchers continue to look at the participation of young people and children in sexually explicit activities on the internet, since this is a topic of intense interest. Researchers have shown a strong correlation between juveniles' prolonged exposure to sexual content online and their reported levels of sexual feeling and tension (Cooper et al., 2000; Brown and Eisenberg., 1995).

Scholars discovered positive correlations among an individual's exposure to erroneous web content and their sexuality-related views, mindsets, and

actions (Young Kraut et al. 1998). This phenomenon was confirmed by Goodson et al. (2003), who found that participants' attitudes toward seeking sex data and sexual entertainment varied based on the frequency with which they used the internet.

Few statistics are available on the number of children from poor nations who are trafficked and sold into commercial sex exploitation in the West. Despite the fact that only lately have social services begun to take notice of these instances, UNICEF estimates that 250 children were trafficked into the United Kingdom during the course of five years (Gary et al., 2007).

The impact of the media on gender norms in Kenya is the last topic up for debate.

Men in Africa before to the introduction of Western culture were expected to exhibit traditionally male characteristics like strength, power, courage, insensitivity to pain, and aggression, while women were meant to be nurturing, sympathetic, forgiving, cooperative, and kind. These characteristics are now considered archaic due to westernization. Both men and women are no longer expected to shoulder the responsibility of solely caring for the home and its inhabitants. The information presented in the media has altered the way people of various sexes see the world and contributed to these shifts. Although males still hold most of the power in the media sector and decide what gets broadcast, ambitious women may succeed in this profession regardless of the gender gap.

Conclusion

As a result of people's innate desire to maximize their personal benefit, modern societies are always engaged in a competition to enhance their capacities and sway over others. Therefore, cultural hegemony via mass media will always be a problem so long as there are people and societies. Exploitation of lesser countries, whether in politics, culture, the economy, or society, will always be a concern for both strong and weak civilizations, as well as for the rest of the globe.

As a final point, it should be made clear that so long as Kenya, as a role model of the developing nations, continues to screen programs from the West, its citizens will continue to believe they should behave, feel, think, and live in the same manner. And the mass media will continue to serve as cultural imperialism's primary means of dissemination. And this is counterproductive to efforts to advance African and Kenyan traditions for the better.

References

1. Das, V. 1995. "The Effects of Television Viewing". Television: Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies. III: 147-167. London: Routledge. Fortner, R.S (1993), International Communication. California: Woodsworth Publishing Company.

2. Genner, S. and Süss, D. (2019) Socialization as Media Effect. Available from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/314395153_Socialization_as_Media_Effect [accessed May 31 2019].

3. Kroeker, B. (2000). Changing Roles in Information Dissemination and Education in G. D.Garson Social Dimensions of Information Technology: Issues for the New Millennium. (pp.141-159) Hershey, PA: IDEA Group.

4. Liebes, T. and Katz, E. (1993). The Export of Meaning: Cross Cultural Readings of Dallas. Cambridge: Polity. Lyon, D. (1988). The Information Society: Issues and Illusions. Cambridge: Polity Press.

5. Mehraj, H. K., Bhat, A. N., and Mehraj, H. R., 2014. Impacts of media on society: A sociological perspective. Inter J Humanit Soc Sci Invent, 3(6), 56-64

6. Mutunga, K. (2007). "Mexican Soaps glue Kenyans to screens". The Daily Nation. February 17 2007.

7. Schiller, H. J. (1973). Communication and Cultural Domination. New York: International Arts and Sciences Press.

8. Nity & Singh G. (2017) Role and Impact of Media On Society: A Sociological Approach with Respect to Demonetisation. International Journal of Research in Humanities, Arts and Literature, 127-136.

9. Schiller, H. (1976). Communication and Cultural Domination. New York: International Arts and Science Press.

10. Spronk, R. (2007). "The young and the ambitious in Nairobi: Sexuality and emerging middle class elf-definitions".
    http://www.ascleiden.nl/Pdf/paperspronk.pdf Accessed: 7 November 2008.

11. Wahome, W. (2007). "Soap operas". The Daily Nation. October 9 2007.

12. Wandago, A. (2003). "We need more local content". Friday magazine in The Standard. September 5 2003.

13. Wolf, A. (2000) Emotional Expression Online: Gender Differences in Emoticon Use. CyberPsychology and Behavior. Vol 3(5)