

THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN PROGRESSING THE PEOPLE'S CULTURE

Yahya Naghizadeh¹, Horiyeh Shahzadeh²

1- Ph.D Student of Strategic Management of Passive Defense, Supreme National Defense University, Tehran, Iran

2- M.S.C Student of Exercise Management, Teheran Pardis University, Tehran, Iran

ABSTRACT: Before discussing the role of the media as an instrument of cultural policy, it should be noted that, broadly speaking, the relationship between culture and the media is one of inclusion. Culture, defined in the widest sense, incorporates all 'articulated symbolic practices' (hence a culture of dressing or a culture of everyday life). Contemporary theory (primarily in the field of cultural studies) puts forward a social definition of culture, as the 'description of a separate way of life in which specific meanings and values are not only expressed in the arts and education, but also in institutions and everyday behavior. The aim present study was to review the role of media in progressing the people's cultures. In a theoretical way, cultural studies should also deal with the general role of the media in the formation of ideas on culture in contemporary society, particularly the complex relations that emerge in the 'confrontation' between the traditionally imposed elitist representative culture and various forms of sub-cultures and pop culture.

KEYWORDS: TV, Radio, Satellite, culture, progress.

INTRODUCTION

The point of departure is the crucial role played by media in particular electronic and audiovisual media, in the cultural, political, economic and social processes that together constitute the process of globalization. By globalization is meant a development through which the constraints of geography on social and cultural structures are reduced, an increased social and cultural interconnectivity across time and space is created, and a heightened consciousness is developed about this secession of social and cultural interaction from geographical constraints. Globalization, however, is neither an unambiguous concept, nor does it refer to a single and specific socio-cultural phenomenon. Similarly, globalization is not a historically new phenomenon that is only confined to the 20th century. Consequently, one aim of the research program is to advance a comprehensive understanding and critique of globalization both as a concept and a sociocultural phenomenon ([Graziani, 2000](#)).

The media have an important impact on cultural globalization in two mutually interdependent ways: Firstly, the media provide an extensive transnational transmission of cultural products and, secondly, they contribute to the formation of communicative networks and social structures. The rapidly growing supply of media

products from an international media culture presents a challenge to existing local and national cultures. The sheer volume of the supply, as well as the vast technological infrastructure and financial capital that pushes this supply forward, have a considerable impact on local patterns of cultural consumption and possibilities for sustaining an independent cultural production. Global media cultures create a continuous cultural exchange, in which crucial aspects such as identity, nationality, religion, behavioral norms and way of life are continuously questioned and challenged. These cultural encounters often involve the meeting of cultures with a different socio-economic base, typically a transnational and commercial cultural industry on one side and a national, publicly regulated cultural industry on the other side. Due to their very structure, global media promote a restructuring of cultural and social communities.

Just as media such as the press, and later radio and TV have been very important institutions for the formation of national communities, global media support the creation of new communities. The Internet, for example, not only facilitates communication across the globe, but also supports the formation of new social communities in which members can interact with each other ([Eagleton, 2000](#)).

And satellite TV and radio allow immigrants to be in close contact with their homeland's language and culture while they gradually accommodate to a new cultural environment. The common point of departure for the research program and its individual projects is the assumption that a series of international media constitutes a global cultural supply in itself and serves as an independent agency for cultural and social globalization, in which cultural communities are continuously restructured and redefined. The aim present study was to review the role of media in progressing the people's cultures.

GENERAL COMMENTS

2.1. *Media and Cultural Policy*

The first set of problems stems from the general relationship between policy—and thus cultural policy as well—and the media. Although it is impossible to provide a uniform description of the status of the media in transition countries, certain common features become apparent. There are two key issues in this field: the issue of media ownership (private or public/state) and, in the case of state ownership, the official management structures and the practical ways in which political forces influence the media. A sticking-point in formulating a cultural policy of conduct towards the media is the obvious gaping chasm between the two 'types' of media: those which have high-circulation (a large number of viewers/listeners) but are not primarily interested in culture, and those which have low-circulation (a small audience/readership) but higher standards and more exacting criteria in portraying cultural themes. The principal characteristic of high-circulation media is their treatment of culture as a separate field, as something of a 'ghetto', dedicating separate broadcasts or special sections to it. These contributions (broadcasts or printed features) are regularly placed at the periphery of central topics (with precedence over sport and weather reports, but second to local crime, tabloidesque news and 'human interest' pieces), and according to surveys of viewers/readers they have a much lower priority than central news broadcasts. Specialized broadcasts on television dealing with culture and the arts (fine arts, literature, and so forth) are normally at the bottom of the viewer ratings and are scheduled in unattractive time-slots: either early in the afternoon, combined with educational broadcasts, or late at night. In my opinion, the fundamental reason for this in transition countries is that, lacking a comprehensive cultural policy and cultural development

strategy during the 1990s, these countries inherited the practice of treating culture as something 'separate' from the social context, and 'above' it. Although this separation is often explained as 'elitism', as a sign of 'high culture', I believe that it brought about a series of negative consequences, the most fundamental of which, bases cultural practice on the principle of exclusion ('cultural is for the above average') rather than inclusion ('let's secure the conditions for transmitting culture to the largest possible number of people'). The political heritage of transitional countries, as typically centralized states, includes the notion of culture as an activity representing the state. In media practice, this means that the major media promote for the most part those cultural activities which directly represent the state, most often on the back of the idea of national cultural identity: staging historical themes in which the national and cultural are unified, representative exhibitions, neo-conservatism, favouring a concern for heritage over the promotion of contemporary cultural products ([Graziani, 2000](#); [Eagleton, 2000](#)).

2.2. *Cultural Administration and Cultural Institutions in relation to the Media*

Administration in the field of culture in transition countries (at national and local levels and in individual cultural institutions) does not make use of professionally trained staff, qualified to communicate with the media. While a feature of political structures is that they are, in principle, still closed to the media, showing a certain apprehension and passivity towards them, cultural institutions generally employ inadequately trained staffs who simultaneously performs marketing, advertising and public relations functions. Cultural policy vis-à-vis the media should be based primarily on the perception that the media are allies in the promotion of cultural values and objectives, and that those working in the cultural field should have a proactive stance toward the media—in short that they should offer content to the media on a continual basis for promotion, in a form which the media can understand, and in which they can convey the message as mediators. Cultural administration charged with the task of communicating with the media must learn the language of the media (media discourse) and their rules of behavior, rather than remain closed to the media on the feeble pretext that the media are 'politicized', 'scandalous' or 'kitschy'. Whatever the character of the media in a given area, cultural administration at the municipal, regional or national level cannot directly

influence their change (the idea of so-called 'fixing the media'). It can only accept the rules of the game as they are presented on the media scene and transmit its own, high-quality mediasuited messages ([Lloyd and Thomas, 1998](#)).

2.3. Promotion of Cultural Objectives

Every cultural administration or cultural institution needs to have a strategy for media actions. Such a strategy should include:

- a) Regular information on the routine cultural activities of individual institutions (press conferences, bulletins, websites);
- b) Formulation of media strategies for each individual cultural event, from advanced promotional activities to concluding assessments;
- c) Selecting and maintaining links with permanent media patrons who also assist in sponsorship initiatives;
- d) Varied means of contact with reporters: press screenings and productions, informal communications.

The promotion of cultural events and cultural products is most effective through the promotion of persons—those, that is, who produce culture. The personalization of culture and cultural events, rather like the notion of 'individualized reception' (creating the feeling in the consumer that a cultural product is intended specifically for him/her), are the fundamental principles of cultural strategy towards the media.

Cultural policy must additionally be tailored to the needs of its various fields. The cultural heritage, contemporary cultural activities and the culture industry all require different media strategies. The cultural heritage is an exceptionally difficult challenge for media promotion, as certain procedures need to be in place for its actualization—to render itself contemporary. Promotion of the cultural heritage can be conducted with the help of the third sector—with links to tourism promotion, and of the public media in the field of educational broadcasting. On the other hand, the culture industry (motion pictures, music, and, to a certain extent, publishing) has its own media promotion mechanisms—in the sense of promotion in the culture market. Here cultural policy measures must be reduced to a minimum. Finally, the real challenge for cultural policy in relation to the media is the production of contemporary art, which demands proactive, contextualized activity at the local level. The local media, with their more focused outreach can be most effective in the promotion of

contemporary artists and their products. Providing information through the media implies first and foremost an awareness of communication through the media ([Lloyd and Thomas, 1998](#); [Eagleton, 2000](#)). This means institutions must obtain feedback on the effect of their media messages as well as on the forms of direct communication with the public (open mailboxes, open telephone lines, and open office hours).

2.4. Formation of Media Identities and Roles

In the last quarter-century, the idea of cultural identity has been replaced with that of national identity. In my opinion, cultural identity is not based on national identity in the sense of ethnicity. Media promotion of the idea of cultural identity must not portray it as the result of unification processes nor of reduction of differences. On the contrary, cultural identity must be promoted in the plural, as a network of cultural identities which emerge through the blend of linguistic, poetic, aesthetic and cultural differences which interact and coexist. The idea of multiculturalism must also be promoted as a means of cultural communication in the broadest sense of the word, outside the national borders of culture. Multiculturalism preserved within the borders of one nationally and culturally dominant region (e.g. concern for the local customs of minorities in a limited area) is not productive; what should instead be supported is multiculturalism as a form of intra-regional communication and cooperation. Cultural and sub-cultural identities, local, national and regional identities, should be promoted as simultaneously existing identities, which are complementary rather than mutually exclusive ([Mundy, 2000](#); [Williams, 1965](#)).

CONCLUSIONS

Having identified the central issues to be addressed, further action needs to be developed and pursued in two main areas which are *Education and Training*.

Two types of programs should be considered in the formulation of cultural policy in relation to the media, with the objective of finding concrete mechanisms for promotion in individual fields and through different types of media, based on an awareness of the media's role in the promotion of cultural values and goods.

1. Educational programs concerned with the training of administrative and management staff in culture, in the field of public relations and media communication, promotion and marketing;

2. Educational programs aimed at specialized supplementary training for reporters and other media professionals who are involved in specific cultural fields.

SUGGESTIONS

Special research should trace the relationship between culture and the media by analyzing the results of media actions, promotional programs and media sponsorships. This means it should monitor the effects of the role of media promotion in the formation of public perceptions of individual cultural products or events. The monitoring of the results of media actions and cultural activities should become an ongoing commitment, in statistical analysis of the numbers of visitors, as well as analysis of the financial impact of individual cultural events.

In a theoretical way, cultural studies should also deal with the general role of the media in the formation of ideas on culture in contemporary society, particularly the complex relations that emerge in the 'confrontation' between the traditionally imposed elitist representative culture and various forms of sub-cultures and pop culture.

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