

Details of Module and its Structure

Module Detail	
Subject Name	Sociology
Paper Name	Development, Globalisation and Society
Module Name/Title	Media (Agencies of Globalisation)
Pre-requisites	Understanding of globalisation, media and relationship between them
Objectives	To understand the concept of globalisation To examine the relationship between globalisation and media To trace the beginning of media as an agency of globalisation To analyse the globalisation of media
Keywords	Media, Globalisation, Multinational Corporations, Globalised media

Structure of Module / Syllabus of a module (Define Topic / Sub-topic of module)

Agencies of Globalisation – Media

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Course: Development, Globalisation and Society

Unit: Agencies of Globalisation

Module Title: Media

Introduction

This module aims to understand the concept of globalisation and the role of media in globalisation. It also tries to study the relationship between the two exploring the developments in media. Accordingly, the module is divided into sub-parts; the first is focused on understanding globalisation, the second looks at media as an agency of globalisation, the third discusses the use of media as an agency of globalisation, the fourth analyses the globalisation of media and the fifth part examines alternatives to globalised media.

Understanding Globalisation

“Globalisation is a process fuelled by, and resulting in, increasing cross-border flows of goods, services, money, people, information and culture (p 4),” defines Guillen (2010). Giddens (1990) says, “Globalisation is the intensification of world-wide social relations, which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa (p-64).” Albrow (1990) says, “Globalisation refers to all those processes by which the peoples of the world are incorporated into a single world society (p-45).” Oman says (1999) “Globalisation can be defined as the growth, or more precisely the accelerated growth, of economic activity that spans politically defined national and regional boundaries (p-37).” There are very many definitions of globalisation like any other concept but as the process of globalisation seems to be progressing, it is discussed more and more and different interpretations are being made about globalisation. Different theorists are putting forward their views about globalisation. These different interpretations can be classified under three categories.

First-wave theorists interpret globalisation as an economic phenomenon but having cultural repercussions (Hopper, 2007). They, also known as globalists say that globalisation is purely related to open market with no boundaries of any states. This open market encourages international trade, greater mobility of capital as well as human resources and hence, in the process leading to coming up of Multinational Corporations. Globalists admit that the increased

flow of international trade sometimes pose threat to nation-states as independent economy and polity as well as cultural identity of a nation-state has started eroding. Citing an example from media, Hopper (2007) says that even the powerful states like China have not been able to monitor the content on internet as well as other media viewed by its people.

Raising a concern, second-wave theorists interpret globalisation as a further expansion and domination of powerful economic and military states (Hopper, 2007). Often called sceptics, they argue that globalisation is nothing but expansionist designs of earlier capitalist countries from Europe, Japan and North America (Matos, 2012). They in fact say that globalisation is a wrong term to use for this phenomenon rather it should be called 'triadisation' – trade and investment by triad of Europe, Japan and North America (Hopper, 2007). These thinkers contend that these powers would do anything to make capital and biggest casualty in this process becomes the culture of a weak state. The companies run by these countries would do anything to be in business and earn profit. For instance, if a nation-state objects to any of the content or product of Multinational Corporations run by these countries and goes for ban, these MNCs alter their content or product to suit the needs of the nation-state. Though very few nation-states can be quoted here who have taken a stand to stop the invasion of products and services of MNCs.

Third-wave theorists interpret globalisation as a process of transformation which is still unfolding (Hopper, 2007). Often termed as transformists themselves, they contend that globalisation is a process which is taking a lot of things along and it is not just about capital and investment but involves establishment of industries, technological and scientific development and sometimes even critical thinking.

Media as an agency of Globalisation

As has been discussed above, globalisation can be interpreted in different ways but it is certain that globalisation largely is to do with increased flow of information and capital from one country to another or from one group of countries to another. Now, the next important question that needs to be discussed is what is fuelling this flow or exchange (if this term can be used) of information or capital. The answer to this question to large extent, if not the only answer, is media or mass media. Media is one of the important agencies of globalisation. Media are the motor of contemporary globalisation (Hopper, 2007). Matos (2012) says that mass media play a

key role in globalisation as it is through it only that information is exchanged between different cultures and countries. Rantanen (2005) says that the relationship between media and globalisation can be explained by using the metaphor of one being a horse and other a carriage or one like a computer and other a screen. Most of the media organisations have gone global in the 21st century and after becoming global organisations themselves, these media organisations are making the world global. Moyo (n.d.) says that digital technologies have the capacity to transcend geographical as well as societal boundaries enabling people to share information rapidly and easily. The author further elaborates that this power of media can be used in several ways, one can be to empower and encourage participation even by marginalised groups or the other can be to reduce the power of the nation states through increased trans-border information flows. However, McQuail (2010) says that media has become both the object and agent of the globalisation process. This implies that media itself has become global and is also contributing to the process of globalisation.

The terms 'Mass media' and 'media' are generally used interchangeably. Mass media is the media which is designed to reach a very number of people at the same time while media is something which is 'in between' the sender and the receiver which facilitates the contact between two or more people. But generally media is taken as mass media, the media which is used to give messages to a very large group of people.

Use of media as an agency of globalisation

A book in a printed form is said to be the first form of mass communication which was used to disseminate ideas or information extended over large areas. The church in Europe had effective means of printing books to transmit its ideas to a large number of people but this form of book was part of mass communication different from the concept of mass 'media' (McQuail, 2010). 'Media' tend to stress more on the medium or channel rather than the content of the medium and with the coming of digital technologies, mass media have become more important than mass communication. Mass media helps in making the process of mass communication easier and quicker.

Most of the mass media started as a national media. McQuail (2010) says, “The national character of early mass media was reinforced by the exclusiveness of language as well as by cultural and political factors (p-248).” It was from the mid-nineteenth century that mass media started transcending boundaries and this transcending became possible with the setting up of well-organised news agencies and use of telegraph (McQuail, 2010; Rantanen, 2005).

The development of global media can be traced back to the invention of Telegraph in 1837 followed by the growth in postal services, telephone, radio communications and mass circulation press (Matos, 2012). McQuail (2010) says that since the Second World War, many of the countries recognised the role of media in projecting the image of their nation states and thus, used it to give out a positive image of their nations. In 20th century, many developments took place, the most important being the deregulation of economic policies not only in developed countries but in developing countries as well which made the spread of mass media quicker and easier. Though newspapers and radio were widely used during Second World War and after but it was television that has accelerated the process of globalisation (McQuail, 2010). The moving and visual element of television has not been only able to attract the audiences but has also broken the barriers of language. Highlighting the importance of broadcasting, Moyo (n.d.), “Right from the beginning, it became clear that broadcasting was a powerful tool – commercially (promoting goods and services), politically (influencing people’s voting habits) and culturally (shaping people’s identities and advancing the nation building project). For these reasons, governments sought direct control of broadcasting institutions throughout the world.”

The use of electromagnetic waves gave the final push to sharing idea and information globally much more quickly, easily and efficiently.

The different interpretations which have been made out of process of globalisation, the same are being applied to use of media as an agency of globalisation i.e. whether the media is helping in making the ideas global or is it that the media is helping only the Western countries to spread their ideas to the rest of the world? Is media helping in exchange of ideas and information between different countries or is it just one-way flow of information from few countries having capital power to countries which still are struggling with their scarce resources?

Mass Media was used on large scale and it was thought that it can be used for developmental purposes. Wilbur Schramm, Daniel Lerner and Everett Rogers were among the first communication theorists who contended that media can be used for development purposes. Schramm suggested that the developmental work or the technological and other advances made in developed countries can be shown to developing countries with the help of media and in this process, developing countries can benefit from it (Matos, 2012). Daniel Lerner in his paper *The Passing of Traditional Society* (1958) writes, “The mass media opened to the large masses of mankind the infinite vicarious universe. Many more millions of persons in the world were to be affected directly, and perhaps more profoundly, by the communication media than by transportation agencies. By obviating the physical displacement of travel, the media accented the psychic displacement of vicarious experience (p-124).”

However, a little later it was found that the role of media in development has undergone a change as the media was not found to be producing the effects which most of the thinkers thought. They argued that since the advances made in technology or other fields were from the western countries, their point of view has only become global. McQuail (2010) says, “Early theory of media and development portrayed the influence of media as ‘modernising’ simply by virtue of promoting western ideas and consumer aspirations. (p- 488) .” Schiller (1976) said that showing of media content or the use of media technology developed in the Western became a tool of undermining the autonomy of countries of the South. Matos (2012), “Cultural imperialism theories of the 1970’s and 1980’s highlighted how the media in developing countries imported foreign news, cultural and television genre formats (i.e. talk-shows, sitcoms) and also values of capitalist consumerism and individualism (p-2).”

Setting up of International news agencies like Agence France Presse, Reuters, Associated Press too have contributed to giving representation to only one side of the world. This domination of media during 1970s and 1980s by the Western world became an area of serious concern and hence, was discussed upon by United Nations Educational, Social and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). UNESCO set up a Commission called Macbride Commission which came out with a report calling for a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO). This Order called for a more balanced view of the world in media giving equal and fair coverage to the developing countries instead of projecting the developed countries and their views. Moyo (n.d.),

“NWICO debate did not only centre on imbalances in global news flows. It also included the unequal and unidirectional flow of images from North to South or centre-periphery; including the role of advertising in promoting consumerism.”

But still even after NWICO, the media has not been able to become global but remain American to a large extent. Even today media systems which are popular globally are owned by Americans such as CNN, Hollywood.

Not only the content and ownership of the media was discussed but even technological aspect of the media has also been reflected upon. Marshall McLuhan (1964) was among the first few thinkers who pointed out the effects of technological media that has been put into use in everyday lives. He said ‘medium is the message’ which emphasises the point that the introduction of every medium brings out ‘personal and social consequences’. McLuhan observed that technology lead to changes in society, in its structure, in how people think and how people act (McQuail, 2010). He also used a term ‘global village’ to refer to “the new form of social organisation that would inevitably emerge as instantaneous electronic media tied the entire world into one great social, political, and cultural system” (Baran & Davis, 2010, p. 231). Hence, it can be said that McLuhan in 1960s had the concept of globalisation which is happening at large scale now.

Pointing towards the interconnectedness in the society, Manuel Castells (1996) talks about ‘network society’. He says that ‘Network Society’ is a result of three independent processes: the Information Technology revolution of the 1970s; restructuring of capitalism in 1980s and social movements of 1960s and 1970s (Hopper, 2007). It is a society in which people have wide networks. Harold Innis, Canadian economic historian who founded the ‘Toronto School’ of thinking about media after World War II also believed that characteristic features of a civilisation are due to dominant modes of communication present at the time (McQuail, 2010). For instance, he attributed the shift from royal to priestly power to change from stone to papyrus.

Globalisation of Media

It is not just the world that is getting globalised but media is becoming global. This era of globalisation is also seeing the globalisation of media itself to some extent as emergence of Multinational Corporations in media has led to concentration of media ownership in few hands.

Some of these MNCs owning media are Sony, News Corporation, Disney and Time Warner. These corporations own print media, broadcast media and online media at the same time leading to homogenisation of content across media. Not only this, most of these MNCs are owned by western powers hence, seeming to project just the Western side of the world. Global multimedia giants such as News Corporation, Disney, Time Warner and Viacom are making the content which is being received by millions of audiences worldwide. Matos (2012) says, “By the 1990’s, Murdoch claimed to have TV networks and systems that reached more than 75% of the world’s population, having launched satellite systems in Latin America, Japan and India and established agreements with national media systems, including with TV Globo in Brazil, as well as conquering markets in China and India (p- 10).” The author further points out, “ The concentration of media firms in the hands of few owners is pointed out by critics as threatening diversity, impeding real competition, forcing smaller players out of the market, and contributing to reinforce conservative views of the world, marginalising dissent or content that does not generate profit or which is seen as challenging to capitalist values(p-10).”

New media i.e internet and mobile phones seems to have further accelerated this phenomenon of interconnectedness. Though in case of new media, accessibility has become more of an issue as compared to content because in case of internet, users are producing the content themselves thus, providing a platform to different sections of people. Giving the example of Tiananmen Square demonstrations in China, 1989, Moyo (n.d.) explains the point that new media has made sharing of issues easier.

Alternatives to globalised media

In the late 20th and 21st centuries, many thinkers came up different concepts to counter the view of globalised media. In the late 20th century research studies regarding response of media audiences were conducted and it was found that media audiences are not passive. They just do not use or consume whatever is given to them by media rather they use media according to their own needs and gratifications (Matos, 2012). This approach of studying the preferences of audiences was termed as Uses & Gratifications approach. Thus, this point of view further showed that projecting the one side of the world is not very easy as audiences too are active and do analyse the content they are using.

In the 21st century, most thinkers have moved away from equating “global culture with homogenisation or cultural synchronisation or “McDonaldisation”, recognising diversity and the impact of reverse flows on Western cultures. Here homogenisation is understood as the degree of convergence of media systems towards formats that originated in the US (Matos, 2012, p-6).”

Some of the theorists have come up with the concept called ‘glocalisation’, merging the terms ‘global’ and ‘local’ together (McQuail, 2010). This concept refers to the programmes and formats offered by Multinational Corporations but tweaked to local tastes and cultures to make them desirable by the people of local community.

Another concept which is being discussed to counter the process of culture globalisation is ‘deterritorialisation’. This concept implies a world where geographical territories do not matter any longer but addresses the concerns and problems of diasporic communities. Matos (2012) writes, “deterritorialisation opens up new markets for film companies to explore the life stories of diasporic communities and the need of these deterritorialised populations for contact with their homeland (p-8).” Matos (2012) says that globalisation of communication and increased mobility has resulted in awareness of cultural difference. Accordingly, Multinational Companies are adapting their products and services as per the local needs and situations.

Some of the critics have still not closed the debate around the dominance of world view by US media corporations. Some still point out that the transnational companies are overpowering national media of countries in its influence. Hopper (2007) says that consuming media is necessarily an experience in which the viewers are at a place from the actual happening and are getting the view which the programmers of the media are projecting. Hence, media controls the way audiences get to know about the events happening at a distance from their place of residence.

Interlinkages between media and other agents of globalisation

Mass media has played an important role in accelerating the process of globalisation. But the two other factors, money and advertising which contributed to this process have worked in close association with media. Television which is said to have contributed the most to globalisation has been able to work just because of money that has been put into its programme making. “The

expansion of television since the 1980s, made possible by new, efficient and low-cost transmission technologies, has been driven by commercial motives and has fuelled demand for imports. It has also stimulated new audiovisual production industries in many countries that look, in their turn, for new markets. The main beneficiary and the main exporter has been the United States, which has a large and surplus production of popular entertainment... (McQuail, 2010, p-250).

Conclusion

Media is an important agency of globalisation and the technological advancements being made in media technology are further helping in connecting people worldwide and exchange of ideas and information. Sharing of experiences by large number of people rather than only some media organisations at the world wide level through media has raised some concerns about the power of state but the concept of state cannot be wholly negated. Moyo (n.d) says, "...it can be argued that liberalisation and privatisation of media systems throughout the world, coupled with the development of cable and satellite technologies, has reduced the state's capacity to exercise communicative sovereignty, it would be rather far-fetched to conclude that the state is no longer relevant." Another important issue is dominant ownership of media and subsequently leading to homogenisation or heterogenisation need to be discussed. Rantanen says, "The resource and technology at the disposal of the global media companies to cover the war is overwhelming in comparison with any media company (p-159). The new media which is used by individuals rather than big organisations has to some extent given an alternative to the one sided ownership of media but here again another issue of accessibility crops in. The issue of digital divide i.e. who, where and how many people are able to access internet and use it to their advantage has become an issue of concern. Globalisation is a phenomenon which is still in progress and rapid developments in media world too are making it further complex.