

Role/ State of Electronic Media in Pakistani Society: A Sociological Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Media in Pakistan has been more informative than ever before. Media in country create genuine public enlightenment about real life issues- Issues that matter such as health, education, sanitation, unemployment, increasing prices of essential commodities and the state of the country and the nation.

In modern- age media has assumed the role of a guide in daily life of everybody. It is used as instrument of policy by the government. The volume of out put of print and electronic media is simply overwhelming. The media in Pakistan continuously shapes and reshapes our opinion, attitudes and perceptions.

The purpose of this paper is to throw light on the three- dimensional role of media i.e. informing the public, educating the unknowledgeable and providing entertainment, and the state of print media, radio, television and internet in Pakistani society.

INTRODUCTION

There is significant progress seems in the era of communication technologies. Among the Asians countries, Pakistan is also adopting these rapidly changing communication technologies from last decade. Many public and private channels have been launched in the country. This paper takes a critical view on the state/role of media in Pakistan and the challenges that it faces at present.

The electronic media in Pakistan has become the most powerful medium of the moment by spreading education, information and powerful entertainment. It brings us latest news of events and developments. Pakistan's media especially press is active. It has a long history of efforts for its and for the rights of public. It keeps the public aware of even the tiniest detail about their politicians and their misdeeds. We can have a better view of the media in Pakistan by defining their role separately.

1. PRINT MEDIA

In past dictatorial time only government's favorable stories were published, but presently, the press enjoys centrality. The press does not only articulate public demands but also provides a forum for highlighting issues that are of public concern. The press has developed a healthy public opinion. There is significant relaxation in the laws of publication. There is remarkable increase in the number of publications.

In 1987 there were 1748 newspapers and periodicals published in eight languages: of them 125 were dailies and 346 weeklies. In terms of language, there were 1315 newspapers and periodicals, 317 English, 88 Sindhi and much smaller numbers Gujrati, Balochi, Punjabi and 2 tri- lingual newspapers. The total circulation of the dailies was 1.5 million, of which the Urdu newspapers claim more than 80 per cent. English dailies are about 212,000: Regional language press and the Sindhi dailies claim a circulation of about 60,000 copies. These figures must be viewed in the context of Pakistan's low literacy rate. At present there are 2538 newspapers and periodicals, of them 275 are dailies, 4 bi- weeklies and 510 weeklies. Of the dailies 184 are published in the province of Punjab, 48 in Sindh, 27 in NWFP and 12 in Balochistan. In term of circulation and readership Urdu and English newspapers form the heart of the national press.

Journalism and communication in Pakistan has tremendous potential to progress. It has played a vital role for the awareness of masses. Political, economic activities were trickled down from mega cities to villages.

2. RADIO

Radio Pakistan began its broadcast on 14th August 1947 as a government department. Radio Pakistan through 25 stations located at as many places in the country is on air for 24 hours daily both on Medium Wave and Short Wave. In the home service using 20 languages and dialects it reaches 75 per cent of the area and 95 per cent population of the country.

3. TELEVISION

Television is the main source of electronic media. It is playing a main role in creating awareness in the society and enlightens the social, economic and health issues of the

country. Television in Pakistan is successfully playing three- dimensional role of educating, informing and entertaining the public.

Apart from government owned PTV there are other private channels operating in Pakistan. Their out reach to viewer- ship and listener- ship is severely restricted through laws and mechanism that hinder the development of an enabling environment.

To add to this unfortunate state of affairs is the assumption of a greater role by the ministry of information to discourage the private media from reporting on issues such as politics, current affairs and particularly terrorism.

4. THE INTERNET AND THE TRADITIONAL MEDIA

Internet is the most important mover of change for print and electronic media. It has brought about the greatest revolution in mass communication since the invention of movable type of printing. Unlike the previous one, which took centuries in reaching all parts of the world?

In Pakistan, the introduction of internet services into schools and universities allow students and teachers alike to explore veritable universe of information at their fingertips. Today there are many websites which educate, inform and entertain the users. The major contribution of this scientific revolution towards human development is that has removed all boundaries. This is why it has enabled like- minded people around the globe to form a single world community.

The use of internet in Pakistan is on the rise not only in offices but also in shops and residences. People now carry the world of information and communication in the form of laptop and mobile phones. Students now mostly appoint for subjects related to information technology and their courses are designed to catch the modern needs.

CONCLUSION

Pakistani media deserve better marks as far as providing entertainment and information is concerned. Live coverage of International events, and of games that are a craze in Pakistan, like cricket, hockey and football, provide a healthy relief to the viewers from the grinding stresses of life. Glamorous world of fashion and movies has also been adequately covered. The Pakistani print media has become significantly pictorial and the quality of pictures has also

improved considerably but major focus is still on portraying females. TV too has been jazzed up since the private channels have been allowed to telecast its programs. The entertainment that private channels provide is much more liberal and flashier than PTV, which too is trying to catch.

Pakistan's media outlets are full of vibrant and talented journalists. Pakistan's news organizations increasingly provide a constructive channel for debate and dissent. These media organizations also have businesses and contribute to the economic growth of the country.

The only criticism that can be done on the media in the field of entertainment is that it has not shown native genius in innovation. It is aping the Indian model of entertainment-high heels and lower necks. The media can improve its performance in the three aspects of its role in the society and can play it more effectively and more successfully.

Trend of privatization has been increased due to competition which is the root cause to minimize the share of government commercials. So far there is a control of state on macro level. Reduction in Government commercials will keep up editorial liberty in the country. Many states exploit commercials as a tool against publication.

We cannot escape globalization, so why not reap its benefits? But to achieve this we have to be part of the global village. This objective will be achieved only if we allow liberalizing and totally independent radio and television stations and channels, including news broadcast.

The electronic media is the most powerful medium of public education and awareness. It has to be opened up and made to respond to the needs of the society, whose problems have grown enormously complex. Another problem with media in Pakistan is providing entertainment. Entertainment is the order of the day. Until Pakistani media realizes this it cannot expect to be competitive.

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