

NEW MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY - ESSAY

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Information in new media can be shared and redistributed to other people. In old media one used post mails, radio, and TV for information. Yet, in the new media era people can chat live on Skype, mobile phones, and other digital media. Both the sender and receiver are participating actively making it easier for one to communicate with people. Social networking sites have changed the communication among people and their social life. However some interactive media sent on a mobile phone such as emails “are used for their lack of synchronicity, producing and receiving messages can be done at a self-chosen times and places, and one I allowed to think longer about a reply” (Dijk, 2006, 8). As a result this is at the expense of immediate responses. The media have become influential in many people's lives. Since the growth of the internet in the early 1990s, one important issue has been important to government. The issue of access to the new technologies has been and

ongoing policy. ICTs are also transforming old media, especially broadcasting. Therefore, it is essential for society to respond to these technological changes. However, many people often resist change and conforming to situations that take up their time “people are going for 40 second stories rather than two minute ones” also “they re going for lightweight stories that they can share with their friends” (Thurman, 2007, 445).

South Africa tends to resell what is produced elsewhere. However the domestic divide is the main cause of the digital divide in South Africa. Jensen (2002) argues that in Africa, where a “large majority of the people are poor, Mike Jensen argues that by 2002, 1 in 35 people had a mobile phone, 1 in 130 had a personal computer, and 1 in 160 had used the internet”. The domestic divide analyses the lack of technologies in rural areas and all elements of inequality and poverty. “Internet is generally perceived as creating opportunities for

cheap, reliable, and instantaneous communication in the north, the poorer telecommunications infrastructure in some countries in the south mean that internet access may be limited to a few people while the majority of people find it unaffordable” (Hassan, 2004, 68).

There is a constant lack of infrastructure in Africa and this therefore makes it difficult for many people to have access to the internet and majority of those that have the internet, access it through their mobile phones. Mutula (2003) emphasizes on the notion that there many problems facing the dissemination and consumption of information in Africa, which “include the language divide, IT illiteracy, lack of appropriate costing models, lack of appropriate content, lack of compatibility among devices connecting to the internet, and insufficient or complete lack of indigenous local content”.

The audience has a much greater knowledge of society around them. New media have enabled a connectedness or a “global village” as McLuhan (1997) once stated. Audiences are able to engage with media texts. This could therefore mean that one is shifting from being a passive audience to being active users. Interactivity is “the dimensions of communication, flexibility about time and roles in the exchange, having a sense of place in the communication environment, level of control and perceived purpose” (Downes and McMillan, 2002, 24).

However, new media has enabled more face to face engagement with technology such as an electronic mail or social networks with a webcam such as Skype. Thus, one cannot imagine a two way communication that did not involve a mobile phone text message or tweeting especially with the South African youth. The ongoing process of media technologies coming together is convergence. Many things can come together in many ways “convergence arises in the first instance out of the growing linkages between media, information technology and telecommunications, but the impact of convergence is broadening beyond these sectors to the full range of commercial and government services” (Poster, 1994, 58).

People grow relationships with one another and interactivity allows control within one. During old media, communication was limited to a small

amount of people that one is familiar with, however with new media a person can interact with strangers from all over the world. The public is becoming more interactive, for example the radio could become a platform where listeners can call into the show from their phones and voice their opinions live on air. Also the audience that reads news online could send their opinions and comments through emails voicing out their views. These letters to the editor are mainly written by the audience to a certain news organization. Digitization is the paradigmatic shift from analogue to a digital era. Castells (1996) stated that “digitization means that diverse forms of information, including text, sound, image, and voice are encoded in a single 0-1 binary code” meaning that a picture can be taken on a mobile phone and the binary codes would create the picture stored instead of the old film strip taken out of a camera. Technology has vastly improved the way things run. News on the internet travels fast and reaches a mass of people. Some websites may go as far as giving the option of sending direct links, files or documents online as an email to other people. One of the differences between new and old media is that it “transgresses the limits of the print and broadcasting models by enabling many to many conversations and provides the instantaneous global contact” (Poster, 1999, 15). Anyone who has the internet can get access to different information and make it available to others. “The Seattle Times was able to print a photograph of military coffins being transported back from Iraq” also “Tami Silico, had emailed a shot taken with her digital Nikon Coolpix camera to a friend back in the United States” (Stuart, 2010) this is an example of news being disseminated fast on the internet. One could therefore deduce that interactivity gives rise to consumers having a choice. For example an audience that enjoys watching sports on television can watch it all day. There are sport programs which play different sporting games on television twenty four hours a day. However, such privileges are enjoyed by the minority of the population that is subscribed to satellite dishes such as DSTV and TOP-TV. There are a lot more channels to suit different people. Old media is changing and is being replaced by new media. One could say that old television networks such as free to air channels

are losing their audience and are being replaced by the new networks such as satellite television. Television is digital these days and it has hundreds of channels to choose from.

It could be argued that the “new media overcomes barriers of space and time” (Williams, 2003, 213) meaning technology enables one to do a lot of things or talk to a lot of people at the same time, having more time to do other things. In comparison, old media was better at bridging space. Furthermore, “digital technologies like the internet have brought about visual communities or network societies that transcend the limits of time and space” (Castell, 2000). Old media required a lot of money to disseminate information to the mass as a result of making its content limited. People went from making phone calls with their mobile phones to chatting on BBM (BlackBerry Messenger), personal computers were a device where one created documents and stored pictures, these days people use computers to download music and videos and to get access to the Internet, however most people still read newspapers today but mostly online. This idea may have severe effects on the economy of print media. Letters have been replaced with telegrams, telegrams with the telephones, telephones with cell phones, talking on cell phones has been replaced with text messaging and now social networking has become the main trend in society. Ghonim (2011) stated that, "If you want to liberate (a people), give them the internet". This notion emphasizes on the huge role that the internet plays in many peoples lives. However, this does not deny the fact that new media is growing therefore new means of doing things are to be created “given the population of the world is somewhere around 5.9 billion people, obviously there is considerate growth potential for more users across the internet” (Albarron, 2002, 110-111). Fidler (1997) stated that “traditional forms of media change in response to emerging new media. New media improve upon or remedy prior technologies”. The impact of new media regarding the internet and mobile phones is that they are able to empower the individual user and therefore encouraging space for smaller narratives as opposed to metanarrative. An example, could be the fragmentation of mass audience to the

encouragement of active participation to become citizen journalists. "As our ways of storing manipulating, and retrieving information change, so too do our perceptions of the world (Purves, 1998, 214)". Much of our perception of the world is determined by our access to information. Very often governments in power use the media to strengthen their campaigns, “the internet was a significant part of the 2008 election for candidates, news organizations and voters in both fund raising and communication directly from the candidates staffs to the audience” (Shoemaker, 2009, 7). An advantage of new media is that many people across the world are able to understand one another better, thus it develops a common understanding and reduces differences. One could therefore deduce that new media is multiplying spaces and this means society has a chance of working towards a better democracy. These technologies could be seen as empowering people in a sense that society is becoming more informed and engaging. There is always a tone of optimism considering the uses of the internet and mobile phones. Lastly, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, help unite the people around the world. Examples from Egypt and South Africa have been given. The internet thus, gave ordinary citizens a platform to communicate freely and anonymously, and to show the rest of the world their views. The decline of telecommunications and its impact in the world have affected the cost of accessing means of production. This means that the media content production costs have fallen so the means of production are now much more widely accessible. People can view and share information without moving from their homes. Mobile phones such as smartphones tend to keep us informed on what is new around society. However, new media have severe impacts on the age groups of people, people's democracy, and ethical issues. In conclusion new media has become a daily routine in people's lives, affecting the way we live and the way people live around us. New and old media have been analyzed fully in this essay. This essay has also explained the role of mobile phones and the internet in regard to the modern society. Therefore media do not determine ones individual identity, the technology one uses influences how one sees themselves and the world around them.

Similarly, one could also argue that the media would not have evolved the way it has if it was not because of globalization and technology. For example, one could speak to anyone on the planet in means such as IM (instant messengers), Skype, and social networks which have been introduced by technology. When one has access to video calling software s such as Skype, one could immediately assume that global connectedness is possible and that anyone with an access to the internet can communicate effectively with anyone within or across borders. “It is just as implausible to think of real life as an absolute immediate experience entirely separate from cultural representations, as it is to think of television as “the real world” (Kroker and Cook,1991:131), social networks sort of become our real world. Hence it becomes hard to imagine a world which did not have technology advancements. This is a positive effect of globalization. Malam (2010:71) states that “globalization allows us to find opportunities and freedoms. It exposes us to new influences of different cultures allows us to grow individually and globally”.

Similarly Featherstone (1995:389) also deduces that “globalization as a set of economic processes gathered pace with the neo-liberal deregulation of markets in the late 1980s. Indeed, marketization is often seen in the popular imagination as the defining characteristic of globalization”. This means that products are able to move to other markets around the world. Images and ideas are flowing more than they ve ever been, ideas of the world are expanding this means that people get to access the same material as we enter into a global mindset. Mediation, however, as an unplanned process is embodied in things like the cinema and theatre through which people are able to represent their own cultures through art and performance. This therefore gives them a platform to spread to other recipients and ideas and knowledge about other people is disseminated in these ways. This is therefore similar to what Silverstone (2007:10) deduced about the globe appearing on the “world s screens”.

Many political economists argue that the mediated world has become “a capitalist victory that is dispossessing democracies, imposing policy

homogenization, and weakening progressive movements rooted in working class and popular political organizations” (Curran and Park, 2000: 10-11). Therefore, this means that globalization seeks to weaken the power structure and influence the state by continuing with the capitalist production. Globalization could also be a “freer passage of commodities, the dominance of finance capital, the increasing authority of supra- national organizations and the rapid development of new labour saving or labour replacing technologies”.

However, Mosco (1996: 212) disagrees by stating that “structures are constituted out of human agency, even as they provide the very medium of the constitution” this means that information and ideas are infused on other people for example Western identities may be adopted by African societies. This could mean that the globalization of the media tends to not give rise to new forms of dependency and ideas. “Most forms of culture in the world today are, to varying extents, hybrid cultures in which different values, beliefs and practices have become deeply entwined” (Thompson, 1995:170). The human population is often forgotten and globalization only exists as an autonomous entity or a capital driven business. However, Barnett (2001) argues on the notion that “globalization is constructed by people and involves the agency of people”. These literary scholars offer an interesting debate about the two contested terms. The consequences of globalization are the “pressure to become and remain attractive to capital increases, producing a mating dance with globalized capital that tends to follow a sequence of routines choreographed by the ideology of neoliberal s” (Marais, 1999:119). This is where the role of multinational corporations such as the IMF, UN and the World Bank could be analyzed. Many of these corporations emerged because of globalization, and a lot of them are often media institutions. Corporations seem to run a business of disseminating ideas and information for example media texts tend to become these informational goods which flow around the globe. The international markets lead to how goods are made in one place and are able to travel to another place across borders, for example society gets to watch a lot of movies. Most movies are produced in

Hollywood, but could be watched by a mass of people in different parts of the world. "ICTs sustain globalization; they create profit from hardware, software and services, protected by patent and intellectual property rights legislation of primary benefit to developed countries" (Barrett, 2006:25). This could therefore mean that one cannot begin to imagine how globalization would be without the internet and technology. One could therefore argue that global media forms were instituted and controlled by the capitalist system to keep us from the real world. Tomlinson (1999:20) expands on this notion, that it is the "complex connectivity of globalization, especially the question of how the rapidly developing network of interconnections alters the construction of identities, the experience of place and the shared understandings, values, desires, myths, hopes and fears that have developed around locally situated life". McChesney (1997:65) states that "globalization of the media means commercialization, thus globalized media go where there are consumers ready to buy products of the advertisers, the motto of commercialized media". However, this may seclude many people, especially in the African areas. Others may therefore argue that globalization is weakening nation states and it makes no respect to different cultures. Globalization seems to support the western culture. One may find that globalization has brought people together and increased the spread of popular culture by example similar ideas through music, religion and food. Lule (2011) states that "decades ago McLuhan prophesied that media technology would transform the world into a global village slowly, fitfully, his vision is being fulfilled".

Many media markets in developing countries are, however saturated with products from the developed countries "the result is an electronic invasion which threatens to destroy local traditions and to submerge the cultural heritage of less developed countries beneath a flood of TV programs and other media products emanating from a few power centers in the west" (Thompson, 1995:166). This could mean that people around the world are consuming the same media and all this equals a global cultural homogeneity which creates "met culture whose collective identity is based on

shared patterns of consumption, be these built on choice, emulation or manipulation" (Ferguson, 2002:245).

The media communication can be seen as an imperialism culture. The media however have a lot of power in terms of its content, and very often society becomes brainwashed. One might assume that they become the receiver of media texts that absorbs the information. The "media can serve to repress as well as to liberate, to unite as well as to fragment society to promote as well as to hold back change" (McQuail, 2005:8).

Globalization could lastly be a set of processes becoming more unified. Mazzarella (2004:357) states that the impact of globalization on processes of mediation is extensive in a sense that "Globalization has facilitated flows between cultures through mediation in ways that are creating a shrinking world, which is capable of seeing representations of several cultures, including one's own culture". These could therefore mean that society tends to consume the same texts and these then results in people sharing and having the same ideas about the world. Television can be seen as an example in which one can examine the impact of globalization on mediation. Through globalization, different television shows have been played in several countries around the world for example a lot of American shows such as *The Bold and the Beautiful* and *Dr Phil* are shown on the SABC (South African Broadcasting Corporation) channels.

However, this does not deny the fact that new media is growing "given the population of the world is somewhere around 5.9 billion people, obviously there is considerable growth potential for more users across the internet" (Albarron, 2002:110-111). The world is still surrounded by media everywhere, from billboards on the highway to programs one may watch on television and to the newspapers sold at the traffic lights. This essay has tried to analyze the relationship mediation has with globalization. However, many scholars have varying opinions about their relationship because globalization tends to mean different things to different people. Lastly the demand for media is growing and the media is a constant reminder of

reality in society today, and it is almost as if society cannot live without the media. It enlightens people about things they may not have been aware of it also becomes hard to imagine globalization without the media. Statistics show that there is a high demand of media texts than ever because more people are becoming literate and therefore growing an interest in issues around them. In conclusion the advantage of globalization is that people across the border can understand each other, thus it develops an

understanding and hopefully reduces differences among people of different values. However, there were more advantages of globalization and mediation than disadvantages. In this highly developed world, one may live in one could see a productive future due to the opportunities new media technologies bring and people are able to receive news in a very short space of time therefore making the world a better place to live in.