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# Mass Media as a Deceptive Planning Tool for Promoting National Development.

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## Abstract

*Joseph Klapper's Reinforcement Theory(1960) says media rarely have any direct effects and are relatively powerless when compared with other social and psychological factors such as social status, group membership, strongly held attitudes, education etc.*

*Mass communication ordinarily does not serve as a necessary and sufficient cause of audience effects but, rather, functions among and through a nexus of mediating factors and influences.*

*However, following the dominant paradigm of development which says development can mostly be achieved through using mass media to disseminate information regarding technology to the masses; all nations` governments have embarked on using mass media to disseminate information regarding new development projects/programmes with the sole aim of promoting human development. This is not achieved in most cases.*

*Therefore, this paper intends to examine reasons why mass media are tools of deception for promoting human development, identifies the role of mass media in promoting national development. It also recommends the planning authority in each nation to integrate mass media with Theatre for development. This will help the planning authority to use mass media to*

*disseminate information that comprises of people's opinions and their set priorities for human development thus achieving national development. This is because development is best achieved through participatory planning approach.*

**Key:** Mass media and Development, Theatre for Development, Participatory media, media as a deceptive tool.

## Introduction

Mass media refer to all communication channels used to disseminate information to anonymous, heterogeneous and diversified audiences with the aim of achieving the desired goals of the sender. The question is, can mass media help to promote national development? To answer this question, it is worth understanding the term development communication which implies the art and science of human communication applied to speedy transformation of a country and the mass of its people from poverty to a dynamic state of economic growth that makes possible better social equality and the larger fulfillment of human potential(Nora,Cruz.Q.1971)

According to Sainath, media can only promote human development if journalists cover/ report development issues that are mostly ignored by the main media houses. He adds that development journalism involves putting the poor people in the centre of news reporting.

The development journalists are the one who are industrious enough to look beyond published news. Such journalists must be brave enough to present home grown solutions to pressing development problems. Development journalists travel to remote areas to report on happenings there. This type of journalism acts as a tool for social justice, speaking for the voiceless, looking at the strengths and weaknesses of a country and in so doing identifying ways in which the nation can be helped (Fleury, 2008). Media are undoubtedly very fast, vast and powerful modes of communication. They have got tremendous impact on the political run of the country and cultures of the society (Answesha, Mohanty, 2012).

### **Ways Mass media act as deceptive planning tool for national development.**

Dominant paradigm of development suggests that any area can develop if mass media are used to disseminate information regarding technology and innovations. In fact many government authorities think that they can easily promote national development by using mass media. This thinking is attributed to the fact that mass media channels can be used to disseminate information to a large diversified audience.

Therefore, governments rely heavily on using mass media to cause action among people thus achieving human development. Instead of disrupting society and creating unexpected

social change, media generally serve as agents of the status quo, giving people more reasons to go on believing and acting as they already do (Klapper, Joseph, 1966). Klapper further argued that there simply are too many barriers to media influence for dramatic change to occur except under very unusual circumstances. Similarly, information/innovation diffusion theory assigns a very limited role of mass media. Media mainly create awareness of new innovations. Only early adopters are directly influenced by media content (Rogers, Everett, 1983). This implies that mass media cannot cause immediate change among people despite being used by government planning authorities with the aim of achieving national development.

According to Rogers, Everret,(1983),diffusion of new innovation is only possible if there are change agents; people who can go out into rural communities and directly influence early adopters and opinion leaders. In development planning, media are only used as means to draw attention to innovations and as a basis for group discussions led by change agents.

Limited effect theory says that media rarely influence people`s decisions, actions and behavior directly. Mass media are powerless to immediately cause action among people. Therefore, it is relatively impossible to use mass media as change agent for promoting human development.

Social marketing theory can be regarded as a persuasion of an effort to increase the effectiveness of mass media base information campaigns through greater understanding and manipulation of aspects of societal and psychological factors (Rogers, 1983). A key first step in promoting ideas or candidates is to

make people aware of their existence. The easiest but most costly way to do this is with a saturation of television advertising campaign. As social marketing theories have gained sophistication, other methods have been developed that are almost as effective but much less costly. These include using news coverage and news media channels to induce awareness.

Although magic bullet theory confirms media as being so powerful that can penetrate through all people's defenses/ minds and instantly create an effect/ action, this is possible only if the intermediary factors are inactive. The fact is that people are much influenced by opinion leaders/ fellow people directly rather than mass media. Besides, mass media communication has limited factors like; shortage of electricity in some areas and lack of enough money to buy dry cells for radios. This implies that any information for development disseminated through expensive mass media tools may not reach the intended target audience.

Mass media persons always assume that their information is received by all people immediately it is disseminated. In most cases, this is not the reality. Mass media tools are used to propagate inappropriate technologies and development planning strategies. The government planning authorities copy these new technologies from internet. They quickly adopt them as their new planning strategies to achieve national development and in most cases; these new planning strategies copied from internet fail to meet the desired goals. This is because societies in the country have different levels of development and therefore need different appropriate planning strategies/ approach.

According to Rostow's model of development, all countries to develop must pass through five stages of economic development; traditional society, transitional stage, take off stage, drive to maturity and lastly high mass consumption stage. Each stage of development has different characteristics and needs different planning strategies which are participatory in nature rather than depending on only using mass media to cause economic growth, positive and quality change in the nation.

The media are malignant, cancerous force within the society and must be purged or totally restructured (Marcuse, 1969, 1978). The mass society assumes that media can be used to turn control over other elites. Although their efforts may have disastrous effects, the media can control other social institutions and government agencies.

Once people's minds are corrupted by media, all sorts of bad long-term consequences result not only bringing ruin to individual lives but also creating social problems on a vast scale (Marcuse, 1941). Most problems for example, prostitution and delinquency to urban violence and drug abuse are linked to media. In fact, all these are indicators of under development in the society.

### **The role of mass media in promoting national development**

Mass media inevitably debase higher forms of culture, bringing about a general decline in civilization (Davis, 1976). The elites saw themselves as responsible for nurturing and promulgating higher forms of culture, not only within their own societies but worldwide. The whites believed that it was their burden to bring

civilization and their culture to the uncivilized parts of the world even if this meant suppressing indigenous cultures and spread theirs. The media were supposed to give people they need rather than what they want.

According to Marxist theory, powers must be taken away from the elites to have social change and to dominate the means of production by the average people. Mass media can be used as mobilization tools to encourage the nationals to take active participatory role in promoting national development campaigns in their localities. Since mass media create awareness to people about certain new innovations, it becomes easier for the change agents sent in the communities to influence both the early adopters and opinion leaders.

Rogers, Everett (1983), innovations pass through many stages before being widely adopted. Most people will become aware of them through information disseminated by mass media. He further says that media just create awareness of new innovation and only influence early adopters directly. Others adopt innovations only after being influenced by other people.

Media quite literally extend sight, hearing and touch through time and space. Electronic media would open up vistas for average people and enable us to be everywhere instantaneously (McLuhan, Marshall, 1964). However, the question is, can ordinary people succumb to all media messages when electronic media extend their senses in McLuhan's way?

Daniel, Lerner, (1917:198), in his book, "The passing of traditional society", gives much attention to communication tools to accelerate development. He further says that western

values and ideas disseminated by mass media could help to transform countries with modern forms of social, economic and political organization. Lerner's argument raises a question whether without the help of opinion leaders or change agents, mass media communication can have direct influence on people to cause social development.

Many development programmes have been launched using mass media communication for the purpose of poverty alleviation, employment generation, food security, abolition of child labour etc (Dr.Pisal, Anita.S. 2015). All these programmes need special care by the media personnel for smooth arrival to the needy people of the country. Television telecasts programmed and community radio services are very helpful in this regard. News papers and journals have no less importance in propagating the mission of the government (Pisal, Anita.S.2015).

Most of the developing countries are emerging from a textual and colonial background. The told socio-economic structures are giving way to new ones. The media, which are the mirror of the society, have to relate themselves to these changes. The media have to guide the course of action in the developing societies, apply correctives where needed and also mould themselves to the changing realities of the time. The media have a symbiotic relationship with democracy, which in rural terms means empowering the weak. The two cannot exist without each other. The essentials of democracy are well informed citizenry, an equal and effective right to every member of the society to participate in the affairs of the state and accountability of all those who are exercising

public powers and utilizing public resources (Prof. Pradeep, Mathur, 2006).

The governments have taken a good initiative in the form of community radios. People get a platform through which they can address issues like; health, education and public facilities pertaining to their area. The local people or the community can get attention of the regional and national media through this platform (Kamik, K. 2003).

However, the question to ask ourselves is, if such community radios are put in place for rural people to address their pressing grievances, does it automatically imply having solutions to their problems without taking practical action? Can simply talking about issues on community radios bring human development?

Rogers, Everett (1983), in his theory innovation diffusion says, media themselves cannot cause change in the community unless change agents are sent to influence early adopters and opinion leaders. Media only create awareness about innovations to the people. With technology increasing and with mobility of people, goods and services becoming easier, traditional cultures find themselves in a situation where their environment is eroded and their relevance is questioned. This environment naturally breeds a sense of insecurity and alienation. The important question is how media can contribute to preserving these cultures for the sake of promoting development by functioning in this environment (Prof. Pradeep, Mathur, 2006).

Social mobilization makes people available for change. It also gives rise to new needs, new aspirations and new demands. It implies increased political development of the

population but also increased challenges to political development of the institution (Daniel, Lerner, 1917).

The present study indicates that audio-visual media are the most effective one for making changes in various aspects of rural life. The impact of visual media on overall development has been influenced by various dimensions such as age, caste, income, education and occupation. The respondents of middle age groups, middle income status and other backward castes have shown a high level of exposure and adoption to development practices created by mass media. It has been observed that as the education level of respondents increased, there has been an increase in the level of exposure and adoption of development practices introduced by mass media (Amit, Malik, 2009)

### **Recommendations and conclusion.**

Mass media communication has a wider coverage. In fact, mass media tools; radios, televisions, internet, films and videos, newspapers have the power to disseminate information to almost all people in the nation putting other factors constant. However, the question is, how best can mass media communication be used to promote national development? Can mass media be incorporated/merged with other forms of media like theatre for development to promote human development?

Development is a practical process that promotes growth and positive change or an addition of physical, social, economic, environmental, political and demographic component. Therefore, achieving development

requires a practical and participatory planning approach.

Any innovation can be widely adopted if change agents are sent to the communities to influence early adopters and opinion leaders who later influence their followers to adopt the new innovation/information (Rogers, Everett, 1983). If mass media persons cover all the activities involved in the participatory planning approach, this can help to promote human development in the nation because all citizens get to know the easiest and practical ways of mitigating their own problems. Electronic media can extend human senses; sight, hearing and touch through time and space thus enabling all people to be everywhere instantaneously (McLuhan, Marshall, 1964).

When mass media communication is included in the theatre for development (T.F.D) activities where community members get empowered and learn to solve their own pressing problems, this can help the government planning authorities to appropriately allocate resources to the development priorities set by community members thus achieving human development.

Medium is as vital as the message. Media help to give focus and light on the message's content. Medium is massage; it brings relief from stress. People become mentally relaxed due to media and forget their worries (McLuhan, Marshall, 1964).

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