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A Sketchy Note on Mass Communication
In Korea

by

Kim Il Chul
A Sketchy Note
on
Mass Communications
in
Korea

Paper prepared for Seminar at Asian Mass Communication Research and Information Center/Singapore

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October, 1971
A sketchy note

on

Mass Communications in Korea

It would be a difficult job to deal with a general situation of mass communications in Korea in a few pages. The writer will though try to present only limited aspects of it in an effort to provide with basic informations which, the author expects, will help us in clarifying some issues underlying the present situation in this country. It will also help us to materialize the problems in a clearer perspective. The writer will attempt to state the situation as concretly as he can.

Included in the present paper are as follows:

(1) Mass Media in Korea
(2) Governmental communications in Korea
(3) Press Organizations in Korea
(4) Training and seminar for working journalists
(5) University Education in Mass Communication
(6) Researches and Journals in Mass Communication
(7) Conclusion

(1) Mass Media in Korea

In Korea today, there are 45 daily newspapers and six news agencies. Of these daily newspapers, 6 are economic papers, 5 are children's papers, and 2 are English papers. And there are one Chinese paper, one sports paper, and one welfare paper.
All the newspapers are published in the Korean language except two English papers and one Chinese paper. Out of 45 daily newspapers, about 50 percent are published in Seoul, capital of the country. Another 50 percent are published in provincial-capitals throughout the country.

There are 49 radio broadcasting stations (including 3 FM stations) and 12 TV stations operating in Korea today. Besides, there are 25 radio relay stations and 11 TV relay stations. For the radio stations, seventeen of them are owned by the government and the rest by private agencies. There are two religious broadcasting stations owned by the private agencies. Korean is, of course, the only language used for broadcasting. But there are special government broadcasting programs in English, Japanese, Chinese, French, and Vietnamese for overseas broadcasting.

There are 685 weekly, monthly, quarterly, and other periodicals, this is a 13 percent increase over 1968. There are 82 weeklies, 405 monthlies, 70 quarterlies, and 128 other periodicals in circulation.

As of the end of 1970, the daily newspaper circulation was 3,210,000, which is a 19.1 percent increase over that of 1969. The highest increase, 92.1 percent, was recorded in Seoul during 1967-1969. Pusan was next, with a 43.8 percent increase at the same period: the rest of the country showed a 20.3 percent
increase. The regional differences in circulation indicate metropolitan dominance. These regional differences in circulation imply some serious problems existing today. One of these can be seen in an increasing unbalance of the circulation ratio between the rural and urban sector of the country. According to a survey, economic difficulties have been found one of the most important factors for non-subscription. Despite the fact that there might be other reasons, e.g., illiteracy, poverty has often been believed the most important factor to be considered.

The urban-rural differences in the circulation, from this point of view, would tell urban-rural differences in economic conditions. From 1961 to 1969, for example, the average income for the farm household increased 3.3 times. The increase in the average income for the urban counterpart was 4.6 times. The differences are also observed in the income ratio between the two regions. The average income ratio between rural and urban households was 100 versus 205 in 1961. In 1969 this ratio was 100 versus 278. Although a steady increase of circulation in the rural area can be expected, it would be hard to expect as rapid an increase as previously. It would be true, however, that some positive improvement can be expected if the third Five-Year Economic Plan of the government is successful. Some difficulties accounted for the increase in the rural circulation must be noted. Higher adoption of the electronic
Media, especially radio, is one of these. Radio sets, especially transistor radios, became easily available at the inexpensive rate. Fast news service and many other entertainment programs of radio broadcasting are very popular to farmers. Many rural villages where electricity is not available are now found to have many transistor radios.

The number of radio receiving sets in Korea, as the end of 1971, reached 3,200,000. The number of TV receiving sets, at the end of 1970, was 680,000. The increase in the number of radio sets during 1969 was 50.8 percent over 1968. The increase in TV sets, on the other hand, was 24.3 percent for the same period. An interesting fact is that the increase pattern of TV and radio set distribution in the last ten years is just the opposite of that for the daily newspapers. The distribution ratios for the radio and TV sets between Seoul and other areas were 1 versus 2.4 in 1961, 1 versus 3.3 in 1963, 1 versus 4.9 in 1965, 1 versus 4.8 in 1967, and 1 versus 4.5 in 1969. The distribution ratio for newspapers between these two regions is almost opposite to this.

It is true that Korean press organizations made significant investments for the betterment of press facilities and equipment than ten years ago and that the investment has reached a certain stage. Major daily newspaper companies and news agencies in
Seoul, for example, have built new buildings, made great innovations in printing facilities, and own even airplanes for speedy reporting. In printing facilities the development is prominent; major newspaper companies in Seoul and Pusan are now equipped with two to seven high-speed printing machines (each capable of 150,000 copies per hour) imported either from West Germany, Japan, or the U.S.A. Four companies now have multi-color printing facilities for newspaper publication. Many printing processes are automatically controlled. Many local papers are, of course, out of competition with major metropolitan papers because of poor capital investment.

(2) Governmental communications in Korea

Communication activities by the government through its huge bureaucratic machineries are manifold; information diffusion services of the government have been carried out by Information Centers located throughout the country. Ministry of Culture and Information publishes many leaflets, pamphlets, and books and often conduct public opinion poll for various purposes. This ministry is primarily responsible for all phases of mass communication activities in the country as far as government supervision is concerned. The Ministry has a Film Production Center by which a given number of documentary and educational films are produced.
Office of Rural Development which is being operated under the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry is doing one of the major functions in the area of agricultural development communication for the country. They produce many educational materials and periodicals for the farm families. They also produce farm radio program and conduct many kinds of survey both for practical and scientific purposes. Personal contacts between village workers and farmers are still a strong basis emphasized for the program and thus personal communication techniques are one of the favorite subjects for training and research. There are over seven thousand workers in the country supervised by this office.

Another government efforts in developmental communication is observed in the area of family planning. About two and a half thousand family planning workers who are helping birth control education and practice at the national level are supervised by the Ministry of Health and Welfare. The Korean Institute for Family Planning with its own staff and budget helps the program directly and indirectly through researches and training of field personnels.

(3) Press Organizations in Korea

Owing to a rapid social change and development last ten years, demands of journalism activities have also been growing remarkably. Many organizations in meeting activities came into being. Some of these organizations are,

a. Korea Newspapers Editors Association (Established in 1958, Office: Press Center, Seoul)
f. I.P.I. Korea Committee (Established in 1960. Office: Arts Building, Seoul)
g. Korea News Agencies Association (Established in 1956. Office: Press Center, Seoul)
h. Korea Photo Journalists Association
i. Korea Woman Journalists Association
j. Kwan Hoon Press Club
k. Korea Newspaper Publishers Association

(4) Training and Seminars for Working Journalists

Very often many different types of small seminars are held each year. Korea Newspaper Publishers Association, Korea Journalists Association, and many different organizations conduct seminars serving different purposes for different groups of people. By a request of Korea Newspaper Association, the Graduate School of Mass Communication, Seoul National University, organized and conducted three month training
programs twice for working journalists in Seoul as well as in country. From this year Korea Journalists Association and the Graduate School of Mass Communication, Seoul National University, will sponsor special training courses for experienced working reporters. For this program, first in its kind, the Asia Foundation (Korea) and some Press Organizations are expected to support.

Each year several reporters after a careful screening procedure, are sent to the U.S. and Japan for advanced training. For this overseas training the following organizations are in a close collaboration; the Sung Kok Press Foundation (Seoul), the Asia Foundation (Seoul), Harvard University, Columbia University, and Research Institute of Mass Communication (Tokyo University, Tokyo).

Many civic associations and academic institutes also very often conduct seminars where participation of journalists are in a great demand. International organizations like Press Foundation of Asia, IPI Korea Committee, etc., frequently organize international seminars in Seoul.

Increasing opportunities for journalists to take part in many types of discussions are very good experiences for them. To take part in discussions in various seminars will not only bridge the communication gap existing between different groups of people within and outside Mass Communication Community but
also develop their capabilities to deal with problems in the broader perspectives and find out many serious problems overlooked previously.

(5) University Education in Mass Communication

In Korea today, seven four-year program, one two-year program, and one graduate school in mass communication at universities are operating. Their curriculum and activities are varied. It was in 1954 that the first independent department in mass communication was set up in the university. Graduates of mass communication major from universities have not been given any privilege for reporter scouting in Korea today. This tells a difficult situation in job market for graduates. At the Graduate School of Mass Communication, Seoul National University, 110 students are enrolled each year. They are, of course, B.A. holders from colleges. Four fifths of total enrollment at this school are from working journalists. Classes are conducted at night and day for their convenience. Many universities which do not have independent department of mass communication now offer courses in mass communications at the elective base.

(6) Research and Journals in Mass Communication

In recent days research activities are numerous. Most of researches are conducted by university professors and some
Research institutes. Research funds are mostly coming from government, Sung Kok Press Foundation, and some foreign agencies. It is my observation in relation to mass communication research in Korea today that researches conducted are by and large descriptive in nature. There have been very little efforts aiming at theory building or testing existing hypotheses in mass communication theory today.

As far as academically oriented journals in mass communication are concerned, there are six major periodicals being published either quarterly or annually. These are


The last two journals are entirely devoted to scientific studies of journalism and mass communication. The first four, on the other hand, are not 100 percent scientific journals.
Outside these publications there are numbers of scientific journals published mostly by the universities which often contain many good articles and research papers on mass communications. On the other hand many newspapers and broadcasters have been equipped with research functions. They conduct opinion poll, readership and listener researches. But most of the important findings are available only to the limited number of people.

(7) Conclusion

A rapid development in mass communication is, as I see it, largely quantitative in nature: Increased newspaper circulation, extensively available electronic media, modernization of media facilities, expansion of university education, and various types of educational activities. All these are, of course, a prerequisite to the development. On the other hand, however, long range planning and studies in determining the direction of development and causes of various latent effects produced are very much in need of more careful attentions. Types of education for and training both professionals and students also need to be carefully evaluated in view of national needs and changing situations. Quality education and researches are our future tasks above all.