

**The Impact Of Satellite Broadcasting On The Media Environment**

**By**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

National development is dependent upon the active role of its society and the support provided by its government. This development, needless to say, is directed to create prosperity and provide national security and integrity among its people.

Crucial to national development is public opinion which is achieved through social interaction by the exchange of information of its people and society better defined as communications.

With the advent of better and advanced technology, this exchange has been able to be conducted on a global scale. This has led to increasing demands for acquiring more information at a faster rate thereby pushing the need for better communications.

Global communications will allow nations to obtain and select any information they require and channel it for national development purposes. Therefore careful selection of information is necessary to avoid negative impacts by global communications to the nation's social and cultural values.

Since the evolution of the information era and the corresponding role of global communications a meaningful anxiety has arisen as a consequence of the social culture transformation that could follow and eventually define the opinion of the nation.

## 2. THE MEDIA ENVIRONMENT

### 2.1 Mass Media

Mass media as a media used for mass communications can consist of newspapers, film, radio, television, etc and is basically a one way communication. As information is delivered, the communicator does not know whether the information has been received, understood or conveyed by the communicant.

In providing mass communications for supporting a country's development mass media should adapt to the environment of the media which involves the characteristics of the delivered information or follow the characteristics of the mass media itself to optimise its function.

In this, mass media should have the following functions: objective, accurate and educative, constructive social control, capable to encourage creativeness in people, dynamic and capable to accept society's aspirations.

As a disseminating agent of this aspiration, the mass media should be capable of conveying the information to the government or to the concerned decision makers. Whereby functioning also as a means of control of national discipline.

As a consequence of the wide distribution of information, a negative impact could occur caused by the information flowing into a country. In facing this problem each government generally will have their own policies.

There are countries that moderately establish a free policy to any foreign impact to their country. They impose no restrictions in adopting technologies and its impacts.

Some other countries determine restrictions or strictly control the media environment by establishing regulations on information flow, communications and mass media.

## 2.2 **Role of Technology on Mass Media Broadcasting**

Mass media, whether printed or electronic, plays an important role in information distribution. Printed media such as newspapers, magazines, bulletins, etc. requires physical transportation to bring them to the customer.

Besides being time consuming (depending on the distance travelled) there is also a limitation on how much can be transported.

The electronic media utilizes higher technology than printed media to deliver its information to the communities. For example, electronic media use radio broadcasting to spread its programs to audiences in local areas or use the satellite to broadcast its programs to audiences over the country or to several countries. Telefaxes and remote printing enable the transmission of printed media over vast distances almost simultaneously.

However the experience of the international press media indicates that despite the wider and even coverage brought about by advanced technology, there exists an imbalance of information between developed and developing countries.

### 3. **SATELLITE BROADCASTING IN GLOBAL COMMUNITY**

When Neil Amstrong stepped on the moon 26 years ago, 500 million people on earth watched the event live via the Intelsat satellites. Three regions of Intelsat satellites over the Pacific, Indian and Atlantic oceans broadcasted this event allowing people all over the world to see man's first visit to the moon as it happened.

With more than 10 satellite systems now covering the earth, by using small parabola antennas, people anywhere anytime can watch in real time activities in other parts of the world.

It is a fact that the satellite has changed the traditional behavior of the communities in developing countries and remote communities to modern behavior. Consequently the media environment has also been effected by this change in modernization caused by satellite broadcasting.

#### 3.1 **Satellite Broadcasting Technology**

The advantage of satellite systems is that it reaches a very wide audience bringing in services to communities covered by the satellite. As a satellite can cover one third of the globe, one satellite has the capability to broadcast signals to countries in two or more continents.

With that capability the issues that arise are not of domestic nature but regional and global as well. Countries willing to launch their own satellites have to concern themselves with other countries covered by the footprint of their satellite.

Indonesia was the first country in Asia and the second country in the world after Canada to build a domestic satellite communications system. Aptly called the PALAPA system after an oath taken in this name by the then prime minster of the 16th century kingdom of Majapahit to unify all of Indonesia, the first satellite, PALAPA A1, was launched in 1976. By the end of 1995 or early 1996, Indonesia will launch the first satellite of the third generation of PALAPA satellites (C-Series).

Today, many countries in Asia such as Hongkong, Japan, India, Thailand have or will launch their own satellites with regional or global coverage and most of them in geostationary orbit.

By the end of 1994, more than 20 C-Band satellites were placed in geostationary orbit above Asia creating a problem as regards to orbital slots. This has yet to be settled by the IFRB for oncoming satellites.

### 3.2 **Role of Satellite Broadcasting on Mass Media**

A satellite is nothing more than a relay station in space capable of covering large areas of the earth. But this very feature makes it ideal for broadcasting signals not subjected to terrain constraints. In particular satellite broadcasting is the right choice in developing the isolated regions of rural areas and remote villages.

Today, using the satellite in space, it is possible for TV stations to transmit its programs all over the world. By the use of inexpensive television receive only (TVRO) sets installed on their own premises, there will be little restrictions for people to select one of several TV channels that they want.

On the PALAPA satellites alone, there are 28 channel TV programs broadcasted to South East Asia. Not only domestic TV programs, but also several foreign TV programs from Australia, America and Europe such as CNN, ESPN, ABS, HBO, etc.

However, satellite broadcasting need not be limited only to entertainment programs, but more important it is a strategic media for promoting national or regional development.

In such it is quite vital to know to what level of success the information received can be screened so that it can be to aligned with the needs of that country for development purposes considering that foreign program penetration can result in transforming cultures and life styles.

### 3.3 **Competition on the Satellite Broadcasting Market**

Today TV broadcasters by utilizing satellite to achieve a much wider audience taken advantage of multinational corporation to advertise their products or services over their networks.

Because of the higher returns, the competition on TV broadcastings to attract advertisements continues to increase.

As the result of this competition, demand for satellite transponders for TV broadcastings in Asia has also increased. By the end of 1994, there were 100 satellite transponders for TV broadcasting in Asia, by the end of 2000, this number will increase up to over 205 transponders.

CNN, as one of the largest broadcasters has proved themselves as a worldwide broadcaster. CNN has covered the world by their TV News Network via the satellite broadcasting network. People receive up to the minute news happening around the world practically 24 hours daily.

By broadcasting a 24 hours programs service, CNN has enabled viewers to follow events in Bosnia continuously, observe the latest status of "the trade war" between USA and Japan or search business opportunities in the world's capital market by following the fluctuation of international currency.

In competition with CNN is STAR-TV. They have successfully conducted their market strategy by broadcasting 5 television channels simultaneously via Asiasat satellite which comprises of BBC 24 Hours News, Music Television (M-TV), Prime Sport, Star Plus Entertainment and a channel in Mandarin language to more than 26 countries.

#### 4. **IMPACT OF SATELLITE BROADCASTING**

##### 4.1 **Impact on Mass Media**

Satellite broadcasting technology will greatly impact the evolution of mass media industry by changing its conventional system into a modern industry. It will simplify the production process, save cost and time and minimize human resources.

Application of a remote printing system of the newspaper industry by satellite broadcasting will effectively save operational cost, human resources and shorten the delivery time to reach the remote customer, thus increasing customer demand. The implementation of the system will enable customers in Jakarta to read newspapers printed in Hongkong, for example.

Long distance education is applied also in satellite broadcasting which enable remote student to absorb knowledge or new information. This system will improve the degree of the nation's education as one of the factors in enhancing daily's life quality.

Other businesses may adopt this kind of system to suit their requirements, such as remote administration services, remote purchasing order, etc.

#### 4.2 **Open Sky Policy**

Many governments implement an open sky policy over their country. The open sky policy enables a TVRO receiving spillover coverage area transmissions from satellites of neighboring countries.

The pattern of the coverage area of a satellite broadcast is fully dependent on the target market of the satellite provider. TV broadcasters can only be responsible for the content of the broadcasted TV programs on the leased satellite broadcast. The coverage would depend on the satellite's footprint thereby creating an issue of how these unwanted transmissions can be refused.

As the spillover of satellite broadcasting in many cases is difficult to be avoided by a country, the use of a decoder that will scramble signals on the broadcasted program, can protect the country from the unwanted penetration.

Realizing that there are many satellites around the Asia Pacific area which also covers Indonesia's region, Indonesia allows TVRO antennas to point to any satellite which may cover this area though originally it was meant to point only to the PALAPA satellites. This situation enables the Indonesian people to freely access any information individually by a small antenna which are now commonplace in Indonesia.

Though allowing free access to information is probably inevitable the evils that it brings can cause erosion to a country culture and lifestyle. Effectively what is happening is a transfer of behavior and customs from the information rich countries to developing countries.

#### 4.3 **Impact on Society**

Globalization of information has decreed that any information on demand can be accessed at any place and distributed to any place around the world. By use of satellite broadcasting the process has been made more accessible. This marks the inception of a world information order system which involves the production, distribution and processing of information.

Television broadcast is the primary source in creating social opinion in the communities. TV programs provide audio and video information globally to their audiences, thus allowing the possible entrance of foreign culture impacting the local culture of their audiences.

It will depend upon the country itself to obtain, protect, select, absorb or to decrease the degree of its impacts. Each country has their own strategy to face this problem, since the flow of global information is difficult to be avoided and the problem is specific to each area.

The flow of information is a paradox to developing countries in the case that it brings an easy source of information directly or through mass media. The success of a nation to overcome the constraints and utilize this opportunities will effect the degree of country's protection from foreign penetration.

In society, information and communication may cause problems in the following aspects : ideology, politic, economy, socio-culture and national defense. The national development is determined by their ability to absorb and manage the information. But on the other hand it will basically depend on the level of the nation's education, communication and transportation facilities.

## 5. **DEVELOPING THE INFORMATION COMMUNITY IN INDONESIA**

Recently, the development of an information community has been the subject of serious discussion. Two industrial sectors have major roles in information development in Indonesia namely telecommunications and mass media.

The telecommunication role in the infrastructure development is to speed up and extend the coverage of information dissemination. Using satellite technology and the open sky policy that has been taken, the Indonesian community have free access to any information sources they require.

On the other hand mass media have an important role in creating public opinions. With the globalization of information, mass media can create information imbalance, information imperialism and foreign propaganda of adverse interests which are hard to control.

Thus the problem lies in how to prevent negative material from being contained in the information received.

Building a community with a high information resilience emanating from the community itself capable of wisely handling the impact of globalization of information will be the right answer in meeting the coming challenges.

The people of Indonesia that have been information culture oriented will handle actual information more accurately suited to individual needs without being influenced by adverse information. Fear of information globalization will only isolate people from global socialization.

Policies to be adapted in realizing a reliable and responsible mass media resilient from the impacts of globalization should be in the following terms:

- a. establishing regulations in information, communication and mass media that support national development
- b. establishing a National Information Network Infrastructure
- c. cultivating information awareness to separate fact from fiction
- d. even dissemination of information that portrays the importance of information in the nation's development.
- e. science and technology utilization that observes religious and cultural values
- f. optimises human resources
- g. developing the technology industry that stimulate growth of the mass media and flow of information.

Realizing that human resources is the dominant factor in determining the success of national development, building an information community is essential to improve the quality of the people in building the nation's character and making it more reliable.

6.

## **C O N C L U S I O N**

Satellite broadcasting has allowed the globalization of mass media and information which in turn create openness to more cosmopolitan values.

This mass communications has put the audience, in this case the public, in a condition of cultural and spiritual values that have been polluted. Because of this the role of managing public opinion has become of strategic value.

Supervision of a responsible mass media with high integrity will play an important role in functioning as a mediator between the people and the information disseminated globally.

In facing this era of globalization, human resources and society should be educated and conditioned in absorbing accurate and factual information, capable of applying the correct communication and information technology to support continued national development.