The Impact of Diversity in Information Society to Consumers

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to analyze the impact of diversity in information society as consumers. The society we currently live in is an information society, because our economy primarily depends on the production and consumption of information. Today the media are changing our world in many ways, in the rise of the internet, the integration of communication technologies, shifting media empires, new lifestyles, challenging career, changing regulations, shifting social issues and a new dynamic of power in society. The source of the dynamic of social change, the diversity impact and what are seen as epochal and global transformations in the structure of the economy, in social stratification, politics and culture is a technological paradigm based upon a cluster of innovation in information and technological paradigm. The transition to an information society is driven in part by rapid changes in technology such as computer and digital television. We should no longer think about the various media of communication as completely distinct entities. Why do the media exist? Do the media shape culture or does culture shape the media? Information technology and media are converging in the information society. Technological change is increasingly shaking up conventional media and now the ‘old’ mass media are responding with the innovation of their own. When new media enter our homes, media consumption patterns tend to change. In one survey of Pew Research Center, a quarter of Internet users said they watched television less since going online. Consumer’s differences improve or affect the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) among socially inclusive communities.

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1. Introduction

We live in a society that is saturated by media. Since reformation era, we have been living in media industry. Now we are living in the era of television-booming and new media. There are many television channels and new media come to our home everyday. Of course, we—as the consumers of media- are given various programs. Consumers have benefited from the revolutionary growth in the number of TV and radio channels, magazines, newspapers, outdoor media and new media in recent decades. However, the time devoted to a single medium constantly shrinks, and the complexity of the media landscape undermines the stability of media habits. As the attention of consumers is spread over more media categories than ever before, only one conclusion is possible: an effective media strategy must take a multimedia selection approach (Franz, 2000). The media mix decisions, a unique case of a resource allocation problem, is a complex multi-faceted decision (Dyer, Forman & Mustafa, 1992 in Chang, 2012: 297). Selecting the best media requires considering not only cost and the number of readers, but also the efficiency with which the medium reaches the target audience. These developments have influenced the media usage habits of target audiences as well as the fit between the product and the characteristics of the medium.

The way we see the world is colored by the experiences and influences we absorbed as children (Mannheim, 1952). People of all ages act according to how they reacted to childhood experiences and assumptions as they entered their twenties. Now in their twenties and older, the current workforce perceives work and work performance differently. Many factors impact on the way people world-wide collaborate, interact and perform in the work environment. A condensed list of diversity factors includes culture, race, age, gender, socio-economic status, literacy, physical ability and legacy.

Information and Communications Technology (ICT) should be seen both as a pedagogical tool and as a discipline in its own right for the development of effective educational services. These technologies are not merely tools, they inform and shape our modes of communication and our thinking and creativity processes. How should we act so that the benefit of this ICT revolution accrues to all mankind and does not become just the privilege of a small number of economically highly developed countries? How can we ensure access for all to these information and intellectual resources, and overcome the social, cultural and linguistic barriers to participation in knowledge societies? How should we promote the online publication of content that is increasingly more diversified and potentially a source of enrichment for the whole of humanity? From the privacy rooms to the public
forums of presidential debates, the media serve as the informational network connecting the many elements of our society. There is no doubt that the media are significant and worth studying.

2. Theoretical framework

Information Society

An information society is a society where the creations, distribution, use, integration and manipulation of information is a significant economic, political, and cultural activity. The aim of the information society is to gain competitive advantage internationally, through using information technology (IT) in a creative and productive way. The knowledge economy is its economic counterpart, whereby wealth is created through the economic exploitation of understanding. People who have the means to partake in this form of society are sometimes called digital citizens. This is one of many dozen labels that have been identified to suggest that humans are entering a new phase of society. The markers of this rapid change may be technological, economic, occupational, spatial, cultural, or some combination of all of these. Information society is seen as the successor to industrial society (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Information_society).

Figure 1: Media Convergence, Information technology and media are converging in the information society (Straubhaar, et.al. 2012: 5)
It is possible to distinguish analytically five definitions of an ‘information society’ each of which presents criteria for identifying the new. These are technological, economic, occupational, spatial and cultural (Webster, 2005: 7). Media technology changes with every generation. Conventional media forms are combining with new ones in ways that changes our media consumption patterns, our lives and the societies in which we live. New media technologies impact our culture by offering new lifestyles, creating new jobs and eliminating others, shifting media empires, demanding new regulations and presenting unique new social issues (see Figure 1).

The changes are not only purely technology driven. Our individual creativity and our cultures push back against the technologies and corporations that deploy them to redefine their uses. Big media corporations now contend with citizen journalist, Facebook network, garage bands and amateur video producers on the Internet. The digital domain now encompasses nearly all radio, television, film, newspapers, magazines and nooks with an ever-narrowing list of exceptions. To catch up with the times the ‘old media’ have responded with the digital innovations of their own. Now exciting new digital media form have emerged, ranging from video games to social networking to texting (Straubhaar, et.al, 2012: 4-5).

In our contemporary life, the media is undeniably a part of society. Through media information, ideas, entertainment and educational materials are exchanged, which contributes to the development of society. Modern life is also closely connected with the media, as it becomes part of almost all social affairs. At the individual level, media, through the presence of diverse platforms, has worked its way so profoundly into the construction of each of our daily lives. Tufte (1996) shares the same opinion, that the mass media plays a fundamental mediating role between public and private spheres, between tradition and modernity, between urban and rural, and between the individual and the collective. We admit that the idea of investigating content production is not entirely new. Several scholars and writers have attempted to uncover the meaning of television production, particularly in the Indonesian context (Kitley, 2000, Arps and Heeren, 2006, Heryanto, 2014) but have mainly done so in the cultural realms and textual interpretation of TV program. In fact, there are a variety of approaches in analyzing media production, with two strands dominating existing debates. The cultural studies approach focuses on the questions of superstructure and ideology, while the political economy underlines questions of ownership, institutions and regulations. This
eventually led to a division of labor: political economy was mostly used to study production, while cultural studies focused on.

**Participatory Communication**

Unlike other mass communication theories which deal with the effects of the few and powerful on the masses via vertical diffusion, the participatory communication approach focuses on the effects of individuals on mass communication with special emphasis placed on the development of the third world. The study of participatory communication emerged as a counterbalance to theories such as cultural imperialism. It was formulated through a disconnected group of scholars and practitioners from around the world searching for something to replace the modernization paradigm or cultural imperialism approaches. While cultural imperialism focused on the ability of the powerful to influence cultures and economies around the world, advocates for participatory communication sought to describe the power of the individual to influence the world and to find ways to further advocate and enrich such action with the ultimate goal residing in a utopian scenario of positive development for all and better inter-cultural understanding. Dervin and Huesca (1997: 46) state that participatory communication is understood as being at the heart of what it means to be human, to have an identity, and to possess a sense of belonging vis-à-vis humanity, nature and God. Participatory communication thrives on input from people from all walks of life and of every socioeconomic sphere.

In application towards the development of nations in the southern hemisphere, this change of thought is a shift of understanding aimed at not simply studying indigenous communication from an outside, social scientific, or even imperialist perspective, but instead delving into the point of view of native people on their own terms, looking at their culture, and issues that they consider relevant. In doing so, one of the primary concerns is the language used to describe the people and cultures of third world countries (McPhail, 2009: 26).

Globalization isn’t only about what is out there, remote and far away from the individual. It is an “in here” phenomenon too, influencing intimate and personal aspects of our lives (Giddens 1999: 12). Globalization can be understood as a multi-dimensional, complex process of profound transformations in all spheres—technological, economic, political, social, cultural, intimate and personal. It has been variously conceived as time-space
compression (referring to the way that instantaneous electronic communication erodes the constraints of distance and time on social organization and interaction); accelerating interconnectedness (understood as the intensification of worldwide social relations and consciousness of world society); action at a distance (the actions of social agents in one locale can come to have significant consequences for distant others).

Globalization suggests the expanding scale, speeding up and deepening impact of interregional flows and patterns of social interaction (Held and McGrew, 2003). It has been influenced above all by developments in systems of communication (Giddens, 1999: 10); there is no globalization without communications media. Contemporary individuals, subject to an extraordinary diversity of information and communication, can be influenced by images, concepts and lifestyles from well beyond their immediate locales. Globalization affects the basic identities of individuals who now live with a partial and precarious integration of the multiple dimensions of cultural referents (Castells, 1997). Discussions of globalization gain by being grounded in the detail of particular cultures and by considering the particular complexities of global encountering in specific social, historical, and everyday experience (Robins in Kim, 2008: 27).

What happens to our sense of our own lives when globalization confronts our everyday experience? How deeply do we feel this? What are these main transformations, and what is the role of the global media in this transformative process? Reflexivity is increasingly understood, in recent social theory, to be central to the constitution of subjects under conditions of global modernity. Globalization, in the simplest and most common connotation, means that certain global values—political, economic, and cultural—have been so thoroughly circulated that ultimately national borders are dissolved and local cultures are homogenized. These global values, are legitimately referred to as Western values and culture (Cvetkovich and Kellner, 1997). Thussu (1998) argued that even through the imagination of consumers worldwide, the virtual empires of the electronic age could have a profound effect on national media systems and cultural sovereignty.

Hall (1994) designates ‘popular culture’ as the political arena that encompasses all the everyday life cultural practices of the masses in contradistinction to and contestation with the elite culture of a society. Consumer communities of imported pop culture are often confronted with an overwhelmingly bigger ‘non-consumer community’. In such confrontations, the non-consumers readily use their overwhelming demographic majority to ‘anoint’ themselves as the ‘people’ and turn the contest into one of ‘defending’ the ‘national’
culture against foreign cultural ‘invasion’ or ‘imperialism’,” often with the complicity of not only local pop culture producers but also the state.

**The Social Construction of Media Technologies**

A sociological approach emphasizes that media technologies are embedded in ongoing social processes that affect their evolution. For example, the Internet is subject to social forces that help to shape how it functions and how it is used. These forces include legal regulations, social norms, market pressures, as well as the medium's inherent technical properties (Lessig, 1999, 2006). Together these forces—law, social norms, market pressures, and technological architecture—have shaped the Internet, just as they have shaped every other communications medium. The development of media technologies entails thinking simultaneously about the technological and the social (Bijker and Law, 1992). To understand the relationship between media and society, the most important question is not: "What does a new technology do to people?" but, instead: "How do people use the new technology?" Scholars have documented the importance of these forces to the introduction and evolution of various new media technologies (Croteau, 2012: 291).

Birkerts (1994 in Croteau, 2012: 307) concerned that new media would squeeze out prior cultural forms including reading and rigorous thinking. It's hard not to think of this sort of concern today when observing a group of people in a public space, all engrossed with their laptops and smartphones—and all ignoring each other. Jackson (2008), argues that our embrace of new media has produced a sort of attention-deficit culture, expressed through the presence of constant stimulation, interruption and multitasking. This fleeting culture of distraction. Such a culture undermines our ability to focus, concentrate, and attend to the deeper and more substantive issues in life that are the bedrock of intimate social relationships, wisdom and advances in culture. Powers (2010 in Croteau, 2012: 307), a journalist who covers technology issues, considers what he calls the ‘conundrum of connectivity’. The technology allows us to connect to information and people from anywhere 24/7 is an awesome achievement. But history suggests that wisdom, insight, and perspective are gained from being disconnected; by creating time and space for solitude and contemplative thought. Carr (2008, 2010) argues that the fragmented, transient, and hyper-stimulative environment of the Internet and other new media contributes to ways of perceiving and thinking that are similarly fragmented and shallow. Carr (2010) turns to experimental evidence from neuroscience
showing that surfing the Internet indeed develops different neural pathways in the brain than does reading a book. The constant stimulus, fleeting distractions, frequent interruptions, and pervasive multitasking that characterize the contemporary media environment help produce a decline in people's ability to focus, concentrate and engage in serious thought. The ability to concentrate, think seriously, read deeply and follow an argument are not instinctual.

The younger generation that has grown up with new media is less informed, less literate, more self-absorbed and more depressed than any that has preceded it (Bauerlein, 2008; Twenge 2006). They point to the popularity of social networking as one source of the problem. The immediacy and personalized nature of social networking, emphasizes the value of newness and facilitates an extreme focus on the self and immediate networks of friends. The result is a worldview that promotes entitlement and self-centeredness, what Twenge (2006) dubbed "Generation Me" (Such entitlement, meets reality soon enough and younger people have higher levels of dissatisfaction with their jobs and lives than earlier generations).

The trend toward briefer instantaneous messages not only threatens thoughtful communication, but it even promotes the erosion of traditional spelling grammar, and punctuation that have long served as a useful foundation for serious communication (Bauerlein, 2008). Neuman (in Croteau, 2012: 308) used the metaphor of a tug-of-war to describe the push-and-pull between the technical capabilities of new media and other social forces. We have already seen how various media, including the Internet, were affected by social forces as they were developed and deployed.

3. Discussion

Our media and our society as we know it fused: media/society. One way to recognize the importance of the media in our lives is to imagine life without the media. Imagine that you wake up tomorrow in a sort of twilight zone parallel universe where everything is the same except that media do not exist: no television. no movies. no radio, no recorded music, no cell phones, no computers, no Internet, no books, magazines or newspapers (Croteau:2012: 5).

The forces of globalization and technology development are paradoxical by nature, offering both threats and opportunities for cultural diversity. Yet the information society is currently perceived only as an economic imperative in a new environment shaped by rapid information technology developments, based on visions shaped primarily by technologist and
business concerns and priorities. The prevailing options embedded in these visions, such as globalization based on cultural homogenization, are questionable not only from a political and social standpoint, but also in economic terms. In the final analysis, information society developments will hinge on political and social acceptance, for better or worse. Recognizing cultural diversity encourages community participation in the definition of a sustainable information society. Social participation is important for achieving a sustainable information society, where future communities will be both geographical and virtual. The culture of each community differs as it defines the negotiation space between individuals -with capacities, aspirations and values and communities. Social participation therefore requires multi-cultural approaches. Recognizing cultural diversity will make it easier to develop communication capabilities to address social exclusion in the information society. Communication capability is a key factor of integration or exclusion. It depends upon motivation, competence and access. Approaches that respect cultural diversity and develop these three components in a balanced manner will reduce social exclusion in the information society (Marsh, 2001: 8-10).

Figure 2. Simplified Model of Media and the Social World (Croteau, 2011: 24)

One of the central tenors of contemporary everyday life in Asia is the increasing role of global Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and negotiation between online and offline spaces. In the region, divergent uptake and characteristics can be noted, with each location demonstrating that the global media is far from homogenous. The cultural significance of such mediated spaces as the Internet makes it an apt symbol for discussion of the issues of globalization, democracy, capitalism, individualism and redefinitions of place. The various nodes of consumption and production of media cultures in the region have notably changed since the 1997 financial crisis. Far from the homogeneous “global village” Marshall McLuhan (1964) detailed, the global space of the Internet is giving rise to multiple
and divergent formations of what it means to be co-present (virtual and actual, here and there) and how this reflects offline notions of community, mobility and locality (Chua, 2000).

**The Never-Ending News Cycle**

A society's dominant media help set the rhythm of social life. Media technologies have also given users more control over time. To watch or listen to a particular program, traditional broadcast media required audience members to tune in at a time determined by the broadcaster. *Time shifting* refers to the practice of recording or downloading media content to watch or listen at a later time that is more convenient for the audience (Croteau, 2012: 301).

Meyrowitz (1985) recognized that television compressed distances and transcended physical boundaries by allowing us to see things that were far away. Television transcended social boundaries as well. In earlier eras, children would have to know how to read and be sophisticated enough to understand the content of adult-oriented print media to access adult social life. But as a visual medium that does not require literacy, television allows children to see parts of the social world that were previously hidden or difficult to access, thus "blurring" childhood and adulthood. The result is that an important boundary between adults and children, which in the past was reinforced by different levels of reading skill, no longer holds. (This may have a good deal to do with the popular belief that children grow up faster today than they did in the past).

**Media in a Changing Global Culture**

McLuhan believed that the rise of electronic media marked a new phase in human history. For the first time physical distance was no longer a barrier and instantaneous mass communication across the globe was possible. McLuhan's notion of the "global village," in which the people of the world would be brought closer together as they made their voices heard. Such an information environment compels commitment and participation. We have become irrevocably involved with and responsible for each other (McLuhan and Fiore 1967 in Croteau, 2012: 325).

In fact, the trends in media globalization are marked by distinct ambiguity and contradiction. Some developments seem likely to produce positive changes of the sort envisioned by McLuhan; others seem cause for alarm. New media technologies are also making content from many countries more readily available online for those who have access
and who make the effort to seek them out. The trends in global media are mixed. The ability to innovate and adapt quickly to changing social and cultural tastes favors decentralized locally produced products. Many developing countries came to understand it as privileging the First World's market-driven perspective of information flow. Developing nations, which did not have the private investment needed to support major commercial media, looked to their governments to nurture media that served public (Croteau, 2012: 338-340).

Localism and Virtual Communities

Media technologies have altered our sense of space and place in other ways as well traditional media tended to be rooted in a particular physical location. By affecting our sense of place, media technologies have also altered our sense of community. Birkerts (1994 in Croteau, 2012: 302) notes that new media technologies created an entirely new social space, cyberspace, which allows for new forms of interaction with little connection to the physical world. The concept of virtual community (Rheingold, 2000) suggests that communities no longer need to be geographically based. People all over the globe can become "virtual" neighbors through the space-bridging technology of the Internet. By "friending" others on Facebook, joining discussions in chat rooms or online forums and playing in virtual worlds, users can employ the Internet to connect with others. Rheingold (2000) stated the Internet can constitute a powerful antidote to the loss of traditional community values and can help reestablish social ties. Finally, the loss of media rooted in distinct physical places has been accompanied by the loss of media content that is located in distinct social spaces. For example with the Internet and mobile media, the distinction between public and private has become blurry, and this process is intensified by new forms of mobile media (Ling and Campbell, 2009).

Castells (2001) provocatively claimed that "the network is the message". The Internet is the technological basis of a new organizational form, the network. The boundaries between network as a form of social organization and network as a technological infrastructure are blurred. Our perception of time is modified by the immediacy of communication technologies. Time is "dissolved," and this process has been accelerated by wireless and mobile technology (Castells, et al. 2006).

Castells (2001: 5) recognizes the role of human agency in shaping media technology. The Internet is a particularly malleable technology, susceptible of being deeply modified by its social practice. Three independent processes in the last quarter of the 20th century
contributed to the rise of the network as a new organizational form and its technological counterpart, the Internet: (1) pressure from the corporate sector to globalize capital, production, and trade; (2) citizen demands for individual freedom and open communication; and (3) unprecedented advances in the telecommunication and computing fields which paved the way for the microelectronic revolution. The Internet works as a lever for the transition to a new form of society, one in which the power of information and therefore the possibilities of participation, are potentially distributed throughout the full range of human activity. Competition and market forces influenced the rise of the never-ending news cycle. Users chose to have more control over when and where they watched and listened to media content—often to the dismay of traditional media companies.

In this digital age, where data seem almost limitless, Birkerts (1994 in Croteau, 2012: 306) argued that our waysof thinking are changing. The abundance of information now available electronically and the complex ways of storing and manipulating it put a premium on a new set of skills—retrieving and referencing, rather than understanding.

**Active Citizenship and the Participatory Public Sphere**

Based on Dewey’s conception of an intimate linkage between participation and reciprocity, whereby each person has to refer his own action in relation to that of others and to consider other’s action as providing purpose and direction for one’s own, the idea of the media as a space for active citizenship contrasts with the notion of mediation as authoritative dissemination. At least four developments in the late twentieth century began to give credibility to the idea of a participatory public sphere. The first was a growing sense that a new contract needed to be forged between authoritative institutions (governments, broadcasters, public services) and their users and supporters. Secondly, as the concept of “empowerment” came to dominate policy discourse in a range of contexts—from the treatment of school students to global transitions to a post-colonial order—the impact of institutional arrangements upon civic culture was much debated. At stake here was a conception of media citizenship which sought to transcend the binaric division between the production and the consumption of public knowledge. Thirdly, visions of a more participatory media culture were indirectly strengthened as scholars abandoned the simplistic media-effects models that had dominated communication studies. The public increasingly receives and sends its messages through mediated channels, from phone-ins to emails to reality television votes, it comes to look remarkably like an active audience. Manin’s notion
of an “audience democracy” is relevant here. Fourthly, new forms of media production emerged that challenged the claim of mainstream media to constitute the only effective model for public communication.

**Commercial Interests and User Habits**

New media give users the opportunity for more control and more choice, which can lead to increased content diversity and a shift of power from media corporations to users. However, other social forces—especially commercial interests and user habits—often pull in the opposite direction, leading to sameness and conformity. Most users have deep lying reined media habits that do not change dramatically simply because of new technological capabilities. These media conglomerates also had the extensive investment capital needed to launch risky online ventures and the traditional media venues (newspapers, television, etc.) to advertise and promote them (Harmon, 2001 in Croteau, 2012: 309).

**Consumers: Victims or Informed Choosers?**

The views of the likes of Milton and Locke are correct in that truth will prevail in an open marketplace, in part because autonomous and rational individuals will be able to discern the difference between truth and falsity. This belief in the rational abilities of the people who receive media messages is directly responsible for such precepts as caveat emptor. “Buyer beware” assumes that an intelligent consumer will be able to discern nuances in messages —nuances that the designer of the message may have intentionally obscured. Why do those advertising and public relations practitioners who say they believe in the intelligence of the average consumer try so hard to cloud their messages? Could it be that, like Plato, they really believe that the masses are easily deceived by the “shadows on the cave wall”? Recent years have witnessed the rise of new media channels such as Facebook, YouTube, Google, and Twitter, which enable customers to take a more active role as market players and reach almost everyone anywhere and anytime. These new media threaten long established business models and corporate strategies, but also provide ample opportunities for growth through new adaptive strategies (Bivins, 2004: 137-138). Media use among young people is even more extensive has been increasing significantly in all forms —except for reading, , which has found that, by 2009 in US, young people 8 to 18 years of age devoted the significant increase in media use over a 10 years period was due largely to the growth of the mobile media devices -
especially cell phones, MP3 players and laptop computer – which made it easier to access media products anytime, anywhere (Rideout, Foehr and Robert, 2010).

Popular social media are more easily accessible from smartphones than from traditional desktops as many people have 24/7 access to smartphones. Beyond Technology: From Public Participation to Self-Organization ICT, social media and mobile technologies alter the larger context of public participation because they open up new possibilities for policy-makers, but perhaps more importantly, they empower and foster the self-organization of citizens. Social media are a powerful tool for citizen mobilization (Reinout, 2015: 240). The ability of the Internet to make vast quantities of information readily available to users also suggests some consumer protection solutions in the form of disclosures, self-policing, and consumer education. The information society promises to provide many benefits to consumers. It also presents some difficult consumer protection issues and consumer education efforts should be emphasized (Starek, 1996).

4. Conclusion

Cyberspace not only carries and distributes information but is also a vehicle for communication and the exchange of views. The wealth of information about different cultures and values available on the Internet enables an individual to remain based in his or her own culture while becoming exposed to and influenced by others. One problem is that the information and services available on the Internet are usually written in the world’s most dominant languages. If this state of affairs is not changed it could quickly lead to the erosion of cultural and linguistic diversity and accelerate the extinction of languages, customs and traditions (Unesco, 2003).

Today, we are witnessing the rapid installation of the complex systems that will become the technological and commercial foundations of a "global information infrastructure". Interactive communication space will doubtlessly function as a powerful tool in the service of the economy, but it will also be at the centre of radical and far-reaching changes in our societies. Among the undeniable responsibilities of public authorities are the protection of essential community functions against possible encroachment and the promotion of the enormous potential of these new technologies for the cultural and social development of all our societies. The market is developing exponentially and is marked by cutthroat competition between strategic alliances and mass buyers at the centre of a rapid convergence of three previously separate sectors: audio-visual, computer technology and telecommunications(Serexhe, 2000).
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