



Forum: Special Political and Decolonization Committee (GA4)

Issue: The Question of Media Influences on Global Mentality

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“Our common humanity is more important than our differences. Questions of community and identity, personal identity, will determine our collective capacity to deal with all the problems. The most important thing is the understanding of the elemental value that makes all communities possible in an interdependent world.”

*Bill Clinton
Former president of the United States*

INTRODUCTION

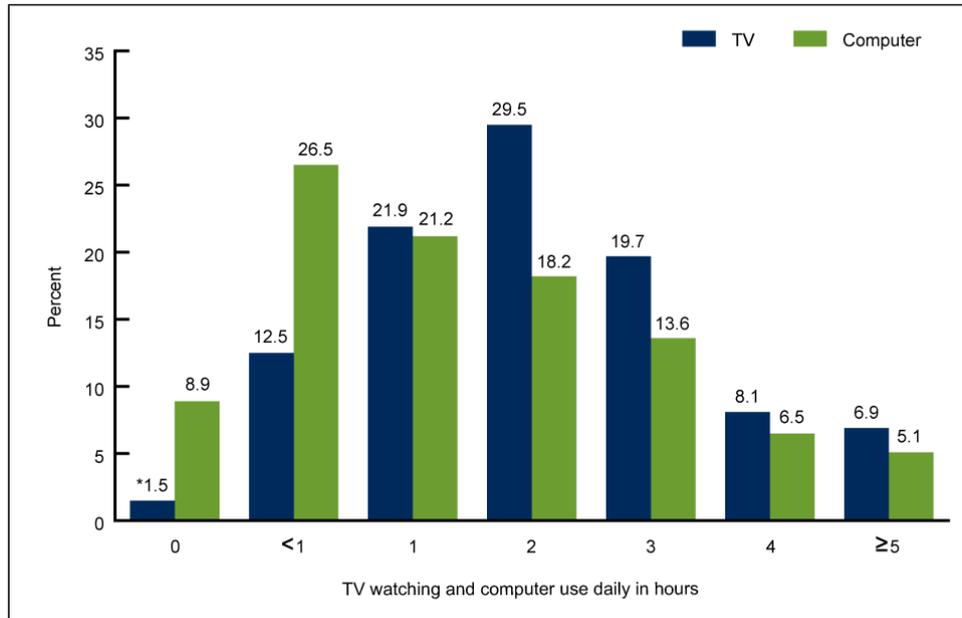
Whenever we want to hear our favourite song, watch our favourite movie, etc. we are more than likely turn on our TV, computer or radio. All that together is considered mass media. People use mass media to be informed on political issues, social issues, entertainment and news in pop culture.

The power of the news media to set a nation’s agenda, to focus public attention on a few key public issues, is a huge and documented influence. Not only do people obtain information about public affairs from the news media, readers and viewers learn how much importance to attribute to a topic based on the emphasis placed on it in the news. Newspapers offer a host of signs about the salience of the topics in the daily news – principal story on page one, other front-page spectacle, large titles, etc. Television news also offers numerous signals about salience – the opening story on the newscast, extent time devoted to the story, etc. These signs repeated day after day effectively communicate the importance of each topic. In other words, the news media can set the agenda for the public’s attention to that small group of issues around which public opinion forms. Over this period of time, whatever it might be, a few issues are accentuated, some receive light attention, and many are seldom or never mentioned.

The agenda-setting influence of the news media is not limited to this initial step of concentrating public attention on a specific topic. The media also influence our understanding and perspective on the topics in the news. If you think about the agenda in abstract terms, the potential for a larger view of media influence on public opinion becomes very clear. The items that define the agenda are objects. For all the agendas we have discussed, the objects are public issues, but they could be other items or topics, such as the agenda of political candidates during an election. The objects or pictures are the things on which the attention of the media and the public are focused on.

During the 1996 general election in Spain, the descriptions by voters in Navarra of the three major party leaders showed significant correspondence with the media's presentation of these men.

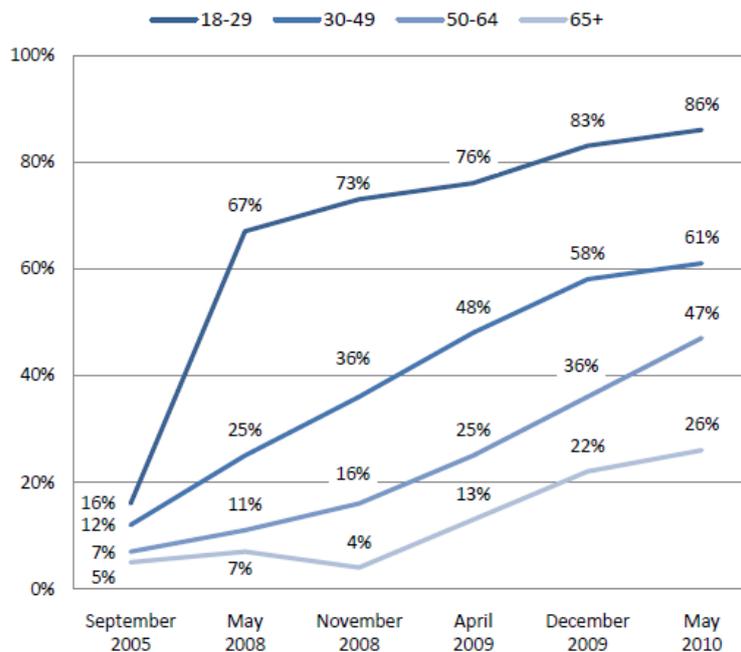
Figure 1. Percentage of youth aged 12–15 reporting TV watching and computer use daily, by number of hours: United States, 2012



* Estimate does not meet standards of reliability or precision; relative standard error is greater than 30% but less than 40%.
 NOTE: Access data table for Figure 1 at: http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db157_table.pdf#1
 SOURCES: CDC/NCHS, National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) and NHANES National Youth Fitness Survey, 2012.

Social networking use continues to grow among older users

The percentage of adult internet users who use social networking sites in each age group



Source: Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project Surveys, September 2005 - May, 2010. All surveys are of adults 18 and older.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Mass media: technology that is intended to reach a mass audience.

Audience: The group of consumers for whom the media text was constructed as well as anyone else who is exposed to the text.

Critical: A reflective position on the meaning, biases or value messages of a text.

Agenda setting: The ability of the media to tell people what and whom to talk and think about. Also refers to those media that have more credibility than their competition.

Critical viewing: The ability to use critical thinking skills to view, question, analyse and understand issues presented overtly and covertly in movies, videos, television and other visual media.

Balkanization: used to describe the process of fragmentation or division of a region or state into smaller regions or states that are often hostile or uncooperative with one another.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

THE UNSCRUPULOUS SIDE

If it were a nation, Facebook would be the world's second largest with 1.31 billion citizens – soon to cover China. Of course, Facebook is not a solo country; it consists of millions of groups. These extra-national groups are often more important to individuals than devotion to their nation. Yet, rather than instigate today's turbulence, social media is reflective of pre-existing attitudes of turbulence across societies. It is a petri plate, but the bacteria are already present. Social media provides both an organizing instrument through its ability to structure and facilitate communication and an organizing principle in the way people gravitate toward the extreme. In this way, social media accelerates political turbulences like a giant centrifuge, rotating faster and faster and expelling out those who disagree.

The risk that this trend postures to business is weighty with registered Western firms gaining 20% to 30% of their sales in emerging markets, about twice the level in the mid-1990s. The risk to society is thoughtful, because now revolutions such as the Arab Spring can happen in months rather than years.

THE WORLD IS BEHAVING MORE AND MORE LIKE SOCIAL MEDIA

In light of the ability to organize online in this extra-national way, countries such as Belgium (Wallonia v. Flanders), Italy (North v. South), Spain (Catalonia v. Madrid) and Canada (Montreal v. Ottawa) become not only possible contenders for break-ups, but perhaps move inexorably in that direction (nevertheless the results of last month's referendum in Scotland). These countries face Balkanization in part because of closer communications in social media dissenting communities. Unlike Iraq and Afghanistan, these are civil quarrels occurring in developed markets in Europe. As any marketer understands, developed markets inevitably lead to more brand extensions, more fragmentation of the primary product line. As there are now more than 30 brands of Mountain Dew, there will be more nations in Europe.

Despite being one of the most technologically sophisticated countries in the world, Israel is fighting a losing battle on the social media front.

Both Israel and Palestine use social media effectively to fight the other side. However, Palestinians are winning because their content relates to people based on more defined empathies and emotions beyond ideas of right or wrong.

In Hamas' communications in social media, they organize and share visual content to appeal to distinct roles such as moms, educators and neighbours.

The Palestinians place content in the context of what an audience already cares about and relates to. Comparatively, there were very few pictures of rockets falling in Israel in social media. Winning the actual battle may not mean winning the war if there is a larger proxy war occurring in social media of people outside contributing countries. The treacherous rise of anti-Semitism in Europe supports this view.

HEALTH

There are millions of adolescents fighting obesity, but at the same time, they are exposed to thousands of advertisements of junk food, while the ideal image of a successful person is told to be thin and wealthy. This can all bring to eating disorders and health problems. Another negative effect media had in us is violence. We see lots of violence on television. Kids that are starting to grow and are modelling their personality values and beliefs can become aggressive or they can lose a sense of reality and fiction of what they are seeing. Teens and even adults seeing these violent acts may be persuaded to some point that it is acceptable to be violent. Media can affect our opinion. In the attacks of 9/11 the media gave a huge coverage of the event and exposed Osama guilty for the attack as they were told by the authorities. This shaped the public opinion to support the war on terrorism, the same happened with the war on Iraq. This is the power of public opinion influence.

In 2013, Pew Research conducted a study of social media use in more than 20 developing countries. Of the countries charted, here is how the results stacked up in terms of social media use:

<u>Argentina</u> - 75 percent	<u>Malaysia</u> - 76 percent
<u>Bolivia</u> - 71 percent	<u>Mexico</u> - 77 percent
<u>Brazil</u> - 73 percent	<u>Nigeria</u> - 83 percent
<u>Chile</u> - 76 percent	<u>Philippines</u> - 86 percent
<u>China</u> - 48 percent	<u>Russia</u> - 86 percent
<u>Egypt</u> - 88 percent	<u>Senegal</u> - 75 percent
<u>El Salvador</u> - 75 percent	<u>South Africa</u> - 62 percent
<u>Ghana</u> - 77 percent	<u>Tunisia</u> - 85 percent
<u>Indonesia</u> - 84 percent	<u>Turkey</u> - 79 percent
<u>Jordan</u> - 84 percent	<u>United States</u> - 73 percent
<u>Kenya</u> - 76 percent	<u>Venezuela</u> - 83 percent
<u>Lebanon</u> - 72 percent	

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Notes on what to improve in our society:

1. How to avoid balkanization;
2. How to avoid health problems (created by mass media);
3. How to avoid violence on TV;
4. How to avoid the thought that mass media is a “must” for everyone.

USEFUL LINKS

- <http://www.pewinternet.org/2010/08/27/older-adults-and-social-media/>
- <http://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article/how-social-media-leads-to-a-less-stable-world/>

NOTES FROM THE CHAIR

I hope the chair report was clear and helpful enough. This report will also help you to see which countries you may need to challenge with. Do not forget to take your information from many sources. Good luck.