

## Topic 2 - New media, globalisation and popular culture

**New Media:** the evolution of existing media delivery systems and the development of new digital communication technologies

**Two trends:**

1. **The evolution of existing media delivery systems:**

The way that moving images have traditionally been delivered has been changed, only 20 years ago there was only 5 channels on TV but now there are hundreds of choices of channels and radio channels.

2. **The emergence of new delivery technologies:**

There are more innovative technologies now than before, the growth of the internet and high capacity broadband wireless networks has improved society's access to a multimedia library of information and services.

### Characteristics of new media:

1. **The digital revolution and convergence**

- o Convergence has occurred - the combination of different ways of presenting a variety of types of information (e.g. text, images, films, music) into a single delivery system/into a universal computer language.
- o Boyle (2005) - digitalization allows information to be delivered across a range of media platforms. Before, there were separate unconnected technologies which are now connected.
- o This technology convergence has also created economic and social convergence. e.g. Mobilephones - Jenkins (2008) observed that he could no longer buy a simple functioning phone because nobody wanted them anymore. This was a powerful demonstration of how mobiles have been through the process of media convergence.

2. **Compression**

- o The way in which digital technologies can send many signals through the same cable. This has led to a rapid increase in radio and TV channels

3. **Interactivity**

- o Digital technologies that are responsive in real time to user input e.g. the internet
- o Jenkins (2008) interactivity has been brought about by convergence because media users will go to great lengths for the entertainment experience they want.
- o It has also produced a participatory culture - media producers and consumers are no longer occupying separate roles, they interact with each other according to a new set of rules.
- o It has also produced collective intelligence - the way in which users of new media combine skills, resources and knowledge. (everyone knows something, so collecting all that info creates a pool of resources and combines our skills.)
- o The internet provides the means of which people can interact in a participatory culture and build a collective intelligence.
- o Fans of TV programmes are now more in the centre of current thinking/influential in the making of TV shows and other campaigns.. e.g. a campaign was set up to make Cadburys aware that people wanted Wispa chocolate bars back and it worked.
- o Boyle (2005) TV is now demand led, used to be supply led. We are no longer restrained by TV schedules. The introduction of TiVo, Sky+ etc. are examples of how consumers of new media are encouraged to take an active role in the construction of their own TV schedules. Netflix offers people the service of watching TV shows and movies at a monthly rate for use whenever they want. We can now interact with different TV shows with mobile phone apps and websites and 'press red'. There's also catch up and on demand services available.

### Who is using the new media?

1. **Generational/AGE divide -**

- Boyle (2007) New media is often associated with young people. But Boyle argues that there has always been a generation divide in media use since the emergence of youth culture in the 1950's. Communication technology has always been used by young people as they assert their particular difference and develop their individual and collective identities through music, sport, media and technologies.
- 16-24 are the most to use new media
- We use it for contacting people, work, gaming, shopping
- Different ages use the media for different reasons.

2. **Class divide -**

- The poor are excluded from new media because they lack material resources like computers, internet.
- W/c have mobiles but no contracts, limited internet data.
- Middle and upper class are more likely to use it because they can afford it
- They are the digital underclass who cannot afford to keep up with the middle class technological elite
- 80% of richest have internet access/11% of poorest

3. **Gender divide -**

- Government Technology survey - suggests that women are more likely to make use of platforms that encourage social interaction where their male counterparts make more use of sites that encourage networking and self-promotion. While none of these media platforms were designed to cater to all single sex, they have been divided along societal definitions of gender lines.
- e.g. Women use Facebook/Instagram to make connections and share info about personal life whereas men use it to gather info and increase their status. (Forbes)
- Girls aged 12-15 are more likely to use phones, internet, read magazines than boys.
- Boys and men are more likely to play games on consoles and computers whereas women are less confident with using them. However, this is increasingly becoming false with the rapid growth of the IT sector and more women becoming computer literate... ICT at schools becoming compulsory.

4. **Global/location divide -**

- USA and Western Europe generate most of the content of the www. This dominance is reinforced by the fact that an estimated 85% of the web is written in English despite the fact that roughly 13% of the world's population speak native English.
- Seaton (2003) Economic and social inequalities of the offline world mirror the online world.
- Poorer countries are unable to access new media because of poverty, availability and language barriers.

## **Postmodernism and the new media**

- Industrialization and the manufacturing of goods is in decline because the transmission of information and servicing consumption e.g. mass media, government has become more important.
- The rapid expansion in media technologies in the last decade has led to postmodern society becoming more MEDIA SATURATED.
- The media now shapes our identities, lifestyles and consumption patterns more than traditional influences like family and culture by making us more aware of the diversity of choice that exists
- The media defines our lifestyle. e.g. what we wear and eat. It informs us that the consumption of images and logos and brands should be central to our identity. We buy labels to no longer be judged on the basis of ability but on how 'cool' we look
- Many people feel as if they don't belong to real communities, but instead proto- communities on Instagram/TV shows. They are increasingly replacing roles of our kin and neighbours. (we know them better than family/neighbours.

### **Critique of postmodernism**

- **Postmodernists have been criticized for exaggerating the degree of social change. Evidence from surveys show that family, social class and ethnicity still have a huge influence of people's lives. Media influence is undoubtedly important but is not the determining factor in most people's lifestyle choices.**
- **They ignore the fact that a lot of people are unable to make consumption choices because of inequalities brought about by unemployment and poverty or simply because they don't have access to the internet and TV.**
- **There is also a rather naïve element to post-modernist analyses, in that they tend to ignore the fact that a substantial number of people are unable to make consumption choices because of inequalities brought about by traditional influences such as unemployment, poverty, racial discrimination and patriarchy. Traditional forms of inequality remain a crucial influence, as access to the Internet, digital television and so on is denied to many people in Britain.**

## **Globalization of the media**

Globalisation is a process whereby social and economic activity spans many nations with little regard for national borders Examples of globalisation of the media:

1. Ownership of the mass media
  - Large media conglomerates are no longer restricted by national boundaries and own hundreds of media companies around the world
  - Globalisation has encouraged and facilitated the development of global multimedia corporations that are able to take account of economies of scale operating their businesses globally
  - Media focus has become more international, not just focusing on national issues. e.g. news about isis, France, Australia, usa on UK news channels.
2. Satellite TV
  - You can now watch whatever you want whenever you want from anywhere in the world.
3. The internet
  - Access to the www opens up so many opportunities to do things such as watch movies, download music, access social media, watch videos and research anything from any part of the world.
4. Advertising
  - Has allowed brands like Coco Cola to become a household name. Its instantly recognisable.
5. Entertainment
  - Has become globalised by TV, global marketing/advertising and the internet and has resulted in the world's population engaging in the same popular culture. e.g. everyone watching the same Hollywood produces films/same music.
  - News has become 24/7 - development of the 24 hour agenda

## **What are the consequences of globalization? NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES**

- Marxists argue that it restricts choice because transnational media companies and their owners have too much power. They are particularly concerned that local culture and media might be replaced by a global culture
- Cultural pessimists refer to this as "Disneyfication of culture" because global culture is overwhelmingly an American entertainment culture
- Kellner (1999) - global media culture is about sameness and that it erases individuality
- Global media is also 'dumbing down' real and authentic culture
- Postmodernists suggest it brings about more choice with regards to identity and lifestyles. They see global media as a good influence because it gives developing countries modern ideas to benefit their economy and cultures.
- Globalisation is beneficial because it is primarily responsible for diffusing different cultural styles around the world and it is argued that cultural diversity and pluralism will be the global norm
- CRIT OF MARX - Postmodernists disagree with Marxists because they argue that globalisation is good for both the developing and developed worlds because it offers more choice and opportunity.
- Local cultures are not swallowed up by the global media but rather adapt to global culture.
- Cohen and Kennedy (2000) suggest that the cultural pessimists underestimate the strength of local culture. They don't usually abandon all their traditions and family values because they listen to certain Western music or watch Disney movies. They actually just mix and match elements of local culture with global culture.

## Debates about new media: Curran and Seaton (2003)

Two perspectives dominate the debate about the new media in the UK:

Neophiliacs - ARGUE THAT NEW MEDIA IS BENEFICIAL TO SOCIETY	Cultural pessimist - ARGUE THAT THE REVOLUTION IN NEW MEDIA HAS BEEN EXAGGERATED BY NEOPHILIACS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased consumer choice               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has resulted in more TV channels and increased competition between media institutions to create better media output.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• An e-commerce revolution               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• e.g. Amazon has undermined high street sales of books and music</li> <li>• E-commerce trend has resulted in more choice to consumers because it increases competition, leads to lower prices</li> <li>• Puts consumers in control as they can compare prices from a wide range of products and services</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Revitalizing democracy               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People can acquire the education and information required to play an active role in democracy.</li> <li>• It gives a voice to those who would go unheard.</li> <li>• It allows like-minded people to join together and take action which may lead to social change</li> <li>• Provides an alternate view to ones presented on mainstream media</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cornford and Robin (1999) - suggests that the 'new media' is not so new. Old tech are integral to the use of new media such as computers, internet etc. They believe that the revolution of the new media has been exaggerated by neophiliacs. They suggest, further, that interactivity is not something new because people have written to newspapers and phoned in to radio and television for many years. The only thing that is new about new media is its speed – information, news and entertainment can be accessed in 'real time'.</li> <li>• Domination by media conglomerates –               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Jenkins (2008) - new media developed as a result of investment of internet dominated by companies that have high market share over several markets. They can direct you to what they want because they own so much. E.g. Curran - 1/3 of the 31 most visited sites are a part of the largest media corporations in the world, e.g. google own youtube etc.</li> <li>◦ Cultural pessimists criticise the idea that new media are increasingly the potential for ordinary people to participate more fully in the democratic process and cultural life.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Commercialisation –               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ increase in the commercial use of the internet</li> <li>◦ Rise of e-commerce businesses – growing more successful as more people buy online than go to the shops on the high street. Causing competitive rivalry</li> <li>◦ Cornford and Robins – agree that these new technologies may produce more choice for the consumer, but they are also some side effects, such as companies using cookies to track user data usages and internet activity, thus they can target potential customers and enhance profits.</li> <li>◦ Marxists have become alarmed at this commercialisation because it encourages materialism, consumerism and false needs, and thereby furthers capitalist domination and control.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Reinforcing elite power – MARXIST ARGUMENT               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ major corps dominate the web with sites that ensure that their view is dominant. Marxists argue that they do this to ensure that their views are dominant?</li> <li>◦ Cornford and Robins - are doubtful of the view that new media will lead to a more democratic communications structure that will bring about a new political and social order. They note that through mergers/takeovers/patents, media corporations will seek to monopolise the media market.</li> <li>◦ Jenkins – not all Pp in the new media are equal, corporations still exert greater power than any individual consumer. Therefore media technologies mainly strengthen the power of the existing elites rather than promoting alternate ideas and free speech. The digital class divide also contributes to this inequality because it is probably those who are unable to access the web who have the most genuine political grievance</li> <li>◦ SEATON (2003) - reports online political involvement probably mirrors the level of ordinary people's involvement in the real world.</li> <li>◦ Hill and Hughes (1997) - only 6% of webpages were devoted to political issues. BUT THIS WAS CONDUCTED OVER 20 YEARS AGO NOT RELEVANT TODAY. Today, the internet is more likely to contain web content with alternate views of political issues than the mainstream media presents.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Decline in quality of popular culture – there aren't more choices that we can choose like it has been portrayed by neophiliacs, its just full of repeats. E.g. me too products, same shows on different channels.</li> <li>• Hill and Hughes (1997) challenge the view that cyberspace is more likely to contain web content that supports alternative minority political issues or views – 78% of political opinions expressed on the American websites were mainstream.</li> <li>• Cultural pessimists argue that increased choice of media delivery systems and particularly the digitalisation of television, has led to a decline in the quality of popular culture. Harvey suggests that digital television may have dramatically increased the number of channels for viewers to choose from, but this has led to a dumbing down of popular culture as television companies fill these channels with cheap imported material, films, repeats, sport, reality television shows and gambling. Harvey argues that, increasingly, television culture transmits a candy floss culture that speaks to everyone in general and no one in particular.</li> <li>• Some sociologists, politicians and cultural commentators argue that new media, particularly the Internet, is in need of state regulation. All points of view are represented on the Internet, but it is argued that easy access to pornography, and homophobic, racist and terrorism-inciting sites is taking free speech too far.</li> </ul>