EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE ROLE OF THE

SMALL MEDIA IN SAUDI ARABIA: THE

GROWING IMPORTANCE OF VIDEO

CASSETTE RECORDERS AND

AUDIOTAPES

By

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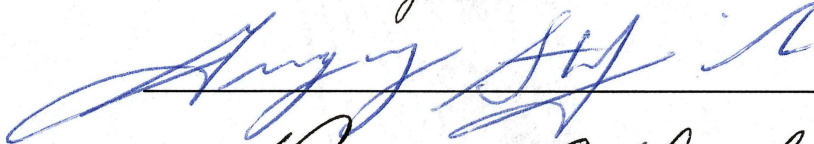the requirements for
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

General

Daniel Lerner wrote that communication, in our lexicon, is the neural

system of organization. Whenever people must act together (an informal

definition of organization) they must exchange information (an informal

definition of communication).[1] It follows that the larger and more complicated

the society, the greater the need to exchange information. With the invention

of the machine and the creation of mass society, the West had no choice but

to look for means to distribute more information to more people in less time.

First came the "penny press" to fulfill this need. Then came the cinema,

followed by radio and television. The function of these new mass media was

to provide the masses with adequate surveillance of what was going on in

their environment in addition to providing entertainment.

Coexisting with the mass media today are other means of

communication which, although not called mass media, perform many of the

same functions as mass media including entertaining the people and providing

them with information. Such means of communication could be called non-

mass media. An example of this means of communication is the church or

mosque where people gather regularly and exchange information and discuss issues. Other examples of non-mass media are audio tapes and video cassette recorders which play a similar role to that of television and radio, although they cannot be called mass media because they do not disseminate messages simultaneously to large audiences. These non-mass media or small media have not received the attention they deserve and most researchers tend either to ignore or belittle the role of these media in today's world.

Background

<u>General</u>

After the Second World War, the world witnessed the emergence of many small countries, especially in Asia and Africa. These new and underdeveloped countries, faced with poverty, illiteracy and many economic and social problems, sought desperately for ways to enhance their situations. With the help of the United Nations and some Western countries, especially the United States, these newly created countries adopted the Western model of development. The Western model of development is "characterized by private or corporation ownership of capital goods, by investments that are determined by private decision rather than by state control, and by prices, production, and the distribution of goods that are determined mainly in free market."[2] This model is appealing to the new, emerging countries because it provides individuals with the incentive and motivation to take part in building the country, since personal gain leads to improvement in the whole economy.

In the Western model, two key elements for development are urbanization and the implementation of effective mass communication systems. As Daniel Lerner put it:

> Increasing urbanization has tended to raise literacy; rising literacy has tended to increase media exposure; increasing media exposure has "gone with" wider economic participation (per capita income) and political participation (voting).[3]

But if the mass media were credited with outstanding ideological, political, cultural and economic power in the Western industrial setting, they were also endowed with great powers within the developing world context. Mass media technologies and institutions were expected to create a climate of change in developing societies by introducing new values, attitudes, and modes of behavior favorable to modernization.[4]

Wilbur Schramm, a communication scholar who is well known for his studies in mass media and national development, stated that mass media could facilitate the planning and implementation of development programs which correspond to the needs of the population.[5] Such tasks include fighting illiteracy and encouraging people to participate in the development process.

So, it was taken for granted by many developing countries that if any underdeveloped nation wanted to develop, it first had to establish its own mass communication system which would facilitate and coordinate the development process. Now, after nearly three decades, the hopes and ambitions of many of these countries have vanished since they found that their mass communication systems are not as powerful and as efficient as they thought they would be. A recent UNESCO study about the international flow

of selected cultural goods showed that developing countries accounted for only 10.2 percent of world exports of cultural goods. These cultural goods include printed material, TV programs and movies, etc.[6] This study, however, does not mean in any sense that the failure of the mass media in those countries was solely responsible for this imbalance in the flow of cultural goods.

Investigating the reasons behind the difficulties that the mass media are facing in some developing countries, some communication scholars believe that in certain cultures, social and traditional modes of communication are so powerful that they sometimes counter the effectiveness of the mass media. In recent years there has been a gradual shift in research in the communication field from concentration on mass communication alone to a wider focus on all types of human communication. Sreberny pointed out that, in general, research on communication had tended to lack a broad ecological view of the entire communications network and cultural milieux in which collectivities, individuals, and message-producing entities are situated.[7] Thus, essentially because of the concentrated focus on the mass media of communication, a great deal of important social communication has been ignored.

In general, there have not been enough studies on non-mass media communication. Menzal was one of the early scholars who talked about what he called the neglected area of quasi-mass communication.[8] He argued that most discussions on communication focus either on mass communication and its effects, or on interpersonal communication. This dichotomy, he contends,

leaves out a vast amount of socially vital communication activities that utilize social arrangements and setups but can be characterized neither as mass communication nor as person-to-person communication. An example of such communication activities would be a priest delivering an oration to a huge gathering at a religious meeting.

Mass and Non-Mass Media in Saudi Arabia

In Saudi Arabia, as in many other developing societies, the role and the effectiveness of the mass media have been overrated. Despite the massive amounts of money spent on modernizing the government's radio and television systems, the effectiveness of these two means of mass communication might be very limited. Taking the phenomenal diffusion of video cassette recorders, which could be seen as a major competitor to government television, and the popularity of foreign radio services which are the competitors of the national radio system, both might indicate that the existing mass media is experiencing some difficulties in keeping their audiences. Although these indications might be interpreted differently, the lack of accurate scientific studies makes it difficult to know with certainty what is really going on.

In the past, most of the studies done on the effectiveness of the mass media in Saudi Arabia focused primarily on the technological aspects of the communication process such as the strength of the broadcast signals and the availability of radio receivers and television sets. Because of the apparent lack

of empirical studies on the effects of the mass media in Saudi Arabia, the only way to determine the role of the mass media in that society is by taking the communication trends that are prevalent there as an indication of the current role of the mass media. For example, the widespread use of video cassette recorders (VCRs) in Saudi Arabia is viewed by many as a sign of dissatisfaction with what is being offered on government owned television network. Bakhaider found that of his sample of the population in Jidda, the country's second largest city, 73% watched less Saudi television after acquiring a VCR.[9] He concluded that the VCR has had a negative influence upon the Saudi Arabian television network because it has detracted from the latter's public following, the amount of time television is viewed, and the medium's economic importance.

Another trend in Saudi Arabian society is the phenomenon of using audiotapes to convey religious messages. In the past, audiotapes were common only among music lovers but recently there has been a dramatic increase in the use of audiotapes for religious purposes. According to government records, in Riyadh for example, 123 of the 550 record stores sell only religious material. Besides these trends and others, the availability of fax machines and the widespread use of xerox machines reduce significantly the importance of the mass media.

Statement of the Problem

The media environment in Saudi Arabia and in other Third World

countries changes with the passage of time and what was the source of information yesterday might not be today. Some recent studies indicated that there are several types of small media that are growing and expanding in Saudi Arabia. Some studies on the diffusion of video cassette recorders in Saudi Arabia suggested that this medium is becoming very popular and that it has a negative impact on the mass media. The problem that will be discussed in this study concerns the role and importance of these small media and their impact on Saudi Arabian society and on the mass media. The questions of how and why these small media are being used in Saudi society is the main focus of this study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research is to study and learn more about the role and impact of the small media in Saudi Arabia. Another goal of this study is to find reasonable answers to such questions as why these small media are becoming popular and what is their social and political significance. This study will focus on two forms of small media: audiotapes and video cassette recorders.

Objectives

This qualitative study seeks to accomplish two major objectives:

1. To evaluate the performance of the mass media in Saudi Arabia.

2. To find out the role of two types of small media in Saudi Arabia;

video cassette recorders and audiotapes.

Research Theory

The theory being tested here was presented by Joseph Klapper and it states that mass communication ordinarily does not serve as a necessary and sufficient cause of audience effects, but rather functions among and through a nexus of mediating factors and influences, such as selective process, group process, group norms and opinion leadership. As this theory suggests, in any communication process the interaction of related factors determines the effectiveness of that process. Therefore, in the case under investigation, developments in VCR ownership might affect the size of the TV audience. By the same token, a sermon in Friday prayer might affect the credibility of radio news. Another study that will be used in this study is the Diffusion of Innovation Theory which was introduced by Everett Rogers. This theory will be used to explain the diffusion of video cassette recorders in Saudi Arabia

Significance of the Study

This study is expected to explain the role and the impact of the small media in Saudi Arabia, and this may help media policy makers to understand the current changes in the media environment and encourage more in-depth research in this area.

Limitations of the Study

There are three limitations to this study:

1. Since the study has a wide scope, some important issues will not be discussed in detail because of the limitations imposed by time and space.

2. The major limitation of this study comes from the difficulties in obtaining the needed data and information. Most of the figures and statistics that are available about the media in Saudi Arabia are outdated. But to lessen the effect of this on the study, some statistics and information taken directly from the Ministry of Information records are included. These statistics and information, which have never before been published, will compensate in part for the scarcity of data.

3. This research is limited to the study of the role and impact of the small media in Saudi Arabia, which makes it difficult to make any generalizations about the mass media elsewhere.

Organization of the Study

The study will be organized as follows:

Chapter II contains a review of some aspects of the relationship between development and media, and a review of the available literature on small media in Third World countries.

Chapter III is divided into two sections: a background and evaluation of

the performance of the mass media in Saudi Arabia and a section devoted to

a discussion and analysis of the role of two small media in Saudi Arabia.

Chapter IV contains the conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER II

MEDIA AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE THIRD WORLD

This chapter will focus on the relationship between the media and development in Third World Countries. It will discuss three theories that attempt to explain the failure of the mass media in some Third World countries. The discussion will then focus on the role of the small media in Third World countries in recent times.

Communication and Development

Robert C. Hornik suggested that the conventional history of communication for national development began after World War II with an extraordinary political change, the movement to independence of more than half the world's nations, most of them in the Southern Hemisphere and most of them poor by all the criteria that the Northern Hemisphere nations held dear.[10] These newly independent nations were faced with many economic, social, educational, and health problems. For example, while they represented about 75% of the world's population, they had only 20% of the world's income.

These newly emerging nations, which were later to be called Third World Countries, had very low per capita incomes, and illiteracy was widespread. The health systems were primitive and sometimes non-existent.

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With the advice and help of UNESCO, most of these poorer nations adopted developmental plans that aimed to improve their social and economic situations by motivating and encouraging citizens to participate in the development processes.

Many of the development strategies that were adopted emphasized the importance of the mass media as the key factor in attaining any development goal. Mass media technologies were expected to create a climate of change in developing societies by introducing new values, attitudes and modes of behavior favorable to modernization.[11] As Schramm put it:

> The mass media were expected to teach new skills. . . .from literacy to agriculture to hygiene to repairing a motor car and act as multipliers of resources and knowledge.[12]

The mass media had promised to speed the transition from the rigid, centuries-old cultures of Africa, Asia, and Latin America to the open, wealthy societies of the industrialized West.[13]

Scholarly attention to the role of communication technology in the economic development of Third World nations was launched by two important books: Daniel Lerner's The Passing of Traditional Society (1958), and Wilbur Schramm's Mass Media and National Development (1964)[14]. During the 1950s and 1960s, it was believed that the mass media had a tremendous role in determining whether or not any development plan would succeed. In the 1970s, most American researchers moved away from the assumption that mass media could multiply development efforts and, therefore, promote rapid economic growth and stable democracy, to one that argued for a more

modest role for mass media.[15]

This shift toward a modest role for mass media in the Third World was felt all over the world. Scholars from different countries and with different ideologies started to question the role and the effects of the mass media. Goran Hedebro argued that mass communication is at best a complement to development, not its core, with power in only a few specific areas such as education. Hedebro suggested that mass communication is only one of several factors that bring about change in society, and mass communication activities do not always result in the desired change.[16]

The failure of mass media to live up to its expectations in many of the Third World countries prompted communication scholars to examine this phenomenon and attempt an explanation. One scholar argued that the 1965-1974 decade saw a rising number of military dictatorships in Latin America, Africa, and Asia, and these governments stressed the media's propaganda role, decreasing the public's trust in mass communication.[17]

Patharapanupath, who did a study on communication and social change in the Third World, found that the main role of mass communication in Thailand was, intentionally or unintentionally, designed to help secure strict compliance with the norms of the social and political system, to enforce obedience to the government, and to attain the country's goals. The mass media served primarily as a carrier of the government's behavioral prescriptions for citizenry.[18]

Elizabeth Evans found that development communication strategies had

been unsuccessful because of their philosophic and social perspectives as well as their methods of implementation. Evans argued that while the use of Western philosophy and perspectives partially can be blamed for the failures of many development communication strategies, developing nations also must share in the failure, since many did not recognize the enormous possibilities of radio as an effective development tool for the improvement of the quality of life for the populace.[19]

Everett Rogers provided another explanation for the failure of mass media in some Third World countries. Rogers mentioned that the Iranian Revolution against the Shah in 1979 was in part a struggle against a repressive, modernizing regime by a popular, tradition-oriented movement. Rogers argued that this conflict was also between the big media versus the little media and the little media won.[20] By "little media," Rogers meant the use of pamphlets, video cassette recorders, audiotapes and copier machines.

The Iranian Revolution brought to the attention of scholars and researchers the role of the small media or the non-mass media. In recent years, these small media are attracting more and more attention from both scholars and government officials who are concerned with the implementation and the advancement of development plans.

Ranganath argued that the mass media approach, while important, tends in some developing countries to leave vital elements out entirely: the local color, the regional dialect, the traditional dress and costumes, and the familiar local musical rhythms. Often, too, ongoing development programs

designed at the national level may not take into account the prevailing local conditions in the villages and in the city slums. The poor are seldom consulted for their own view about development. Ranganath believed that there is a growing feeling among development experts and communication strategists that the existing media channels of the very people they are trying to reach should not be overlooked.[21]

The Role of the Small Media

The term "small media" in this study includes all means of communication except mass communication. Gumpert defines the mass communication event as having the following basic characteristics:[22]

1. Mass communication is public communication.

2. The dissemination of mass communication content is rapid.

3. The content of mass media is transient.

4. The direct cost to the public of mass communication content is minimal.

5. The mass communication audience is large, heterogeneous, and anonymous.

6. The nature of the mass communication institution is complex.

So, for the purpose of this study, the term "small media" means all processes of communication that don't have mass communication characteristics, whether these processes use traditional or modern modes of communication.

Traditional Small Media

Herbert Menzel argued that because most discussions of communication focus either on mass communication and its effects, or on interpersonal communication, a vast amount of socially vital communication activities that utilize social arrangements and set-ups are left out, since they can be characterized neither as mass communication nor as person-to-person communication. Menzel called these communication activities "quasi-mass communication," which include:

> Speakers who take part in election campaigns, streetcorner orators, luncheon club circuit riders, salesmen approaching a succession of potential buyers, missionaries preaching in foreign societies, store-front information centers, literary agents, selective dissemination services, and numerous others.[23]

MacDonald and Hearle emphasized the role of traditional channels of communication which have been used for centuries in rural areas. These include folk songs, plays, stories, puppet shows, etc. These channels are usually neglected by scholars and development planners, although in many societies they may be the most powerful way of communicating.[24]

In many of the Third World countries, there are three major types of small media: religious sermons, folklore, and social event and gatherings.

Religious Sermons. In most Third World societies, religion is very powerful. The impact of religion could go beyond the walls of a mosque, church, or temple. In Islam, for example, the pulpit serves as a social and political forum. Borthwick argued that Islamic history has provided the

precedent for the sermon serving as a channel of political communication. The sermon has been a means whereby the ruling elite has informed the public of its policies, programs, and ideas. The political content of the sermon in Islam has varied but, at least in theory, it has always been considered a channel of communication for the state.[25]

In another study, Asghar Fathi described the Islamic pulpit as a distinct, organized system of public communication, operated by a class of professional communicators who do not rely on modern technology. Fathi argued that such a system can have a powerful impact on socio-political development.[26]

Moslems believe that the mosque is not only a place to pray, it also functions as a place where Muslims meet and discuss issues and problems in the community. In the Iranian Revolution, the mosque played a significant role. Hamid Mawlana noted that the opponents of the regime, who were denied the outlets of free newspapers, political parties, labor unions, student organizations, and free speech, gravitated toward the only forum that remained open to them; the approximately 100,000 mosques and holy shrines under the supervision of some 200,000 mullahs or religious leaders.[27]

In other parts of the world, religion proved to be very powerful in determining the way people think and the way they interact with each other. In a study done in India, Malik suggested that the use of religious discourse as an instrument of social and moral change, is not new or unfamiliar in the Indian context.[28] Gumperz, in another study in India, found that all types of

religious communicators, in assuming their religious role, are freed from many restrictions of broadcast systems. They interact freely with many individuals with whom they otherwise would not come into contact and their message is assured a more sympathetic hearing than that of ordinary citizens.[29]

Folklore. In 1972, UNESCO organized a series of meetings on the integrated use of folk media and mass media in family planning communication programs. These meetings, which were held in London, drew attention to this form of communication and its potential in implementing developmental programs. Since then, many seminars on related topics have been held all around the world. Among such seminars were the 1973 Traditional Media Seminar held in Chiegmai, Thailand, and the Seminar on Traditional Media in Development held in Jogjakarta, Indonesia, in 1973. A seminar on Indigenous Structures, Folk Media, and Non-Formal Education for Development was held in West Berlin in 1980. Seminars such as these and a steadily growing body of literature on the topic, point to a rapidly increasing international awareness of the importance of folk media in communication policies.[30]

Folklore in Third World societies fulfills two main functions. One is entertainment and the other is an information function. The major forms of folklore are folk theater, folksongs, storytelling, and puppet shows. Puppet shows have a strong presence in some societies, especially in Egypt and India. Development workers in both these countries have found that puppet shows are efficient channels with which to reach children and villagers. Puppets are being used in physiotherapy, psychotherapy, to educate children,

to encourage scientific methods of farming, to promote the use of fertilizers, and to deal with a host of social problems from dowry to child delinquency.[31]

Social Events and Social Gatherings. Several centuries ago, the poet John Donne wrote "No man is an island." Donne was trying to draw attention to the most distinctive of all human characteristics, the fact that we are social animals whose behavior and personalities are shaped by the groups to which we belong.[32] The impact of the group on the individual, on mass media, and on society as a whole, is being studied by psychologists, sociologists, and communication scholars.

Sociologists classify groups into two basic types, primary and secondary. A primary group consists of a small number of people who interact in direct, intimate, and personal ways. A secondary group consists of a number of people who come together for some specific, practical purpose, and usually the members don't have a deep relationship with each other, at least when compared to the relationships among primary group members.[33]

Communication experts always take into account this distinction between primary and secondary groups in order to select the proper method of reaching certain audiences. For example, in traditional, preindustrial societies almost all social life took place in the context of primary groups such as the kinship network or the small village. In such circumstances, personal and face-to-face communication is far more effective than the mass media. A 1940 voting study concluded that interpersonal influence in a primary group was effective in maintaining a high degree of homogeneity of opinions and

actions within the group.[34]

Arafa, in a study about the relationships between communication and social structure in a small section of Egyptian society, said that the social organization in a village depends heavily on the flow of information within and between the social institutions, and argued that every level of social organization maintains a certain mode (or modes) of communication within and between the constituents of that level and vice versa.[35]

The Iranian Revolution provides an excellent example of how powerful public meetings and social events can be. In an article about communication in the Iran Revolution, Fathi stated:

> . . . revolutionaries and people in general relied on traditional channels of communication, primarily public meetings or other meeting places at which to spread their messages and organize their resistance.[36]

The power of such communication is not only found in traditional and underdeveloped societies, it is practiced and utilized in industrial and modern societies as well.

Suzanne Riches did a study on the wedding shower as a communication ritual and rite of passage for the Mormon woman. Riches found that Mormon wedding showers serve as an example of a modern communication ritual which occurs in a industrial and technological society. Such rituals are central to the establishment of community realities and the perpetuation of community life.[37]

Modern Small Media

Describing the role that technology plays in today's societies, William Paisley wrote, "Technological change has placed communication in the front lines of a social revolution."[38] In many Third World countries, the governments total control over the means of mass communication has motivated people to seek other means to satisfy their communication needs.

Among modern small media are photocopy machines, audiotapes, and video cassette recorders (VCR's). The photocopy machines work as a reproduction tool in which a group of people who share a common goal can utilize them to communicate with each other. The two main advantages of photocopy machine utilization in Third World countries are that they provide more freedom for people to communicate their opinions with each other and they are relatively inexpensive. The Chinese democratic movement in 1989 showed that photocopy machines could be a very powerful communication tool, especially when supplemented with facsimile machines. The leaders of the Chinese students during the movement were receiving the world reaction to their movement by facsimile machine and, with the help of the photocopy machine, they disseminated the news coverage from the outside world to the participants in the demonstrations.

In the Iranian experience, the revolutionaries produced dozens of newsletters and religious proclamations on a daily basis with only the help of a photocopy machine. As a Tehran University professor stated in October 1978, "We are struggling against autocracy, for democracy, by means of

xerocracy."[39]

Audiotapes are used much the same way as photocopy machines. In the Iranian Revolution, Khomeini, the religious leader, sent his messages by telephone and audiotapes from Paris to Iran where they were copied by the thousands and made their way through the informal and traditional channels of communication to millions of people.[40]

The trend of utilizing audiotapes for things other than music has spread to many parts of the Third World. For example, in Saudi Arabia more than one-third of all the record stores now sell only audiotapes with religious content such as prayers, recitations from the Holy Koran, and sermons by popular religious men.

The third modern small medium is the video cassette recorder (VCR). VCR's are considered the most powerful small medium in the Third World. Alvarado suggested three reasons behind the VCR boom in the Third World:

1. Limited television programming.

2. Government controlled television news and entertainment.

3. VCR's may be used as a means of communicating political points of views.[41]

The mass media environment in the Third World makes VCR's very important as a means of communication. For example, in the Philippines where strict government censorship paved the road for video cassette recorders to become a medium for communicating political points of view, video cassettes of a Japanese documentary about the assassination of the

opposition leader Benigno Aquino were circulated. They are popular because the mass media has been prevented from presenting a full discussion of the event. Sometimes certain groups who are dissatisfied with the mass media, utilize video cassette recorders in order to satisfy their social and communication needs. In Brazil, a tribe of the 200,000-member minority Kayapo Indian group has purchased a videocassette system to link all the Indian villages. The chief of the tribe plans to use video technology to preserve the local culture, "given that the white man has little interest in us, we have to act on our own."[42]

Summary

This chapter discussed the role of the mass media in the development process of Third World countries. It was argued that the mass media can play a significant role in transforming traditional societies into well-developed, industrial societies in a short time period. In some parts of the Third World, the mass media has not lived up to this expectation. This in turn has prompted some media scholars to attempt to explain the apparent failure of the mass media in some parts of the Third World. There are three theories or explanations for the poor performance of the mass media in some countries:

1. Some scholars believe that the use of mass media as a propaganda tool by military dictatorships in some Third World countries has decreased the public's trust in the mass media.

2. Some attribute the lack of success of communication strategies on

their philosophic and social perspectives and methods of implementation. For example, some communication strategies might ignore the local culture and the values of the targeted groups. Also, using the wrong medium might be devastating to the outcome of the strategies, for example, using the printed media in an illiterate environment.

3. Other scholars argue that there are other means of communication that have gained popularity in some Third World countries at the expense of the mass media. These other means of communication are called small media.

The discussion then focused on the third theory which emphasizes the role and different forms of small media.

CHAPTER III

BACKGROUND

Saudi Arabian Modern Mass Media

The history of modern mass media in Saudi Arabia is relatively recent. The country as a whole was created when Abdulaziz ibn Saud captured the city of Riyadh from the Rashid family in 1902. Over the next thirty years, ibn Saud and his supporters, starting from Riyadh as a base, conquered various parts of the Arabian Peninsula. In 1932, the land which borders Jordan, Iraq, Kuwait, Gatar, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, and Yemen was proclaimed Saudi Arabia.[43]

In the country's early stages it was ruled by the king, who had an ongoing system of interpersonal communication, visiting the various tribes on a regular basis and often inviting tribal leaders to meet with him when he traveled to the kingdom's major cities.[44] Later on, however, the king realized that he would need the help of wire and wireless communication facilities in order to rule effectively over such a vast, sparsely populated country. For that reason he purchased and installed a network of transmitters in various cities in the kingdom and also acquired portable transmitters that would accompany him when he travelled.[45]

As the king aged, it became increasingly difficult for him to travel extensively as he once did. The king started to establish a radio network that would substitute for his visits. In May 1949, the Minister of Finance arranged for International Telegraph and Telephone, Incorporated, to build a medium-wave transmitter and studio in Jidda, the western port, and the king put his son, later crown prince and king, in charge of the station.[46] In 1953 the government established the first identifiable office within the government to handle broadcasting and information activities — the Directorate General of Broadcasting, Press, and Publications, an organization later given the status of Ministry of Information.[47]

Starting from that small, three-kilowatt transmitter in Jidda, the government went on to expand the radio network and in 1963 it announced that it would build a national television system.[48] The Saudi government signed an agreement with the United States Army Corps of Engineers in January 1964 to build two television stations, one in Riyadh and one in Jidda. Both television stations went on the air on July 17, 1965.[49]

One of the important things about the media development in Saudi Arabia was the strong opposition by some religious leaders to the construction and use of radio and television stations. Those religious leaders who helped King Abdullaziz unite the country were now opposing not only radio and television but other things including the use of cars, telephones, tobacco, and photography. Their argument was that these Western novelties had the potential to corrupt the Islamic society. The government eventually overcame

this obstacle by devoting most of broadcasting time to religious content programs and persuading the religious leaders that radio and television were not the work of the devil.[50]

Reasons for the Expansion of the Mass Media

The government's determination to expand the role of the mass media in society was motivated by several factors. The following is a brief discussion of some of the possible reasons that may have encouraged the government to expand and improve the mass media facilities.

Prestigious Reasons. The government may have intended to reflect to both insiders and outsiders the image of a modern country. Television and radio were perfect symbols of modernity. This phenomenon is true in other Third World countries also. The mass media have become not a means to social and economic development but an end in themselves, symbols of independence and prestige. As proof of this, some researchers point to some small countries in the Persian Gulf area that could afford to exist without an army and sometimes without a viable economy, but could not afford to exist without radio and television stations.[51]

Political Reasons. The Saudi government, in establishing radio and television networks, might have been seeking to counter the hostile broadcasts from Egypt's radio stations which were attacking the royal family. In addition, the government might have hoped that by establishing a national

television service they could provide the population with an attractive

alternative to the hostile radio broadcasts produced by some neighboring

countries.[52]

Psychological Reasons. Another important goal in establishing national

radio and television networks might have been to create a sense of unity

among the people of the country, given the fact that the country was newly

formed on a vast land that was inhabited by scattered, isolated communities.[53]

This psychological sense of unity was also promoted by other means such as

the building of inter-province roads, national airlines, and telephone and telex

systems.

Social Reasons. Solving social problems and promoting new and

modern social values especially among Nomads and Bedouins might well

have been the focus of the government's development plans. It might be that

an important reason for establishing radio and television services was to use

such services as tools for modernizing the society and helping to solve social

problems.

Educational Reasons. Another reason that might have motivated the

government to utilize radio and television services could stem from an

educational need. The country was suffering and, to a certain extent still

suffers, from high illiteracy levels and a lack of skilled workers. The mass

media might have been expected to help raise the level of education and

teach workers and farmers new and much-needed skills.

An Evaluation of the Performance of

the Modern Mass Media

In most Third World countries it is very difficult to find out accurately
how electronic mass media are performing and Saudi Arabia is no exception.
One of the major problems of assessing the performance of the mass media
is the apparent lack of scientific research. Boyd and Najai wrote that when
they did their study on television viewing in Saudi Arabia there was only one
study that had been done prior to theirs which dealt with the mass media in
Saudi Arabia.[54]

The blame for this apparent lack of scientific research on Saudi Arabian
mass media might be shared by three major partners: the government,
researchers, and audiences. Each of these three could be held responsible
for the lack of reliable studies, although there is no scientific evidence that
supports this assumption and there is no way of finding out precisely how
much each of the three contributed to this problem unless more empirical
studies are done. The following is a discussion of the possible role played by
each of the above three in creating this problem.

The Government

Boyd and Najai argued that historically the Saudi Arabian government
has not been receptive to media research by Saudi nationals or outsiders.[55]
Although it is very difficult to accuse the government of discouraging media
research, it is safe to say that from general and casual observations, it seems

that the government is not enthusiastic about doing any media research. One indication of this lack of enthusiasm is the fact that the Ministry of Information, which runs both radio and television networks, does not have any means of getting feedback from audiences except through letters and phone calls from individuals. For example, some variety programs on both radio and television ask listeners and viewers to call or write if they want certain material to be broadcast or if they have any comments regarding programming or scheduling. Also, the government imposes rigid research guidelines that researchers must adhere to and these guidelines could easily portray any data collected in a biased manner. For example, any questionnaire must be preapproved before it can be distributed and there are certain questions of a political or religious nature that are not popular among government officials.

The Audience

Saudi society is a traditional society which could be described as a closed society. The audiences in such a society are less willing to take part in research or surveys. There may be several reasons for the audience's apparent reluctance to participate in any kind of study. One of the reasons might be that they are suspicious of strangers who ask them questions. In general, however, the case here is not unique. It probably is common in other traditional societies and it might be expected to improve with time and effort.

Another problem with the audiences is that they are hard to reach. It is very difficult to draw a random sample from the audience in Saudi Arabia.

Most of the studies that have been done used either judgmental samples or door-to-door surveys which, in both cases, lessen the credibility of the outcome of the studies. Almost all of the random sample studies in Saudi Arabia used students as subjects. This tendency to use students has some problems that might cause the results to be biased. For example, researchers must submit their questionnaires to the Ministry of Education or the Ministry of Higher Education for approval before the study can be conducted. This process limits the freedom of the researchers because there are certain topics that are not allowed to be discussed. Another problem with using students is that the participants are selected and forced to participate in the study and this increases the risk of getting false information.

To summarize, researchers might face problems with the audience. These problems include unwillingness on the part of the audience to participate in scientific studies and the difficulty encountered in trying to reach the audience through scientific or probability sampling.

The Researchers

The academic community in Saudi Arabia is still new and small. Researchers have not established themselves as either a political or social group. Scholars and researchers are still far from being influential in politics or decision-making situations. The researchers' weak presence is illustrated in the scant amount of literature available about the mass media in the kingdom. The only real hope for increasing media research came after the opening of

the Mass Media Department at King Saud University in the late 1970s. An indication of the importance of that development is that most of the studies that have been done on Saudi Arabian media were done by students from that department.

Considering the severe shortage of reliable studies, it is not an easy task to evaluate the performance of the Saudi media. In general, there are two types of studies that deal with the Saudi media. One consists of academic dissertations and the other of audience surveys that have been done by companies and agencies. The first academic dissertation on Saudi Arabian media was done by Abdulraman Shobaili in 1971 at Ohio State University.[56] In this dissertation, Shobaili did a historical and analytical study of broadcasting and the press in Saudi Arabia. The scope of the study was so wide that it dealt with all aspects of the print and electronic mass media in Saudi Arabia. Most of the studies that followed were historical or qualitative, in part because of the difficulties involved in doing quantitative studies such as selecting the sample and in obtaining an adequate response rate.

The following is a discussion of some of the conclusions of studies done on the Saudi Arabian mass media.

Conclusions Drawn from Studies on the

Saudi Arabian Mass Media

Media Impact

Al-Attibi, a Saudi researcher who did his dissertation on media

consumption in Saudi Arabia, found in 1985 that personal communication was the best satisfier of audiences' affective needs including entertainment and escapist needs. Mass media were found to gratify cognitive/information needs.[57] In another study, Kazan in 1987 found that the local media correlated negatively with modernity.[58] He suggested that the communication policies controlling the media and the value climates conveyed by the latter, rather than media per se, might be the decisive factors in determining media's impact.

Alzahrani, in a study that attempted to investigate the impact of television viewing on the academic achievement of male high school students in Saudi Arabia, found that there was no association between the amount of time spent viewing television and academic achievement.[59] The study did not give an explanation of why television did not appear to have an impact on levels of achievement. There might be several possible explanations for that, some of which could be related to the medium itself and some to the content of the media. For example, the results of the study might be explained by the high percentage of cultural and educational programming on Saudi television.

Media Programming

In a study about television programming, Shaikh found that the percentage of imported programs was much higher than local programs (63% versus 37% of transmission).[60] Also, the United States was the major supplier of all imported English programs, while Egypt was the second major supplier

of Arabic programs after Saudi Arabia itself. Shaikh found that the quality, price and language of programs influenced decisions to import various programs, whereas popularity, personal taste, and the decision maker's educational background and training abroad did not influence their decision to import certain programs.

In another study, Beayeyz found that Saudi television has adopted a conservative policy that is revealed in the types and sources of its programs because of pressure from religious leaders who enjoy a great deal of sociopolitical influence.[61]

About program preferences, Boyd and Najai found that 40.5% of respondents preferred programs from other Arab countries and 36% preferred Western programs. Only 23.6% of the respondents said they preferred locally produced shows.[62] In a related study, Merdad encouraged the Saudi television network to increase local television production against the intrusion of imported programs.[63]

Television Advertising

One of the new developments in Saudi television is the introduction of advertising which started in the mid-1980s. This move might be motivated by two factors. One may be an effort to find new sources of funding. The other could be a move to facilitate the private sector with an attractive means of advertising in order to promote locally manufactured products. Alfordi did an historical study on advertising in Saudi television in which he traced its

development from its first stages up to the time of his study.[64] However, since

commercial advertising is a new development, its impact upon television itself

and upon the audience is possibly limited. More studies are needed to

evaluate this aspect of the television service in Saudi Arabia.

Media Penetration

In general, radio and television have a very high penetration rate in

Saudi Arabia. In 1985, there were 3,700 radio receivers in use per thousand

people and 3,100 television receivers per thousand in use.[65] The present

transmission networks, which consist of approximately 85 transmitting and

relay stations, cover about 90% of the kingdom's populated areas.[66] The radio

networks cover a wider area because of the different types of transmission

used.

Government and the Mass Media

It was mentioned earlier in this study that the mass media in Saudi

Arabia are owned and operated by the government. The Ministry of

Information which is in charge of running these media has strict guidelines for

both radio and television. These guidelines are an attempt by the government

to make certain that both media serve the development processes and help

modernize the society without doing any harm to the social and political

systems. Under these guidelines the mass media are restricted from criticizing

any political or social aspects of society. In such circumstances, the mass

media are reinforcing the status quo of the society. This media tendency is manifested in the guidelines established for censoring programs. The following are prohibited on Saudi mass media:

1. Scenes which arouse sexual excitement.

2. Women who appear indecently dressed, in dance scenes, or in scenes which show overt acts of love.

3. Women who appear in athletic games or sports.

4. Alcoholic drinking or anything connected with drinking.

5. Derogatory references to any of the "Heavenly Religions."

6. Treatment of other countries with praise, satire, or contempt.

7. References to Zionism.

8. Material meant to expose the monarchy.

9. All immoral scenes.

10. References to betting or gambling.

11. Excessive violence.[67]

These restrictions that are imposed on the content of the mass media could severely limit the choices of programming and might lead to making the mass media less attractive to the audiences.

Two of the main functions of the mass media are informing and entertaining the audience. With such strict guidelines, these functions could be disabled. In terms of the information function, the news editors or gatekeepers in the mass media have to make certain that the newscasts conform to the political and social systems of the country.

Hudson and Swindel found in their study of television news in Saudi Arabia that stories related to the royal family were broadcast more frequently than stories on any other subject and that Islam was the only religious subject discussed. Also, they found that there was no Saudi violence portrayed on the newscasts.[68] This sensitivity towards covering certain subjects and issues could have a negative impact on the credibility of radio and television broadcasts.

There have been no serious investigations into the credibility of the Saudi mass media, but there are two things that could be taken as indications of the low credibility of the Saudi mass media. First, there are several unscientific surveys that have been done for international radio systems such as the British Broadcasting Corporation and Voice of America, which indicate that a large percentage of Saudi citizens seek news and information from international radio stations. Another indication of low credibility is the popularity of short-wave radio. Although there are no official figures on the exact number of short-wave radio receivers in use, almost all radio receivers, including car radios, that are on the market in Saudi Arabia have short-wave reception capabilities, something that is not common in many countries including the United States.

The other function of the media that might be disabled by the strict guidelines imposed in Saudi Arabia is the entertainment function. Here, too, there is no scientific evidence to back up this assumption, but from general observation it is possible to assume that the entertainment capability of the

mass media has not been utilized to its full potential. Possible reasons for this might be the strict political, social, and religious restrictions imposed on all kinds of programming.

Alvarado suggested that the popularity of video cassette recorders in Saudi Arabia came about as a result of the limited and controlled entertainment programs available through the mass media in the country.[69]

The main assumption of this study is that the strict control over the mass media in Saudi Arabia has made the media less attractive to the audience. In other words, the audience might not be satisfied with the quality of the media programming and this may lead to the audience seeking other means to satisfy their communication needs.

Harold Innis in his book, The Basis of Communication, said that when a monopoly of knowledge prevails, this very situation stimulates the need and invention of countering media.[70] This theory might explain the phenomenal popularity of certain small media in Saudi Arabia especially video cassette recorders.

These small media might provide the audience with more choice and freedom over what they are watching and listening to on radio and television. In turn, these small media could force some changes to the existing mass media.

The remainder of this chapter will focus on two of these small media: audio tapes and video cassette recorders. The discussion will include the development of these media, some possible reasons for their popularity, and

their role in Saudi Arabian society.

Video Cassette Recorders

Video cassette recorders have become so popular in Saudi Arabia that a former Saudi Arabian minister referred to his country as the first videotape society.[71] The story of video cassette recorders in Saudi Arabia started when a local agent for Sony imported the three-quarter inch U-Matic video tape machines.[72] By the mid 1970s the country became affluent as a result of the increase in oil prices. As a consequence of the sudden and sharp increase in per capita income, more and more people could afford to buy U-Matic machines. This new medium, however, did not reach a high popularity point until the late 1970s, with the introduction of half-inch Beta and VHS cassette recorders.

The Diffusion of Video Cassette Recorders

In his book, The Diffusion of Innovation, Rogers specified five adopter categories classifying individuals in their rate of adoption of an innovation:

1. Innovators — venturesome, eager to try new ideas, more cosmopolitan relationships than their peers.

2. Early adopters — respectable localities, usually highest degree of opinion leadership within the social system.

3. Early majority — deliberate, interact frequently with their peers but seldom hold leadership positions.

4. Late majority — skeptical, often adopt innovation because of economic necessity or increasing network pressure.

5.   Laggards — traditionalists, most local, many are near-isolates, point of reference in the past.[73]

Is very useful to use these categories to illustrate the diffusion of video cassette recorders in Saudi Arabian society. It was mentioned earlier that the first video cassette recorder was imported in 1972 and that was the three-inch U-Matic model from Sony. At the U-Matic stage, video cassette recorders were probably acquired by the elite and the wealthiest groups in society. Rogers called these groups innovators and early adopters. The U-Matic penetration was limited to these groups because of several possible reasons:

1.   The cost of the U-Matic was high. At the beginning, a U-Matic machine cost somewhere between five and seven thousand dollars, which was a lot more than the average person could afford.

2.   Programming materials for video cassette recorders was scarce. Most of the material at that time was obtained from Western firms with government contracts who used the video cassette recorders for employee recreation and from large hotels who needed programming for internal cable systems. The scarcity of programming materials was reflected in the expensive rate charged for renting videotapes. For example, renting a movie for a week cost between twenty and thirty dollars. It is interesting to note that renting was done on a weekly rather than on a daily basis. This might indicate two things; scarcity of available materials and the limited penetration of video cassette recorders at

that time.

The Beta and VHS Explosion

The video cassette recorder became a very popular medium when the Beta and later the VHS format were introduced to the Saudi Arabian market in the late 1970s. In a matter of months the new Beta and VHS formats were selling at a remarkable rate. A survey in 1983 revealed that 75% of those who owned a television set acquired video cassette recorders.[74]

With this high penetration rate, it is possible to say that both the early majority and the late majority has acquired this new innovation. According to Rogers, the early majority are those who are socially active but seldom hold leadership positions. In Saudi Arabian society the upper middle class could be viewed as what Rogers called the early majority, while the lower middle class could resemble the late majority. Little is known about the Saudi social system and even that little could not provide any better understanding of a society that is experiencing a tremendous transition. Therefore, it is difficult to detect a clear cut difference between the various segments of society.

Rogers defined the late majority as a skeptical group who often adopt an innovation because of economic necessity or increasing network pressure. Considering the traditional characteristics that Saudi Arabian society has, such as the importance of kinship, it is possible that many Saudi's acquired video cassette recorders because of family or peer pressure. Although there is no empirical evidence to support this assumption, many casual observations

indicate the importance of kinship and family relations in the decision to adopt any new innovation. One example of this is the lifestyle of Saudi families. Most people live within extended family groups where two generations or more live in the same house. In such circumstances, the decision to bring anything new into the house can be done only with the approval of the entire family, especially that of the elder members.

Also, it is worth noting that in Saudi society most of the social interactions take place in the form of family or kinship unions. The importance of kinship networks in social communication might be realized from two things: first, the emphasis of the rule of the family in the society; second, the lack of alternative means of social interaction such as social clubs or movie theaters which are both prohibited by law. In other words, the family and kinship network probably provides the single most important mode of social communication.

In 1988 Abuzinada found that video cassette recorders were a very popular medium in Saudi Arabia. Almost all of the subjects interviewed reported that they owned a unit.[75] Of the 280 individuals who constituted the sample, only 14 indicated that they did not own a video cassette recorder. As indicated by Abuzinada, between 1983 and 1988, the number of video cassette recorders in use increased. However, it is difficult to pinpoint exactly how great that increase was. It could also be observed that the rate of penetration was significantly slower than it was immediately following the introduction of the Beta and VHS systems.

Between the late 1970s and 1983, the penetration rate jumped from almost zero to 75% among television owners. Comparing this penetration rate to the penetration rate in the United States during the same period, it is revealed that the diffusion of video cassette recorders in Saudi Arabia was remarkably fast. In the United Stated the video cassette recorder penetration rate jumped from 2.5% of households in 1980 to 7.5% in 1983.[76]

<u>Reasons for the Popularity of Video Cassette</u>

<u>Recorders</u>

The phenomenal success of video cassette recorders in Saudi Arabia prompted some researchers to explain why it happened. For example, Boyd and Adwan suggested that the limited television programming and government control were two important factors that significantly contributed to the video cassette recorder's popularity.[77]

In the diffusion of innovation theory, Rogers categorized the characteristics of an innovation that affect its rate of adoption as follows:

1. Relative advantage — the degree to which an innovation is perceived as better than the idea it supersedes.

2. Compatibility — the degree to which an innovation is perceived as being consistent with existing values, past experiences, and the needs of potential adopters.

3. Complexity — the degree to which an innovation is perceived as difficult to understand and use.

4. Triability — the degree to which an innovation may be experimented with on a limited basis.

5. Observability — the degree to which the results of an innovation

are visible to others.[78]

It might be helpful to use these categories to analyze the diffusion of video cassette recorders in Saudi Arabia:

1. Relative advantage — in general, video cassette recorders face competition from two main media, television and movie theaters. In Saudi Arabia, however, competition from television is limited while competition from movie theaters is non-existent. As mentioned earlier, Boyd and Adwan argued that governmental control and the limited programming available on television left people predisposed to purchasing video cassette recorders in order to satisfy their viewing tastes.[79] Movie theaters are strictly prohibited in Saudi Arabia. It is worth noting that a cinema is not prohibited by itself, but public cinemas are prohibited. Before the advent of the video cassette recorders, there were stores in Saudi Arabian major cities where it was possible to rent movies in 16mm film format and projectors. However, this was very expensive and involved a lot of complexity. After the introduction of video cassette recorders these stores ceased to operate. The video cassette recorder was perceived as better and more convenient than the 16mm film and projector.

2. Compatibility — in general, the video cassette recorder was seen as a new innovation that was probably an alternative or maybe a complement to the television service which was already consistent

with the social values and norms. So, the video cassette recorder was an innovation in the sense that it was a new medium, but in another sense it was just an extension of an old medium, television.

3. Complexity – comparing video cassette recorders with 16mm projectors makes the former look easy and convenient to operate. From this angle, video cassette recorders might be seen as better than the alternative which is the 16mm projector. So, the complexity consideration was probably another plus for video cassette recorders.

4. Triability – with the service of renting both the video cassette recorders and tapes, potential adopters could try this new innovation on a limited basis. This aspect could be viewed as another plus for video cassette recorders.

5. Observability – usually, people acquire video cassette recorders to satisfy certain communication needs, and with the powerful personal communication that exists in Saudi society, many new adopters introduce and recommend this new novelty to others who have similar needs.

Taking all these considerations together might explain the phenomenal diffusion of video cassette recorders in Saudi Arabia. According to the diffusion of innovation theory, innovations that are perceived by receivers as having greater relative advantage, compatibility, triability, observability and less

complexity will be adopted more rapidly than other innovations.[80] As

discussed earlier, theoretically, in all aspects the video cassette recorders had

the potential to be a popular medium in Saudi Arabia. This assumption is

derived from casual observation and not from solid scientific evidence.

The Impact of Video Cassette Recorders

According to Harold Inns, the introduction of a new medium of

communication into a social order has the potential to wield profound psychic

and dislocating institutional effects on the culture in which is appears.[81] Berko

suggested that in much the same way as the Guttenberg press undermined

the authority of the papacy in medieval dynasties by stealing the church's

monopoly of language, the convergence of communications and computation

technologies and the availability of portable and small format video production

equipment have challenged the monopoly of knowledge and production

maintained by such institutions as broadcast television, cinema, and

educational institutions.[82]

Theoretically, the advent of a new communication medium will have an

impact on the existing communication media and on society as a whole. As

far as the impact of the video cassette recorder on Saudi Arabia is concerned,

although changes were acknowledged by some researchers, more studies are

needed in order to know exactly the strength and scope of the change that

was brought about by the advent of the video cassette recorder.

Impact on the Mass Media. The major impact of video cassette

recorders on the mass media was that people tended to spend less time with the national mass media once they acquired video cassette recorders. Bakhaider, who did a study about the diffusion of video cassette recorders in Saudi Arabia in 1981, found that 73% of a sample taken in Jidda, the second largest city in Saudi Arabia, watched less Saudi television after acquiring video cassette recorders. He concluded that the video cassette recorder has had a negative influence on the Saudi television network because it has detracted from the latter's public following, the amount of time it is viewed, and its economic importance.[83]

This negative impact might have the potential to force some kind of change in television programming and policies in Saudi Arabia. One possible positive impact of video cassette recorders on television is that it might provide more television employees with a clearer picture of viewers' tastes in programming. For example, because wrestling programs were in great demand in video stores, the television network has expanded the amount of time given to this type of program. So, video stores might provide the national television system with important feedback from the public.

Impact on Society. In 1988 Abuzinada found that video cassette recorders were affecting the Saudi family lifestyle by generating conflict between family members over the kind of programs to be viewed and by exposing the traditional Saudi culture to more liberal programs than were available on other Saudi media.[84] One example of such liberal programs is the pornographic material which is believed to be widely available despite strict

banning of such material. A study conducted in neighboring Kuwait, where society is very similar to that of Saudi Arabia in terms of social and media environments, found that 18.5% of the respondents to a survey said they watched video material for the sexual thrills. This study was conducted in 1985 by the Arab Center for Audience Research. The results of this study do not mean that the material was necessarily pornographic, but it indicates that movies with sexual themes are popular and have a potentially great negative effect on the general values of society.[85]

Audiotapes

The audiotape is another important modern small medium in Saudi Arabia. It is probably the oldest of the modern small media. It is not known exactly when it made its first appearance in the country or how popular it currently is.

As in most parts of the world, audiotapes in Saudi Arabia are closely associated with music. Audiotapes have been considered merely as a mode of disseminating songs and music. They are in demand when music is in demand and they flourish whenever music flourishes since their main use is for conveying music. In this sense, the audiotape in Saudi Arabia was, in general, a single purpose medium.

Because of its close linkage to the music industry, the audiotape has never been studied as a medium per se. For example, no single study has been found that deals with this medium and its impact on individuals or on

society. Possibly, it was taken for granted by government officials and researchers that this medium was meant for music only and no more than that. Apart from MacLuhan's approach that "the medium is the message," the impact of the audiotape was probably that of the music and the lyrics.

In the same way that video cassette recorders came to broaden the choices of television viewers, audiotapes are used to broaden the choices available to radio listeners. It is possible that part of the audiotape's popularity could be attributed to the limited music programming available on the Saudi Arabian government controlled radio.

The extent of penetration of audiotapes in Saudi Arabia is not known. This could be for two main reasons. First, there is a lack of copyright laws in the country. All record stores have copying machines with which they copy tapes and then sell these copies. This procedure makes it impossible to detect how many tapes are being used, except by counting the number of blank tapes that have been sold in the country. Even by so doing, it is impossible to tell how many of these blank tapes are actually being used for copying purposes or what type of material these tapes record. Second, studies or surveys which investigate the penetration of audiotapes are literally non-existent.

Although it is difficult to accurately assess the level of penetration of this medium, several things indicate that it has a high level of penetration. The government customs records show that in 1989 alone the country imported 40 million dollars worth of radios and cassette players.[86] In addition, the Ministry

of Information records show that in 1990 there were 3,735 record stores in Saudi Arabia.[87] It may also be noted that almost all cars have cassette players and this may reflect the importance of this medium.

The Islamization of Audiotapes

When audiotapes were being used to communicate songs and music they did not have much political or social significance. Probably the only significance they had was in relation to the music industry in the country. This small medium suddenly became important when some religious leaders started to use it as a political and social forum.

Starting from the early 1980s, audiotapes began to experience a major trend in which their use shifted from a means of conveying music to the communication of religious and political messages. A clear indication of this trend is the sharply growing numbers of record stores that sell only religious tapes. The records of the Ministry of Information, which licenses the record stores, show that in 1990 there were 313 religious record stores in Saudi Arabia, most of them located in the big cities.[88]

The use of audiotapes for political and religious purposes is not new in that part of the world. The Iranian Revolution is sometimes called the "Audiotape Revolution" because of the role this small medium played in that revolution. Serberny, in his study on the power of traditional communication in the Iranian Revolution, argued that the small media such as audiotapes proved to be more credible, more participatory and a better source of collective

identity than the mass media during the period prior to the revolution.[89]

As an indication of this trend of using audiotapes for political and religious purposes, a reporter for The Washington Post in Saudi Arabia wrote describing a growing "audiotape war" in which news reports from the West and from other Arab countries, normally blocked by Saudi Arabian censors, were being recorded on audiotapes and widely circulated as anti-regime speeches by prominent Saudi clerics and educators.[90]

Summary

This chapter provided a background on the development of the mass media in Saudi Arabia and discussed some possible reasons behind the government's expansion of the role of the mass media in society. An attempt was made to evaluate the performance of the mass media with a discussion on some of the difficulties involved in making such an evaluation such as governmental restrictions on media research, the apparent lack of enthusiasm and determination on the part of the researchers, and the apparent unwillingness of the audiences to participate in media research. The role of the modern small media was discussed, focusing on two such media: video cassette recorders and audiotapes.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

General

One of the important areas in communication research is developmental communications in which media scholars try to analyze and understand the complex relationship between development and the media. According to Everett Rogers, scholarly attention to the role of the media in the development process started with the launch of two important books; Daniel Lerner's The Passing of the Traditional Society (1958) and Wilbur Schramm's Mass Media and National Development (1964).

During the 1950s and 1960s, it was believed that the mass media had a tremendous role in determining whether or not any development plan would succeed. Scholars such as Schramm, Lerner and others stressed the importance of the mass media in attaining any development goal. Schramm argued that the mass media were expected to teach new skills, from literacy to agriculture to hygiene to repairing a motor car, and act as multipliers of resources and knowledge. As a result of this emphasis on the importance of the mass media, many of Third World countries were led to believe that the mass media were the key to modernization and prosperity.

Unfortunately, by the 1970s, many Third World countries started to realize that they overestimated the importance of the mass media. The performance of the mass media in most of these nations did not live up to their expectations. As a result of this, some scholars moved away from the assumption that the mass media could multiply efforts and, therefore, promote rapid economic growth and stable democracy, to one that argued for a more modest role for the mass media.

Summary and Conclusions

One of the assumptions of this study was that the mass media in some of the Third World countries did not play an important role in the development process. A discussion of this assumption was presented in Chapters II and III. After several examples from Third World countries, the discussion suggested that there might be several possible reasons for the poor performance of the mass media in such countries, some of which are of a political, social or economic nature. For example, some believe that the problem with the mass media in Third World countries is a political one. They argue that military dictatorships in Latin America, Africa, and Asia abuse the mass media by stressing their propaganda role and decreasing the public's trust in them.

Another assumption of this study was that the small media is growing in importance in some Third World countries. The discussion of this assumption presented in Chapter II, was divided into two parts. One part dealt with the traditional small media and the other with the modern small media.

In many Third World countries there are three important types of traditional small media. These are religious sermons, folklore, and social events and gatherings. There may be some overlapping between these three categories but in general each one of them has a different function and fulfills different needs in society. People usually seek religious sermons for spiritual fulfillment. Usually this medium resists change and, by its nature, it tries to reinforce the status quo. Folklore is another important medium for social communication in many Third World countries. Its function in society is as a medium for passing on values, norms, and cultural heritage from generation to generation. The major difference that distinguishes folklore from religious sermons is that the former is usually sought for entertainment fulfillment. The last traditional small media discussed in this study was social events and gatherings. In many Third World countries, especially in the Arab World where verbal communication is prevalent, interpersonal communication plays an important role in social interactions.

The other type of small media discussed in this study was the modern small media. Any modern novelty that can be utilized as a channel of communication within the social system can be described as a modern small medium. Examples of such media are video cassette recorders, audiotapes, photocopying machines, facsimile machines, telephone lines, etc. The discussion of these types of small media concluded that there is evidence to support the assumption that these media are flourishing and expanding in some Third World countries. Some of this evidence comes from several

studies on the role of the small media in the Iranian Revolution, which some call the audiotape revolution. The findings of these studies suggested that the small media proved to be more powerful and more efficient than the mass media during the pre-revolution era. Also, evidence provided by studies done in Saudi Arabia supported that assumption. Studies on the role of video cassette recorders in Saudi Arabia indicated that this small medium is very popular there.

Some general conclusions could be drawn from the discussion and analysis of the role of the small media in some Third World countries:

1. Small media play a very important role in many Third World countries and they have significant potential for political and social communication in such countries.

2. In spite of their importance, the small media seems to have been neglected by scholars and researchers who focus solely on the prestigious and complex mass media.

3. In certain areas, such as preserving local culture and in small community interactions, the small media seems to be more efficient and more fulfilling than the mass media.

4. The small media could be utilized effectively to advance development plans and to modernize society, as illustrated in the potentiality of using folklore as a channel for communicating development and modernization ideas to the public.

5. Finally, by acknowledging the importance of both the mass

media and small media, the best way to advance development

plans might be through the utilization of both media, making

each compliment the other.

For a close-up look at the media and the development dilemma in Third

World countries, Saudi Arabia was taken as a study case. First there was a

general discussion on the media environment in Saudi Arabia and the role of

the modern mass media in that country.

The modern mass media in Saudi Arabia are, to a certain extent, a

recent phenomenon. The move by the Saudi government to utilize the mass

media was motivated by several factors including prestigious, political,

psychological, social and educational reasons.

The discussion then moved to evaluate the performance of the mass

media in Saudi Arabia. The major obstacle of doing such an evaluation was

the lack of available scientific and credible studies on the mass media in Saudi

Arabia. The blame for this lack of scientific research might be shared, as

suggested in Chapter III, by the government, researchers, and the audiences.

Each of these three entities contributed in varying degrees to the absence of

credible media studies.

Certain areas of the Saudi mass media where analyzed with the help of

the available related literature. Such areas included media impact, media

programming, media penetration, and advertising in the mass media.

The last section of the study was devoted to the role of two modern

small media in Saudi Arabia. The two media examined were video cassette

recorders and audiotapes. Some general conclusions drawn from this study were as follows:

1. Video cassette recorders are very popular in Saudi Arabia, with a penetration rate of 80% of all television set owners.

2. The diffusion of video cassette recorders in Saudi Arabia was very rapid when compared to other countries, with the exception of other Arabian Gulf States which have a lot of resemblance with the situation in Saudi Arabia.

3. Some studies indicated that dissatisfaction with what is available on the mass media was the main reason why many people in Saudi Arabia purchased video cassette recorders.

4. Some studies found that the video cassette recorder had a negative impact on the national television network. People seemed to spend less time viewing the national television stations once they acquired a video cassette recorder.

5. In general, video cassette recorders are sought for entertainment fulfillment.

6. Some studies indicated that the use video cassette recorders have social consequences. One study found that video cassette recorders were affecting the Saudi family lifestyle by generating conflict between family members over the type of programs to be viewed and by exposing the traditional Saudi culture to more liberal programs than were available on other Saudi media.

7.   The audiotape, which is another popular small media in Saudi Arabia, is experiencing a major shift in its usage. Traditionally, the audiotape were considered as a music medium because it is primarily used to convey music and songs to listeners. However, a significant shift is taking place in Saudi Arabia in which audiotapes are being utilized for other purposes. More and more, people are now using audiotapes as a channel of communication for religious, social, and political messages. This trend is evident in the growing number of record stores that specialize in religious materials only. Growing from none in 1980, there are now approximately 313 such stores in Saudi Arabia.

Recommendations

General

One of the major problems in implementing any development plan is how to convey the plan to the public and how to make the public understand and believe in the plan. This problem has two stages. The first stage is technical in nature and deals with how to convey the development messages and which medium to use. The other stage deals with the question of how to make the public understand and believe in the development plan. By looking at development communication in this way it becomes obvious that in order to communicate development messages to the public effectively and successfully, one must have an appropriate medium to convey the messages

and one must maintain a degree of persuasion and credibility. Selecting the right medium and being persuasive and trustworthy are two very important requirements not only in development communication but in any communication process.

Recommendations for More Effective Utilization
of the Mass Media in Saudi Arabia

The following are some recommendations which were derived from the discussions and analysis in this study. These recommendations aim to enhance the mass media environment in Saudi Arabia.

Enhance the Image and Reputation of the Mass Media. The Mass media lives as long as they are credible. Once the mass media loses credibility, they lose their audience. The mass media, as they exist in Saudi Arabia, do not benefit the government or the public. Because of the strict governmental controls that are enforced upon on the mass media, the public's trust in them is decreased and the mass media is rendered ineffective. So, for that reason, the government should turn the mass media over to the private sector and abandon censoring them, at least overtly. By doing so, the mass media might regain some credibility and could then be more efficient and effective for both the government and the public.

Utilize Some Type of Feedback Mechanism. The mass media do not operate from an ivory tower. If credibility is the oxygen for the existence of the

mass media, getting the right feedback is the water. Both are vital to healthy mass media. For that reason, the Saudi mass media must adopt some means of getting feedback from their audiences. One way of doing so is by establishing a department of audience research for each mass medium. Such departments could carry the burden of finding out what the audience want to hear and see. It is difficult to imagine a national television network operating for years on the assumption that people are watching without knowing with certainty that they are. With the advent of new communication technologies such as satellites, video cassette recorders, and small transistors, the competition for audience attention requires a credible source of feedback from the audience.

Provide Appealing and Attractive Programming. Once the mass media build a credible reputation and have reliable feedback from the audience, they will face the third and final challenge, programming. The problem with programming in Saudi Arabia and in many other Third World countries stems from finding the perfect mix of what the audiences want and what they need. Programming should be both entertaining and useful. One way to enhance programming quality is by hiring talented writers, producers and directors and giving them the incentives to stay and work. The best example of this hiring system is in commercial television in the United States where talent and creativity are the basis for setting salaries. Another way of enhancing the programming quality is by making programming decisions independent from the influence of political or religious groups.

These recommendations could help the mass media to revive and flourish. But if the current situation continues, the mass media in Saudi Arabia will lose more and more of its audience and people will continue to seek other means to satisfy their communication and entertainment needs. It is the opinion of this researcher that, unless the mass media react to the changes in society, especially the utilization of many forms of small media by the public, the use of these small media will continue to expand and flourish as a consequence of public demand.

Recommendations for Further Research

The focus of this study was the role of the small media in Third World countries, especially in Saudi Arabia. The small media, as indicated earlier, have been neglected by scholars and researchers. It may have been the Iranian Revolution in 1979 that attracted attention to the role of the small media. Since then, and amount of literature about the small media has been expanding but there is still a lot of work and research needed in order to have a better understanding of the role and impact of such media. This study was done with a limited amount of information because this is a new area of study. In general, there are three types of studies needed to enhance our understanding of the small media:

1. Studies to identify the small media. Studies could be done by conducting surveys to find out if there are any changes in the media habit in society such as where people get their information

and how they spend their leisure time. By doing such studies, new and emerging media trends would be identified.

2. In-depth studies on the small media. Once a small medium has been identified, researchers should do an in-depth study of this medium in order to determine accurately its role and impact on society and on other media.

3. Trend analysis. In order to put the findings of in-depth studies into the correct perspective, a trend analysis must be conducted. The trend analysis would answer such questions as why and to what extent the medium is important.

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