

WEDNESDAY PM WORKSHOP # 6: THE MEDIA IN DEVELOPMENT

Workshop Session	The Media in Development
Names of presenters	Siok Sian Pek-Dorji; Paul Shore; John de Graaf
Name of rapporteur	Krista Hall

PRESENTER 1

Presenter #1 Siok Sian Pek-Dorji, Journalist and Board Member of the Bhutan Broadcasting Service Corporation, Bhutan
Title of Presentation: N/A (presentation about media in Bhutan)
The <u>Innovative Practice or Strategy</u> that the speaker is presenting. The mandate of Bhutanese media is to inform citizens about issues, programs and ideas that will positively influence their lives. Media aim to advance society's positive development.
The " <u>Mainstream Practice</u> " the speaker says their strategy is an alternative to. Mass media around the world is driven by advertising; advertisers have great influence over programming and the development of new stations and networks. The majority of mass media today are driven by commercialism and selling ideas to a broad audience, much of which may not result, or assist, in promoting the values and wellbeing of societies. At its worst, mass media messages result in the degradation of traditional values and the promotion of negative behaviours.
The <u>Alternative Vision</u> presented by the speaker (i.e. this innovative practice contributes to this vision) Media should promote the positive development of societies. Indigenous media in Bhutan has played an important role in people's development. Citizens are now more aware of family planning, children are better educated, and farmers can get reliable, and timely, information.

WEDNESDAY PM WORKSHOP # 6: THE MEDIA IN DEVELOPMENT

Success Factors: factors that the speaker attributes to the success of their innovative practice or strategy.

- Bhutan's strategy of gross national happiness is being implemented in all areas of government policy and sectors of society such as media. Indigenous media believe in advancing this vision and play a large role in putting this view into practice.
- Bhutan's lack of an advertising industry allows for the development of original programming that has a pro-development approach rather than the end goal being to increase consumption and materialism.
- The government conducted a survey to gauge people's attitudes about television. Results showed that most citizens feel positive about television and believe that they are now better educated, informed about issues that affect their lives, and that they are finally connected to the rest of the world.

Key Challenges: the main challenges the speaker identifies in implementing the strategy

- Globalization - The speaker identified globalization as the biggest challenge to achieving the vision of gross national happiness. Today Bhutan has access to many of the major global networks which air programs that may be negatively affecting people, particularly children, and influencing them to act in destructive ways. For example, some people believe if their children watch violent programs they will then become violent. Mass media influence has changed the culture in urban centres. Children are reading less and people are sleeping later. Global mass media promotes materialism as the main goal whereas Bhutan's media has always been focused on the wellbeing of people. The concepts of consumerism and materialism are very new to Bhutan. Bhutan's programming is also very simple and is based on existing, local, talent and experience as opposed to the global media's "slick" and expensively produced programs. There's a definite concern that children will be "sucked in" by the global media and will no longer value, or tune into, local programs.
- Shortage of funds and resources – It is difficult for Bhutanese media to create original, indigenous content. They are up against global networks which are funded by commercial advertising. The media in Bhutan is funded by the state government. There is very little commercial advertising in Bhutan because the advertising industry as we understand it in the West is non-existent.
- Media's ability to be autonomous – Due to the fact that media is funded by the government there is a concern, both among media professionals and citizens, that it could appear to be controlled and influenced by the state. Therefore, media professionals must do their best to report stories objectively and maintain credibility.
- Young media industry - Bhutan is one of the last countries to introduce television and many other forms of media. Mass print and radio development did not begin in Bhutan until the 1980's. Internet and television were not available until 1999; geographical and technological access to both of these mediums remains limited.
- Shortage of trained professionals – Due to the fact that their media industry is very young, the country lacks trained, and experienced, media professionals.
- Rumours – Before the introduction of mass media Bhutan was an oral society. Today, mass media are attempting to reach a broad audience that is geographically spread out and isolated. It takes two weeks for newspapers to reach some areas. Real-time television broadcasts only reach some places in the Western region. Other areas receive delayed broadcasts. Due to these factors, rumours develop and are spread before people receive messages from the media.

WEDNESDAY PM WORKSHOP # 6: THE MEDIA IN DEVELOPMENT

Overcoming Challenges: the ways the speaker says that challenges have been overcome.

- Bhutan recently drafted its first constitution. The State is now drafting media legislation to ensure the rights freedom of speech and the freedom of information are recognized and respected.
- Media literacy training for citizens, and training in gross national happiness for media professionals
- More funding for local media
- The government is putting in the foundation for publicly funded TV to deal with the proliferation of global media messages
- The government is putting in guidelines for all media so that the industry continues to cater to people's real needs

Moving from the Fringe to the Mainstream: the ways the speaker says this work will move from the fringe to the mainstream.

The speaker believes that if gross national happiness is to be the policy for Bhutan's development and for empowering people then local media must provide alternatives to the global trends of mass media. Local media must become as prevalent and influential as global media; indigenous media must generate, or be given, the resources and capacity to create content.

Lessons Learned from this Experience - lessons learned identified by the speaker

- Citizens everywhere need to rethink the world and our collective values. We need to put more spirituality into our media. We need to have a vision of wellbeing for our society. If we are producing media with this goal in mind then we have hope.
- Mass media can be used to promote, and advance, a country's positive development.

WEDNESDAY PM WORKSHOP # 6: THE MEDIA IN DEVELOPMENT

PRESENTER 2

Presenter #2 – Paul Shore, Canada Bureau Chief, Guerrilla News Network (GNN) Canada (www.gnn.tv)
Title of Presentation – No official title (spoke about alternative styles of media)
The <u>Innovative Practice or Strategy</u> that the speaker is presenting. <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Because their target audience is youth, GNN’s strategy is to use conventional advertising and marketing methods to disseminate messages and news stories that are not being broadcast, posted, or written in, mainstream media. These methods speak to youth. It’s what engages young people.➤ GNN is an open source network which means that users of the site can upload their own views, news, and media. Users of the site are not merely receivers of information but are in fact news generators.➤ GNN’s style is experimental because it is driven by people, not advertisers
The “ <u>Mainstream Practice</u> ” the speaker says their strategy is an alternative to. <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Mainstream media caters to, and is highly influenced by, advertisers and their goal of promoting consumerism and materialism. This has led to media homogeneity and leaves no room for diverse views or ideas.
The <u>Alternative Vision</u> presented by the speaker (i.e. this innovative practice contributes to this vision) <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ GNN was founded by Shore’s brother and employs six people full-time. It was developed as a reaction to the shortcomings of mainstream US media, mainly the narrow, one-sided view of news. Shore and his partners wanted to report stories that were not being covered by large media organizations; these are the stories that are considered to be too controversial and which often report, or expose, facts about corporations and governments.➤ GNN founders believe this is the future of news because it shows a diversity of views and empowers people to play a role in deciding what gets aired on television, posted on the internet, or written about in newspapers
<u>Success Factors</u> : factors that the speaker attributes to the success of their innovative practice or strategy. <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ There’s a large market for this type of media. They get 70,000 new users each day who log onto their website.➤ They do not accept advertising dollars so people can write and distribute any idea or view about any topic without being censored.

WEDNESDAY PM WORKSHOP # 6: THE MEDIA IN DEVELOPMENT

Key Challenges: the main challenges the speaker identifies in implementing the strategy

- Ability to reach a broad audience
- Ability to break into the mainstream media. Mainstream media are not receptive to views and ideas that counter the goals of advertisers
- Ability to secure funding for original programming. GNN is not sustainable because they do not accept advertising. Their advertising comes from word of mouth.

Overcoming Challenges: the ways the speaker says that challenges have been overcome

- GNN has been able to partially fund their project by selling and licensing the videos they produce to receptive television stations such as PBS, as well as to individuals and organizations.

Moving from the Fringe to the Mainstream: the ways the speaker says this work will move from the fringe to the mainstream.

- The speaker believes GNN must break into the television market in order to reach a larger audience and to become financially sustainable

Lessons Learned from this Experience - lessons learned identified by the speaker

- There's a danger in mixing advertising and news because it's difficult to remain objective
- There is definitely an existing, and growing, audience that is interested in this style of user-generated media
- If they do break into the mainstream TV market they will have to accept advertising but hopefully this won't influence the programming or lessen its value in any way.

WEDNESDAY PM WORKSHOP # 6: THE MEDIA IN DEVELOPMENT

PRESENTER 3

<p>Presenter #3 – John de Graaf, Producer and Author, Take Back your Time Foundation, Seattle, USA</p>
<p>Title of Presentation – No official title (spoke about his experience working as an independent film-maker, particularly about creating the film Affluenza which addresses the topic of over-consumption and the virus of affluence in America)</p>
<p>The <u>Innovative Practice or Strategy</u> that the speaker is presenting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Take a journalistic position - be unbiased so you attract as many people as possible➤ Research the topics and values that appeal to the audiences you are trying to reach – know your audience and how to engage and manipulate them into learning about both sides of the story➤ Talk to the other side – if you stand on one side of an issue also try and understand the beliefs and ideas of those who may be opposed. For example, while making Affluenza – a film that criticized America’s consumption society - the filmmakers engaged the religious right in America. It turned out that they were some of the strongest supporters of anti-materialism because they were concerned about family, family life and traditional values. By talking to what appeared to be the opposition, the filmmakers were able to engage them in the topic and garner their support
<p>The “<u>Mainstream Practice</u>” the speaker says their strategy is an alternative to.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Many “alternative” thinkers and media producers take the approach of being very direct, and one-sided in their reporting or pitching of stories to mainstream media. De Graaf feels this approach does not work as well as taking a journalistic approach and trying to report both sides of the argument, leaving it up to the audience to decide where they stand on an issue.
<p>The <u>Alternative Vision</u> presented by the speaker (i.e. this innovative practice contributes to this vision)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Media professionals can produce, and have aired and printed, news and documentary pieces about controversial issues if they are unbiased in their approach and they know their audiences
<p><u>Success Factors</u>: factors that the speaker attributes to the success of their innovative practice or strategy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ His unbiased approach has helped him get his message aired, or written about, in some mainstream media, increasing his ability to reach a broader audience.➤ Market research – knowing what engaged various groups of people helped him create a film that appealed to a broad audience➤ Be “stealth” in your intent to produce news or documentary pieces that promote socially conscious topics such as the environment, education or social justice – find a way to pitch stories about these topics without scaring away your audience, broadcasters or investors➤ Use humour – sugar helps the medicine go down➤ Generate a name that appeals to a large and diverse audience

WEDNESDAY PM WORKSHOP # 6: THE MEDIA IN DEVELOPMENT

Key Challenges: the main challenges the speaker identifies in implementing the strategy

- Ability to reach the mainstream media audiences
- Garnering the support of all of the major media organizations

Overcoming Challenges: the ways the speaker says that challenges have been overcome.

- Target both your supporters and the opposition and hope for the best – Affluenza has been aired national four times on PBS, seen by 4-million people in the US, and was then translated and broadcast in many other countries. It has also spawned a book.

Moving from the Fringe to the Mainstream: the ways the speaker says this work will move from the fringe to the mainstream.

- Try and appeal to the mainstream media by knowing what will engage them and their audiences

Lessons Learned from this Experience - lessons learned identified by the speaker

- Be sure to research your audience
- Media makers need to become better at reaching the broad, mainstream media

WEDNESDAY PM WORKSHOP # 6: THE MEDIA IN DEVELOPMENT

SUMMARY OF WORKSHOP DISCUSSION

Workshop Discussion: Summarise statements, questions, responses:	
Name	Comment
Not Provided	<p>Question: (for Paul Shore): What measure do you take to validate the credibility of sources?</p> <p>Answer: None. The community is the editor. It's like a forum. The stuff that ends up on the front page of the site is what is deemed credible by the users. It's a self-moderated site.</p>
Not Provided	<p>Question (for Paul Shore): Can you download the content off the GNN site?</p> <p>Answer: No. You can't take the movies home with you. You can buy the videos off the site</p>
Not Provided	<p>Question (for Siok Sian Pek-Dorji): How much coverage has there been on Bhutanese refugees?</p> <p>Answer: There has been some coverage on the local networks and in the newspapers.</p>
Not Provided	<p>Question (for Paul Shore): What do you see as the interface between the internet and television? What about fact that people see the internet as not as valid or credible?</p> <p>Answer: I don't think there will be a full convergence of internet and TV like we talk about. Maybe there will be something like a simulcast of TV and internet. As for the credibility of internet sources, people shouldn't believe everything they see or read on TV, the internet, or in newspapers. If we get on TV, our goal will be to attract different types of advertisers who support the ideas and issues that are being reported</p>
Not Provided	<p>Question (for Siok Sian Pek-Dorji): How has the introduction of internet influenced Bhutan?</p> <p>Answer: There are now 10,000 computers in Bhutan but most of them are located in institutions. More people are now "chatting". It's very useful, especially for technical questions and researching health matters. People go on forums when they have a health problem or such.</p>

WEDNESDAY PM WORKSHOP # 6: THE MEDIA IN DEVELOPMENT

Workshop Discussion: Summarise statements, questions, responses:	
Name	Comment
Not Provided	<p>Question (for Siok Sian Pek-Dorji): How much of the media content in Bhutan is locally produced?</p> <p>Answer: The content on the Bhutanese channel is largely Bhutanese. We have four hours on TV and 10 hours on radio. We want more.</p>
Not Provided	<p>Question (for John De Graaf): What is the cure for Affluenza? And how does the religious right relate to the cure you talked about?</p> <p>Answer to Question 1: 70 per cent of first movie was about the disease, while the second movie, “Escape from Affluenza”, featured those who were changing their lives and trying to live a more environmentally friendly, spiritual type of lifestyle. We did try and look at the treatment as well as disease.</p> <p>Answer to Question 2: Well the religious right is always talking about family values. From our point of view one of the things that tears families apart is materialism. So it was a good fit with the religious right. The religious right knows a lot more about the progressive folks then we do about them. They read everything about “liberalism” but we tend not to want to know as much about them.</p>
Not Provided	<p>Question: (for John De Graaf) Did you try and get your film aired beyond PBS in order to reach more people?</p> <p>Answer: It is true that PBS appeals to only a certain group, but those people then spread it beyond, at house parties or in other forums. We’d love to be on the larger network but that’s unlikely. What’s excited me about it is that the film is eight years old and people are still using it in public institutions and buying it based on personal interest.</p>
Not Provided	<p>Question (for all presenters): Would it ever be possible to design a specialized network that filter out the mainstream shows?</p> <p>Answer: (Paul Shore responds) Maybe. I think it’s a tall order. Cable carriers have a lot of the control. I have to go and make a deal with a carrier if I want to air certain programming. If I came with a consortium of progressive networks then we might have a chance but it costs a lot of money. To start a network is a multi-million dollar business. There’s very little money for originally programming because there are so many channels and the audience is very diffuse. There are more channels trying to appeal to the same amount of people.</p>

WEDNESDAY PM WORKSHOP # 6: THE MEDIA IN DEVELOPMENT

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Name	Comment
Not Provided	<p>Question (for John De Graaf) – Can you elaborate on type of market research you did?</p> <p>Answer: We didn't have a lot of money to fund all of this research but we did go out with a couple of pollsters we knew to gather existing research. We also examined focus group research. There was a lot out there to learn from. It clearly pointed us in the direction we should move in.</p> <p>(Paul responds) Any aspiring TV producers do not say environment, social justice or similar terms because they won't get any dollars. You have to pitch it in a way that speaks to the media decision-makers.</p>
Not Provided	<p>Question (for Siok Sian Pek-Dorji) To what extent does the government influence Bhutanese media?</p> <p>Answer: News about the King or government is usually the top of the news. But you have to remember that TV and mass media are still young in Bhutan and people are interested in where the royal family is going and what they are doing. Most people had never seen the leadership up front. So there is a fascination.</p>
Not Provided	<p>Question (Paul Shore asks Sion Sian Pek-Dorji) What kind of impact has global television had on Bhutanese children?</p> <p>Answer: There's no empirical study on this but I can say that educators are encouraging parents not to let their children watch particular programs like wrestling for example. I think at the end of the day media is up against materialism – money drives the world. You have to have the right sound bite when you're trying to sell a show or station.</p> <p>In Bhutan we have the Communication Authority which tries to guide media. It tells cable providers that they should have at least a minimum number of sports, news, etc channels. Most people want the lowest denominator, non-stop fashion TV, world wrestling. I think we have to make sure we're much more socially conscious and try and influence the media accordingly</p>
Not Provided	<p>Question (for all presenters): There is a market for originally programming so why isn't mainstream media catering to this interest?</p> <p>Answer (Paul Shore responds): I feel there is a hunger for what we are doing but broadcast executives don't like to take risks. The leftist media you're talking about has to be sought out. There's a lot less of it. I think it's a combination of people not wanting to take risks, especially because mainstream media is funded by ad dollars.</p> <p>(John De Graaf responds) I'm nervous about the divisiveness. We all want to watch and read what we already believe. I really worry that we're not coming together and talking to each other. The right and left are already so divided. We have a big job on our hands to find out how to reach a broad audience, not just the progressives.</p>

WEDNESDAY PM WORKSHOP # 6: THE MEDIA IN DEVELOPMENT

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Name	Comment
Not Provided	<p>Question (for John De Graaf): Would a film like Affluenza appeal to a broader network? Can you get this stuff on TV?</p> <p>Answer: I'd like to see this happen but right now it doesn't look promising.</p> <p>(Paul Shore responds): It's not an easy sell to put a show against advertising on mainstream TV because it's funded by advertisers.</p>
Not Provided	<p>Question: (for Paul Shore): What do you think about Google's advertising? Ads could correspond to what the stories are about?</p> <p>Answer: I would accept ads on my site but a couple of my partners may not agree. We're idealistic. We're against mixing news and advertising. We're only six people so we have very little resources to set that kind of thing up.</p>
Not Provided	<p>Question (for John De Graaf): Can we put stories about the conference on GNN?</p> <p>Answer: Yes it's already happening.</p>
Not Provided	<p>Question (for Sion Sian Pek-Dorji): If you start seeing the trend in Bhutan that gross national happiness is decreasing because of TV what will happen? Are you conscious about it?</p> <p>Answer: Yes, that's why we're promoting more programming from Bhutan. At the end of the day, you know it's hard. If we decided not to have TV then we'd always feel like we are deprived and less developed. The King agrees that people are much more educated now that TV has been introduced. Technology is moving along. We can't isolate ourselves. We have to teach people how to judge for themselves. We are in control. It's not the media that is in control.</p> <p>(Paul Shore responds): Media literacy is critical. That means being involved creating the media and to understand and see what goes into making videos for example. You then understand what goes into creating messages and how it influences our world. If children in Bhutan have the critical tools they need to understand what they watch and read then they should be okay.</p> <p>(Siok Sian Pek-Dorji responds): We also have to move away from having a TV in every room. TV is about family viewing time. Parents should be aware of what their children are watching.</p>

WEDNESDAY PM WORKSHOP # 6: THE MEDIA IN DEVELOPMENT

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Not Provided	<p>Question (for all presenters): What if there was a station dedicated to actually demonstrating the contrast between the two dichotomies? What if it aired both sides of the story, pros and cons of an issue?</p> <p>Answer (Paul Shore responds): We use musicians to score a lot of our films so we leverage celebrity to attract people.</p> <p>(Siok Sian Pek-Dorji responds): We should also ensure that our media makers understand what kind of world we want. If reporters produced stories with happiness and wellbeing in mind the message may be a lot different. Reporters also need to be inspired by new ideas and paradigms. We need to produce media makers who understand.</p> <p>(John De Graaf responds): I do think journalists do care but they have a different agenda than the bosses. They have to produce what sells.</p>