

American psychological association citation style media essay

[Media](#)



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The media may be defined as the different channels through which meanings are substantially reproduced and conveyed (Bazalgette, 2000, p. 21). The television, for example, is one such channel that reproduces meanings in audio-visual form to be transmitted to audiences via radio signals. Television broadcasting is subjected to certain policies in most countries, as with other media outlets like print and telecommunications. These policies regulate the media in the form of laws and regulations and codes of conduct. This essay will examine the purpose of media policy and its importance, citing examples from Malaysia. Cunningham and Miller (1994) define 'policy' as "the systematised statement of position or guide for action which is adopted by an organisation as an instrument for achieving desired results" (p. 22). It is a rule which guides organisations in carrying out their daily operations and decision making to achieve the preferred outcome. Media policy can be explained as rules that oversee the practices of the media industry. It is able to mould the "structures and practices" of the media (Garnham, 1998, p. 210) as it controls what can be produced and disseminated. In Malaysia, the Printing Presses and Publications Act 1984 regulates the "printing, importation, production, reproduction, publishing and distribution" of printed materials and audio recordings (p. 5-6). This is an example of direct regulation as the government is directly involved in regulating the media. The policy uses what Cunningham (2010) describes as the 'stick' in the "carrots and sticks" approach of government intervention as it bans certain types of materials from being published and circulated (p. 35). The opposite to that is 'carrots', in which the government offers incentives - subsidies or

extra funding - to organisations in the industry (Cunningham, 2010, p. 35). The government may also choose to deregulate or allow the industry to self-regulate. Garnham (1998) terms this as "negative" media policy as the government is not interfering with the industry's affairs (p. 210). One of the purposes of media policy, which works like a cultural policy, is to ensure the production of informational and quality media texts by the media industry (Cunningham & Miller, 1994, p. 23). Movies with overtly gory or raunchy scenes will be subjected to censorship and rated. Regulation on the media is important due to its powerful and influential nature. Meanings reproduced and disseminated in the form of media texts not only reflect reality, but may also potentially affect social culture and shape the way audiences perceive reality (McKee, 2002, p. 62). They may internalise a stereotypical or offensive media portrayal and regard reality in that manner. A few scenes in the Tamil film Vishwapooram were cut prior to its screening in Malaysian cinemas as it is said to portray Muslims as terrorists (Pragalath, 2013). Media policy is thus crucial in the socio-cultural sense as it looks into upholding "taste and decency", the individual's right to privacy, as well as curbing the spread of false news (Garnham, 1998, p. 212). This argument rings true in a multicultural country like Malaysia, as media texts produced and distributed should respect the culture and norms of different ethnic groups. Another reason why media policy is necessary is because the media work as an instrument for people to exercise their rights to freedom of expression (Garnham, 1998, p. 211). Regulations are needed to protect the public's right to free speech, and ensure that members of the public do not abuse that right by slandering and spreading false news. However, such policies

may be abused by some governments so that the media only circulate texts that direct the public to think in a certain way. As noted in Hamzah's (2009) article, the media in Malaysia is predominantly controlled by a number of political elites (p. 52). Various Malaysian newspapers and media companies are known to be owned by the ruling political parties, creating a lack of political pluralism in mainstream media in the country. Another purpose of media policy is to protect media consumers and it works in a way similar to consumer protection laws. The media, besides being a tool for communication and a platform for the exchange of ideas, is also an industry. As pointed out by Garnham (1998), the media are economic activities governed by market forces and are affected by the market structure they operate in (p. 211). Media firms are profit-driven organisations that obey the market forces: where there is a demand for goods and services that guarantees a high profit margin, the firms will supply. For example, the cost of establishing a wireless access point in rural areas may be higher than the revenue generated, thus discouraging telecommunications companies from supplying their services even when there is a demand. However, telecommunications service is considered a necessity that the public depend upon, thus media policy is needed to ensure media firms provide goods and services which are necessities for the public (Picard, 2011, p. 356). Media firms are scarce as the entry costs are high and the licenses are not given out liberally. Hence, media policy safeguards the interests of consumers, making sure the firms operate efficiently and do not abuse their status as natural monopolies (McQuail, 2010, pp. 236-237). There is a tendency for firms to exploit consumers as the situation is such that demand highly

outnumbers supply. Like organisations in other industries, media firms often seek to expand their operations and acquire assets in order to enjoy economies of scale. Media policy is also important in limiting media ownership to increase pluralism in media supply, allowing individuals to form opinions of their own (Picard, 2011, p. 361). Although there is an increase in alternative media outlets in Malaysia, the media market is still far from pluralism as there is still a high concentration of media ownership. Most members of the public are only exposed to media texts with similar messages, restricting their knowledge to what the large media firms want them to know. The purpose of media policy is to regulate the operations of the media industry and its production. Such regulation is necessary as the media is an industry with the ability to shape its audiences' perceptions of reality. However, as demonstrated in the examples above, there is a possibility that policy-makers may design policies to their advantage. Thus, there is a need to examine the purpose and presentation of a policy (Garnham, 1998, p. 210). In conclusion, the study of media policy is salient in order to obtain a richer understanding of its impact on society.(1, 083 words)