

REVIEWS

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Title : Communication Technology and the
Television Industry in Malaysia
Author : Juliana Abdul Wahab
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Introduction

The rapid development of technology in the media is surely one of the signs of progress in today's society. In view of these innovations in continuous evolution, the author of the article entitled: "Communication Technology and the Television Industry in Malaysia" discussed how technology helped transform the 'old' society to the 'new' society.

The dominant purpose of the article written by Juliana Abdul Wahab, PhD, is to assess the benefits of advances in communication technology that has taken place and continues to take place in the Malaysian television industry.

Using television as a cornerstone for the discussion, the author, outlined the history of television industry in Malaysia and how

it has evolved over time and developed into what it is today. This evaluation went through many years and the writer made comparison between the past and the present.

Summary

In summary, the author offered indepth knowledge of television industry in Malaysia. This includes chronologies of how the industry started with radio as the only broadcasting medium in Malaysia, back then.

Radio broadcasting dates back to 1921 when an engineer brought the first set into the country. Television broadcasting

commenced on 28 December 1963 and was broadcast in black and white. The government operated radio and television stations are under Radio Television Malaysia (RTM). RTM operates two nationwide television channels, TV1 and TV2.

According to the author who quoted the government mission statement, the two channels were to propagate government policies, promote Malaysian art and culture, and provide education, general information and entertainment (Ministry of Information Malaysia: 1997). In short, both state-run channels are used as a medium to support the dominant ideology and policies of the ruling elite and they remain until this very day.

From my point of view, the media in Malaysia are continuously evolving. There has been a gradual transformation from government-only media outlets, particularly for broadcasting, to include new privately-owned channels.

The Privatization Policy that was introduced in 1984 brought about the establishment of TV3. As a privately owned television station, TV3 came on air in mid 1985, almost a year after it was launched in June 1984. As Malaysia's first private television channel, essentially broke more than 20 years of government monopoly of the television medium.

As narrated by the author, on 1st of July 1995, a second private TV licence was accorded to a channel known as MetroVision. It experienced financial difficulties during the financial crisis and shut down in November 1999.

Not long after the establishment of MetroVision, the first subscription based television, Mega TV was launched in late 1995 before Malaysia introduced its first

satellite television, ASTRO (All Asia Television and Radio Company), in 1996. The service is subscription based, offering more than 50 channels, inclusive of five FM radio stations in digital.

The author also provides description which emphasis on the intensity of the development of the Malaysian television industry which saw the introduction of ntv7, launched on 7th April 1998. A fourth private television station known as Channel 9, commenced telecast on 9 September 2003.

Juliana also did not single out the fact that "Today, television in Malaysia is moving towards digitization, where all the data are converted into binary code numbers, and computer technology is used to support the system. The move towards the digitization of media system is very much driven by the idea of creating a society that is equipped with the so-called "Information Technology" (IT)".

Numerous facts also seemed to express the author's idea to explain that "communication technology would bring positive implications that would subsequently benefit Malaysian society as a whole".

Point of view:

In my opinion, telecommunication sector is actually supporting the robust growth of multimedia industry.

Generally, most people relate that telecommunication industry is a catalyst and the backbone for better services of broadcasting and communication services. There is no doubt that the developments of telecommunication industry and its technological infrastructure throughout

the world have influenced the robust evolution of information industry. Thus, such phenomenon has contributed to the introduction of various newly sophisticated related technologies.

Nowadays, especially in the sophisticated information age, the industry also bares responsibility to create a global information society throughout the world via integrated technological network.

By looking at the strategies and related information, it is clear that Malaysia is very serious to foster the telecommunication industry to greater development. The industry is expected to move in a viable direction and thus bring a better living scenario of its communities in order to establish a model of information-rich and intelligent nation via supreme telecommunication facilities and network.

After reading the article, I can summed up that apart from a persuasive idea offered by the author that there is no doubt that the telecommunication sector will expand farther and further in Malaysia and for all of Malaysia's ICT innovations, one surprising weakness. This is the digital divide which is still a great concern, particularly in the difference in accessibility between urban

and rural areas. The article exposed that: "The preoccupation with the adoption and utilization of communication technology in Malaysia has only benefited certain sections of the society. Access to communication technology is therefore only applicable to the privileged group thus creating disparity between those with the power to purchase and maintain a high demand on technology on one hand and to those who have not on the other".

Conclusion

In conclusion, I noted the fact that Malaysia has not made a mistake when it invested more money in the telecommunication industry. This will definitely propel the nation into a new culture of civilization and such measures contribute to another culture of excellence.

However the barriers between the privileged and the under privileged groups need to be tackled seriously and immediately to ensure the next generation who are adept with the new technologies are able to access and manage the information explosion.