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Impact of Media on the Society and It's Legal Regulations

Adv. Mr. Meyyappan Kumaran S

INTRODUCTION

Media is the medium through which information is disseminated to the public. Media maybe generally understood as Mass Media which includes the Press, Publishers, News Media, Cinema, Broadcasting (Radio and Television), Advertising¹ and in the current generation, Social Media also.

The term "**medium**" (the singular form of "media") is defined as "one of the means or channels of general communication, information, or entertainment in society, as newspapers, radio, or television."²

Media plays a major role in informing people about the happenings in a society and the **newspapers and television news** are the main avenues where people listen and read news from. Media may have a positive as well as negative impact on the Society. Media can bring in healthy exchange of information among the viewers and readers to put forth their views which is a positive impact. Knowledge and **awareness**-spreading advertisements also bring about positive impacts in the society through Media. Youngsters are most likely to follow the actions in Cinemas in real-world life and hence if it is shown in a negative light in the cinema, they would be doing that in their lives and it is a negative impact on the Society.

Now-a-days, we are living in the **era of Electronic Media and information is disseminated using the internet in a quick span of time.**

LAW REGULATING MEDIA IN INDIA

Media Law is a legal field that relates to legal regulation of the telecommunications industry, information technology, broadcasting, advertising, the entertainment industry, censorship, and internet and online services among others.

Article 19 (1) (a) of the Constitution of India guarantees **Freedom of the Press** in India as enshrined as Freedom of Speech and Expression although it is subject to reasonable restrictions under Article 19 (2).

The **Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, India** as a part of its duties regulates the **Administration of the Press and Registration of Books Act, 1867** in respect to newspapers.

¹ Martin Lister; Jon Dovey; Seth Giddings; Iain Grant; Kieran Kelly. *New Media: A Critical Introduction* (PDF) (2nd ed.). (Accessed on 24th July, 2020)

² "The definition of medium". *Dictionary.com*. Retrieved 2015-08-10. (Accessed on 24th July, 2020)

SOME OF THE LEGAL REGULATIONS FOR MEDIA IN INDIA ARE:-

1. PRESS COUNCIL OF INDIA

The **Press Council of India (PCI)** was established under the **Press Council of India Act, 1978** for the purpose of preserving the freedom of the press and of maintaining and improving the standards of newspapers and news agencies in India.

FUNCTIONS OF THE PCI

The functions of the PCI include among others (i) helping newspapers maintain their independence; (ii) build a code of conduct for journalists and news agencies; (iii) help maintain “high standards of public taste” and foster responsibility among citizens; and (iv) review developments likely to restrict flow of news.

POWERS OF THE PCI

The PCI has the power to receive complaints of violation of the journalistic ethics, or professional misconduct by an editor or journalist. The PCI is responsible for enquiring in to complaints received. It may summon witnesses and take evidence under oath, demand copies of public records to be submitted, even issue warnings and admonish the newspaper, news agency, editor or journalist. It can even require any newspaper to publish details of the inquiry. Decisions of the PCI are final and cannot be appealed before a court of law.

2. CENTRAL BOARD OF FILM CERTIFICATION (CBFM)

The CBFM certifies the content to be screened in the theatres and advertisements that may be screened inbetween a movie. It also provides certifications to short films, documentaries, movies, television shows, and broadcasting via television.

3. CABLE TELEVISION NETWORKS (REGULATION) ACT, 1995

Programs and Advertisement Codes for regulating content broadcast on the television are given permission under this Act.

4. NEWS BROADCASTERS ASSOCIATION (NBA)

The NBA has devised a [Code of Ethics](#) to regulate television content. The News Broadcasting Standards Authority (NBSA), of the NBA, is empowered to warn, admonish,

censure, express disapproval and fine the broadcaster a sum upto Rs. 1 lakh for violation of the Code.

5. **Advertising Standards Council of India** regulates the advertisements on media.
6. **DRAFT BROADCASTING SERVICES REGULATION BILL,2006**

In 2006, the government had prepared a [Draft Broadcasting Services Regulation Bill, 2006](#). The Bill made it mandatory to seek license for broadcasting any television or radio channel or program. It also provides standards for regulation of content. It is the duty of the body to ensure compliance with guidelines issued under the Bill.

IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON THE SOCIETY

Social Media is the trend and its use is on the rise day in and day out by the youngsters mainly. Since they are free to post anything they like, they tend to do so unmindful of its consequences. The most common ones being **defamatory statements** against someone being posted online. It is true that that Article 19 (1) (a) of the Indian Constitution guarantees freedom of speech and expression and therefore people can freely express their views and opinions. But, when it comes to defaming another person it is a punishable offence under Section 500 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), 1860 and Cyber Defamation takes place on the internet and social media which is again punishable under the Information Technology Act, 2000.

Today, **Data is the new oil**. Huge amount of data is being shared online everyday. Social Media platforms such as Instagram, WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, and so on have gained popularity among the masses for the ease of communication and to keep in touch with friends and family across the Globe.

On the Positive Impact Side, Social Media helps disseminate useful information quickly as it can be shared in one-touch of a button for the entire world to see. It may be helpful in pandemic situations such as the COVID-19 for news to spread. Connecting with friends after many years and in from any part of the world is made possible by social media.

On the Negative Impact Side, Pictures of women from social media platforms are being morphed and misused, cyber defamation takes place, including cyber bullying, cyber threats, etc.

are carried on social media platforms by perpetrators to harass victims.

The recourse such victims can get it to **'Report Abuse'** on the respective platform for the provider to take action and remove such content or look into the issue. Reporting a person, Blocking them, and so on are the ways in which one can safeguard themselves online.

At times, people post disturbing pictures which may corrupt the minds of the youngsters or some others who see it and this is a disturbing trend on social media. It is to be kept in mind that anyone from across the cyber space can get access to information and photographs we share on social media and it should be kept in mind before posting such content online by the user as he would be liable legally for consequences arising thereof.

The Copyrights, Trade Mark Infringement Suits may come into picture if copyrighted content is being misused on the social media platforms and Intellectual Property (IP) Infringement suits maybe filed. But, there is no single law which books the culprits of social media crimes. There is a need to enact such a law with immediate effect as today, almost every information is posted online and internet and cyber space is dominating over the press media.

Youngsters are glued to the mobile phones and access social media continuously throughout the day in their laptops and mobile phones and hence the content shared there should be positive to spread positive impacts on the society. But, due to the existence of cyber criminals, data theft and misuse is prominent on the internet along with even unverified content being posted maybe for fun or to incite protests – all of these bring a negative impact to social media.

IMPACT OF MASS MEDIA IN THE SOCIETY

Mass Media including News Papers can be construed as an authentic source of information provided it is being reported after verifying the authenticity. News paper reports can be clipped and used as evidences in courts of Law. This being so, the news paper reporters have an additional duty to be extra cautious while publishing information and must refrain from publishing any defamatory statements against anyone or any false news.

Since the content reaches a huge audience who read the news paper, they must proof-read

the content thoroughly before publishing to avoid legal consequences arising otherwise.

IMPACT OF CINEMAS IN THE SOCIETY

Cinemas are a form of **entertainment** for any person and going to watch a movie with friends and family is a recreational activity. But, it is the duty of the producers to bring about a good message in the movie they broadcast in the theatres and the youth being fan followers of the Actors / Actresses may replicate their exact steps in the movies in real life. Hence, movies create a huge impact in the society either positively or negatively and it should be a positive take-home message in all aspects.

CONCLUSION / MY SUGGESTIONS

On a concluding note, I would say that the Media, be it Mass Media or Social Media, has a great impact on the society and it can be positive or negative based on the contents being posted. Care must be taken by the publishers and reporters to give accurate information. Even more than mass media, social media is becoming a revolution by itself and almost everyone who owns a smart phone is connected to a social media networking site to network with their friends and professionally also, apart from reading news and sharing materials online. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic, people are accessing e-copies (electronic copies) of the newspapers to read them and are increasingly backing on television news as well to get updates. Surpassing all of these is the social media that provides instant notifications and updates but the problem here is a large chunk of the information posted maybe unverified and untrue also and it cannot be relied as much as a news paper report. To sum up, I would say it is left to the reader or viewer to take the positive part of the media and ignore the negative aspects for it to be useful to the society as a whole.

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