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## COMMUNICATIONS AND COSMOPOLITANISM

(in Melvin Prince (ed.) *Consumer Cosmopolitanism in the Age of Globalization*, 2012)

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### Mediated cosmopolitanism

The view that certain media, in their technological form, open up possibilities which foster or create a form of cosmopolitanism amongst their users or consumers finds its origin in the media theory of Marshall McLuhan. In *The Gutenberg Galaxy* (1962) McLuhan predicted that electronic media would usher in a new age of “electronic interdependence” and recreate the world “in the image of a global village”.<sup>1</sup> Although he does not use the word “cosmopolitanism”, his metaphor of the global village implicitly contains within it elements of the utopian idea of cosmopolis present since Ancient Greece in two respects.<sup>2</sup> First, electronic media transcend space, or as globalization theorists have subsequently expressed it, they bring about “time-space compression”.<sup>3</sup> Second, through the connectivity which they enable, they create a new mutual awareness among people, or as McLuhan puts it, create “total interdependence, and superimposed co-existence”.<sup>4</sup>

McLuhan’s views have been influential among media theorists who believe that contemporary media and their use create or foster a specific and valid form of cosmopolitanism, mediated cosmopolitanism, which exists alongside or underpins other forms of cosmopolitanism, such as those based on political outlook, travel, or other forms of consumption.<sup>5</sup> On this logic, as the world, or at least a substantial number of media users in it, move from “traditional” media, such as newspapers, to broadcast media (particularly transnational broadcast media), and then to the internet and social media, they and the mediated world will become more “cosmopolitan”. Before looking at the implications of this view for communicating to cosmopolitans and assessing criticisms of it, the origins of McLuhan’s theory and its premises will be explored more fully. Within media

theory, although influential, McLuhan's ideas have been increasingly criticised as 'technological determinism': they attribute too much causal importance to the nature of the medium, and not sufficient importance to its use. Subsequent theorists, such as Régis Debray in his concept of 'mediasphere', have sought to redress this balance by drawing attention to the importance of social milieu in determining the answer to the question of what social impact a communication medium will have.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, despite its recognised shortcomings, contemporary theorists of cosmopolitanism in media need to address McLuhan's theory, if only to disagree with it, not least because of its popularity. Rantanen draws attention to the importance of understanding of the historical development of contemporary media in addressing the question of mediated cosmopolitanism, and McLuhan's contribution to this historical awareness.<sup>7</sup>

The main premise of McLuhan's theory is the priority of media form over content, or as he famously expressed it, "the medium is the message". The "message" of any medium or technological form is, for McLuhan, "the change of scale or pace or pattern that it introduces into human affairs".<sup>8</sup> Each age is dominated by a particular form or medium, introducing a new scale into human communication: the age of the printed book and the newspaper, followed by the age of television, followed by the age of the internet. The content of the media is secondary for McLuhan; it is the form which is primary. As far as cosmopolitanism is concerned, then, as the form of the media becomes more global, as this form enables us to see, hear, and communicate to larger parts of the world and its peoples, then we will inevitably become more cosmopolitan, regardless of what the content of these media actually is. The history of media, therefore, is dominated in McLuhan's schema by one particular form or medium, which determines the form of social and cultural life which predominates in it: the spoken word (in oral cultures); the written word (in "typographic" cultures in McLuhan's term); and electronic media.<sup>9</sup>

As an illustration of this we can examine McLuhan's characterisation of the print or "typographic" age, which began with Gutenberg's invention of the printing press and lasted until it was "replaced"

by the electronic age in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The printed form, particularly in its mass industrialization in the nineteenth century, brought with it “nationalism, industrialism, mass markets, and universal literacy and education”.<sup>10</sup> The domination of print and the associated dissemination of national languages represented a “fragmentation which terminated ... in the *anomie* of the nineteenth century”.<sup>11</sup> The era of print, therefore, was predominantly national: the medium led to the separation of people into their national cultures and languages. The electronic era, in contrast, rather than separating people brings them together, makes nations less relevant, and thus overcomes nationalism: “nationalism still depends on the press, but has all the electric media against it”.<sup>12</sup> Just as Enlightenment thinkers of the eighteenth century such as Kant in his idea of a cosmopolitan state of ‘perpetual peace’, and later Marx and Engels in their communist utopia, thought that a cosmopolitan society or political order would transcend nations, making them irrelevant, so McLuhan believes that a cosmopolitan world will be brought about by electronic media. In relation to the contemporary twenty-four hour global news media, for instance, it has become common to think that they have “shrunk the planet and given us a berth in McLuhan’s global village”.<sup>13</sup>

The question is whether McLuhan was right, and whether a specific form of mediated cosmopolitanism exists in the contemporary world? Mediated cosmopolitanism can thus be defined as the belief that particular forms of media can bring about in their users expanded horizons, a cosmopolitan perspective, or “a willingness to engage with the other”.<sup>14</sup> For those concerned with communicating *to* cosmopolitans the issue can be formulated thus: are cosmopolitans defined by their use of a particular medium and are they more likely to use one medium rather than another? Can cosmopolitans be identified solely by means of their media consumption, as opposed to other indicators, such as education, socialization or travel? In attempting to answer these questions, a typology of media will be adopted, starting with “traditional media”, in their print and broadcast form, followed by “new media”, the internet and social media. Adoption of such a typology does not necessarily imply, however, that one form of media supplants the other, or that we can assent to the

assumption that, as we move from one form of media to the next, the degree of cosmopolitanism increases.

### **Traditional media: print and broadcast**

As we have seen, McLuhan held that print media, primarily the book and the newspaper, were predominantly national, in that, through the development of national languages and the rise of nationalism, they contributed to, if not determined the fragmentation of the world into separate peoples. This connection between the print medium and the rise of nationalism is also emphasized by Benedict Anderson. For Anderson, the nation, as well as being a political entity and geographical territory, is an “imagined community”, a community of people brought together by means of media. This is evident in the two forms of print media which, he says, flourished at the same time as the rise of nations in the nineteenth century: the novel and the newspaper.<sup>15</sup> As an example of this link between newspapers and nations as ‘imagined communities’ he asks us to imagine the front page of a national newspaper such as the *New York Times*. Regarding the events reported in this edition of the newspaper he asks, “why are these events so juxtaposed? What connects them to each other?”<sup>16</sup> The answer is two things: they happen to occur on this particular calendar date, and they are presented through this medium to the national readership of the newspaper, those thousands if not millions of people who pick up this newspaper on the same day and read about these events. This “ceremony”, Anderson says, “is being replicated simultaneously by thousands (or millions) of others of whose existence he is confident, yet of whose identity he (the reader) has not the slightest notion. Furthermore, this ceremony is incessantly repeated at daily or half-daily intervals throughout the calendar. What more vivid figure for the secular, historically clocked, imagined community can be envisioned?”<sup>17</sup>

The daily consumption of the news, then, reinforces the feeling of nationhood, by, for instance, reporting national events to a national public, and interpreting the outside world for this public. How national print media report what is going on outside the nation to it is the key consideration in

determining the degree to which print media are or are not cosmopolitan. Here Anderson's allusions to the similarity in form between the novel and the newspaper give interesting food for thought. He gives an example of the *New York Times* reader who reads a story about Mali; the country as presented in the newspaper comes to seem like a character in a novel: "The novelistic format of the newspaper assures them (the readers) that somewhere out there the 'character' Mali moves along quietly, awaiting its next reappearance in the plot".<sup>18</sup> A country "out there", then, takes on the life of a character in a story for the national readership of the newspaper "here": perhaps they may not have been aware of its existence, or perhaps only become aware of it because of some catastrophe which has happened there, or some potential threat it constitutes to "home".

A key point is made here about the relationship between media and cosmopolitanism: that media have the power through the form of their story-telling, particularly in the print media, to decrease the distance felt between "here", the place of publication of the national newspaper, and "there," wherever those events are occurring. Rantanen, drawing on the work of Heidegger, stresses the importance of this process of *de-severance* (Entfernung), by means of which distant places and cultures are brought into the home of the viewer, a feeling that is produced by "people's own experience, how they feel about places".<sup>19</sup>

One of the principal means through which the broadcast and print media bring about the feeling of "being there" in distant places is by means of the reports, written or broadcast, of foreign correspondents. Much of our (i.e. the West's) experience of mediated cosmopolitanism comes from the reports of iconic news correspondents such as John Simpson, Peter Arnett or Lyse Doucett. The correspondents are our mediators of the foreign, although in the case of CNN its founder Ted Turner forbade the use of the word "foreign" in their job title, preferring the term "international correspondent".<sup>20</sup> In Hannerz's words, the reports of foreign correspondents can contribute to a feeling of cosmopolitanism on the part of the viewer in that they "pull our sleeve to point to something that is there now. Simply absorbing their claims on our attention as an integral part of a

forever fleeting news awareness may add to this (cosmopolitan) awareness".<sup>21</sup> There are questions, however, of how far the reporting of foreign correspondents can contribute to a cosmopolitan feeling: maintaining a network of correspondents is costly, and whether some broadcasters have cut back on them, preferring to use "second hand" news from other broadcasters, and indeed have cut down the amount of foreign news per se. In addressing the question of the relative media space devoted to the 'foreign' in domestic media, we need to differentiate between different species of the 'foreign': at one end of the spectrum news of other countries which is just tailored to the needs of domestic audiences; at the other that news which has no connection to the domestic audience, and thus could be said to constitute genuinely 'global' news.<sup>22</sup> One criterion of measuring the degree of cosmopolitanism in domestic media might be the degree to which this latter category is present: if the 'foreign' in domestic media is predominantly the former, however, we might question whether this is cosmopolitan at all.

Two aspects of this process of 'de-severance' are important for mediated cosmopolitanism – the imagination – in particular how foreign places figure in the imagination of the reader, or in the case of broadcast media the viewer, and the fact that news media present places and events in terms of certain prescribed stories, rituals or news agendas, which determine both which places are presented to the reader/viewer, and how. For some media theorists, the key question in determining the question of how cosmopolitan the media are is the method of presentation of the world to the reader/viewer and the political agenda behind it, rather than just the technological medium through which it is received.<sup>23</sup>

To return to Anderson's comparison between the novel and the newspaper and their relationship to the creation of a national "imagined community", while it is undoubtedly true that the printed book and the novel in particular are associated with the rise of the nation state, it is equally true that the history of literature contains many authors and works who have been expressly cosmopolitan in outlook and who seek to foster a cosmopolitan outlook in their works. This does not necessarily

mean that the authors themselves had travelled or experienced foreign cultures. Amanda Anderson, for instance, in her study of English writers who might be thought of as quintessentially English and thus national in outlook, such as Dickens, Arnold, and George Eliot, maintains that they are cosmopolitan in the sense that they advocated a “distanced relation to oneself, one’s community, or those objects that one chooses to study or represent”.<sup>24</sup> Following Anderson we should distinguish two senses as regards whether a work of literature is cosmopolitan. In the first, although the world the author depicts is primarily national in its geographical content, the way in which it is depicted questions the assumptions which the reader has about the nation, and this could be said to be cosmopolitan. In the second, cosmopolitan would mean that the literary work depicts places and cultures outside the nation. However, the history of literature contains many instances of fiction which, although representing the foreign for domestic consumption (usually for European and N. American audiences), represents those cultures in an exotic, stereotyped, and even demeaning way, particularly those parts of the world which Edward Said calls “the Orient”.<sup>25</sup> Thus, even though it represents the foreign, the way in which it does so would deny this literature the designation cosmopolitan.

To return to how the print media mediates the world, particularly in the era prior to the advent of electronic media, the question of the relationship between home, the imagination of the reader/viewer and the distant is a key determinant in assessing the historical development of mediated cosmopolitanism. Rantanen, for instance, looks at the development of news in the nineteenth century as an important precursor to the question of place in today’s global electronic media. In the first half of the nineteenth century the telegraph “revolutionized the communication of news and the news agencies became the first truly global media”.<sup>26</sup> If news up to that point had reinforced the feeling of locality and nationhood, it now became increasingly detached from place, a global commodity which could be bought and sold.<sup>27</sup>



By 1870 the three most important news agencies, Reuters (Britain), Havas (France) and Wolff (Germany) had carved up the world's news market between them in the same way as the European powers had colonized the world, creating "an impression of global space".<sup>28</sup> Two features of this new sense, however, should be noted: news had become a commodity, and that the global sphere created was dominated by the West. These two elements constitute for some theorists an objection to the supposed cosmopolitanism of global media in our own time: by "cosmopolitan" we really mean Western, and that the reduction of media content, particularly news, to a commodity means that what is created is not genuinely cosmopolitan.

### **Global images and 'banal cosmopolitanism'**

When we move from the prototype global media of the nineteenth century to the global broadcast media of the late twentieth century, the power of such media to bring us distant places, events and cultures has increased exponentially. Not only do we have the global Western broadcasters of CNN, BBC World etc., but in recent times, and in response to the dissatisfaction of many outside the West with the way that global issues are presented in the Western media, Al Jazeera, and latterly the global arms of Chinese (CCTV-9) and Iranian state broadcasters (Press TV), among many others. The global, in the form of images of foreign places, cultures, and events is thus now a familiar part of our everyday reality. As Szerzynski and Urry note, "there is much global imagery on contemporary TV, both directly of the globe and indirectly through images of exemplary 'global' individuals and peoples and through various iconic places, peoples and animals....The global is thus 'ready-to-hand', a backcloth to a world of exceptional co-presence".<sup>29</sup> If mediated cosmopolitanism means the consumption of global images, then, Urry believes, the global media and their consumers *are* cosmopolitan, as illustrated by his description of a CNN Worldview broadcast: "In just 29 seconds, dozens of global icons and exemplars are employed. This flood of images represents how over just one day there is the observation of and appeal to all cultures across the globe".<sup>30</sup>

This “flood of images” which constitute the contemporary broadcast media’s way of representing its cosmopolitanism might , however, for those theorists taking a more critical viewpoint, not so much be a way of mediating the diversity and difference of the world to the spectator, as a process of reducing such differences, of “dedifferentiation through hyper-differentiation” the message of which is the power of the global media corporations who provide it “a metaphor for the power, coverage and scope of corporate reach”.<sup>31</sup> The rejoinder of optimists such as Urry would be that, whether commercialized or not, the global images of today’s media can lead to at least a “banal” form of cosmopolitanism amongst their consumers, which he defines, drawing on a definition by Hannerz, as “a cultural disposition ... involving an intellectual and aesthetic stance of ‘openness’ towards people, places and experiences from different cultures”.<sup>32</sup>

The “banal cosmopolitanism” of the global media consumer is seen by its proponents as a counter-balance to the “banal nationalism” of national media.<sup>33</sup> Billig introduced the term to describe how national media (e.g. the press, but also national broadcast media) create and reinforce the day to day “we” feeling within a nation by means of their reporting, including their depiction of other nations. If “banal nationalism” was the chief characteristic of media in the national age, its proponents believe, “banal cosmopolitanism” is the chief characteristic of the media in the “post-national” or global age. Beck, probably the leading sociological theorist of cosmopolitanism, is clearly of this view.<sup>34</sup> Just as the “banal nationalism” of national media created “imagined national communities”, he argues, so the “banal cosmopolitanism” of global media creates imagined communities of global risk: “The most interesting thing is the fact that the reception of such media reporting creates an awareness that strangers in distant places are following the same events with the same fears and worries as oneself. Strangers become neighbors!”<sup>35</sup> The global media’s role in mediating global risks (such as financial collapse, global warming, terrorism) creates “imagined cosmopolitan communities”, which, in contrast to imagined national communities and their orientation towards the past, are “rooted in the future anticipated in the present” (Beck 2011: 1354).<sup>36</sup> Although Beck claims that this form of mediated cosmopolitanism is sociologically realistic,

not idealistic, it is not difficult to see in such belief in a world community brought together by media elements of McLuhan's utopian idea of a "global village".

For more critical theorists, the "banality" and superficiality of the images through which the cosmopolitanism of the media is communicated is a problem, as is the degree of understanding or ability to contextualize the knowledge gained from them on the part of the viewers. Baudrillard and Virilio, for instance, see the "staged" nature of the reality presented by global media as something negative, indicating a lack of reality.<sup>37</sup> Both Virilio in *Desert Screen* (2002) and Baudrillard in his (in)famous article "The Gulf War Did Not Take Place" (2001) focus on one event, the First Gulf War. For both theorists, what could be seen as an example of the global media's power of "de-severance", to bring distant events into our living room, here took on different dimensions, to the extent that the war became almost a "simulacrum" for the spectator, its mediation designed to create the illusion that it was almost taking place in virtual reality. Such skepticism about the artificiality or banality of global media images has been compounded by the representation of a series of subsequent high profile media events, such as terrorist attacks and wars.<sup>38</sup>

### **Distant suffering and the cosmopolitan spectator**

The power of the global broadcast media to bring us images of war, conflict, and catastrophic events, for some theorists, then, far from creating a feeling of cosmopolitanism, creates what Bauman calls 'telecity', whereby images of famine, disaster and terror are consumed alongside advertising and entertainment, to the extent that the former are reduced to the level of the latter: "In the telicity, the others appear solely as objects of enjoyment, no strings attached ... . Offering amusement is their only right to exist".<sup>39</sup> Bauman's "telecity" is almost the exact opposite of a mediated cosmopolis: while the latter postulates moral consequences from the viewers' consumption of images of war, suffering, and disaster, the former is skeptical about any such consequences.

The question of morality in relation to mediated cosmopolitanism in global broadcast media brings us to perhaps the single most important issue in the debate surrounding it: the question of “distant suffering” and its consequences for the viewing public.<sup>40</sup> The central question can be put in the following terms: to what extent can the presentation of instances of “distant suffering” such as the series of high profile natural disasters we have seen in the last decade, for instance the Asian tsunami of 2004, Pakistan earthquake of 2005, Hurricane Katrina of 2005, and most recently the Japanese earthquake and tsunami of 2011, provoke genuine cosmopolitan sentiment, and turn viewers into cosmopolitan citizens who want to take action to alleviate the suffering of those affected whom they see on their screens?

Boltanski emphasizes the importance of emotions and their relationship to the imagination of the spectator, distinguishing between sympathy, in which the viewer is cut off from the suffering by distance, in the same way as the audience member in a theatre is cut off (by the awareness that it is fiction) from the tragic events on stage in a tragedy, and empathy, in which the gap between the sufferer and the spectator is reduced by means of the imagination. Reporting on distant suffering which enables the viewer to imagine what it would be like to be in the place of someone suffering on the other side of the world, in other words, is more likely to generate empathy, and motivate the viewer to want to take action (by donating money to aid organizations, for instance).

This focus on the mode of presentation of suffering in news media is taken up by Chouliaraki.<sup>41</sup> By analyzing the mode of presentation (such as live reporting, visual presentation, graphics, and language), she comes to the conclusion that there is a hierarchy of suffering as presented in the Western news media. At the lowest level in the hierarchy is “adventure news” which in its mode of presentation “consists of random and isolated events” which “fail to make an ethical demand on spectators to respond to the suffering they report”.<sup>42</sup> At the highest level is “ecstatic news” which is characterized by the predominance of live footage, correspondents reporting from the scene, and which establishes “a regime of pity and a manner of moralizing the spectator”, the paradigmatic

example of which in recent times was the live global media coverage of the terrorist attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001.<sup>43</sup> Chouliaraki's conclusion is that the mode of presentation, rather than the form of media as such is crucial in deciding whether there will be a response from the spectator. Rather than there being "compassion fatigue" due to too much suffering being presented to the spectator, there is a hierarchy of places, peoples and sufferers, and the suffering of some is virtually absent from our screens. Robertson, in a study of media coverage of the Asian tsunami of 2004 in five European domestic and three European global broadcasters, comes to a less pessimistic conclusion about the degree to which media coverage of distant suffering can create genuine cosmopolitan sentiment.<sup>44</sup> Perhaps due to the unprecedented scale of the disaster, she found that, surprisingly, the domestic broadcasters played a more prominent role than the global media in generating cosmopolitan sentiment, "a role previously accorded to churches, the television news offered a site for people to congregate – to (...) reflect on the vulnerability of human life".<sup>45</sup>

In concluding this section, can we draw some conclusions about print and broadcast media in relation to the question of communicating to cosmopolitans? Clearly as we progress from a world dominated by print media, with their predominantly national emphasis, to broadcast media, in particular the transnational broadcast media of the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the technological form brings with it expanded possibilities for the development of cosmopolitanism. We should be cautious, however, about committing the "cosmopolitan fallacy" of assuming that simply the entry of global media into national spaces necessarily leads to an expansion of horizons of consumers. Rantanen warns against committing this fallacy in her ethnographic study of the degree of cosmopolitanism of four generations of three families in Finland, Israel and China.<sup>46</sup> She concludes that, although the media consumption of the family members has progressively become more cosmopolitan over time, particularly in the youngest generation, media consumption is only one factor in determining a cosmopolitan outlook, and must be seen in connection with other factors such as travel, interests and educational background. She also points out that the influence of media can be "liberating" for some people, i.e. promote cosmopolitanism, but also "restrictive, closed and

hierarchical” for others.<sup>47</sup> She cautions that “it would make no sense to argue that access to media is enough to make somebody a cosmopolitan. ... The media can offer the global ingredients for the development of cosmopolitan awareness, but it is up to people what they make of these ingredients”.<sup>48</sup>

### **Internet and social media**

To return to McLuhan, if we adhere to the theory that the “extensions of man” associated with different technological forms are related to degrees of cosmopolitanism amongst their users, then we can expect the users of the internet and social media to exhibit the highest degree of cosmopolitanism. Amongst those who take an optimistic view of the internet in this regard, there is no doubt that this is the case: “cosmopolites can do more than ponder and dream about the rest of the world they can experience it in an immediate and colorfully mediated fashion. The Internet affords the cosmopolite communicator an unprecedented opportunity to selectively experience this vivid immediacy”.<sup>49</sup> What features of the internet lead to this conclusion? First, “cosmopolites” are more likely to have an interest in international affairs and pursue this interest via the internet. They could of course pursue this interest by means of the international print media or transnational satellite broadcasters, but “cosmopolites are strong seekers both of control over their access to mediated content and of access to timely information”.<sup>50</sup> In other words, cosmopolitans do not want to be dependent on the “gatekeepers” who determine what news or information they can see (such as media companies and their owners, or, in countries with high state control of media, the state), but want to by-pass such control. The question of time is also crucial: they want to be informed instantly rather than waiting, for instance, for national media to report events, and thus turn to the internet for this.

The study by Jeffres et al., however, contradicts the common belief (based on McLuhan’s ideas) that, in pursuing cosmopolitan interests via the internet, “cosmopolites” will abandon “traditional” media such as print and broadcast. In fact, it seems, “cosmopolites” already pursue their interests through

other media – books, newspapers and television: it is just that the internet provides another dimension to their cosmopolitanism. Cosmopolitans, in other words, are not created by the internet: they already are cosmopolitan – the internet simply provides another means of pursuing their interests.

The relationship between internet use and an expansion of international knowledge has been the subject of a number of studies. Beaudoin, for instance, carried out a telephone survey in the US, testing the correlation of the degree of international knowledge and interest (geographical, political, and historical) with the use of the internet and other sources of news about the world.<sup>51</sup> US citizens, Beaudoin says, have on average low levels of international knowledge in relation to other developed countries, and this might partly be explained by their heavy dependence for their picture of the world on (domestic) television news, as this is essentially a passive medium.<sup>52</sup> The internet, in contrast, is an active medium, allowing people to seek out information on countries or events not covered in the domestic news media. The study concludes that there is evidence that internet use is positively correlated with increased international knowledge, but the internet is only one of the sources of information about the world used by cosmopolitans: it is used to complement, rather than replace other sources.<sup>53</sup>

### **Online journalism**

One of the major changes brought about by the internet is the globalization of online journalism. As most newspapers in the developed world have an online presence, and in some cases multilingual editions which can be accessed by internet users throughout the world, a medium which was “primarily a local artefact ... can go ‘global’; and it is doing just this”.<sup>54</sup> The international audience, albeit limited by the ability to understand the language in which the online newspaper is printed, is nevertheless quite significant, with the UK *Guardian*, for instance, receiving 78% of its online readers from overseas, and other newspapers such as *The China Times* (60-70%) and *The Jerusalem Post* (90%) having significant numbers of overseas online readers.<sup>55</sup> This is particularly significant in the

English-speaking world, with the BBC website and other major UK quality newspapers receiving significant numbers of online readers from the US, with the phenomenon less significant in reverse. This pattern can partly be attributed to large numbers of users accessing news stories via internet portals and indexes, but this may be more due, in some cases, to the desire to have quick access to sensational stories, regardless of where they are published, rather than readers on the other side of the world necessarily abandoning or by-passing their domestic press in order to gain a more cosmopolitan perspective.<sup>56</sup>

Berger similarly cautions against a simplistic utopian belief that the advent of online news necessarily means that audiences for news will become more cosmopolitan, citing the phenomenon of “hyperlocalism”, the trend towards a new parochialism in which some newspapers focus more on the local and the national rather than the global or the “foreign”.<sup>57</sup> This might be partly due to economics: the fact that the advertising revenue on which the newspapers depend is national rather than global in source, and that to some extent large numbers of foreign online readers are unwanted, as they are essentially getting this content free of charge.<sup>58</sup> Nor is a trend towards cosmopolitanism rather than parochialism necessarily noticeable among the users of social media such as MySpace, Facebook or Flickr, Berger argues, as “despite the involvement of many young middle-class people from developing countries, ... the value of global diversity tends to be effaced in such environments”.<sup>59</sup>

### **Linguistic and cultural diversity and the internet**

The extent to which the internet user is being exposed to unexpected encounters with other cultures, or simply pursuing interests and thus a view of the world which they already have, seems to be related to the question of language. Is the internet truly cosmopolitan in the sense that it is multilingual, or does the “cosmopolitan” nature of the web disguise the fact that it is really monolingual (i.e. dominated by English) and thus simply reinforces the domination of the English-speaking world? David Crystal, probably the leading expert on language and the internet, wrote in



2001 that, although the situation at that time seemed to back up the fear that the internet would be dominated by English, with 82.3% of internet pages being in English, he did not think that this would mean that the internet would be predominantly monolingual.<sup>60</sup> By 2010, although English was still the dominant language with 27.5% of all internet users, its dominant position was being challenged by Chinese (22.6%), with other major languages having experienced a huge growth in internet presence in the period 2000-2009, in particular Arabic with a 2,200% increase over the period, and Russian with a 1,300% increase.<sup>61</sup>

There is some evidence that in the past decade the “digital divide” (the divide between the rich, developed nations with high internet access rates, and those that do not) is beginning to be overcome: there has been a 1,800% increase in internet users in Africa over the period 2000-2009, and a 1,675% increase in the Middle East over the same period, although the percentage internet penetration, 9% in the case of Africa and 29% in the case of the Middle East, is still quite small in relation to the “developed world”.<sup>62</sup> If cosmopolitanism necessarily implies multilingualism, then, the internet and its users, it seems, are becoming more cosmopolitan. However, Crystal says, “the internet will one day represent the distribution of language presence in the world, but it is currently a long way from that ideal”.<sup>63</sup> The degree to which corporations, in their desire to be cosmopolitan in their communication, are also localizing their web presence into diverse languages, even those which may be seen as minor languages, will be discussed in the section on corporate media.

One particular area in which the internet seems unambiguously to have contributed to the development of a cosmopolitan identity is in the case of the internet use by diaspora communities. There have always been communities of exiles living in diasporas, but patterns of migration during the era of globalization in the past two or three decades have led to large diaspora communities at the same time as the rise of transnational satellite media and the internet have hugely increased the possibilities for diaspora communities to stay in touch with their “home” culture and language. The diaspora, then is a kind of “imagined community” in the sense identified by Anderson in the rise of

nations, but here the space which the imaged community inhabits is transnational not national, and the medium through which the symbolic identification takes place is satellite TV or the internet, not the press.

In the case of transnational broadcasters, this has been seen in the growth of importance on Arabic broadcasters such as Al Jazeera and others, Hindi broadcasters such as Zee TV, and Chinese broadcasters such as Phoenix TV, which broadcast to large diaspora communities as well as audiences in the home country or countries. With the internet, possibilities of communication across diaspora communities, in some cases avoiding internet censorship of the home countries from which the diaspora communities come, has increased. Everett, for instance, chronicles the rise of the internet presence of African diaspora websites such as websites for Nigerians abroad, Ghanaians, as well as pan-African websites such as Africa Online.<sup>64</sup> In some cases, in addition to strengthening of diaspora identity, these websites provide a public sphere for the discussion of issues which does not exist in the countries from which the migrants emanated. In relation to the “Chinese cultural sphere” (including mainland China, other Chinese-speaking areas of East Asia, and the Chinese diaspora), similarly, Yang comes to the conclusion that the internet, including non-interactive media such as online newsletters and magazines, and interactive forums such as chat rooms, bulletin boards and newsgroups, provide a space for a transnational Chinese public sphere to develop, where some of the issues affecting Chinese at home and abroad, circumventing the censorship of the internet in mainland China, can be discussed.<sup>65</sup>

### **Corporate media**

For the corporate media, including corporate websites, brand symbols and logos, communication artefacts such as company reports and documents, and advertising campaigns, cosmopolitanism can be conceived of as the necessity for the corporations of projecting a corporate image as a world citizen, which can be seen to have two dimensions: the global reach of the corporation, and its sensitivity to the national and local cultures in which it operates. This combination of global reach

and local sensitivity is termed by Koller in her study of the branding strategy of the HSBC bank “glocalization”, but could equally well be called corporate cosmopolitanization.<sup>66</sup> HSBC is a prime example of a corporation which, on the one hand, is one of the world’s largest banks, but on the other is sensitive to image problems which might result from its global reach. As Koller states, corporations have, through the propagation of a cosmopolitan image sought to move away from the image of a “faceless corporation” with a “US-style corporate persona”.<sup>67</sup> The “World’s Local Bank” campaign, started in 2002, which Koller analyses in all the company’s corporate media, from websites and corporate documents to print and broadcast ads, is designed to overcome these image problems.

From a visual and linguistic perspective, local cultures in the branding discourse of HSBC are symbolized by the depiction of cultural peculiarities and “cultural mistakes” made by (usually) Westerners in interacting with them, accompanied by the slogan “never underestimate the importance of local knowledge”. Koller concludes her analysis as follows: “HSBC’s branding discourse shows stereotypical indications of the global while the local is largely constructed and subsequently exploited to endow the brand with a “human touch” ... the global is offered as an allure for local audiences, while the local is presented for the benefit of global audiences”.<sup>68</sup> The corporate image, in other words, faces in two directions: for the local, in particular non-Western audience, it represents the allure of a cosmopolitan brand, for the Western audience it represents local sensitivity, albeit a version of the local which never goes beyond stereotypes. For the non-Western audience, in other words, being associated with a Western brand brings with it connotations of belonging to an elite and moving beyond the confines of their locality.

A similar duality in corporate media is noted by Goldman and Papsen in their comprehensive semiotic study of global branding by mainly American corporations.<sup>69</sup> The “glocal” or “cosmopolitan” element of the corporate images is increasingly signified by the use of image banks of “floating signifiers” which represent cultural diversity in “stock photos (...) which have been severed from

meaningful context”.<sup>70</sup> Signifiers are combined together using montage technique which “juxtaposes abstracted images and sutures them together, to tell a story”.<sup>71</sup> The increasing use of image banks such as Getty Images in corporate media, then, can be seen as evidence that the local functions primarily for its sign value: what it signifies about the corporation and the marketable moods and feelings it produces, rather than the depiction of actual places and cultures.<sup>72</sup> For example, moods like ‘freedom’ and ‘exhilaration’ are realized through ‘activities which are in harmony with the corporate world’, a mood, in this sense is defined as a ‘passing feeling (...) a concept drawing on ‘new age’ ideas of serenity and simplicity’.<sup>73</sup> A further example of an industry which wants to promote its cosmopolitan credentials through its media is the airline industry, in particular through the genre of the in-flight magazine. In their study of 72 in-flight magazines of leading global airlines, Thurlow and Jaworski conclude that these magazines, through their depiction of the attractiveness of a global jet-setting life of global cities, hotels and celebrities, written primarily in English, which has the status of a cosmopolitan language, promote “a glamorous image of cosmopolitan travel, which transcends national boundaries” rather than depict of a world of cultural diversity. English is ‘cosmopolitan’ in these in-flight magazines as being in English rather than the local language signifies that their reader belongs to the global elite of frequent travellers who have moved beyond their local and national origins.<sup>74</sup>

The significance of English as a language with cosmopolitan credentials for the elite international business traveller lead us to the question of to what degree are corporations multilingual in their corporate media? Kelly-Holmes analysed the web presence of 10 major corporations, six of which were American, three European and one Japanese, examining the languages of both the dot.com (headquarters) website and 548 country-, region-specific websites, using a hierarchy of world languages based on De Swaan’s world language system.<sup>75</sup> The results, while confirming the global or “hypercentral” significance of English as the global lingua franca of commerce, a language which holds the whole language system in place by virtue of the numbers of native speakers and those who speak it as a foreign language, also point to the significance of “supercentral” languages such as

Spanish, French, Chinese, German, Portuguese, Russian, Arabic and Japanese in the corporate media, particularly in parts of the world which were former colonies of the European countries from which those languages emanate, languages which also have a lingua franca function, if more limited than that of English. Furthermore, and perhaps more surprisingly, the study found that there was a considerable amount of localization of websites into “peripheral” languages which have no significance beyond the country or region in which they are spoken, such as Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Icelandic, Vietnamese and others. As far as the cosmopolitan communication of the corporate media is concerned, then, what this study seems to show is that the corporations, in their desire to portray themselves as locally sensitive as well as globally powerful, are beginning to see the necessity of communicating to locals in the local language, even where this might be a relatively small number of people.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

Many people believe that the contemporary media promote a specific form of ‘mediated cosmopolitanism’: that the move from traditional media, print and broadcast, to the internet and social media brings with it a broadening of horizons and interests on the part of media consumers, a realization of McLuhan’s utopian idea of the ‘global village’. This view, however, is premised on the prioritization of media form over content. When we examine the specific content of media, the way in which the world is presented, and how this is received by consumers, we may need to be cautious about committing about what some media theorists have called the ‘cosmopolitan fallacy’.

The equation of a move from traditional media, predominantly national in outlook, to electronic media, cosmopolitan in form, is founded on the historical association of print media such as books and newspapers with the formation of national consciousness. It is undoubtedly true that national media, in their process of ‘de-severance’ of the outside world, can give a selective and distorted picture, particularly in the area of news, where news agendas and national concerns determine which parts of the world are presented to the reader or viewer and how. The role of the ‘foreign

correspondent' in mediating the view of the world held by the national audience is crucial here. It is equally true, however, that some 'traditional' media have always sought to give a cosmopolitan view of the world, albeit one which is often presented in terms of exoticism and interpreted from the dominant perspective of the interests of the West. In our own day, the increasing availability of news providers with an expressly non-Western perspective may go some way to correcting this one-sided picture.

Contemporary media present the world predominantly via the image: the average media consumer, whether cosmopolitan in terms of travel, consumption, or political outlook or not, is presented daily with a flood of global images. For some media theorists, this 'banal cosmopolitanism' of image is a valid form of cosmopolitanism, forcing the consumer to move beyond the purely national or local, whether they expressly choose to do so or not. For other theorists, such de-contextualised images, often presented to the viewer without understanding, betoken inauthenticity and even unreality, which may lead the viewer to dis-engage with the world rather than expand their horizons. This debate is particularly pertinent to the question of 'distant suffering', the way that media present disasters and humanitarian suffering in often distant parts of the world. For some, this form of mediated cosmopolitanism gives hope of a genuine moral engagement with the suffering of others. For others, suffering as presented in 'telectivity' often just promotes indifference and apathy. Once again, the question of *how* distant suffering is presented rather than just the fact that it *is* presented is crucial here.

The optimists about mediated cosmopolitanism would clearly believe that the users of the internet and social media, able to escape the constraints, political and otherwise, often imposed by national media, would be, by definition, 'cosmopolites'. The evidence in an emerging area of research, however, is by no means conclusive about this. The principal area of contention is whether the internet can *create* cosmopolitans of those who are not, or whether the internet merely provides an additional opportunity for those who are *already* cosmopolitan, as measured by their use of other

media and consumption habits, to extend their global outlook. Certainly, there does not seem to be evidence that internet users who are cosmopolitan in their media usage abandon other media as a result of their internet usage. Undoubtedly the internet does enable many communities, such as those in diasporas and in countries where media censorship prevails, to build a public sphere beyond national constrictions. Online newspapers provide an obvious opportunity for readers to move beyond the confines of their own political and cultural sphere; whether those who do use them do so with the intention of engagement with global issues, however, or as just an additional source of entertainment remains to be seen. The question of language and the link between multilingualism and cosmopolitanism has become an increasing focus of interest in recent years. It does seem that the internet has moved from being a predominantly English language medium to a more multilingual one, but there still seems some way to go before we can say that the internet is truly multilingual.

Finally, corporate media do seem to indicate the importance that corporations attach to being seen as cosmopolitan, understood as having a global reach, serving customers in all parts of the world, while at the same time being seen to be sensitive to local issues and cultures. For some industries, particularly the finance industry and the airline industry, cosmopolitanism seems to indicate on the one hand a desire to be associated with a global elite of frequent travellers and those who aspire to a global lifestyle; on the other, corporations are aware of the negative connotations of being too exclusively associated with this elite. In their symbolism, in other words, corporations have to face in both of these directions, a strategy which can be termed 'glocalism'. As part of this glocalism, companies have increasingly realized that it is insufficient to communicate in the lingua franca English alone, although English may have a positive cosmopolitan connotation among those who wish to be seen as part of a global elite, but also to localize their communication into other languages, including those languages which may only appear 'peripheral' when judged solely from point of view of the numbers of speakers.

## **Managerial implications**

This chapter has provided guidance for managers on how to target cosmopolitan consumers based on their usage of media. The first approach to doing this which is examined is based upon media form: media users are more likely to be cosmopolitan on the basis of what *form* of media they use. Users of the transnational broadcast media, internet and social media, on this view, are more likely to be cosmopolitan to the extent that they use media which, by their nature, are more likely to encourage a cosmopolitan attitude, as these media circumvent the national sphere and allow the formation of a global consciousness.

The second approach to targeting cosmopolitan consumers on the basis of media examined is that based on media *content* and *mode of presentation* of the world rather than form. On this view, by examining the content of any particular medium, for instance the degree to which reporting of the foreign or global affairs is given prominence over domestic affairs, we can decide how far this medium is likely to be read or viewed by cosmopolitan consumers. Online newspapers, for instance, despite being global in form, may not be global in content; in fact there is some evidence of the phenomenon of 'hyperlocalism', that such media are becoming increasingly parochial rather than cosmopolitan.

A further theme of importance to managers in the chapter is that cosmopolitans are probably not created by media. In other words, to target cosmopolitans by media usage, we need to know something about their use of conventional media such as books and newspapers, travel habits and political outlook, as well as their predilection for new media. In this sense, media are just an opportunity for existing cosmopolitans, whose horizons have already been broadened by perhaps by upbringing, education or travel, to further develop their cosmopolitanism.

Managers of corporations, however, need to consider the negative implications of too closely and solely targeting and identifying with the global elite in their marketing strategies and corporate



media. The cosmopolitan elite has a negative image in many parts of the world, and a more profitable media strategy, the chapter argues, is 'glocalism', in which companies publicise their cosmopolitan credentials, yet at the same time display sensitivity to local issues and cultures, thus not alienating those consumers who might view global corporations negatively. An important aspect of this, the chapter argues, is language. Managers need to be aware that communicating with consumers in English alone is unlikely to be sufficient in an age where multilingualism on the internet is on the increase: that locals, and also perhaps cosmopolitans, increasingly prefer to be communicated with in their own language.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> McLuhan and Zingrone (1997), p.127.
- <sup>2</sup> Toumlin (1990).
- <sup>3</sup> Harvey (1989).
- <sup>4</sup> McLuhan and Zingrone (1997), p 127.
- <sup>5</sup> Robertson (2010).
- <sup>6</sup> Debray (1996).
- <sup>7</sup> Rantanen (2005), p.24.
- <sup>8</sup> McLuhan (1964), p.8.
- <sup>9</sup> McLuhan (1964).
- <sup>10</sup> McLuhan (1964), p.172.
- <sup>11</sup> McLuhan and Zingrone (1997), p.138.
- <sup>12</sup> McLuhan (1964), p.177.
- <sup>13</sup> Robertson (2010), p.133.
- <sup>14</sup> Hannerz (1990), p.238.
- <sup>15</sup> Anderson (2006), p. 24.
- <sup>16</sup> Anderson (2006), p.33.
- <sup>17</sup> Anderson (2006), p.35.
- <sup>18</sup> Anderson (2006), p. 33.
- <sup>19</sup> Rantanen (2003), p. 437.
- <sup>20</sup> Hannerz (2004), p. 85.
- <sup>21</sup> Hannerz (2004), p. 34.
- <sup>22</sup> Berger (2009), p. 357.
- <sup>23</sup> See Herman and Chomsky (1998), Van Ginneken (1998), Volkmer (1999).
- <sup>24</sup> Anderson (2001), p. 4.
- <sup>25</sup> Said (1979).
- <sup>26</sup> Rantanen (1997), p. 605.
- <sup>27</sup> Rantanen (1997), p. 608.
- <sup>28</sup> Rantanen (2003), p.441.
- <sup>29</sup> Szerzynski and Urry (2002), p. 467.
- <sup>30</sup> Urry (2000), p.5.
- <sup>31</sup> Goldman, Papson and Kersey (2003).
- <sup>32</sup> Urry (2000), p.6.
- <sup>33</sup> Billig (1995).
- <sup>34</sup> See Beck (2002), (2004), (2011).
- <sup>35</sup> Beck (2011), p. 1350.
- <sup>36</sup> Beck (2011), p. 1354.
- <sup>37</sup> See Baudrillard (1994), (2001), and Virilio (2002).
- <sup>38</sup> Hammond (2008).
- <sup>39</sup> Bauman (1995), p.178.
- <sup>40</sup> Boltanski (1998).
- <sup>41</sup> Chouliaraki (2006).
- <sup>42</sup> Chouliaraki (2006), p. 97.
- <sup>43</sup> Chouliaraki (2006), p. 157.
- <sup>44</sup> Robertson (2010).
- <sup>45</sup> Robertson (2010), p. 101.
- <sup>46</sup> Rantanen (2005).
- <sup>47</sup> Rantanen (2005), p. 55.
- <sup>48</sup> Rantanen (2005), p. 126.
- <sup>49</sup> Jeffres et al. (2004), p. 14 (the authors here use the term 'cosmopolite' to connect the modern internet user to the original Ancient Greek word).
- <sup>50</sup> Jeffres et al. (2004), p. 14.
- <sup>51</sup> Beaudoin (2008).
- <sup>52</sup> Beaudoin (2008), p. 459.

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- <sup>53</sup> Beaudoin (2008), p. 462.  
<sup>54</sup> Thurman (2007), p. 286.  
<sup>55</sup> Thurman (2007), p. 287.  
<sup>56</sup> Thurman (2007), pp. 291-295.  
<sup>57</sup> Berger (2009).  
<sup>58</sup> Berger (2009), p. 364.  
<sup>59</sup> Berger (2009), p. 363.  
<sup>60</sup> Crystal (2001), p. 217.  
<sup>61</sup> Crystal (2011), p. 79.  
<sup>62</sup> Crystal (2011), p. 80.  
<sup>63</sup> Crystal (2011), p. 82.  
<sup>64</sup> Everett (2009), pp. 30-48.  
<sup>65</sup> Yang (2003).  
<sup>66</sup> Koller (2007).  
<sup>67</sup> Koller (2007). p. 127.  
<sup>68</sup> Koller (2007), p. 127.  
<sup>69</sup> Goldman and Papson (2006).  
<sup>70</sup> Goldman and Papson (1996), p. 14.  
<sup>71</sup> Goldman and Papson (2006), p. 345.  
<sup>72</sup> Machin (2004).  
<sup>73</sup> Machin (2004). p. 330.  
<sup>74</sup> Thurlow and Jaworski (2003), p. 600.  
<sup>75</sup> Kelly-Holmes (2006).

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