

The Foundations of Forming Media Culture and Media Education Among Youth

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Abstract

This article examines the foundations of media culture and media education, particularly for young people, in the context of the modern information age. The author traces the evolution of "media culture" as a concept, noting its emergence in the 20th century and its direct link to mass communication tools like printing, radio, television, and the internet. The text highlights how these tools, initially seen as neutral transmitters of information, have become central to the spread of "mass culture." Drawing on the work of scholars like Marshall McLuhan and Walter Benjamin, the author explores the transformative power of media, arguing that while it expands access to information, it also has the potential to erode traditional cultural values and critically-reasoned consciousness. The article concludes that given the pervasive nature of modern media, it is crucial to cultivate media literacy and a critical media culture among youth to help them distinguish between genuine cultural values and ideological threats. The author stresses the importance of using media consciously and critically to protect spiritual and moral foundations.

Keywords Media culture, media education, youth, information society, digital media, cultural values.

Introduction

Any developed society, at whatever stage of its development, serves to meet the desires and needs of humanity. Thus, every era, during its development, creates various forms of culture. These forms, in a certain sense, are able to satisfy human ambitions and demands. As we live today in the information age, which is the expansion of the mass communication system, the media world — consisting of emptiness and boundlessness — holds significant importance. "Media culture" is considered one of the modern forms of culture that emerged in the 20th century and advanced further in the 21st century. If we focus on the word "media," it is derived

from Latin ("media," "medium") and means "means" or "intermediary." The term "media" and "media culture" was first used in the 20th century by Canadian sociologist Marshall McLuhan to describe the phenomenon of mass culture. That is, "media" appeared as a characteristic of the technical products of mass culture and served as a mean to deliver these products to the awareness of consumers. The term "media culture," as a continuation of modern cultural theory, refers to a specific form of mentality in an information-based society. Until recent time, concepts such as mass media and mass communication tools were widely used in scientific practice. At the same time, the term "mass media" was employed in the West. The emergence of this phenomenon led to the formation of the modern media environment, the media market, media management, and the new media reality. In all cases, this process influences our social interactions and enables us to fully comprehend the concepts of "media" and "media culture", as well as to define their role in the contemporary era.

Before identifying the formation and functions of media culture, it is necessary to address its essence and content. Media culture is the totality of information and communication tools developed by humanity throughout cultural and historical development, which shape an individual's social consciousness and socialization. As is well known, mass printing, photography, telegraph, telephone, and radio (later, television) are considered phenomena of the 20th century. Alongside these, the emergence of libraries, theaters, publishing houses, cinemas, and television studios — which laid the foundation for "mass literacy" — also falls within this context. Over time, with the advancement of technology, cable and satellite television, video, computer channels, the internet, digital cinema, email, mobile communication, and DVDs were introduced. As a result, the formation of a planetary global consciousness began and started to advance. Therefore, all of the above-mentioned tools are considered integral components of the media environment.

In the process of its formation, media culture performs two main functions:

- the transmission or presentation of information;
- the reception of information.

It is evident from this that media culture, alongside society itself, is a significant dynamic factor in its socio-cultural modernization.

At this point, it is necessary to clarify one important matter: what is the connection between “mass culture”, which is the object of our research, and media or media culture? As noted above, the scholar Marshall McLuhan used the terms “media” and “media culture” to illustrate the phenomenon of “mass culture”. This raises the

question: in what sense? The phenomenon of “mass culture” is directly linked to the media environment in the process of its formation and development. In disseminating mass culture products to the population, the technical and electronic tools that are part of the media environment serve as the main means of delivering those products to consumers. However, it cannot be claimed that only positive influences reach the human mind through these tools. Not all information within the media environment yields beneficial results. Today, in particular, there are numerous forms of ideological threats among such influences that negatively affect the consciousness of young people. In this process, the most important factor in preventing negative effects within the media environment is the formation of media culture in youth — aimed at the conscious and critical use of media products.

To achieve this, we must first briefly address the scholars who have conducted scientific research on the formation of media culture. In the 20th century, a number of Western scholars carried out research on media and media culture, including T. Adorno, R. Arnheim, A. Bazin, R. Barthes, W. Benjamin, J. Baudrillard, J. Derrida, G. Deleuze, M. McLuhan, H. Marcuse, S. Žižek, J. Ortega y Gasset and M. Foucault. Likewise, over the past 15 years, a number of Russian scholars have also contributed to this field, including E. Vartanova, A. Grabelnikov, I. Dzyaloshinsky, Y. Zasursky, V. Livshits, K. Rozlogov, A. Fedorov, M. Fedotova, A. Sharikov and G. Yushkavichus.

In the mid-1930s, Walter Benjamin presented a number of ideas concerning the influence of the media environment on artistic culture. Alongside addressing socio-theoretical issues, he also proposed solutions to the problems faced by contemporary art and artistic criticism. According to the scholar, the media environment plays a significant role in the destruction and disappearance of the authentic atmosphere surrounding original works of art. This influence can be observed in the following aspects:

- the growing potential for unlimited technical reproduction in contemporary art;
- the disappearance of ontological and social boundaries between originality and reproduction.¹

It is evident that, as a result, concepts such as genius, the eternal mystery of art, and artistic value lose their significance. Moreover, the traditional and unique techniques of reproduction are replaced by mass replication. In this context, the individual consumer is replaced by the culture of modern mass consumption. The work of

¹ Benjamin, W. *Proizvedenie iskusstva v epokhu ego tekhnicheskoy vosproizvodimosti: Izbrannye esse*. Moscow, 1996.

Canadian sociologist Herbert McLuhan is considered significant in this process. He is regarded as one of the media theorists who reexamined the history of culture. The scholar placed great emphasis on analyzing tools associated with the cultural sphere. McLuhan was among the first to use the term “media”, which has since been widely adopted by cultural theorists, sociologists, philosophers, and journalists to define various means of communication. McLuhan began his scholarly activity in the 1950s–60s, a period when cultural studies demanded special attention and detailed textual analysis. During that time, along with his interest in language and rhetoric, McLuhan also began to reflect on the world of “totemic media,” one of the forms of mass culture. According to him, “By the mid-20th century, America had fallen under the influence (hypnosis) of luxurious voids such as cinema, advertising, comics, pop music, and the world of human passions.”²

In his book “Understanding Media”, McLuhan writes the following about “means of communication”: “Means of communication do not refer only to mass media. At different times, scholars have included various phenomena under this term: electric light, spoken language, letters, roads, clothing, cities, money, clocks, comics, books, advertisements, modes of transportation, photographs, games, the press, typewriters, radio, television, and so on. However, what unites all these is media. That is, these technologies connect humans with the surrounding world through media (means).”

³ According to McLuhan, media from the outset captures the consciousness of the consumer and immerses them into a world of illusion. This influence, in turn, can lead to profoundly serious negative consequences. As media continues to evolve, it ultimately causes a kind of *amputation* of human consciousness. In the process of consuming media culture products, a person's human abilities go beyond their natural limits, and the individual acquires an “alienated logic” — a logic that is far removed from human reasoning. In such a condition, the person becomes spiritually fragile. During this process, the individual deceives themselves without fully understanding what is happening in their consciousness. In other words, a person becomes intoxicated by the limitless opportunities offered by technological machinery. In this state, they resemble a Narcissus who, gazing optimistically at his reflection in the water, loses himself entirely.⁴

During that period, McLuhan’s typology of culture radically transformed the entire theory of official culture. Initially, the scholar began writing about the problems associated with the emergence of mass communication tools and how they can lead

² McLuhan, M. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. Moscow; Zhukovsky, 2003. – p. 83.

³ McLuhan, M. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. Moscow; Zhukovsky, 2003. – p. 83.

⁴ McLuhan, M. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. Moscow; Zhukovsky, 2003. – p. 84.

to the disappearance of traditional culture. However, over time, as technology advanced day by day, he gradually abandoned these ideas. He began to consider the mediation of media products in delivering mass culture to consumers as a normal process and paid little attention to its negative aspects. Later, he made no distinction between authentic and artificial culture. As a result, he began to calmly write about how the humanistic ideals characteristic of the 20th century were turning into false representations. This marked the beginning of McLuhan's shift toward viewing mass culture as a new phenomenon — not with hostility, but with curiosity. According to him, no matter how much one resists these processes, mass culture will inevitably penetrate through the media environment. People, over time, gradually adapt to these developments. It is only natural for anyone reading McLuhan's views to be astonished, because if this situation continues, the disappearance of spiritual consciousness and humanistic values in society becomes an inevitable reality. However, McLuhan offers a different response to this process. He argues that in order to prevent the erosion of national values within humanity, it is necessary to be intellectually enlightened — not only within society but also within the media world.⁵ Time has confirmed the validity of the views expressed by this renowned Canadian sociologist. Even today, one of the key tasks remains to cultivate intellectual awareness among youth within the media environment — that is, to foster media culture. This means that when young people use television and the internet, they should actively seek out information that benefits their moral and spiritual consciousness. In this process, it is of great importance that youth learn to distinguish between genuine cultural values and the "false" culture, as well as the ideological threats that serve to undermine moral and spiritual foundations.

References

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