

## Media and Globalization and how the concept of “cultural imperialism” could be applied to the Disney Animations

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There is no globalization without media and communication but this relationship is often overlooked. Media always acts as a bridge interconnecting the world with many different cultures. Globalization is based on the concept of Marshall McLuhan’s “Global village” describes cross-border relations between countries, highlights the electronic media and technology that rapidly integrating the planet, thus events in one part of the world could be experienced in real-time from the others, as a result, the world become more integrated. The hybridization or fusing of

different cultures all over the world, mixing and representing these into certain dominant forms of media representation result in media globalization and multiculturalism. However, owing to the diversified cultural and historical origins of different countries, the problem of cultural imperialism generally arise leading to the domination and homogenization of Western and American cultures owing to western colonialism influence.

Cultural imperialism can be defined as one specific culture controls or forces its own ideologies onto other cultures through the use of the media. It is also refer to Westernization or Americanization because western values are now dominating the recent cultural industries, being forced and imposed on non-Western societies to which they are spread most especially by the mass media leading to homogenization of world's diversified cultures into western ones thus destroying indigenous tradition of other parts of the world. The global flows of information are mostly believed to be a one-way traffic from "the west-to-the-rest" on one hand due to the historical colonist background that helps imposing their own culture on the others, and on the other hand owing to the technological mediated commodities that rely on the most modern and sophisticated machineries in transmitting media messages, and the growth of cable, satellite TV and internet lead to a globalized world that rely heavily on technological communication systems. Unfortunately, these technological devices are held by the west thus result in western domination. The third reason is that the expansion of media conglomerates such as Rupert Murdoch News Corporation manipulates the media industries and spreading western ideologies, although it gives rise to multinational communication media and cultural industry, the root is from the west and responsible

for mediating Western popular culture to the others and results in Western dominance.

Some people may argue that although the main media products are from western countries, the idea of western cultural dominance no longer important due to the rise of eastern powers for example Hong Kong and Japan. The global culture is forms of differentiation and hybridity rather than western homogenization as there are positive cultural exports between the west and non-west. The changes of traditions are only a form of cultural change within the region to meet the people's need and not related to cultural imperialism. In this aspect, indigenous traditions are represented as cultural business emphasizing its own uniqueness and the cultural text could be combined to form another forms of transnational culture and powerful media geolinguistic regions could be act as a protective barrier in order to preserve their indigenous cultures.

Globalization also leads to media convergence as a result of rapid flow of materials across national borders. It suggested that media flows are multidirectional ongoing process with variety of meanings ascribed to image at various sites of consumption. World's culture is marked by organized diversity rather than replicated uniformity. The term pop cosmopolitanism refers to similar transcultural flows of popular culture inspire new forms of global conscious and cultural competency and neither is neither "global village" nor "media imperialism". The global entertainment market is still dominated by America but other forms of cultures can also evolve so that it can still be popular within certain groups. Notions of cultural domination still presence but in a complex manner in forms of corporate and grassroots convergence.

Corporate convergence is a form of Capitalist convergence that shows the interest of corporate

giants in multinational conglomerates. These giants acquire media companies in different countries to ensure the niche distributor status, therefore the global circulation of national products is usually connected to national pride as cultural products are spread from the dominator to others. Therefore indigenous cultures become capitalized, losing their fragrance uniqueness and follow the odorless marketing trend and standardized forms of production. Grassroots convergence is related to hybridization, transculturation and immigration flows between indigenous and introduced cultures. This new vernacular culture encourages broad participation, grassroots creativity, and a bartering or gift economy however, there are always misappropriation of cultural traditions as powerful culture always exercising power on the weaker together with the shade of “Orientalism”, the understandings of a little understood culture is filtered, simplified and exaggerated within Western consciousness. The corporate hybridity usually forms a “combination platters” that depends on consumers having competencies with little knowledge in indigenous traditions and thus indigenous traditions may not be presented accurately on the media.

Disney animations are always suspected to impose cultural imperialism. The first approach to analyse is the market domination. According to some search, seven of the top ten selling videos in the world are Disney animations and Disney itself conglomerate with Time Warner AOL and become one of the largest media corporations that dominate the media, there is no room for other companies to compete with Disney, Disney’s dominance is secured through its selective application of technology and technique which other companies don’t have such a large financial aid to achieve. Moreover, Disney’s animation product usually more favorable than indigenous products for

example Macmug is not as popular as Mickey and there is very little presence for indigenous products in the global market, peer pressure is also an important reason of Disney domination. Even though Disney have competitors, all of them are American based and culture imperialism is strengthened by cross promotion of similar American products. Secondly, Disney is blamed for selling all-American fun, it is a symbol of ever-expanding capitalist Americanization. Enormous popularity of American products pose a threat not only to a nation's domestic industries but to its cultural traditions and Disney expected to promotes negative stereotypes pigeonhole individuals of race, for examples in Mulan(1998), the characters other than Mulan are ignoramus and blindly follows what the emperor said, promoting the messsage of againsting traditions are heroic but it surely not the truth but promoting American ways of thinking and American superiority instead and create a “spontaneous” consent based on American direction. This is an example of strong cultures to take advantage of the weak destructing the diversity and homogenized forms of creativity by imposing American lifestyle on other countries. Disney construct “mutually reinforcing products” all management refer to the Disney mode of production but not in orginal local practices, even though the product is co-operated with people of different races, the preliminary designs of have been worked out by Walt Disney promoting the Disney own value but not the orginal cultural value from the story. Disney anime are also accused of elimination of cultural diversity, Mulan story originally praise the filial piety of Fa Mulan, however it becomes a love story and only shows the heroic nature on the film which is an American interest, the underlying meaning from the myth is totally ignored. The appearance and even the process of thinking of character also changed by

Disney in which it is much similar to the white Americans than their own race. It is dictated to the hard facts that have created by Americans with shadow of Orientalism. Moreover, Western style internal decorations and atmosphere is promoted, decreasing the originality of different cultures for example the firework shows at the end of Mulan(1998) surely not original Chinese culture. Finally, cultures are not as hybrid as stated, traditional culture like Confucious ideas are not compatible and understandatable by the west easily, even they are understandable, some may completely contradict to the dominant western ideologies, as products are flow from the west to the rest, historical values will be eliminated by the western powers. Although hybridization is the main trend, unique national cultures are still very important.

To conclude, I believed that Disney animation is a kind of cultural imperialism, hybridization or glocalization cannot act as a solution, they only serve as tactics to lower the degree of influence but problem of cultural imperialism still exist though varies from place to place depends on other cultural factors.

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