Mirrors or Movers? II

Understanding the impacts of media content

June 5-6 2014, BBC Old Broadcasting House

Summary Report

Introduction

What you are about to read is the summary of the second Mirrors or Movers? conference, held at the BBC, central London in June 2014.

The event was organised by the three European Media CSR Forums. Collectively, they constitute a group of over 30 global media companies working together to address their impacts on society and the environment.

We believe that picture – the social and environmental impacts of media - is only complete when we also consider content; what is printed, broadcast or put online. As one TV executive once put it: "Our biggest emission is our programmes".

The question then is whether media companies should take responsibility for the social (and environmental) impacts of their content? Is that part of what a responsible company should do?

In 2013, the Forum produced a Report – Mirrors or Movers? Framing the debate about the impact of media content – which began to explore whether and how media content shapes society. The title was taken from one of the arguments advanced against this idea: media doesn't change society it just reflects it back to itself as it is – it is a mirror, not a mover. But the report set out five distinct 'modes' by which media does 'move' society (explained on the following page).

At the same time, the Mirrors or Movers report also acknowledged the important questions this raises: the need to preserve editorial independence from corporate interests, the democratic legitimacy of private media companies, and the fearsome difficulties of measuring and managing these impacts. It acknowledged the delicacy and difficulty of these questions, but suggested that this was a topic which couldn't be ignored.

All of those positions and more were confirmed by the 2013 Mirrors or Movers? conference which led to tremendous discussion and a clear sense that we were 'on to something'.

The conference in numbers

- **2** days of presentations and debate
- **4** panel sessions
- **11** speakers
- **15** minutes of trending on Twitter (#MirrorsOrMovers)
- **107** delegates from **34** media companies

So we returned in 2014 to continue the conversation. Day 1 focused on three distinct issues – 'Women and media', 'Environment and media' and 'Privacy and media' – rather than on the five modes themselves. Each had a panel with distinguished speakers to give their perspective on the topic, followed by time for lively discussion. The final session heard from two experts on the practicalities of measuring impact. Day 2 was reserved for Forum members to discuss where to go next. The Media CSR Forums would like to thank the speakers and all who took part for making the event so fascinating and valuable.

But we see the event itself as just another point in an ongoing dialogue – and to help continue that we have produced this written summary of Day 1, along with three short films. The topics raised will form the agenda for future Forum discussions as media companies respond to the challenges put to them by our panellists. And we welcome inputs from all interested; via Twitter (#MirrorsOrMovers) and by email (mediacsrforum@carnstone.com). We hope you enjoy the report as much as we enjoyed the event.

The speakers

We were fortunate to have 11 experts share their views on the state of the debate related to the subjects up for discussion. They were…

Women and media

Tracy Corrigan
Digital Editor
The Wall Street Journal

Tami Hoffman
Interviews Editor
Sky News

Harriet Minter
Head/Editor of Women in Leadership
The Guardian

Session 2
Environment and media

Arlo Brady
Managing Director of Corporate
The Brewery at freuds

Emily Shuckburgh
Head of Open Oceans
British Antarctic Survey

John Vidal
Environment Editor
The Guardian

Session 3
Privacy and media

Rachel Oldroyd
Deputy Editor
The Bureau of Investigative Journalism

Javier Ruiz Diaz
Policy Director
Open Rights Group

Matt Rogerson
Head of Public Policy
The Guardian Media Group

Insights session
Measuring media impacts

Caroline Nursey
Executive Director
BBC Media Action

Jonathan Simon
Director
Inflection Point

The modes

The speakers' insights often reflected one or more of the five modes outlined in the 'Mirrors or Movers' report. Below is a recap of the modes and we've included the icons in the summaries that follow to indicate where they featured in the discussion. Silencing and amplifying are two sides of the same mode.

Questioning
Challenging existing practices and structures in society, highlighting adverse effects and bringing to light hidden information which leads to subsequent changes in policy or behaviour.

Silencing
Ignoring or restricting voices on certain topics, events or groups, knowingly or not with the effect of creating a particular representation of society which differs from the reality…

Campaigning
Deliberately taking a partisan stance on an issue, topic or product with the explicit aim of selling, changing behaviour or raising money.

Amplifying
…or, conversely, giving disproportionate voice to or coverage of certain topics, events or groups, again creating a particular representation of society which differs from the reality.

Inspiring
Stimulating action via changed perspectives, alternative futures or by highlighting different ways of behaving.

Normalising
Introducing or legitimising forms of behaviour that may otherwise be unknown or marginal.

Women and media

Gender representation in media is certainly not a new subject of debate. Since second-wave feminism in the 60s much has changed, but women remain under-represented in many areas of public life.

This panel brought together women from behind the news on-air, online and in print.

Redefine expertise

Huge under-representation of women in many fields is a real barrier to having women 'experts' on screen, for example a debate on the budget pits a male chancellor against a male shadow chancellor. A piece on air travel can only draw from 4% women pilots. We need to be imaginative to bring in women's voices to these stories, perhaps looking instead at people affected by the issue or with a different type of 'expertise'.

> At the current rate of progress it'll be 14 more elections or 70 years before Parliament has an even mix of men and women.
>
> - Tami Hoffman

> Women often turn down invitations to appear (even on their subject of expertise) more often than male equivalents.
>
> - Tami Hoffman

Front page news

- 84% of news quotes are from men
- Men represent 84% of people referred to, and of the 16% women, most were victims
- 78% of by-lines from men

'Seen but not heard: how women make front page news' (2012), Women in Journalism

Embrace personality diversity

It's not just a gender diversity challenge, it's a personality and background diversity challenge. Does the culture in media companies allow for a range of personality traits to thrive? Why shouldn't media companies tap the non-university educated labour market and train them up?

> One of the biggest shortcomings is a failure to get women back on the career ladder after maternity leave.
>
> - Harriet Minter

(Some) change is here

We're starting to see some of the powerful ways in which social media shapes the way stories are reported. Two recent examples: Jill Abramson's sacking from the New York Times became a debate about the description of female management styles by the media; the Santa Barbara shootings in the US became a debate about violence against women. The stories developed with a gender focus in ways that they might not have before the social media age.

Did you know?

We tend to see anything above about 30% representation of women in a group as 'equal' or balanced. It clearly isn't!

- Harriet Minter

Rapporteur – Jeremy Wickremer, Transformational Media Initiative

Tami Hoffman spoke about how women are perceived on TV news and the diversity of guests. Harriet joined in giving the example of a recent story on breast cancer where the expert voices had been two male oncologists. She questioned who has the expertise and who has the relevant voice. Tami said that female contributors for Sky News had risen from 20 - 35% over the last two years, but that it was still difficult to find female experts for certain issues. For example, there are no former female chancellors, and only 20% of the BMA are women.

From her experience she also noted that men were more forthcoming when asked to be a contributing expert. Whereas women more frequently questioned their ability to be an expert on a subject, men were much more likely to have the confidence or perhaps over-confidence to step forward and present themselves as experts. Women, probably rightly so given audience scrutiny, had concerns over their appearance when speaking on TV.

She said that the problem was not just restricted to gender and was also a question of diversity. On Budget Day, thinking about who was affected, it only seems right to have a diversity of experts and voices represented. It also made commercial sense thinking about the channel's audience which is 50% female and a high percentage of youth viewers.

Harriet, from the Women in Leadership initiative at the Guardian, raised the question of there being a prescriptive attitude to the type of person desired by news agencies. She suggested that it's ok not to have a degree if you want to be a journalist. She spoke about the need for positive examples like Arianna Huffington and Sheryl Sandberg and how they had successfully brought feminine qualities to their roles, perhaps in contrast to female leaders such as Margaret Thatcher who was famous among other things for her lack of sleep. Arianna has just brought out her book Thrive, championing the qualities of intuition, wisdom and nurturing. Sheryl is well known for leaving work behind at 5:30pm each day so as she can spend quality time with her family. Clearly, there is a need for modern news organisations and their audiences, who expect 24/7 coverage, to allow for a work life balance where family priorities can be catered for.

The overall consensus was that while progress had been made on the issue of women in media there was still much to do. Media was credited as having great potential to bring the equality issue forward, but also the reality was that that the issues in media to a large part merely reflect the state of equality in society as a whole.

What's the problem?

On-screen and off-screen diversity go together. More senior women in media will change the representation of women on screen and in print.

There are many internal barriers to female representation in media companies. Discussion covered the competitive and combative news culture, the pressures of the 24 hours news cycle on family life, not enough role models and the high numbers of women who don't return from maternity leave.

> #MirrorsOrMovers Tami Hoffman "Diversity is not a box ticking exercise it makes good commercial sense. Half our viewers are women"
> - @FiFiball

> Tami Hoffman from Sky: news is one of the few places where we can show women not as heiresses, models or surgery addicts.
> - @Hodgson_Simon

Conclusions

The dominant modes here are **amplifying** the under-represented voice of women in the media and **normalising** women's role in public life and the upper tiers of media companies.

- Finding female experts and encouraging them to speak.

- Testing the internal culture to ensure all personality types can contribute and thrive.

- Understand the 'loss points' where women leave the industry.

--- Challenges to media companies ---

- Finding good (often informal) metrics to measure female representation

- Testing internal policies to tackle the barriers to women rising to the top in media

- Covering gender issues without normalising female stereotypes ("heiresses, victims and surgery addicts")

Environment and media

Media faces a number of challenges when covering the environment: the complexity of science reporting, perceived lack of interest from audiences, the challenge of providing balance, and choosing how best to frame the subject.

This panel brought together a climate change scientist, a journalist and a marketer.

A mirror of the future

All the scientific evidence points towards a future deeply affected by climate change. But science also tells us that despite time running out, we do have a choice, as nations and individuals. Media is very good at connecting us to distant worlds, so why isn't it harnessing that creativity to connect us to our possible futures? If the media was able to simply reflect back to us the consequences of our choices today it would affect behaviour without needing to take a moral or editorial position. The media should point its mirrors towards the future.

> The media needs to engage us on climate change, not because of a moral imperative, but simply to remain relevant to its audience.
> - Dr Emily Shuckburgh

> By shining its mirror towards the future, it can help connect people with the actions they need to take @emilyshuckburgh #MirrorsOrMovers
> - @Hkingaby

> Environmental challenges will be tackled by technology rather than media-led behavioural change.
> - Arlo Brady

It's intertwined with every essential media subject area

Environmental reporting is an all-encompassing subject: it reaches to the heart of politics, culture, science and economics. Media companies should focus on the opportunities it brings to enrich their content, rather than delivering negative headlines casting doubt on the scientific facts. Journalists, we lead the debate and we hold it back.

> Journalists are hardwired not to think about the future even though it's their job to do so. It's an abnegation of duty but this in part explains the lack of coverage on environment.
> - John Vidal

Mainstream media risks becoming irrelevant

The future promises ever-increasing data flows – who is seizing the opportunity to curate it? Self-curation is set to become the norm with technology companies as the media titans of the future. In this world the most creative stories will be the ones that get heard, regardless of where from or their accuracy. Huge datasets give unparalleled opportunity for environmentally smarter lifestyles.

Rapporteur – Jon Alexander, The New Citizenship Project

For me, there were three key points:

Firstly, as an industry we're not getting it right yet, and we're not on a good path. Brady was outspoken on this point: beyond the improvements driven by technology, he challenged the group, has the quality of output of the media industry really improved in the last 10, 20, even 30 years? His key point was that the media needs to remember its key public purpose – whether commercially owned or not – in holding government and business to account. This must go deeper than Vidal's protestation that merely by documenting the advance of climate change, journalists are fulfilling their moral duty and creating political space.

This brings me to my second reflection – that we seem to dramatically lack the ability to have a moral conversation. All three of the panellists shied away from levelling a charge of moral responsibility at us as an industry. And this it seems to me is symptomatic of the wider society. The idea of morality is almost impossible to discuss. Yet at the end of the session and the day, I was left pondering – if we cannot have a moral conversation, if we are really just looking at the profit margin to tell us what to do, how are we ever going to face into these challenges?

My final reflection, prompted by the question and answer session, is rather more positive: at the end of the day, this is going to be about people, and that has to engender hope. As Brady put it, "organisations don't have morals, people have morals." It was clear that in the room there was massive energy for a different way of doing things, one that embraces our moral agency as individuals and sees us explore that agency in our professional lives – and find far greater fulfilment as a consequence. The people who work in the media industry are creative, energetic, and thrive on change.

So I came away feeling there is a major step change still required. But also, looking around the room, I could clearly see the potential for that change to be driven in the media industry and beyond.

> Media must cover environmental issues to give legitimacy to politicians to act, otherwise nothing will happen - @john_vidal #MirrorsOrMovers
> - @4Talks

> How can soaps, sitcoms, children's tv, drama play a role in reflecting what's going on in environmental issues asks #MirrorsOrMovers
> - @WIJ_UK

Be positive, be creative

The panel and audience agreed that 'doom and gloom' has had limited success in engaging audiences on environmental issues. It requires imagination and creativity to bring these issue to life for audiences – a quality media companies have in abundance.

Conclusions

This debate was mainly about **inspiring** – the media reflecting back to us different possible futures and encouraging us to think differently.

- The environment, science and the possible future impacts are tremendous fuel for creativity and a rich source of content for the media. And yet it doesn't seem to be engaging with these topics.

- It's not just about news and current affairs. What we see in comedies, soaps and the weekend colour supplements all **normalise** environmental issues in a powerful way.

--- Challenges to media companies ---

- How can we engage creative colleagues to explore possible environmental futures?

- Do we understand what is 'normal' environmental behaviour and are we properly reflecting this in our content across all genres?

- How can journalists overcome short-termism to understand and communicate environmental issues?

Privacy and media

The issue of privacy affects not just media content but also how that content is made. Conventional media business models are under pressure and the sector's response is to explore new revenue streams, often based on holding and using consumer data. But society's views on this topic are unformed and changing fast. Even if these models are legal is the sector bleeding its most precious commodity – the trust of audiences?

The panel included a privacy campaigner, an investigative journalist and a head of corporate affairs.

Enemies at the gate

Why does the media do such a bad job covering the issue of privacy? Is it too complex to explain? Are the media and privacy in fact natural enemies? Is the industry already too complicit in the data economy to be impartial? It is worth considering whether media could play a role in providing a mechanism for greater transparency around this issue.

> This topic is exploding. The media needs to prepare for explosions if they are not looking.
> - Javier Ruiz Diaz

> #MirrorsOrMovers Javier Ruiz Diaz, Open Rights Group: "No common agreement on definition of privacy" pic.twitter.com/gUJC1L1tSq
> - @HamishPringle

Risks and revelations

The value we as individuals place on privacy is changing. We are increasingly prepared to exchange our data for immediate gain, though do not fully know what our data is being used for, nor aware that our own governments use this data. This has an impact on the level of trust between user and the media company, and thus poses a business risk. Online surveillance is a huge threat to independent journalism. There's a strong case to say journalists should be protected from 'collect it all' surveillance.

> Trust is the issue. Corporations need to focus on this more. We will request more transparency on this topic.
> - Rachel Oldroyd

> The right to be forgotten ruling will have profound effect on govts & organisations says @Raoldroyd in #privacy debate #MirrorsOrMovers
> - @WIJ_UK

Surveillance and spies

The response to the Snowden revelations in the UK has been relatively muted. Is this an inherent trust in our government? A sense that surveillance stops terrorism? Or even a romantic view of spies thanks to James Bond? Though users may not react to increased use of data and surveillance, Brussels and the EU will. Media users benefit from tailored content based upon our online profiles. But the flip side is that increasingly we are shown content we like, instead of content that challenges us.

> The reaction to Snowden was that 'our boys' crossed the line. This debate goes to the heart of democracy.
> - Matt Rogerson

Rapporteur – Katrina Crossley, Reed Elsevier

Privacy in the digital world, as a subject for the Media CSR forum, is relatively new. We have looked at the technical and legal implications of the increasing volume and complexity of data media companies collect, and what compliance frameworks we need as a minimum. But there is an ethical framework around privacy that media companies need to explore and come to terms with if we want to maintain the trust of our consumers, whether that relates to what we do with data, how transparent we are and what we report on. And yet we want/need to create new business models, and big data is being lauded as the land of opportunity. So are privacy and media natural enemies?

This is the conundrum the privacy session attempted to unpick. It rightly felt uncomfortable. Media companies are conflicted: we report on and advocate for personal freedom, yet need big data to support new business models. The debate showed pretty quickly that before we even get to what the role of the media is, which 'norm' for moving is relevant here, our response is first and foremost as citizens. To that extent, the media may only be mirroring the wider societal response to privacy.

One thing is sure – there are new competitors for media companies. Telecommunications companies are also exploiting big data and offering new content from insights. And marketers are using content to grow business. New content models and news tools abound. Yet citizens increasingly want more transparency and the ability to control their digital footprint – this means that it is critical to get right the data relationship media companies have with their consumers. All of this bubbled to the surface of the discussion as we grappled with what this means for us as citizens and our own personal take on our digital future.

The subject of privacy is complex; we don't fully understand the implications for ourselves, let alone the businesses we are in. And there were many areas we did not have time to consider during the panel discussion. How reliable is big data anyway? Are we being seduced by it? And what of the more positive, as yet uncharted, possibilities: the role of 'data for good' and the potential big data has to play in driving positive societal change, for example in better understanding environmental impacts or sharing insights to fight disease. These are all areas where media companies can move the debate and start to question – if not inspire for a better future through their own considered use of big data. Privacy and media now feel like natural enemies – the challenge we have started to explore, and we need to keep returning to, is how we can at least be uneasy bedfellows.

> The media cannot be consistent on an issue that is fluid.
> - Javier Ruiz Diaz

> The privacy debate sounds like it suffers from the same as sustainability: cognitive biases and complexity! #MirrorsOrMovers
> @Hkingaby

Scary, fluid and poorly understood

The debate on this topic was different from the others, conducted mainly at the level of individuals reacting personally to the thought of their own data being misused. The issues were complex and the public's reaction was mainly guessed at. There was distrust of government activity and important questions over protecting investigative journalism.

Conclusions

There were fewer conclusions in this debate, but all agreed that the media has an important role in **questioning** how data is used and by whom:

- The media needs to report more on this issue – a challenge when it is such a tricky topic.

- Media companies must reflect on how their own interests may be affected by this topic and be alert to conflicts. Many are using increasing amounts of personal data for commercial gain.

- Public perception of the topic is very unformed, and there may well be 'nasty surprises' ahead.

--- Challenges to media companies ---

- Users want to feel in control of their data and are smarter than we think. Are media companies transparent enough with users about the data they collect and how they use it?

- Is there social benefit to a tailored media experience online, or does it restrict users from that which surprises them?

- Are we protecting the data that we hold as well as we possibly can?

Measuring media impacts

Discussing the impact of media content is not complete without considering how we actually measure media impacts. Two practitioners, one working in international development, the other with media companies and brands in the UK, gave their insights on the opportunities and challenges.

Methods for measurement

It is a challenge to isolate the impact of specific programmes, given the plethora of messages impacting individuals. However, measurement against specific indicators can be done, both qualitatively and quantitatively, and it is important to use both. BBC Media Action has great case studies showing how those exposed to a programme are more engaged with the topic as a result. In 2013 alone, more than 60,000 people took part in our media impact research.

> BBC Media Action does not directly shape or move the debate. It invests in platforms for people to engage in the debate.
> - Caroline Nursey

> Jonathan Simon looks at scale of consumption, intensity & durability of impact when measuring effect of media content #**MirrorsOrMovers**
> **@WIJ_UK**

Measuring the Buzz

When measuring content impacts it is important to consider the timescales. Immediate impacts may be transitory and not long term behavioural changes. Integrated analytics using different media platforms can be used to gauge who viewed a programme and their reaction, along with what they and their friends are discussing online, which can give insight on the depth of impact. This 'Buzz score' is used by Channel 4 and Manchester City FC. It is, however, still difficult to compare impacts across different platforms and benchmark them against each other.

Measuring normalisation of behaviours

Measuring content impacts are most effective when media is aiming to campaign or inspire. However, to measure whether content has led to long-lasting positive outcomes requires measurement over a long period of time. This is can be costly and difficult to understand in a saturated media landscape.

> We need to consider the dimensions of public and private values and explore impacts that relate to those values. What is important or valuable to you?
> - Jonathan Simon

Conclusions

- It is quite possible to measure the impact of content – both qualitatively and quantitatively. But it's expensive and requires effort and investment.

- It is much easier to measure the impact of content which is designed to produce a desired outcome – principally in the **campaigning** and **inspiring** modes.

- Using multiple platforms reveals deeper insights into the impact of media content, e.g. using social media and search terms to understand the immediate effect of content.

- There are lots of opportunities for media to measure its positive impact, but what about the negative impacts of content?

Reactions

Caroline Nursey: Measuring the impact of the BBC's international charity

http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/aboutthebbc/posts/Measuring-the-impact-of-the-BBCs-international-charity

Rebecca Myers: Should the media mirror society or try to move it

http://wannabehacks.co.uk/2014/06/10/should-the-media-mirror-society-or-try-to-move-it/

Victoria Knowles: Could the imposter syndrome be responsible for the lack of women in media?

https://www.2degreesnetwork.com/groups/2degrees-community/resources/could-imposter-syndrome-be-responsible-lack-women-media/

Promoting Women in Culture: Vivendi's cross-cutting ambition

http://www.vivendi.com/press/news/promoting-women-in-culture-vivendis-cross-cutting-ambition/

The Media CSR Forum

The Media CSR Forum is a partnership between 24 leading media companies, spanning the full range of the media spectrum, from scientific publishers to advertisers. Established in 2001, the Forum provides a platform for members to share and promote best practice around social and environmental performance, through meeting with stakeholders, joint research and other sector initiatives. Sister forums also exist in France (Media RSE Forum) and the Nordic countries (Nordic Media CR Forum).
www.mediacsrforum.org