

The role of mass media during pandemic: Informative or Spooking ?



“ A democratic civilization will save itself only if it makes the language of the image into a stimulus for critical reflection – not an invitation for hypnosis.”

Mass media has been playing a very vital role since the world witness its technological reformations. Millions of people are connected to mass media, it helps in organizing public opinion, influence the way people look at the world. We all know this, right? But now lets see the mass media through the lens of pandemic.

The Good!

Lets get rewind ourselves back to 1918; what happened in that dark year? The 1918 flu pandemic, infected a third of the world's population. People didn't have the same sources of communication we now have in the 21st century to quickly share news and information. For context, a [public health report](#) on Minneapolis's response to the 1918 flu shows that critical information regarding the virus was primarily shared via postal workers, Boy Scouts, and teachers. Can you imagine having learned about COVID-19 from a Boy Scout knocking on your door, encouraging you to wash your hands? With the advent of social media in the 21st century, not only are we learning the latest news updates, but we're also using platforms like Facebook and Twitter to provide personal and business updates. Social media platforms has been used to reach out every required information to people, number of professional athletes, celebrities and influencers have spoken up urging people to stay home and follow the norms stated by government. People are more inclined to listen to the high-profile figures quarantining themselves. Sitting

in our couch we can access the whole world at a fingertip; what else magic it could create!

The Bad...

Polarization of perspectives, politicization of vital information and pandemic coverage in the right-wing and left-wing media-spheres, create havoc among the citizens waiting for credible and reliable information on a vital outbreak that impacts on their lives, families and livelihoods. With the essential news, mass media also sugarcoat things. The algorithms that shape what we see on social media typically promote content that garners the most engagement; posts that draw the most eyeballs get spread farthest. Researchers say that model is partially responsible for the spread of misinformation and sensationalism online, since shocking or emotionally-charged content is especially good at getting people's attention. Various journalist has molded the real scenario and showcased it in front of the viewers. The spooking attitude like this creates adverse effects which sometimes explode in the form riots, racism, anger etc.

Conclusion.

We can never declare mass media mostly technology oriented, as totally right or totally wrong; mass media is for the people and by the people so we are going to find the traces of spookiness in this image of information. But at the same time I believe it's not necessarily a problem for people to be nervous, so long as that anxiety motivates them to prepare and stay safe, and they don't cross into a full-blown panic. Oftentimes we think anxiety is a bad thing, but sometimes it's an appropriate response. This does not mean that creating the wrong fierce atmosphere under the umbrella of covid-19 will be tolerated; being attached to the fact it can never be stop but for sure can be effectively reduced.

STAY HOME STAY SAFE.