# Democratization of Information in Malaysia:

# A Response to Globalization

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**Abstract**

Globalization and building of knowledge societies demand higher access to information. Besides investing in appropriate infrastructure and facilitate media literacy, countries must also ensure better access, availability and quality of information to their population. Malaysia has taken the necessary steps to democratize information by enacting several liberalization policies, commercialization of media stations and deregulation of telecommunication industry. To foster a role for media in the democratization of information, Malaysia ensure easy access to information for civil and political participation, guarantee the no censorship of Internet, and create capacity to create knowledge in local dialects.

**Keywords:** Media use, Globalization, Democratization, Knowledge society

## 1. Introduction

In this era of global connections, the advancements in communication technology have resulted in greater access and information flow "from, into and between" countries that are either developed or developing. Held and McGrew (2007) regards globalization as a one sided process that is capable of reinforcing if not extending the already unbalanced power and wealth both between nations as well as the various sectors in a nation. Since today's media is a powerful industry with transnational interests and importance, the preponderant flow of information from western societies to the rest of the world has engaged the western media in issues of cultural hegemony. It is for this very trait itself that several countries especially those that are in various stages of development have taken measures to safeguard their national interests.

Malaysia, with her growing economy and her young multi-ethnic and multi-religious population of which 49 percent is below the age of 35 is a keen participant in the global arena but nevertheless, she is not without reservations. The lessons of colonialism and the information imbalance that forwarded the cultural imperialism debate of the 1980's have guided her current efforts. The national agenda of Vision 2020, that was enunciated in 1991 typifies this cautious outlook. The Vision is the super-ordinate policy aimed at creating an informed and knowledgeable society within the framework of local values, spirituality and culture. This policy with its multi-prong strategies is the prime mover that will ultimately place Malaysia among the developed countries by the year 2020.

This paper firstly seeks to explicate Malaysia's efforts in the democratization of information and secondly, to relate these strategies with the responses of a survey conducted among young adults that gauge their responses on the current transformations in the local communication landscape.

## 2. Knowledge societies and democratization of information

At the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Ministerial Round Table on "Towards Knowledge Societies" (October. 2003), there was a strong commitment toward the improvement of the quality of life and achieving an equitable and peaceful global community. It was acknowledged that the building of knowledge societies is an essential means to achieve these objectives. It is also an effort to humanize the process of globalization. Thus, knowledge societies will have the capabilities to identify, produce, disseminate and use information to build and apply knowledge for human development. Abdul Waheed Khan (Burd, 2005) noted that 'the knowledge in question is important not only for economic growth but also for empowering and developing all sectors of society', But at the same time, efforts must be made to ensure that marginal and disadvantaged populations must be given due access to such knowledge.

With the latest development in technologies, it is recognized that information and communication technologies (ICT) are two essential ingredients for the building of knowledge societies. Thus, all sectors must be given sufficient infrastructure and connectivity besides making sure that such facilities are affordable. In reality, investment in telecommunication infrastructure is much lower in poor urban areas and rural regions than it is in the urban and wealthier areas. Servon (2002) highlighted that the same places that are characterized by economic poverty also tend to suffer from information poverty, whereby it develops a pattern in which inequalities in physical and electronic spaces mutually reinforce one another.

Hamelink (2004) suggested that the bridging of knowledge gaps or inequality of access to technologies is not about the consequences of development divide, but rather the lack of political will from the majority of nation-states. The national government should have a road map with regard to their policies, infrastructure development and regulatory provisions that will spur the sustainable development of knowledge society. Policies such as liberalization of the telecommunication sector to encourage private sector participation in the delivery of value-added services will certainly have a long term effect on providing accessibility to information and communication technologies.

The issue of universal access to information and knowledge has been a point of contention between developed and developing countries in the UNESCO General Assembly debates. This condition is critical not just for the creation but more so for the sustainability of the knowledge societies. At the Ministerial Roundtable of October 2003, this clause was again highlighted. Discussions revolved around the notion of access to content and to information and communication technology including its technical know-how.

Every individual must have similar opportunities to gain access to information in the public domain. In order to achieve that, countries must invest in the appropriate infrastructure and facilitate digital literacy among their population. The electronic revolution has promoted the diversification and democratization of information as people in nearly every country are able to communicate their opinions and perspectives on issues, local and global, that impact their lives. However, this development by itself is problematic as there continued to be disparity between and within countries with regard to the capacity to invest in the necessary infrastructure by national governments. This is coupled with the unending issue of "information poor and information rich" among the various strata of society throughout the world. As of 2009, North American has an Internet penetration of 69 percent of its population, compared to 3 percent in Africa, 10 percent in Asia and 15 percent in Latin America (World Internet Usage, 2009). Malaysia has Internet penetration of 65 percent as of Jun 2010.

Universal access also means ensuring affordable access to a wide range of content. Thus, countries must be willing to allow their corpus of information to be accessed by all in the public domain. This process involves the issue of translation of information into several identified languages as well as the sensitive issue of national secrets. English is the main language of Internet. About 30 percent of Internet content is written in English compared to other languages such as Chinese (14 percent), Spanish (8 percent) and French (4 percent) (World Internet Usage, 2009). Another significant point to this issue is the enabling of citizens to access and create knowledge in their own languages and within their cultural framework.

The role of information and communication technologies in shaping cultural and civic discourse would include not just computers and the internet but other media technologies such as broadcasting media and telecommunications. In lieu of that, subsequent discussions on Malaysian response towards democratization of information must address the following issue within the context of their socio-cultural framework:

- democratizing of the Malaysian communication industry
- fostering media role in the democratization of information

## 3. Democratizing of the Malaysian communication industry

The democratization of Malaysian communication industry includes the enactment of several liberalization policies, commercialization of media stations and deregulation and privatization of several telecommunication companies. To ensure the industry helps promote the national policy objectives, Communication and Multimedia Act 1998 was enacted to replace the Telecommunications Act 1950 and the Broadcasting Act 1988. The new act was necessary because the communication industry is an evolving industry in which the traditionally stand-alone industry such as broadcasting, telecommunication and computing are now converging.

Malaysia had started to liberalize the media industry in the mid 1980s predominantly with the setting up of a first commercial television station TV3 in 1983 (Rahmah, 1992). Prior to that, there was only government run broadcasting stations. As of June 2010, there are 6 free-to-air TV stations (2 public stations RTM1 and RTM2, and four commercial stations TV3, NTV7, TV8 and Channel 9). In addition, the satellite TV station ASTRO is providing a direct-to user service, which carries 80 channels ranging from sports channels (such as ESPN and Star Sports), educational channels (such as Animal Planet, Discovery), movie channels (such as HBO, Cimenax, Star Movies), to entertainment channels (such as MTV). Another pay TV service, MiTV which offers about 40 channels was short lived due to lack of subscribers. Launched in September 2005 with pogrammes from content provider worldwide, its operation was suspended in October 2006 (www.MiTV.com).

The greater dominance of the commercial and satellite stations has undoubtedly marginalized the role of public broadcasting. This has caused concern to the government with regard to its ability to disseminate information to the multiethnic population especially with regard to development and ethnic-relations oriented message. The station audience base has been reduced to largely rural and older age group. On the other hand, the terrestrial commercial stations, which attract younger and urban audiences provide competitive programming so as to stay ahead of competition. The Astro station which has been in existence for the last 15 years, claimed to have 2.93 million subscribers representing a 49 percent penetration of Malaysian TV households (www.digitaltvnews.net/content). Although the industry as a whole has provided a substantial increase in the number of hours of airtime, the issue often asked is whether it is providing a more diversified programming and alternative sources of information?

Programming in local TV stations is a mixed of programming coming from various countries and languages. Besides the heavy dependence on western imported programs, the stations are showing programs from Bollywood, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and lately telenovelas from Latin America. Samsudin (2008) shows that programmes from Western countries mainly Hollywood production, and East Asia (Japan, South Korea) dominates the programming. Hindi and Tamil programmes comes next and followed by Indonesian programmes. The Malaysians are also hooked onto the reality TV craze that has swept audiences worldwide. Programs like *American Idol, Survivor, Weight Loss* and *The Amazing Race*, attracts the Malaysian audience in the comfort of their homes. The satellite television news channel provide alternatives news source coming from *CNN, BBC World* and *Al-Jazeera.*

In the same vein as the above discussion and in anticipation of the impending challenges of globalization and the convergence of communication technology, several initiatives were promoted to encourage ownership of computers and access to the Internet. Internet penetration in Malaysia has increased from 3.7 million in 2000 to 16.9 million in 2009, an increase of 356 percent from the year 2000. Based on population, internet penetration increased from 15 percent in 2000 to 65 percent in 2010 (MCMC, 2010)

To take advantage of the computer technology, computer education and literacy programs have been promoted through school and community network. Realizing the challenges of digital divide, efforts are being made to make people in rural areas more accessible to computer technology by providing public access computer facility. In a smart partnership, the Malaysian Commission for Communication and Multimedia (MCMC) in collaboration with Pos Malaysia, the national postal service and TMNet the nation's largest ISP to establish Rural Internet Centers in rural communities. The Government through MCMC has set up Community Broadband Centers (CBC) to provide collective community Internet access to underserved areas identified under the Universal Service Provision (USP) programme. In 2007 the Government of Malaysia has set its target for broadband whereby the country is to achieve 50 percent household broadband penetration by the end of 2010.

To ensure that the population enjoyed maximum benefits of the computer technology, the government has initiated and implemented several flagships such as e-government, e-banking, e-commerce, e-health, e-learning, smart school etc. so as to make the technology as part of their daily life. Now more and more people are able to perform their daily business on-line in the comfort of their homes, schools or offices. The government has taken steps to improve the related infrastructures to ensure easier and faster access to the Internet. To this effect, with

only one initial service provider, Jaring which was government run, Malaysia now has several other entities that provides internet services such as Maxis, TmNet, Nationcom, TimeNet, and DiGi. According to Malaysian Communication and Multimedia Commission (2009) the affordability factor and bridging the digital divide is being improved by developing various incentives to reduce the broadband access costs and widening the community access.

## 4. Fostering a role for media in the democratization of information

History has taught us that countries would go to great lengths to protect their borders from foreign intrusion. The Chinese built a momentous great wall to keep out intruders. National governments took steps to curtail undesirable foreign materials through censorships. While national security is still the priority for national government to protect their interest, yet we have seen a more flexible outlook with regard to information flow across borders. Instead of outright actions to curb information flow, more efforts are now being put to counter the information received with better access, availability and quality of local information. This is to ensure that the citizens have better choices of information.

With the national policy objectives clearly spelled out, the Malaysian authority has made several policy implementations so as to realize their goals. As such, the initiatives toward fostering a role for the media in the democratization of information include:

- easy access to information for civil and political participation
- no censorship for Internet
- access and capacity to create knowledge in local languages within cultural context

### 4.1 Access to information for civil and political participation

As it is, the Malaysian communication and multimedia landscape has changed drastically over the last twenty years. From mass access information through broadcasting services, the population now has wider option and alternatives to get access to their information requirement. In the early 1980s when one has only the government run public TV station as their source of news and current affairs information, now they have wider choices from the commercial stations and satellite stations which carry news and public affairs discussion over *CNN, BBC World, Al-Jazerra*. As alternatives, they have on-line newspaper such as *Malaysiakini* and *Malaysia Insider* which provides independent and critical news and commentary on current issues. In addition there are numerous blogs with political inclination that provide alternatives views and comments. It was argued that the battle for the young voters in November 1999 and March 2008 general elections was won by swing votes of young voters who have access to the Internet through many websites that offer alternatives news and commentary compared to the mainstream newspapers and TV stations (Kee, 2008; Samsudin 2008). The bloggers community, which was treated with distrust and even contempt before the last general election, has gained a measure of respectability, with the ruling administration admitting that failure to engage the netizens was a factor in *Barisan National Party*'s poor showing at the polls (*The Sun*, May 31, 2008). About 42 percent of internet users are younger generation below the age of 25 years.

Internet and the SMS has empowered the citizens in their decision-making. Complaints about the government and its elected officials can be made through the new technology. Access to the prime minister, chief ministers and other officials can be made at the touch of a finger. The opposition parties such as Democratic Action Party (DAP) and Social Justice Party (PKR) have incorporated the new technologies as part and parcel of their integrated campaign strategy initially in November 1999 and gain higher momentum in March 2008 general election. Realising the power of the new technologies, more government and political leaders are now actively communicating their views on Internet.

Almost all the leaders of the ruling and opposition parties have now become bloggers expressing their views which were much more than covered by the mainstream media. Even the Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak himself now has his own blog and face book account. The most notable success of them all is the former Prime Minister, Tun Mahathir Mohammed whose blog which until September 2010 had a total of 31.5 million visitors. Despite the hiccups and governmental intimidation of bloggers, blogging promotes democratization by enhancing the civil liberties of Malaysians, and helps to frame the discourse and agenda for public policies.

In addition to Internet services, access to information has also making easier through the short-message services (SMS). Access to news, stock market, examination results, banking services are at the customers fingertips. The developmental effort in the telecom sector has resulted in a booming mobile market with more than 30 million subscribers and a penetration of 106% at the start of 2010. In 2003, it was reported that Malaysian had sent 1.996

billion SMS by some 11.2 million owners of cell phones (Utusan Malaysia, July 21, 2004). However by 2009, Malaysians who have been big adopters of SMS, sent an estimated 100 billion SMS.

The younger generation who formed a large segment of cell phone ownership was involved in choosing their favorite stars through SMS in reality TV programs now acquire a sense and feel of freedom and control over their decisions. *New Straits Times* (2004) commented on the political undertones of the reality show. It is an exercise of participatory democracy of sorts where viewers get to vote to help determine the winners. Although their participation in real civic and participatory democracy is still limited, nonetheless the new freedom and control over their decision continues even to the recent reality show where young *imans* or leader of prayers were chosen through popular voted through SMS.

*4.2 No censorship for Internet content*

To make a clean start, the Communication and Multimedia Act noted that there is no censorship on the Internet. Individuals are free to access and post any information on the websites. To add credibility to the policy of no censorship of Internet, the then Prime Minister Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohammed announced that the Malaysian Government would not even censor pornography as long as it was for private viewing, and added that there were ample laws in Malaysia to deal with distribution of smut. However, 13 years later, Dr Mahathir has changed his mind and is now calling for censorship of pornography, citing advancements in technology as his reason for changing his mind. According to Tun Dr. Mahathir, 'Moral decay should not be allowed to be promoted. Certainly, moral decay should not be speeded up via Internet." (*The Star*, 2010)

With regard to censorship, the government has shown tolerance by permitting websites though critical of the government policies such as *Malaysia Insider, Malaysia Today*, *Malaysiakini*, and the on-line newspapers enjoys substantial followers for its critical commentary and alternative news source. Even with regard to pornography, the government has resorted to parental guidance and media education. The current Prime Minister, Dato Seri Najib assured the public that 'government will not censor Internet' referring to the government 1996 pledge to keep Internet uncensored (www.msnbc.com July 2009). Instead the government is encouraging parents to use Internet filters to block pornography and online scams. The statement also allay fears among opposition groups that the government might use Internet filter similar to 'Green Dam' software to block dissent on blogs and independent news web sites.

The Malaysian Multimedia Super Corridor Corporation (MSC) which ensures the no censorship of Internet under its Bill of Guarantee No. 7 interprets the no censorship of Internet as follows:

*While the Government will not censor Internet, this does not mean that any person may disseminate illegal content with impunity and without regard to the law. To the extent that any act is illegal in the physical world, it will similarly be outlawed in the online environment. Hence, laws prohibiting dissemination of, for example, indecent / obscene or other illegal materials will continue to apply. In this regard, relevant ministries and agencies will continue to take appropriate actions and enforce those laws that are under their respective purview.* (www.mscmalaysia.my)

The government position on internet censorship stands. However those who posted any information on Internet that are threatening to national security or touches on sensitive issues as prescribed in the constitutions that touched on the status of the Malay rulers, the status of the national language and the special rights of the Malays and the natives will be dealt under existing laws such as the Internal Security Act, Press Law and Publications 1984 and the Malaysian Communication and Multimedia Act of 1998, and Seditious Act

On March 13, 2009 six bloggers were arrested for writing critically about the Sultan of Perak, one of the nine Malay rulers. Under the headline *Blogger rapped for posting insult to Islam*, The Straits Times (2004) reported that a blogger was warned by the government for insensitive comments on religious issues and the possibility of him being detained under the Internal Security Act. Four internet content authors were charged for spreading rumors via e-mail about an imminent riot by Indonesians guest workers in Malaysia (*The Straits Times*. 2004). On September 25, 2010, Malaysiakini cartoonist Zunar was arrested under the Sedition Act and police seized 66 copies of his *Cartoon-o-phobia*, a collection of political cartoon (Sunday Star, 2010)

*4.3 Access and create knowledge in their own language and cultural context*

Easy flow of information and media programs across national borders in the age of globalization should not constitute laissez-faire flow without any restriction. In spite of its positive contribution such as accelerating the creation of knowledge society, many national governments feel the need to protect their cultural identity. Bowes (1981) suggested that government should be more cautious in expanding the media because "information pollution will spread just like industrial pollution". As such inflow of foreign content in local media network

should be checked to ensure that globalization will not lead to total dependency on foreign media content which will lead to de-localization in social and economic exchanges. Furthermore, UNESCO sponsored Action Pelan on Cultural Policies for Development (1998) recognised the principle that "the defense of local and regional cultures threatened by cultures with global reach must not transform the culture'

The Ministry of Information (MOI) in the 1980s had a guideline that TV stations should have at least 80 percent local content by the year 2000. As of 2010, the quota for local content has not been achieved. This is due to the rapid increase of airtime with the introduction of new channels, lack of incentive for local production houses to produce programs for TV stations and it is cheaper to buy foreign programmes.

With the shift of regulatory authority of private media to the new Ministry of Information, Communication and Culture, there has been no announcement of new policy with regard to a more viable local content ratio in the local public and commercial media. Until now TV3 only has 40 percent local prgrammes. Nonetheless for TV3, most of the top 10 programs are locally produced programs. Even the satellite television channel has to carry local programs. Out of the 80 channels currently being offered, at least four channels *Ria, Awani, Prima* and *Warna* are designated for local production.

The main issue is how local production provides diversity in programs to allow for better alternatives in choices. Going by the programs that have been on the air, it seems they offer many hours of air-time, yet they did not offer real choices. Many of the locally produced programs are low quality on budget productions such as game shows, entertainment talk shows, documentary, and dramas. Although these productions will not meet the standard of the country's elite, nonetheless it is accepted by the masses and gives them the freedom of choice.

As for the advertising industry, the current policy in force is to have at least 70 percent of local content in advertisements. The main aim is to promote local identity and encourage the growth of local advertising companies. The Malaysian consumer forum has initiated the idea of abolishing the 'Made-in-Malaysia' guidelines for advertisement as well as quota for local content for TV stations. Whether the call for liberalization of content get a favorable response from the authorities is yet to be seen. The authorities still believe that unregulated and liberalization of content would not be the in the best interest of the country, culturally, politically and economically, Since advertisements are seen as effective instruments for persuasion, it is felt that the advertisements should reflect the culture and the citizen of this country. Liberalization of advertisement would in a way distort public perception of the society.

Of late, commercials stations have been airing foreign advertisements such as *Toyota, Lux, Ravillion*, and *Visa* although there is no official shift in policy with regard to foreign advertisements. With more international brands and advertising, will it be possible to isolate such advertisements? These stations have indeed challenged the advertisement guidelines and waiting for the government's next response. While the government more or less adheres to the democratic principles, nonetheless there is a desire to maintain some form of national identity. Efforts at restricting the foreign advertisements onto local broadcast stations is more of an act to position the country in search of identity than action to curb free market enterprises and curtail individual decision to make a choice.

With regard to Internet, while access has increased drastically to 16.9 million (population of 26 million) in 2009, it does not correspond with the increase of the local websites especially those using the national language. Although there is no exact figure about the number of local websites, the language issue is important. There is a tendency that those who are less proficient in English will have limited access to information on the websites as English is the language most used on the websites. As of now, Internet subscribers are more skewed towards the young, urban, educated and working professionals. The report further stated that,'… further accentuating the existing disparities such as low internet uptake among Malays, low affinity of poorer states for new technology, the young and educated folks showing greater interest than the older generation'.

The government is addressing the disparity in Internet access so as not to repeat the current economic disparity that the government is trying to address through the New Economic Policy (NEP). The New Economic Model (NEM) launched in March 2010 will rectify all short comings that hinder the achievement of a more equitable distribution of economic and social benefits to all strata of Malaysian society. One recent effort is to make all schools as smart schools instead of providing facilities to newly built schools that have been identified as smart school. Through the school system it is expected to have the 'trickle-down' effect by creating a larger base for computer literacy cutting across ethnic and regional barriers.

## 5. A changing communication landscape: young adult response

In order to gauge the process of democratization of information as undertaken by the initiatives cited in the preceding discussion, a survey of 2000 young media users between 15-25 years old was conducted by the authors during February-May 2008. The main objective of the study was to determine the pattern of media use among the young generation in Malaysia and their perception of several initiatives taken by the government to regulate the communication industry.

The finding indicates that there is high access to media among the younger generation. 100 percent of the respondents have access to free-to-air television, 75 percent have access to satellite television channels, and 92 percent admitted they have access to personal computers and internet. This is a marked increased in young adult access to satellite television and the Internet from the 2000 data. A study by Latiffah and Samsudin (2001) showed that only 25 percent have access to satellite television and 35 percent have access to Internet. It seems that cheaper prices of computer and easy access to broadband networks had encouraged more young people to gain access to Internet.

The Internet is a multipurpose medium, more or less catering for the various needs of the surfers. While TV audience had not many choices in the selection of programs depending on what are being offered, the web surfers could tailor their needs accordingly. On this basis, higher percentage of the young generation very frequently surf the entertainment websites (54 percent) compared to those who frequently surf sports website (27 percent), the educational website (22 percent) or the science and technology websites (22 percent). It seems that many young adults regard internet more as an entertainment medium rather than as source of information to enhance their knowledge.

With regard to the government policy on 80 percent local content on TV, a high percentage of 84 percent are in agreement with the policy while 16 percent strongly oppose to the policy. On the issue of having 75 percent of local footage in advertisement, 85 percent of respondents are agreeable to the idea while only 15 percent opposed to it. The finding indicates that while the young generation accept the new era of globalization and accept the inflow of foreign programs on local TV stations, there are sizeable number of them who are of the opinion that there should be some kind of censorship and control of foreign programs. This could also be seen as their democratic rights to preserve their tradition, values and customs from infringement of foreign values.

The respondents were asked further about their sources of news. Television is still predominantly their source of information compared to Internet. Television was frequently used by these young adults as their source of information (85 percent), followed by newspaper (80 percent), radio (57 percent) and internet (51 percent). When probe further whether they trust the news they get from the various sources, 74 percent stated they trusted television news, 48 percent trusted the Internet news and 70 percent said they trusted the newspaper news. In spite of growing popularity of Internet as source of news, television remains as the most credible source of news.

When asked would they prefer censorship of foreign programs/content on television, 89 percent agree to censorship while only 11 percent strongly against it. In spite of their age and expectation of a more liberal outlook, it is surprising that a high percentage would agree with imposition of censorship on foreign programs. However, with regard to Internet censorship, 65 percent agree with the government initiative not to censor materials on the Internet. This is in contrast with televisyen programs where a high percentage prefers some kind of censorship being imposed on foreign programs. This could be due to Internet being audience-centered technology where young adults feel that they should be in control as to what kind of materials they wish to access.

In relations as to who should be responsible to safeguard societal values and morality, 89 percent of the young adults are of the opinion that the government should assume the guardianship of public values and morality. Even though young adults feel that they should be given more control of access to information and media content, yet in the final analysis they consider the government as the main custodian of tradition and values of society.

With regard to the language used in surfing the Internet, 55 percent used English and another 32 percent used Malay language and the rest used other languages. Since there are many websites in English compared to other languages, those who are not proficient in English, will be at a disadvantage. They will be limited in the choices and alternatives, since they are bound by their limited proficiency in the international language. It is for this reason that there is a need to develop more websites using dialects.

### 6. Conclusion

It is not easy for Malaysia to embrace the incoming agencies of globalization. Malaysia has always taken a more cautious approach about opening herself to the world. Her citizens have always been reminded that globalization is not necessarily good for all countries. There is a need to look at the context of each country before they could gain positively from globalization.

Globalization has brought about liberalization and deregulation of communication industry. Developing countries like Malaysia are cautious about the possibility of unregulated and ownership of the industry. Communication industry being an important industry is needed as a tool for development as well for democratization of society. A laisser-faire approach to the industry would simply leave the direction and role of the industry to the market forces. Censorship of foreign materials and infusion of more local content in the industry is necessary to give purpose and direction to the industry in nation building. Given the situation, the expansion of the communication industry, easier accessibility to various medium of communication and availability of variety of information has indeed shown an effort to democratize information. It is our hope that this effort of democratization of information will translate into knowledge and therefore close the knowledge and economic gaps in Malaysian society.

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Table 1. Exposure to TV Programs

|  | Europe/ America % | China/ Taiwan % | Korea/ Japan % | India % | Latin America % | Thai/ Indonesia % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Less frequent | 12 | 21 | 31 | 44 | 42 | 50 |
| Frequent | 40 | 39 | 40 | 39 | 41 | 32 |
| Very frequent | 48 | 40 | 39 | 27 | 17 | 18 |

Source: Samsudin 2009

Table 2. Internet Penetration

|  | 2000 | 2005 | 2009 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Internet subscribers (to ISP) | 3.7m | 10.0 m | 16.9 m |
| Population | 24.6 m | 26.4 m | 26.1 m |
| Percentage of internet user from total population | 15% | 37.9% | 64.6% |

Source: MCMC 2009