GLOBAL MEDIA, DAILY LIFE AND PERCEPTIONS OF CULTURAL CHANGE IN BHUTAN

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Declaration

Statement of Originality

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being made available for loan and photocopying subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

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22nd September 2009
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Abstract

Using a constructivist epistemology and following the model of duality of structure proposed as part of Giddens’s (1982) theory of structuration, an ethnographic approach was undertaken using in-depth interviewing to analyse perceptions of change in Bhutanese society, following the introduction of television. Twenty seven in-depth interviews were conducted with Bhutanese participants across a range of occupations, age groups and locations. Within limitations researcher observation was undertaken in addition to the collection of documentary evidence from the field. Field interview data was transcribed verbatim and themes and ideas were established and categorised. A triangulation style of evaluation used data from the in-depth interviews plus documentary evidence, including audience studies from Bhutan. Analysis was undertaken of participants’ perceptions of changes to daily life from before the introduction of television to after television had been integrated into the majority of urban households. Two major quantitative studies were used to compare the findings. The primary research question was: how has the introduction of global media changed local forms of communication and culture from the perspectives of Bhutanese people?

Multi channel international television was introduced into Bhutan in 1999 as part of the Kingdom’s drive towards modernisation and move to become more integrated into the global economy. At the same time the local public broadcasting organisation, the BBS, introduced a local television station. Prior to this Bhutan did not have television and most Bhutanese people lived in isolation with very little contact with, and knowledge of, the world outside their country. Bhutan is a small Himalayan Kingdom with a high proportion of the population not literate. Therefore, the electronic media plays an important role in educating, informing and entertaining the population. However, while television was provided by the state at an affordable level, the internet has remained unaffordable to the majority of the population. The impact of the sudden introduction of globalised television content to the media naïve society is examined, as is the role of localism in the culturally diverse, multi lingual population.

Bhutanese people were found to value international content. Program preferences and the amount of viewing had significant impact on the actions of, and interactions between, people in their daily lives. Perceived changes in culture were attributed, predominantly, to the influence of television programs. Substantial changes to the rules relating to communication in households were identified, which had significant impact on the passing down of cultural heritage from the older generation to the younger. The introduction of new resources and decisions of individuals led to changes in the rules and structures of some aspects of society, which led to substantial changes in the daily lives of Bhutanese people.
1 Introduction

In many parts of the world over the past two decades, local radio and television stations, which provided local community-focused and produced content, have been bought by large media networks to provide national or international networked content. Over the same period of time mobile phones and internet usage have allowed people to be connected and form communities of interest across the globe. As a consequence, while people have the capacity to be more connected via media than ever before, they are also spending considerable amounts of time viewing, listening to and accessing media that is not connected with their local geographic community. This has the potential to reduce the communication between members of local communities, because they have less time to spend communicating at the local level due to the time spent using the increased choice of media content, and the media content they are accessing has less relationship to their local community than was the case in the past.

Producing local media content is expensive and in many countries or in many regional communities the expense of producing high quality local television content makes it uneconomic. In Asia the Anglo American content on satellite networks is competing with networked content from some Asian countries such as Korea, Japan and India to offer multi channel cable and satellite services throughout Asia. These services are very cost effective and compete with national or local stations for market share. Indian content has increased significantly in recent years and dominates the cable and satellite services in many countries in terms of the number of channels on offer.

Decline of local content

In countries, such as Australia, the UK and a number of European nations there has been concern expressed by media regulators about the decline of local content and consequent impacts that may occur in local communities. In these countries the concern relates to the increase of networked content which replaces local content delivered at the town, regional or in some cases national level. The concerns have predominantly been expressed in terms of local media content being replaced by networked media content. However, consideration also needs to be given to communication between individuals and groups at the local community level. Communication in local communities takes place in many forms, including through one to one conversations between friends, relatives and neighbours as well as at gatherings, social and sporting events and community functions in addition to business and religious activities. This is not meant to be an exhaustive list of local communication pathways, but rather illustrates that there are many additional forms of local communication in addition to the mass media forms of newspapers, radio, television, online or internet services and mobile phones.
With increased globalisation of media and increased choice in viewing and listening in deregulated markets, there is paradoxically a growing trend for reduced media presence in local communities and smaller local markets. As an example increased network ownership of local media stations across Australia has lead to significant reductions in local station ownership (Australian Broadcasting Authority 2002). Another critical factor for public broadcasting is the difficulty faced across the globe in gaining audience for programming that reflects local culture. Popular culture programming carried on networked stations has much stronger appeal to younger audiences. Many of the world’s public broadcasting organisations are not currently attracting audiences under the age of 40 for their mainstream local media stations, except in the case of specific youth program stations (McCluskey 2003 p 2). The program changes due to global media are particularly evident in news programming. The whole concept of news must now change as international and world news becomes increasingly more important than the traditional local news. However, this is not necessarily the case from the audiences’ perspective where audiences may rate local news as the most important. (McCluskey 2004) How the media professional of the future comes to grips with the new technologies available and how to put them to their best use for all concerned may present a major challenge in this (twenty first) century (Aycock 1999 p1).

The importance of local media content not only relates to changes in local communication and culture but also to the capacity of media to respond to issues of significance to a local community. Such issues may be local news and stories that warrant investigation, or could include significant community or commercial events relevant to a local community. Often in these cases networked media does not cover local issues or stories unless they can be seen as having relevance and interest to the wider community. In addition local emergencies and the coverage of local disasters both as a story and as a community service may not be undertaken by networked media unless the impacts of the disaster were on a scale of significance to the broader community, and even then, the coverage would not be directed at the local community in need of emergency information, but rather delivered as news to the wider community.

Research in Bhutan

The purpose of this study is to consider whether, at least in one media market, there have been changes in communication at the local community level brought about by changes in media content and consumption, and the cultural significance such changes could have within the community. Bhutan was chosen to undertake this study because prior to 1999, it was an isolated country with no television and only one local radio station. However, in June of that year international television was introduced with over 40 channels from the Asian satellite and cable network providers, along with one local Bhutanese station. It is important to note that the local station carried almost exclusively local Bhutanese news and information content while all international television
channels contained no content designed for, and almost no content relating to Bhutan - unless there was a story about Bhutan on one of the international channels and such stories were very rare.

Television was taken up by a significant proportion of Bhutan’s urban population very quickly, and access for additional rural communities has been progressively made available over time. This almost instantaneous introduction of media into the country provided an opportunity to investigate the changes that had taken place from the perspectives of adult Bhutanese in how they spent their time, how they interacted with one another, what they viewed and the significance of these changes for daily life and culture. While the internet was introduced into Bhutan at the same time as television, the cost of fixed landlines and computers has meant that apart from some wealthy members of the community and some business activities, the internet has not become widely used by well over 90% of the population (Kezang and Whalley 2008).

In 2006, when the field work for this study was undertaken, Bhutanese people had a clear memory of the time before television was introduced and could articulate comparisons with aspects of their daily life before and after television was introduced into their country. Two significant quantitative studies have been undertaken in Bhutan since the introduction of television into the country, one by Ehlers and Yeshi (2006) for the Bhutan Broadcasting Service Corporation (BBS) and another by the Bhutan Ministry of Information and Communications in 2003 and repeated in 2008 called the Media Impact Study (MIS). While the MIS did use focus groups to gather some qualitative analysis of people’s perceptions of media impact, neither of these studies undertook an in-depth analysis of how people perceived their daily lives and their communication had changed as a result of the introduction of television. No other major published studies relating to the impact of the introduction of television into Bhutan have been found.

In order to further develop the understanding of changes in daily life and changes in communication at the local community level in Bhutan I undertook an ethnographic study using in-depth interviewing of a range of participants involved in various professional and domestic activities across the country. The results of this study were then compared with the quantitative results of the MIS in 2008 and Ehlers and Yeshi (2006) to determine areas of consistency and difference.

The primary research question underlying this study was:

| How has the introduction of global media changed local forms of communication and culture from the perspectives of Bhutanese people? |

A number of subsidiary research questions are identified in chapter 3, Materials and Methods.
The study found that television viewing has significantly altered daily life and local communication from the perspectives of Bhutanese people and that international television viewing, particularly in educated people, has replaced many aspects of local communication. One of the most significant changes found was that the time people spent viewing television had replaced a range of other activities that had previously been undertaken as well as replacing the time people spent with one another in one to one or group communication such as discussions and storytelling. Aspects of local culture are rapidly changing and there was concern from many participants that some aspects of Bhutanese culture are at risk of being lost as a result of the influence of global content on television.

While these findings are specific to Bhutan, the increased access to networked and non local content could have similar impacts in many countries, notwithstanding the significant differences between Bhutan and other countries. Time spent accessing non local media has been increasing around the world in recent years, especially in relation to social networking and other online activities as well as the increased amount of networked television and radio replacing local stations, leaving fewer local media options for people in smaller or more isolated communities where market forces have meant that it is not economic to maintain a strong local media presence. In Bhutan, many changes in culture have been clearly evident to Bhutanese people because they are visible in terms of clothing, speech and day to day activities. Such visible changes may not be evident in many parts of the world where global media influences have been interspersed with local media content over a very long period of time. Nevertheless more subtle changes may be taking place in many local communities and further investigation is warranted to assess the significance of reduced local content and increased non local media consumption in other local communities and different countries.
2 Literature Review

2.1 International media comes to Bhutan in the 21st Century

Many countries around the world are rapidly developing into ‘media capitals’ (Mehta 2006 p 2) where mass media content from one country or region is so enormous that it transcends national boundaries to become global. Mehta describes the growth of China and India as ‘media capitals’ which are “powerful new centres of media industry and are reordering international global flows of information” (Mehta 2006 p 3). In many parts of Asia cable and satellite services are largely made up from Bollywood productions and multiple news and information channels out of India. These channels are readily available through pay services and in many instances can be made available free to air or at low cost, via redistributed cable content from regional or national television and radio providers. Mehta (2006) describes this swamping of local content from Indian and other international sources as a form of capitalist expansion leading to concerns in some countries over local cultural issues such as language and cultural identities.

One small country in Asia that has a significant level of international content readily available, predominantly from India, but also from the US, UK, Korea, Thailand, China and Australia is Bhutan. Journalists Scott-Clark and Levy (2003) reported on the very significant cultural change that had taken place since the introduction of satellite television into Bhutan. Prior to June 1999, Bhutan’s population did not have television or any local infrastructure for television production. Prior to 1999 one radio station existed in Bhutan and no other electronic media. The Bhutan Broadcasting Service radio station was started by a group of young radio enthusiasts in 1973 as Radio NYAB, the National Youth Association of Bhutan. BBS TV was launched on the 2nd of June 1999, coinciding with the Silver Jubilee celebrations of King Jigme Singye Wangchuck. It started with a daily one hour broadcast in Dzongkha and English in Thimphu. (Department Of Information Technology Bhutan 2005) The people of Bhutan were then given access to 46 channels on satellite TV. (Scott-Clark and Levy 2003) Since the introduction of television Scott-Clark and Levy reported that there has been a documented increase in crime, family break up and school truancy and the local press and some officials in Bhutan were attributing what they saw as a breakdown in traditional social values to the introduction of unedited and uncensored networked media. Much of the concern relates to young people who have been reported to have changed significantly in language, clothing and actions with behaviour mimicking television characters.

While some changes in the lives of Bhutanese people would be expected, it is not clear how similar their experiences have been to other communities where the introduction of global networked media has been a much more gradual process. Networked popular culture programming, especially
in radio, is replacing local broadcasting content in many communities around the world and creating social and cultural change as a consequence (Kottak 1990). This shift is seen as a major issue for broadcasters and media regulators, as well as the communities who undergo such visible changes.

However, with increased globalisation of media, increased choice in viewing and listening in deregulated markets, there is paradoxically a growing trend for reduced media presence in local communities and smaller local markets. As an example, increased network ownership of local media stations across Australia has lead to significant reductions in local station ownership (Australian Broadcasting Authority 2002). The program changes due to increased networking of media are particularly evident in news programming. The whole concept of news must now change as international and world news becomes increasingly more important than the traditional local news. However, this may not be a positive change from the perspective of the audience, where the rating of local news has been seen as most important (McCluskey 2004). Aycock (1999 p 1) notes that it will be a major challenge in the twenty first century, for media professionals to come to grips with new technologies and determine how to put them to their best use. In her book The Audience in Everyday Life, Bird (2003 p 5) cites Spitulnik (1993 p 293) who argues that while there have been ethnographic studies of media communities within Communication, ‘there is as yet no anthropology of mass media’ and that it is legitimate to undertake ethnographic studies relating to the media using a variety of different methods to meet the “goal of finding better ways to understand the dynamics of culture through the eyes of others.” Bird emphasises the importance of understanding “real people” and “looking beyond the audience toward a richer ethnographic understanding of life in a mediated world (where the media is fully integrated into social fabric)” (Bird 2003 p20).

This research in Bhutan is examining the impacts on local communities of networking international satellite television. While it also seems relevant to examine the multiplicity of online and on demand services via the internet, there are, as yet, fewer than 6 percent of the Bhutanese population estimated to have internet access and even fewer with broadband access. (Miniwatts 2008, Kezang and Whalley 2008). In my discussions and interviews in Bhutan, the great benefit of the introduction of television was discussed, relating to television’s important role in educating and informing the population and for bringing what had previously been considered a closed society (Armington 2002 p 25) in touch with the other cultures and the global community. However, concerns were also expressed relating to some changes in Bhutan including a reduction in personal and community based interaction, particularly in young people, and a move away from traditional forms of interaction. The passing on of knowledge and social requirements has been hindered and traditional recreation has been said to have been replaced with less gregarious forms of media
consumption according to some in the study. Bhutan represents a unique opportunity to examine to what extent such changes are significant due to the dramatic transformation in 1999 from a Kingdom which had only one local radio station, and no other electronic media, to a nation with multi channel international cable TV, a domestic television and radio station and allowed full access to online content.

To provide context, the following sections review literature - theory and research - relating to globalisation, local media and changes to social life and culture in the Asian media landscape, relating these to TV audiences in Bhutan. For the purposes of this study, I will refer to globalisation in relation to media as the spread of multi channel international networks and “the plethora of channels supplied by the global economy” (Curran 1998 p 175). As discussed in later chapters, multi channel international television networks and the internet, which are both forms of global media, came to Bhutan as a consequence of the nation’s approach towards modernisation from the second half of the twentieth century. As discussed in section 2.3, localism in media refers to media platforms that deliver content designed to meet the interests and needs of people in a local geographic area. In order to discuss localism in media in Bhutan a decision was made to focus on local forms of communication. Localism in media is one form of local communication. Other forms of local communication could include face - to - face and one - to - one communication, group conversations and community gatherings and activities.

2.1.1 About Bhutan

There are a few important aspects that need to be considered in placing context around this study. This summary is from the author’s own trip to Bhutan in September 2006 and from statistics gathered from the 2005 Bhutanese census. Bhutan is a small country in the foothills of the Himalayas with a population of over 635,000. There is an additional floating population in the census of 37,443 making the total estimated population 672,425 (Census Commissioner Royal Government of Bhutan 2005 p 1). Note the UNDP (2005) stated the population to be 734,340 and there are other estimates of the population in published literature. The population is difficult to count with complete accuracy because, as will be discussed later, over 40% of the population lives in rural villages over an hour’s walk from the nearest road. However, in this study I will refer to the official census population of 672,425.

There are 4 official languages including Dzonka, which is the national language and English which is taught in all schools. Sharshop is an unwritten language of the east and Nepali is the language of the southwest. Approximately 80% of the population is involved in subsistence agriculture with the other 20% employed in the rapidly growing urban areas. Around 40.5% of the population cannot read or write, however in rural areas it is 48%. Lack of literacy is greater in women with
just under 60% of rural women not being able to read or write and in the total population, including urban areas, less than half the women are literate. Unemployment for people 15 years and over was measured in 2005 at 3.1%. In 2005 the country had an average per capita income of Nu. 1,200 per month, with urban households averaging Nu. 2,130 per month and rural households Nu. 990 per month (UNDP 2005 p 6). The Ngultrum (Nu) is currently $0.02043 US which means in US dollars the average monthly income for Bhutanese people was just over $24 and in rural areas it averaged just over $20.00 per month which is below $1.00 per day. Just under 32% of the population was estimated to be below the poverty line in 2005 with just over 38% of rural people and approximately 4% of urban people estimated below the poverty line (UNDP 2005 p 6).

42% of houses are more than an hour’s walk from a road and 70% of the population lives in rural areas. One third of the total population of Bhutan is under 15, with less than 5% over 65. (Census Commissioner Royal Government of Bhutan 2005 p2) The predominant religion is Buddhist with Buddhism also inscribed as the national religion into the constitution. (Constitution of Bhutan 2005) And as has been discussed in the media, Bhutan officially measures its state of happiness. The 2005 census showed that 45% of the population were very happy, 52% were happy and around 3% were recorded as unhappy (Census Commissioner Royal Government of Bhutan 2005 p 2). In addition Kezang and Whalley (2008) outline how Gross National Happiness is one of Bhutan’s unique and best known philosophies. As articulated by Bhutan’s 4th King, Jigme Singye Wangchuck, in 2005, “Gross National Happiness is more important than Gross National Product. The ultimate purpose of the government is to promote the happiness of its people” (Royal Government of Bhutan, 2005). Linked to Gross National Happiness are four clear pillars, which are: sustainable and equitable socio-economic development, conservation of environment, preservation and promotion of culture, and enhancement of good governance. Each of these is also articulated in the constitution. (Larmer 2008, Kezang and Walley 2008, Royal Government of Bhutan 2008)
Bhutan is a Kingdom, however the previous monarch King Jigme Singye Wangchuck, decided Bhutan would be a democracy, and the first general elections for the National Assembly were held in March 2008 where The Druk Phuensum Tshogpa party, led by Jigmi Y Thinley, secured a landslide victory winning 44 of the 47 seats to the National Assembly (Kuensel 24 March 2008). Kezang and Whalley (2008) outlined how the Constitution of Bhutan was adopted in 2008 and turned Bhutan into a constitutional monarchy. The Constitution divides Bhutan into twenty districts or Dzongkhags, (see Figure 1, page 8) which in turn are sub-divided into a series of Gewogs and Thromdes (Royal Government of Bhutan, 2008). The Dzongkhags and Gewogs have existed as designated districts for many years and over time they have played an increasing role in both the administration and development of Bhutan. (Kezang and Whalley 2008 p 3)

Successive Bhutanese Kings and the Bhutanese Government have been driving modernisation, as part of an effort to achieve reduced poverty, increased education and Gross National Happiness with its four underlying pillars, through a series of five-year plans starting in 1961. “The Bhutanese economy has been modernised with considerable infrastructure improvements having been made. The first five year plan focused on the provision of basic infrastructures like roads and telecommunications. Subsequent five-year plans have widened the development remit, with for example, the Ninth Five-Year Plan highlighting a diverse array of issues including devolution, public services management and the encouragement of the private sector. (Kezang and Whalley 2008) The authors also state that, “although poverty reduction has been tackled previously, the overarching objective of the tenth five year plan reflects the fact that substantial socio-economic
inequalities remain across Bhutan notwithstanding the progress that has been made to date (Kezang and Whalley 2008 p 4).

Statistics outlined in the Gross National Happiness Commission’s Tenth Five Year Plan show substantial improvements in literacy, education, sanitation, transportation, health and other key indicators leading to significant improvement in the Health Development Index (HDI) since 1984. (Gross National Happiness Commission 2009) However the Commission also acknowledges there is significant work to do in order to ensure reductions in significant inequalities, especially in the rural / urban divide. “Past and existing low adult literacy levels below 53% has been a major reason retarding what would otherwise have been even more stellar improvements in HDI values. In addition to highlighting the importance of tackling existing rural-urban development disparities, the National Human Development Report 2005 conveys the imperative of tackling the challenges of poverty and youth employment to promote human development progress and avoid any possibilities of regression” (Gross National Happiness Commission 2009 p 13). The Commission noted that for there to be future gains in the HDI the country would need to overcome rural-urban gaps and improve income, educational attainment and life expectancy, which are all significantly lower in rural areas.

Despite the significant changes that have taken place in Bhutan in the past two decades, it is nevertheless, a nation that has its traditional heritage highly evident. Journalist Patrick French, who visited Bhutan for the coronation of the fifth King in 2008 stated, “Bhutan is the most intact traditional society I have ever seen” (French 2009 p134). From my observations while conducting the interviews in 2006 there was evidence that very few people understood the democratic process in the lead up to the election, or that they were aware of how the country would operate under the new draft constitution. This was also under discussion in local media with the Bhutan Times (3rd September 2006) carrying a letter to the editor expressing concern that the electorate was not informed. The national Newspaper Kuensel (6th September 2006) carried an information sheet titled First Election Advisory outlining the rules governing elections and how people may enrol. Having never experienced an election before and knowing that nearly half the population cannot read, the Government of the Kingdom also placed many advertisements in the local electronic media to try and ensure all people were aware of how to exercise their right to vote. This also highlighted the role of locally produced television and radio content in providing essential information to the Bhutanese communities. The constitution cites freedom of the press, television and radio as well as other forms of electronic media as a fundamental right (Royal Government of Bhutan 2008 Article 7.5 p 14).

India has very strong influence in Bhutan by providing grants, scholarships, labour and assistance as well as being Bhutan’s strongest trading partner by a factor of ten (Bhutan Ministry of Economic
Affairs 2008 p 3) and providing a number of the international television channels received in Bhutan, and as will be discussed later, some of the most popular content comes from India. Other significant trading partner countries are Indonesia, Russia, South Korea, Japan, China, Sweden, Thailand and Cyprus (Bhutan Ministry of Economic Affairs 2008 p 3-7).

2.2 Media in Bhutan

At the time of my field work in 2006, Bhutan had 3 weekly newspapers that were published in English and Dzongkha. However, it is unlikely that newspapers have been widely read across the country because 40.5 % of the total population was illiterate, and in rural areas this level of illiteracy was even higher at just under 48% (Census Commissioner Royal Government of Bhutan 2005). Without electronic media coverage, much of the population could not access the media.

In 1974 Radio was introduced into Bhutan by a decree from the King, with a small local radio station called Bhutan Broadcasting Service, broadcasting only a few hours a day. It developed over time to broadcast most hours of the day and in the four national languages. In June 1999 the BBS also introduced a local TV service in some areas of the country. Prior to this introduction, very few people - less than 1% - had access to television, although a very small number of people did have video players. Later in 1999 Global Satellite TV services were introduced with 50 channels being rebroadcast on a free to air basis. Currently BBS and another cable TV provider offer more than 30 channels from around the world for less than $10Aus per month (Kezang and Whalley 2008 p 5-8). As stated previously, internet access is estimated to be to less than 6% of the population and is largely accessed at work or through internet cafes. As I observed in Bhutan while conducting my field research, mobile phones were being introduced into some areas for the first time in 2006 with the first mobile phone licence being issued to Bhutan Telecom in 2002 (Kezang and Whalley 2008 p 7). Rates for calls and mobile phone prices were relatively low, so that uptake of mobile phones in the Bhutanese cities had been relatively high. My own observations and responses from people in Bhutan indicate that MP3 and portable players were not widely used as they were stated to be too expensive for most Bhutanese people and their usefulness was limited because most people did not have internet access to download music and content.

2.2.1 TV and radio audiences in Bhutan

In contrast to many countries of the world, Bhutan has significantly less radio choice for listeners than it does television choice for viewers. The only local radio service in Bhutan in 2006 was BBS Radio and apart from a small percentage of audience who listened to All India Radio or BBC World Service, the 2006 National Survey on Radio and Television in Bhutan found that “radio listening in Bhutan is almost identical to listening to BBS Radio - the overwhelmingly best liked
radio is BBS Radio” (Ehrlers and Yeshi 2006 p 8). The vast majority of the people, both urban and rural, who listened to radio were listening to BBS Radio. However, this same survey found that while the television station watched most frequently was the local BBS TV, but the vast majority of audience also stated that they watched international channels delivered via cable and satellite services. With less than six percent penetration, internet access was not considered in this survey. The number of television stations in Bhutan dropped from 45 in 2004 to 35 in 2005 as a result of stricter regulations from the Ministry of Information and Communications governing the type of content that could be broadcast” (Kezang and Whalley 2008 p 9).

The National Survey on Radio and Television in Bhutan was commissioned by the Bhutan Broadcasting Service. The method consisted of two separate surveys on radio and television, each consisting of nearly five thousand interviews covering the whole of Bhutan. However, since television is predominantly available in urban areas, the television surveys were only conducted in urban areas and both surveys focussed on age 8 and above. “For each survey a standardised questionnaire was used focussing on radio or television issues respectively. However, similar questions were used in order to be able to compare and combine results of both surveys” (Ehrlers and Yeshi 2006 p 7). The surveys drew on interviews from all 20 of the Dzongkhags and on census data from the 2005 Census which showed an urban and rural combined population, aged over 8 years, of 531,492. The majority of television viewing was however, in the urban areas where the population, aged over 8 years, was 165,646. The total population of the country for all ages was 672,425 (Census Commissioner, Royal Government of Bhutan 2005).

Key findings of this survey, were approximately 53% of people 8 years and above listened almost daily to radio, and therefore to BBS Radio. More people listened to radio in rural areas, where television was not available, than in urban areas, where television viewing could replace radio listening. Audiences for both radio and television preferred their content in Dzongkha, which along with English is one of the two written and spoken national languages. The other two major languages that are also broadcast on BBS Radio, Sharshop and Nepali, were not mentioned as preferred. Approximately 97% of the urban population was found to watch television. Of the three percent who did not watch television, the majority were over fifty years and did not have any formal education, indicating that they were likely to speak Dzongkha or other national languages, but not English or Hindi, which would restrict their understanding of the majority of the international television content. While BBS TV is the most watched channel with 46% of Bhutanese urban people viewing it almost daily, other channels such as the Hindi soap channels, movie channels and sports channels were significantly more liked than BBS content. In this context it must be remembered that the only Bhutanese content is available on BBS TV. The survey found that majority of the audience wanted BBS Radio and TV to focus on development
and educational issues, indicating that local content was seen far more in the role of information while the international channels were used for both information and entertainment (Ehrlers and Yeshi 2006 p 4-50).

One of the concluding remarks from the survey states “the Bhutanese society is – as is well known – split into groups with different views on everyday life experiences. The split is roughly between rural and urban, illiterate and educated, poorer and richer, and younger and older people” (Ehrlers and Yeshi 2006 p 51). One of the great challenges for the BBS is that it has to appeal to this wide group of people with its content on radio and TV right across the country. Without the current capacity to diversify local content on different channels, it is a great challenge to please all the audience with local, Bhutanese content.

The Bhutanese Government’s Information and Media Policy states that “information and media play a central role in development in a knowledge based society. Because of its diverse and pervasive impact, information and media are integral to socio-cultural change, shaping and transforming values, lifestyles, national economies as well as socio-political systems” (Ministry of Information and Communication 2006 p1). The policy acknowledges that the socio-economic, cultural and political landscape is rapidly changing and that “information and media are recognized as the most appropriate tools to overcome the challenges posed by a rugged geography, to reach scattered communities in all corners of the country, and to help the nation deal with a globalized world in a new century” (Ministry of Information and Communications 2006). In addition, as has previously been stated the 2008 Constitution articulates media freedom and guarantees “freedom of speech, opinion, and expression” and the “right to information” for the people (Royal Government of Bhutan 2008). In so doing the Bhutanese Government has now given media more freedom and more opportunity for full engagement with the audience than ever before. However, equity of access and diversity in local media content are still major issues within the country.

Gitlin (1998 p 172) expressed concern about the internet and real time continuous connectivity, not doing anything to stop the two tier community. The two tiers relate to those who have access to media and those who do not, those who are internet connected and those who are not. Estimates on global connectivity vary, however there is no doubt that the developed economies in the world, where in general people are far more affluent than in developing countries, internet connectivity is very high. Miniwatts Marketing (2008) has estimated the worldwide connectivity at just under 1.6 billion people who have access to the internet or 23.8% of the worldwide population. This is measured across the world as an average, In many developed countries the percentage of the population with internet access is much higher whereas in the developing or non affluent countries connection statistics are much lower. In Australia 80.6% of people are estimated to have access while in the North American countries the average estimate is 74.4% and for Europe the average is
48.9%. However the average connectivity across Asia is estimated at only 17.4% and in Africa there are only 5.6% internet connected. In Bhutan, where this study focuses, only 5.9% of the population is estimated to be connected to the internet (Miniwatts Marketing Asia 2008, Ministry of Information and Communications 2008). Therefore in many countries such as Bhutan the virtual connection, communities of interest and social networking that is available from the internet is currently only available to a very small percentage of the population.

Curran (1998) explored a claim put forward by Katz (1996) that liberal democracy is at risk due to audience fragmentation from the single national channels into the multi international channel network environment (this is not even including further audience fragmentation from internet and online content access). Curran states “individuals are increasingly picking programs on the basis of individual taste from a plethora of channels supplied by the global economy, rather than as before watching the same, nationally determined schedule of programs” (Curran 1998 p175). The concern is that this is leading to reductions in the shared experience that binds a community together and assists in common goals, values and understandings required for a democracy to succeed. However, Curran argues that there is a lot of evidence that the globalisation of television is overstated and that while there may be an abject trend towards globalised content he says “Televisions staple output includes nationally specific content – chat shows, quiz shows, game shows, sport and even news” (Curran 1998 p 179). He adds that many people like the programs produced in their own country more than imported ones. However, this argument is focussed on the developed world, looking at European content analysis. In Bhutan the experience is very different. The only local TV channel comes from the Bhutan Broadcasting Service. All other channels, and there are currently 35 available to the general urban population, come from international cable and satellite service providers (Ministry of Information and Communications 2008). In the National Survey on Radio and Television in Bhutan, for the Bhutan Broadcasting Service, Ehrlers and Yeshi (2006) found that BBS TV was the channel watched most regularly by people aged 8 years and over (this is only relating to 43% of the population, who were living in urban areas as TV at that time was not available in many regional areas). However, they also found that people actually liked the Hindi soap channels, movie channels and sport channels more than their local channel and they liked the international content more than they liked most local content. In addition BBS TV was predominantly watched between 7 – 8.30 pm with the international channels being predominantly viewed outside that time. There may be many reasons why people like content from international channels more in Bhutan than from their own local channel, but the general assertion that people prefer content from their own country is not universal.
2.2.2 Media impacts in Bhutan

The need for good policy that reflects accessibility as well as cultural and social objectives was highlighted as important in the Australian context by Goldsmith et al (2001). They studied media regulation in Australia and internationally to examine how policy can and should reflect social and cultural objectives for each nation. They stated “the challenge facing policy makers and regulators is to combine the advantages of modernising Australia’s media environment with a continuing commitment to social and cultural objectives. As we have indicated throughout this report, retaining cultural and social objectives is not incompatible with a flexible, efficient and competitive system in which audiences have access to a diverse range of programming and services.” They conclude “in our view, it is not only possible but necessary to place cultural and social objectives at the heart of a regulatory system designed for converging media” (Goldsmith et al 2001 p 74). In this context, the Bhutanese approach which ties media policy into the objective of Gross National Happiness is consistent with national objectives of setting media policy to achieve positive social and cultural outcomes. Some of the objectives stated in the Bhutanese media policy are; “upholding the universal rights of citizens to information, freedom of opinion and expression, and independence of the media which has the mandate to connect, inform, educate and entertain; ensuring the freedom of the media to facilitate increasing participation of the public and private sector in the field of information and media; establishing a vibrant, responsive and responsible media in the kingdom that will respect and uphold national interests and make a positive and meaningful contribution to nation building; creating a well-informed society by providing timely, accurate and comprehensive information and data on all issues affecting people’s lives” (Ministry of Information and Communications 2006 p 1). As will be discussed in later chapters, my interviews with Bhutanese people show differing perceptions of how the media is affecting their society and culture and while some of the participants described negative social outcomes, the majority of outcomes as a result of people having access to television have been expressed as positive.

The Bhutanese Ministry of Information and Communications commissioned a report into the impacts of the media in Bhutan in 2003 and a more comprehensive follow up report in 2008 titled The Media Impact Study (MIS) 2008 (Ministry of Communications 2006, Ministry of Information and Communications 2008). The purpose of the MIS was to “to understand the pattern of information and media consumption, to analyse the impact of all media, and to facilitate the development of appropriate policies for the effective consumption of information and media services and how it related to Gross National Happiness” (Ministry of Information and Communications 2008 p i). This media study used both quantitative and qualitative approaches including in-depth interviews, predominantly with local leaders and decision makers, 21 focus group discussions with a cross-section of society, reviews of surveys and studies and writings on
media. In addition a survey with 6 hundred rural households and 6 hundred urban households was undertaken with 1,191 respondents.

These studies reviewed the perceptions and trends of how the media is impacting on some aspects of life in Bhutan. The Media Impact Study 2008, shows that since 1997 the number of radio sets have more than doubled to 88 thousand (also Ehrlers and Yeshi 2006) and since 2003 the number of television sets have increased from 33 thousand to just over 47 thousand. Since 2003 the number of cable TV subscribers has risen from 15 thousand to 30 thousand with the number of available television channels from outside Bhutan at 35 and BBS providing the only local television channel. The Ministry of Information and Communications (2008) states that there are 10 thousand subscribers to the internet in Bhutan, however that is significantly less than the 40 thousand internet subscribers estimated by Miniwatts. (2008) Whichever figure is more accurate it is clear that the number of people in Bhutan accessing the internet is still well below 6%, despite an estimated doubling of the number of internet users since 2003 (Ministry of Information and Communications 2008). A very interesting trend observed in this report has been with telephone usage. In 2003 there were no mobile phones and an estimated 21,600 telephone users using landlines. However, since then mobile phones have been introduced and while the number of landline users has only grown to 28 thousand the number of people using mobile phones is now estimated to be 250 thousand with most of the urban areas in the country now having mobile coverage and a good proportion of the rural areas as well.

In relation to access the MIS states that 62 percent of households own a radio, followed by 39.3% owning a mobile phone and 37.7% owning a TV set. Note that this is mentioned in households, not individuals and so is a measure of accessibility, not necessarily usage (Ministry of Information and Communications 2008 p iii).

Some of the findings of the Media Impact Study 2008 include that there is significantly more radio choice for some listeners in Bhutan with a new youth station, Kuzoo Radio, Radio Valley and Centennial Radio all having started since 1996. Kuzoo Radio has developed a strong audience base but is not available throughout the country and Radio Valley and Centennial Radio are only available in the capital city, Thimpu and therefore have relatively low audiences. An interesting finding was that listeners stated they mostly listened to BBS Radio for information while they mostly listened to Kuzoo Radio for entertainment. In addition, with the increase in local choices for radio, the number of listeners to international radio has come down from 33.75% in 2003 to 9% in 2008. (Ministry of Information and Communications 2008 p 11-13).

The MIS found that BBS is the most watched television station, which concurs with Ehrlers and Yeshi (2006) and demonstrates a strong preference for local information based content. Television
is now much more widely available after BBS launched satellite TV in February 2006, and the government installed 192 TV receiver sets in 2008. The study also found that when television is available most respondents preferred television over radio for both news and entertainment. However, the survey noted that for remote outlying areas without electricity, radio continues to be the main source of information and entertainment (Ministry of Information and Communications 2008 p14).

The Media Impact Study 2008 also examined mobile phone usage and found that 22.8% of the survey respondents said that they used the mobile for radio, 25% listen to music, 38% use SMS, 23% take photos and 27.5 play games. It is worth noting that none of this activity would have occurred prior to 2005 before the introduction of mobile phones into Bhutan. In relation to internet usage 8% of the respondents have access to internet which is used predominantly from places of employment, especially offices. The MIS report did not state how many people have access to the internet outside their place of work or within their home. Given the very low level of fixed telephone lines, it can be assumed that very few people have internet access from home. In addition, since 66.6% of the working population of Bhutan are farmers (National Statistics Bureau 2007), they would not have access to the internet at their place of work and the percentage of rural people with access to the internet would be much lower when assessed against the total population. Only one person in the MIS sample used internet on the mobile (Ministry of Information and Communications 2008 p iii). One of the conclusions of the MIS was that the disparity in access to media between urban and rural areas remains unchanged since 2003 which constitutes a significant disadvantage to rural media consumers (Ministry of Information and Communications 2008 p1).

While the MIS was commissioned by the Bhutanese Ministry for Information and Communications with a specific purpose of examining the role and impact of the media in assisting the achievement of Gross National Happiness, it nevertheless greatly assists in understanding the rapidly changing and expanding Bhutanese media landscape. Elements of the study also examine the responses from participants to perceptions of influence in behaviour, language, dress, thinking, culture, values, how advertising influences expenditure and media effects on children. As these findings relate to my own study of perceptions of daily life and cultural change associated with media in Bhutan, analysis of my results in relation to this study will be included in later chapters.

2.3 Globalisation and local media

Localism in media content is perceived by governments and media regulators across the globe as being of great significance for the maintenance of cultural identity. In response to these issues, the Public Broadcasting and Globalization Report of the Commission on Radio and Television Policy: Central and East Europe outlined a number of guiding principles for public broadcasters, which
included the following statement outlining one of the roles public broadcasters need to fill where private broadcasters are no longer fulfilling this need comprehensively. “Public broadcasting is essential to provide high-quality information, entertainment, education, and public service programs that take cultural identity into consideration. Public broadcasting is also essential for providing citizens with the information they need to make informed choices and exercise democratic rights, serving the needs of local cultures and minorities, educating citizens of all ages, and transmitting messages important for public health. Public broadcasting can also provide a forum for a ‘national conversation’ regarding issues of fundamental concern” (Busek and Mickiewicz 1997 p 9).

The Australian Broadcasting Authority (ABA) in its investigation report into Adequacy of Local News and Information Programs (2002) stated that the legislation reflected a continuing expectation that programming should cater for the particular needs and interests of the community within a licensee’s designated area and deal appropriately with matters of local significance. The report states that “coverage of local issues, news and emergency information is an important element in the regulatory framework for commercial television and radio. Regional and rural communities need to see news about events and people in their local area, to receive adequate warnings about developing local weather patterns that may affect them and their livelihoods, and to be informed about the activities of their local sporting teams and community groups” (ABA 2002 p 4). More on this matter will be discussed in relation to the role of localism in emergency broadcasting later. The ABA concluded that matters of local significance include, but are not necessarily limited to, the following: “news about people and events that happen in the local area; opinions or perspectives of local residents about events that happen in other places but that have an effect on locals or the local area; news about the local economy and local industry; sporting events that happen in the local area, or that concern sporting teams or participants from the local area or supported by the local area; the weather, and its effects, in the local area; community services in the local area; the activities of members of the community in the local area; features of the local area such as the local geography, and local fauna and flora” (ABA 2002 p5)

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<th>In this study, I will use the ABA’s criteria to define localism in media where a platform for content delivery provides;</th>
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<td>-News and information about industry, economy, people and events in a local geographic area</td>
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<td>-Weather effects and information about geography and the environment in a local area</td>
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<tr>
<td>-Opinions and perspectives of people in a local geographic area</td>
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<td>-Entertainment and factual content that is designed for, or relevant to people in a local area</td>
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Across the world there is a trend for local content to be replaced with networked content for commercial reasons. In addition networked content which uses high production value information and entertainment based programming, is competing with local content where local content producers do not have the funds or resources to compete with the larger media organisations that provide the networked content (Thussu 2006). In addition deregulation of the international communications sector has led to globalisation where large media corporations provide converged multi platform media content and moved away from their previous areas of specialization. Thussu states that media conglomerates across the world plan their strategies “in a global context, with the ultimate aim of profitable growth through exploiting economies of scope and scale” (Thussu 2006 p 98).

Globalisation is one of the fundamental consequences of modernity according to Giddens (1990). He states that globalisation is “more than a diffusion of Western institutions across the world,” but rather there are growing and developing forms of world interdependence and planetary consciousness. (Giddens 1990 p 175). Globalised media, introduced into Bhutan in 1999 included significant Asian, Indian as well as Western media stations, some delivered for their own domestic markets, some delivered for international audiences, and as such represented the form of globalisation Giddens was referring to in that it was not simply Western media content. Rather the Bhutanese people received television channels from a variety of countries that allowed them to begin to develop their own understanding of the people and institutions of other nations, both Western and non Western.

In Media, Communication and Culture, Lull states there is an uncomfortable paradox, because “the fact is that modernity and globalisation exist. These trends will not go away or be reversed, despite the best efforts of well-meaning environmentalists and academics” (Lull 2000 p 229). He points out that globalisation influences are not all bad and not all predictable. He states that nations, cultures and economies have a choice to either integrate into the global scene or ignore or disconnect from it. Lull (2000) states that he does not believe the latter option is viable because economic and social self-sufficiency is not an option for any nation that aspires to improve standards of living. This is particularly relevant to Bhutan, because one of the core reasons for introducing television into the country was because of the drive to modernise and connect with the rest of the world. The importance of connecting with the rest of the world is discussed in later chapters.

In his book, The Consequences of Modernity, Giddens describes modernity in relation to modes of social life which emerged in Europe in the seventeenth century and became worldwide in their influence. He states “the modes of life brought into being by modernity have swept us away from all traditional types of social order, in quite unprecedented fashion” (Giddens 1990 p 4). Giddens outlines a number of factors that separate modern social institutions from traditional social orders.
These include the pace of change, scope of change and the nature of modern institutions. It is interesting to note that the Kingdom of Bhutan, isolated for centuries without being taken over by other countries, operated in many aspects as a traditional agrarian society until the second half of the twentieth century. In terms of the pace of change, it was slow, in terms of the scope of change, it was small, in terms of the nature of institutions they were traditional and had a dual monarchical and religious structure. Giddens also refers to place and space largely coinciding in pre-modern societies, while in modern societies space becomes increasingly “phantasmogoric” or illusionary, “that is to say locales are thoroughly penetrated by and shaped in terms of social influences quite distant from them” (Giddens 1990 p 19). In Bhutan prior to 1999 the notion of space and place largely coincided. Most people did not have any form of communication with other countries, or even other Dzongkhags within their country.

Modernisation was driven by King Jigme Dorji Wangchuk after the invasion of Tibet by the Chinese in 1959 made it clear that the previous isolationism of Bhutan was not appropriate in the modern world. After centuries of deliberate isolation, Bhutan developed clear plans for development and joined the Colombo plan in 1962, opening up avenues of technical and educational assistance from member countries and the first 5 year plan was put in place in 1961. (Armington 2002 p 25). Prior to 1950 the only education available in Bhutan was from monasteries, however secular schools are now in all Bhutanese Dzongkhags and literacy has increased from a reported 28% of the total population in 1984 to 59.5% in 2005 (Armington 2002 p 51, Census Commissioner Royal Government of Bhutan 2005). However, despite the intention for development, it was not until 1999 that Bhutanese people were given access to television and because of restrictions to tourism and travel, most Bhutanese people had no contact with the world outside Bhutan prior to the introduction of television. Bhutan is currently undergoing very rapid change, with the introduction of democracy in 2008, the rapid increases in literacy as a result of widely available education as well as the introduction of mobile telephones, international television and domestic television and radio stations. On this basis it could be argued that Bhutan started emerging into the modern era from 1961 but rapid change and interaction with the outside world did not commence until the introduction of television in June 1999. Modernisation in Bhutan has led to rapid change as it embraces technology, media, democracy, organisational reform and continues to strive to improve longevity and well being in the community. My research is not intended to examine the modernisation of Bhutan but rather to better understand changes taking place within the Kingdom through the perceptions of participants, after the introduction of television, in the context of rapid modernisation.

Modernisation and urbanisation of Bhutan is happening concurrently with the introduction of television, radio and online content. (Kezang and Whalley 2008 p 3) With modernisation and
urbanisation come significant changes in lifestyle and materialism. In setting the background for studying mass communication, Lowery and DeFleur described industrialisation, urbanisation and modernisation effects in the United States, outlining how urbanisation “brings unlike people together” and that “people did not relate to each other easily because of their social and psychological differences” (Lowery and DeFleur 1988 p 8).

This led to a state of “anomie” where rules, customs, traditions and values were confused, whereas in the previous rural and traditional social order there were clear conceptions of the rules of social behaviour. In addition they state that modernisation led to changes in the rhythm and meaning of life including the new importance of time scheduling, where “work, play and even worship started and stopped according to the clock” (Lowery and DeFleur 1988 p 9). 

Strassoldo defines globalism as an idea “that men [sic] all over the earth live, or should live, in the same encompassing social (moral, religious, cultural, political, economic) system” (Strassoldo 2004 p 1). He outlines that globalisation started in the middle of the 15th Century when European seafarers developed the capacity to sail around the world. He also notes that since then European, Christian and western elements of society have not stopped spreading across the world. While industrialisation had given a significant spurt to the speed of globalisation, Strassoldo states that it was the advent of the telephone, broadcast media and PC that really accelerated the rate of globalisation. He states “all newer developments – cable and satellite TV, internet, mobile telephony and all their mutually-reinforcing combinations – have phenomenally increased the speed, power, diversity and flexibility of the earlier technologies, but not altered the basic pattern” (Strassoldo 2004 p 4). He also notes that the fall in the costs of communications technology has meant that they are available to wider masses of people and this has also been a contributing factor in globalisation.

Giddens notes that globalisation is a term that has only come into usage as part of everyday language since the 1980s and that globalisation is “political, technological, and cultural as well as economic” (Giddens 2003 p 10). In relation to the economy and the capacity for trillions of US dollars worth of currency to be traded every day he states, “geared as it is to electronic money – money that exists only in computers – the current world economy has no parallel in earlier times” (Giddens 2003 p 9).

Strassoldo argues that localism is affected by an intensification of globalising trends such that “localism and globalism are dialectically linked. The theory of ‘glocalism’ is now the standard in the field” (Strassoldo 2004 p 6). Thussu (2006 p 63) notes that “glocalisation” expresses “the global production of the local and the localisation of the global.” The term “glocalisation” was used, in relation to Bhutan, in the Media Impact Statement (Ministry of Information and Communications 2008 p 2) to outline the importance of integrated local and global media content. The report stated that the tide of global media content was impossible to stop in Bhutan, but that
local content was also very expensive to produce. In Bhutan, the electronic media choice in 2006 was: - on the one hand, one local radio station, one local television station, both of which were run by the national public broadcaster, the BBS carrying almost entirely local content, - or on the other hand, over 30 international television channels with no content produced for, or directed at, the people of the Kingdom.

Giddens states that instantaneous communication through electronic means not only conveys news and information more quickly, but also “alters the very textures of our lives, rich and poor alike.” He uses the phrase “a global cosmopolitan society” and argues that people living today are the first generation to live in such a society. (Giddens 2003 p 11-19).

In this study, I am referring to globalisation in the sense that it is unparalleled in history, as outlined by Giddens (2003) and is based on unprecedented technological, social, communication and economic changes that have been moving us towards the one cosmopolitan social system as described by Strassoldo (2004). In relation to this I am referring to modernisation as the adoption of these unprecedented changes as outlined by Giddens (1990) where modern social systems are influenced by the pace and scope of change and the nature of modern institutions.

The process of modernisation is also closely linked with the growth of mass media where populations in the process of modernisation increase their consumption of goods, as well as their use of print, film and broadcast media. This has led Lowery and Defleur to infer that modern societies are media dependent societies where they state that populations make use of the media for achieving goals that are handled in a different way to that of the traditional society. They state, “the media provide information critical to economic, political, religious and educational decisions in ways that are totally different from preindustrial societies” (Lowery and DeFleur 1988 p 9).

With respect to modernisation theory where media assists in the transition from a traditional to a modernised state, Thussu cites Lerner (1958) and Schramm (1964) who argued that mass media could increase aspirations of people in developing countries and that exposure to mass media caused traditional societies to lose some bonding to their traditions and “aspire to a new and modern way of life” (Thussu 2006 p 43-44). With respect to Lerner’s study into modernisation theory, Thussu notes that there was a focus on traditional ways of life being distinct from modern ways of life and that there would be a “natural” inclination of people in traditional societies to want to adopt modern, or indeed Western lifestyles. Thussu argues that in Latin America, despite mass media availability, many people remained in poverty. A revised approach to modernisation theory in media was that modernisation required advanced computer and telecommunications infrastructure which assisted traditional societies integrate into “a globalised information economy” (Thussu 2006 p 46).
Alternative media sources, opened up by the internet, allow audiences to choose their own content in their own time, and from their own space. These have fragmented audiences and generated new sources of information (Thussu 2006 p 63). However, while this applies in countries where the internet has widespread use, it does not apply in Bhutan, where internet use in the community is very low because, as discussed elsewhere, the cost of computers is high, landlines are not widely available and incomes remain very low.

The arguments of Lowery and Defleur (1988) and Thussu (2006) are significant in relation to this study in Bhutan because many of the participants described changes relating to time scheduling in family and social life. They also held perceptions that the media was providing important information relating to local and global news, in addition to educational, political and religious development. This information facilitated change from a traditional to a modern way of life. This is discussed further in later chapters.

Many of the formulations about modernisation in relation to global media and their influence are too simplistic to be useful as a basis for close analysis of the process of change in Bhutan. Morley (2005), for example criticises the arguments in the following way; “for too long this debate has oscillated unproductively between a political economy of the global media that sees everything else as a foregone conclusion, and an over-optimistic cultural studies critique of this model (don’t worry they’ve indigenised it) that sidelines the question of media power” (Morley 2005 p 31). My study in Bhutan documented the rapid acceptance of the media and high value that Bhutanese participants placed on access to global media and how this was balanced with a strong awareness of the influence that the media was having in their daily lives, with consequent major concerns relating to their activity and culture. While the media may have been ‘indigenised’ to some extent, it was also perceived as a strong external influence at the time of this study.

Morley argues that the notion of cultural imperialism leads to cultural protectionism “designed to defend indigenous cultures against their corruption, ‘pollution,’ or destruction by foreign elements” (Morley 2005 p 36). He notes the problem with this is to determine how to define the original, pure indigenous culture which is to be ‘defended’. This is an important point in relation to Bhutan. As discussed elsewhere, Bhutan is a nation that was largely isolated from foreign countries in terms of trade, travel and media until the second half of the twentieth century and the country still imposes significant travel restrictions which inhibit widespread tourism and contact with foreigners for the majority of the Bhutanese population. In addition, the kingdom has identified preservation and promotion of Bhutanese culture as one of the four pillars of Gross National Happiness (GNH). In this study I am not investigating the rights and wrongs of cultural preservation, rather I have approached cultural identity as it is perceived by Bhutanese participants and identified through the GNH policies of the Kingdom.
In his book analysing the role of media in regional cultural politics in Southeast Asia, Lewis (2006) argues that globalisation is both regionalisation and internationalisation and he notes that while North America, Western Europe and Northeast Asia dominate the world economy, within regions there are some countries that dominate, or at least are more economically successful, than others. These include Singapore, Australia, New Zealand and Malaysia in Southeast Asia, while other countries such as Indonesia, the Philippines and Vietnam are much less prosperous. In addition, Lewis points out that “mediatisation” of the public sphere is so intense that “the media are now a more important agency of cultural meaning than national education systems” (Lewis 2006 p 5). He argues that while this may be true in some media markets, people in Southeast Asian tend to watch and access media in their own language, meaning that national media has a strong influence in Southeast Asian countries and language acts as a “cultural screen.” However, international media is also available in most countries of Southeast Asia, and there is censorship in some countries to keep media content aligned with cultural values. According to Lewis this leads to Southeast Asian countries waging “regular campaigns against the corruption of national values by international media,” largely targeted at satellite television and more recently at internet, pop music and computer campaigns” (Lewis 2006 p 5-6).

In Bhutan, where local television was not able to develop and establish itself with the national audience before the introduction of international television, the viewing of the national television station in comparison to international channels may not be as strong as is the case in Southeast Asian countries where national television has been in existence for much longer. The “cultural screen” of language may apply to many people who do not speak foreign languages, however, all Bhutanese people now learn English as well as Dzongkha, their national language, at school so many younger Bhutanese people may easily view content in either language. Content from India in Hindi may also be consumed, and as I observed and was told by participants in Bhutan it is spoken by a large proportion of the population.

Paterson (1998) and Thussu (2006) argue that broadcasting organisations worldwide report and present the news, but most of the international television news, particularly about developing countries, comes from the major news agencies. Broadcasting organisations receive the vast majority of international content from the developing world through the decisions of the major agencies. Paterson notes that, “the agencies are agenda-setters and more, for they make the first decisions on how and if international stories – particularly those from the news flow fringes of the non-industrialised world – will be covered for television” (Paterson 1998 p 82). In relation to the local relevance of the content provided by most news carriers Paterson states “many studies of television news are based upon the concept of a shared reality manufactured by the social practices of journalists…. People who do not live in or routinely travel to other countries generally have
little or no opportunity to test or challenge their conception of the (mass media created) ‘reality’ of those countries. Mass media are almost wholly responsible for shaping that reality, and among mass media, international television news agencies are especially influential (for they alone provide contemporary visual representations of most of the world to the entire world)” (Paterson 1998 p 82). This is a particularly important point because it outlines the need for different views to be expressed in the media. Yet the likelihood that these different views would come from more diverse global media providers is not high. It is even less likely to have diversified content that is intended to reflect the interests of local audiences, especially those in relatively small communities. In a developing country like Bhutan that is just emerging into democracy, diversity of content is very important as noted by Fröhlich who states, “apart from freedom of speech, free journalism, and a free media system, the diversity of media is seen as being the most important condition for the emergence and progression of democracies” (Fröhlich 2008 p 937).

Paterson (1998) argues that news is becoming globalised into English speaking news via large English speaking global networks, such as BBC World Service, CNN, MSNBC. While Deutsche Welle in German, Tele-Noticias and CNN International in Spanish and NHK in German have some global influence, the global language of international news is English. Paterson states “regional television news channels in one or more languages have emerged, but the major global services still deliver the news in English contributing to English becoming a global ‘lingua franca’ ….even a large amount of exported NHK and Deutsche Welle news programming is in English” (Paterson 1998 p 87). His view of the lack of news diversity is described as follows; “the dominance of a few powerful media alliances in the provision of international news product means that news, in both print and electronic form, from much of the world, is now determined and provided by what is essentially a single editorial perspective – that of a small number of culturally homogeneous news workers in a few very similar and often allied Anglo-American news organisations ” (Paterson 1998 p 94). Forbes, Malam and Boyd-Barrett (1998) support Paterson’s assertions by arguing that established and globalised news agencies have out competed alternative or local news agencies reducing the capacity for alternative news voices to be heard. They state “the forces of globalisation and liberalisation on the one hand may promote a more diverse media system but not necessarily enhance democracy and a freer flow of information. The main flow of news is still driven by the big players despite the efforts of alternative agencies” (Forbes et al, 1998 p166). Speaking about the interaction of global and national television, Straubhaar argues that there is a trend to stress the significance of globalisation, but he says “we should not over estimate the importance of global levels and elements compared to regional, national, provincial and local ones” (Straubhaar 2001 p 135).
Paterson expresses the view that developed nations, which are dominating global media content provision, are perpetuating a western hegemony hostile to developing nations. He says the perception of a single, valid and global view on news is so pervasive among broadcast journalists worldwide, especially news agency workers, “that cultural relevance has become a nil concept in global TV news distribution” (Paterson 1998 p 95). Paterson also argues that global reality is shaped by the images we see through media sources, largely television, and despite an increased number of news services, concentrated ownership and the small number of news agencies means “television coverage of the developing world is already deplorably infrequent and misleading. The developing world appears now to be more excluded from the global flow of television news than it has ever been” (Paterson 1998 p 96). Not only are the views coming through media agencies likely to be predominantly western, but there is also a strong possibility that they are predominantly male. Fröhlich (2007), studying the prevalence of women in journalism found that most western countries have fewer female journalists than male across all ages and significantly fewer women in editorial leadership roles.

It should be noted that the arguments of Paterson (1998) and Forbes et al (1998), were written while the internet was still developing and much of the citizen journalism opportunities that are available today were not present in 1998. However, it is also worth noting, as will be discussed later relating to Bhutan, much of the developing world still does not have access to the internet and therefore, while there might be more diversity of content through the capacity of people to provide their own, or locally produced content through the internet, this is still not the case for much of the developing world.

In relation to the capacity of the internet to facilitate diversity, especially for local radio in the UK, Crisell and Starkey (2006) discuss how organisational structures and networking of content limit true localism, while new technology and internet or virtual stations allow better access and efficiency for journalists to generate local news. In addition they say the listener would have the capability to formulate their own local content by picking and choosing from internet sources. Technology has made localism easier to achieve but they state that organisational structures and networks are making it less likely to be delivered. “The paradox at the heart of the local radio newsroom is that audiences also expect international and national news, whereas many local weekly newspapers – which are, by contrast, perceived as complimentary to the national press – can provide a wholly local diet” (Crisell and Starkey 2006 p 19). As stated with respect to the arguments of Paterson (1998), the lack of internet access in many parts of the developing world also means there is limited capacity for small developing communities to produce virtual stations or other forms of internet based media content using this new, cheaper, more efficient form.
According to Thomas (2006) there is a significant role for local media in covering language and local issues and there also seems to be a demand for these services, however there is a commercial cost to local content. For example, much of the “local media” in Wales is actually national media covering the whole country especially from BBC provided radio and television content. He says content analysis of local radio in Wales “suggests the processes of commercialisation to be even more visible than for the press with the dominance of large companies providing mainstream, centrally dictated popular music while speech, locality, diversity and public service are marginalised” (Thomas 2006 p 58).

Even if small countries like Bhutan were able to offer new models for delivery of local content, using the internet or “virtual stations” as outlined by Crisell and Starkey (2006) there are arguments that this would still not replace quality journalism providing diversity and local perspectives. Even in the UK, according to Tait (2006) localism on television can’t be guaranteed without careful regulatory action. His argument is that the growth of citizen journalism on television, through mobile phones and recording devices enabling amateur stories to be given or sold to stations, leads to a lack of validity and accuracy. He says “the key issues are verification and mediation – how do regional and local services ensure that the third party material they offer the viewers is accurate and impartial?” (Tait 2006 p 35). This form of citizen based diversity was not leading to improved information content according to Tait; “by the summer of 2006 the future of regional television news was as uncertain as at any time in its history. How far it would survive into the digital age would not depend primarily on how skilfully regional television journalists served their audiences but on the success or failure of complex regulatory and political decisions over the next few years aimed at trying to preserve a hugely important part of public service broadcasting” (Tait 2006 p 36).

The role of local radio stations in covering significant events and disasters is underscored by Allan (2006), however, he outlines how it is highly resource intensive to do so. He states that “Radio is at its best with breaking news” (Allan 2006 p164). He refers to the role of radio stations in covering the London bombings in 2005 and a radio station program head “suggested that radio played a role in ‘galvanising’ the capital (London) following the attacks (Guardian 5 August 2005), a point underscored by the number of listeners who contacted the stations with eyewitness accounts. This point will be explored later in relation to examples of emergency broadcasting as a crucial aspect of the capacity for radio and television to provide relevant and diverse local content.

2.3.1 Importance of geographic localism

The Australian Broadcasting Services Act 1992 states that broadcasters should provide fair and accurate coverage of matters of public interest and an appropriate coverage of matters of local
significance. In its review of the adequacy of local news and information programs on commercial television services, the Australian Broadcasting Authority (ABA) (2002) states that the legislation reflected a continuing expectation that programming should cater for the particular needs and interests of the community within the licensee’s defined area and deal appropriately with matters of local significance. As part of its 2002 examination into aggregated television markets in NSW, Victoria and Queensland the ABA found among other elements that while there has been an overall increase in the quantity of local news broadcast, there has been a decline in competing sources of news since the mid-1990s and there has been a significant decline in local information (other than news) since aggregation. The review found there are legitimate community concerns in four aggregated markets relating to a lack of diversity in broadcasts of matters of local significance by commercial television licensees and that there is a lack of competition in delivering local news and information (Australian Broadcasting Authority 2002 p 4).

The ABA found similar issues of reduced local content for commercial radio in markets where increased networking was taking place due to the growth of single owner networks across the country. Economic constraints in small markets combined with the need to make profits in a competitive advertising market, has seen reduced local content in television and radio. Regional Australian communities are expressing dissatisfaction with reduced local content (Australian Broadcasting Authority 2002 p4). In May 2001 Goldsmith et al in conjunction with the Australian Broadcasting Authority noted among other things that broadcasting has a significant role in nation building and cultural identity as well as being a source of information and shared experience. The report noted that a strict policy environment was required to achieve this or that these significant cultural roles must be carried out with increased necessity by the public broadcasters. As early as 1983 the then Australian Minister for Communications, The Honourable MJ Duffy commissioned a wide ranging review of the policy of localism in Australian commercial broadcasting. Already at that time it was noted that “the nature and economics of commercial television had resulted in the introduction of a significant amount of networked or non-locally produced programming” (Oswin 1984 p 283). However, at that time, commercial radio stations were seen to operate with a high degree of local programming. The resulting report made a range of recommendations that were intended to allow free market ownership, as much as possible, of commercial radio and television stations within Australia, but were designed to ensure localism was maintained. This was seen as essential because of the increase in satellite related broadcasting services and supplementary licences which “could have profound effect on broadcasting in this country, particularly in regional and local areas” (Oswin 1984 p 284).

In other parts of the world similar concerns have been expressed relating to the lack of local content due to increased network ownership. In 2003 an organisation in the USA held regional
meetings based on the following expressed concern: “The FCC relaxed media ownership rules that will allow big media conglomerates to grow even bigger. In so doing, they set off a firestorm of protest. Americans stood up because they are angry that a small group of powerful corporations are being handed even more control of the most vital element of our democracy: our access to information” (Free press. 2003).

Networking is of major concern in Australia and other parts of the world and community groups and governments have expressed concern relating to the potential impacts networked content could have if local content is not being consumed. Localism can be defined at the regional, state and national level (McCluskey, 2003). Two fundamental issues are of special importance in relation to networking of aggregated and conglomerated television and radio across regional markets. Firstly there is real concern from community members that they want to have more content relevant to their local community (Australian Broadcasting Authority 2002 p3), and secondly there is an increasing trend that commercial networked content providers will try to limit their costs and provide as little local content as possible. There is certainly strong evidence that while local advertising content might be maintained, local content of news and information in regional markets within Australia has declined over the past 10 years despite increases in the actual number of radio and television providers. The ABA stated “In the case of every submarket, each of the relevant licensees broadcasts separate local advertising but in some cases, only one licensee broadcasts news bulletins that provide news about matters of significance to the audience in the sub-market (Australian Broadcasting Authority 2002 p4).

It is important therefore to test the assumption that local community members actually want more local news and information content. A number of key questions relating to the potential impact of networking arise. These include: Are there preferences within the community for local content? What is the importance of local content to fulfil audience demand? Do some media consumers simply tune into the content that they feel provides the best quality? Are media consumers interested in local issues and local news?

Before examining these questions in the local Australian market it is important to examine the focus media consumers place on availability of international and global news. Aycock (1999 p1) observes that “in many respects, media have traditionally been about localism - newspapers and radio, especially, but television also, traditionally focus on local audiences. The whole concept of news must now change as international and world news becomes increasingly more important than the traditional local news. How the media professional of the future comes to grips with the new technologies available and how to put them to their best use for all concerned may truly be the dominant challenge of the new century.” Aldridge states that a person’s place of residence is related to both their emotional attachment to their community and the physical convenience of
proximity. She states, “we should not therefore, be surprised that there is a well established appetite for local news” (Aldridge 2007 p 14).

The challenge is not just for media professionals to be aware of the potential that technology can offer in terms of providing global information and entertainment but also that they must be aware of the need to provide significant levels of local content in addition to wider international content (Aldridge 2007 pp 14-15). The media consumer appears to want both in one converged format, rather than to have to make choices about choosing one form or station over another (McCluskey 2004 p 77).

To examine these assumptions, in my role as manager of radio station 1233 ABC Newcastle, Australia, I commissioned research about ABC radio audiences in three separate surveys from October 2003 to June 2004 (ABC Newcastle 2004). The surveys covered audience preferences for local content defined by geographic location in the Hunter Valley. They may be biased by selection of the sample from an audience base with a preference for news and information and global news rather than purely entertainment based content. Participants were selected by asking radio station listeners to visit a website and complete a questionnaire. Control to restrict multiple responses from the same participant was used by limiting one response per Internet Provider (IP) address. 185 members of the radio station audience participated in the survey. Therefore this was not a random sample of the population, but consisted of existing radio station listeners who would have motivation for and interest in completing the survey. ABC Newcastle listeners were also generally over 40 years of age and had a preference for news and information based radio content (McCluskey 2003 p 5, Paradice 2003).

Participants were asked to rank the importance of news content in relation to geographic relevance and broad topics. The ten categories listed were national (Australia wide) news, state (NSW) news, international news, state political news, national political news international politics news, sports news, local news and local sports news. These topics were chosen as they reflected some of the major themes or strands that existed within the existing news bulletins. Participants were asked to rank these news categories on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 was not important at all and 5 was very important. The results are summarised in Table 1, page 31, which shows the proportion who identified local news in preference to state, national or international news. 76% of respondents listed local news as very important, compared to 67% for national news, and 49% for international news. Combining the rankings for somewhat important and very important, 97% stated national and state news was important to them, 95% for local news and 89% for international news. This indicated that local, state and national news was seen by the ABC audience as more important than international news.
10. Using a scale of 1 to 5, can you please rate the IMPORTANCE of the following news services to you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not Important At All</th>
<th>Somewhat Unimportant</th>
<th>Neither Important Nor Unimportant To Me</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Response Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>International News Coverage</td>
<td>1% (1)</td>
<td>3% (6)</td>
<td>7% (13)</td>
<td>40% (72)</td>
<td>49% (88)</td>
<td>4.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National (Australia Wide) News Coverage</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>1% (1)</td>
<td>2% (4)</td>
<td>30% (54)</td>
<td>67% (121)</td>
<td>4.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW State News</td>
<td>1% (1)</td>
<td>1% (1)</td>
<td>2% (3)</td>
<td>35% (63)</td>
<td>62% (112)</td>
<td>4.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW State Political News</td>
<td>3% (5)</td>
<td>6% (11)</td>
<td>19% (35)</td>
<td>37% (67)</td>
<td>34% (62)</td>
<td>3.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Political News</td>
<td>2% (3)</td>
<td>6% (11)</td>
<td>19% (32)</td>
<td>34% (62)</td>
<td>40% (72)</td>
<td>4.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports News</td>
<td>14% (26)</td>
<td>9% (16)</td>
<td>23% (42)</td>
<td>38% (69)</td>
<td>15% (27)</td>
<td>3.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Newcastle News</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>1% (2)</td>
<td>4% (9)</td>
<td>19% (34)</td>
<td>76% (136)</td>
<td>4.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Newcastle Sports News</td>
<td>14% (26)</td>
<td>9% (16)</td>
<td>23% (42)</td>
<td>32% (57)</td>
<td>22% (39)</td>
<td>3.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Politics</td>
<td>6% (10)</td>
<td>10% (18)</td>
<td>26% (47)</td>
<td>38% (68)</td>
<td>21% (37)</td>
<td>3.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Respondents</strong></td>
<td><strong>180</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 Importance of news service to the ABC Newcastle radio audience. Source 1233 ABC Newcastle 2004 – Online Survey

In addition to the preferences for local news there is also a question of whether audiences have a preference for local stories over and above other forms of information. Table 2 on page 32, shows how radio audience members identified a very strong preference for local stories, well above their interest in sport, lifestyle and other issues. They also indicated a much stronger preference for local political issues than national or state politics.
Table 2  ABC Newcastle audience preferences by issue. 1233 ABC Newcastle 2004 – Online Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sports Stories</td>
<td>36.3%</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifestyle</td>
<td>61.9%</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Interest</td>
<td>69.3%</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Newcastle Stories</td>
<td>88.7%</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expert Stories</td>
<td>36.3%</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quirky Offbeat Stories</td>
<td>79.2%</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Womens Issues</td>
<td>41.1%</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural/Farming Stories</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional NSW stories</td>
<td>68.5%</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Political Issues</td>
<td>48.8%</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Political Issues</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Newcastle Political Issues</td>
<td>57.7%</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment News</td>
<td>48.2%</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Respondents</td>
<td></td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(skipped this question)</td>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is evident from the survey information that the ABC Local Radio audiences had a strong preference for local content and issues. Although further audience research would be required across the broad population to assess the general preferences for news sources and types of content, it was concluded that those people in the local community who were interested in information-based content had a strong preference for local issues and news. (McCluskey 2004 p 78)

It is evident that in Newcastle, Australia, there is an audience preference and need for the provision of local information based content. Despite this requirement commercial providers have been broadcasting less local content over the past decade in regional areas due to economic constraints. (Australian Broadcasting Authority 2002)

In Bhutan all but one of the television channels carry no local content at all and in 2006 there was only one national radio and one national television station provided by the public broadcaster – the Bhutan Broadcasting Service. If Bhutanese audiences are similar to some Australian audiences and have a preference for local content, then their only choice for that content is from the BBS.
2.3.2 The role of local media during disasters

Community requirement for local content is based on more than just preference. There is a recognizable and often stated need for emergency and local service information such as localized weather, traffic, community service, and health issues. The Consumer Federation of America in March 2003 noted the serious consequences of not having geographically localized media to provide essential local content. The Federation stated, “Senator Byron Dorgan, Democrat of North Dakota, had a potential disaster in his district when a freight train carrying anhydrous ammonia derailed, releasing a deadly cloud over the city of Minot. When the emergency alert system failed, the police called the town radio stations, six of which are owned by the corporate giant Clear Channel. According to news accounts, no one answered the phone at the stations for more than an hour and a half” (Consumer Federation of America 2003 p 6). Citing this same incident, Klinenberg (2007 p 4) noted that “instead of calling 911 to find out what happened and what they should do, most people in Minot turned on their televisions and radios.” Klinenberg notes that local radio and television services in the United States had proven to be a reliable source of information about what was happening and what to do in the past, as it had be legislated that broadcasters carry local content. However, despite the significance of this disaster, local radio stations around Minot “continued playing a standard menu of canned music, served up by smooth-talking DJs trading in light banter and off-colour jokes while the giant toxic cloud floated into town (Klinenberg 2007 p 6).

In his book Fighting for Air, Klinenberg (2007) extensively reviewed media ownership in the United States, with specific emphasis on radio and television and the significant decline in the broadcasting of geographically local content. He outlines how large media conglomerates in the United States have won concessions from the U.S. Federal Government and have pushed out local competition and now dominate local markets across the nation. He also notes that this is significant because the large conglomerates have replaced local radio and television news and programs with networked content that covers many regions, cities and states that were previously served with local content. Klinenberg argues that it is in the public interest to have local content, and that “the timing of America’s local media’s devastation could not be worse (Klinenberg 2007 p 36). He notes that there are factors such as economic upheaval and environmental extremes as well as concerns over terrorist attacks since the September 11 2001 World Trade Centre disaster, and the involvement of the U.S. in Middle East wars. These factors he states demonstrate that the “need for media that serves the public interest by helping citizens and communities make informed decisions has never been greater” (Klinenberg 2007 p 36). He argues that the provision of relevant information based content to local communities is a fundamental aspect of public interest. Tomlinson states that it is not satisfactory to describe a single, unified moral community, with common values as a result of globalising media content, especially in relation to scandals. Rather
he states “scandals remain in some important senses essentially local affairs” (Tomlinson 1997 p 67).

In response to the decline of local content, poor quality of networked programs and loss of local control of media companies in the U.S., Klinenberg has found that there has been a rise in citizen journalism and community action, largely through the opportunities of new technology on the internet. He notes “today an unprecedented number of Americans have taken up the cause of media reform, in hopes of reining in the local outlets that slipped into the hands of distant corporate overseers (Klinenberg 2007 p 201). He states that these are the people who are “fighting for air” (Klinenberg 2007 p 16) in efforts to bring back more local control and local content in American broadcast media.

Curran and Liebes (1998) outline how Katz over many years in collaboration with other researchers had developed the concept, published in Media Events (Dayan and Katz 1992), that “special media events tend to fall into one of three broad categories: ‘contests’ in sport and politics (such as the Olympic Games or Senate Watergate hearings), ‘conquests’ (such as Pope John Paul II’s triumphant return to Poland) or ‘coronations’ (the rites of passage of the great). What gives them a generic character is that they are usually transmitted simultaneously or extensively by different TV channels” (Curran and Liebes 1998 p 4). It is argued that these special media events can be uncritical, and normal broadcasting schedules or routines are interrupted with emphasis of special significance to what is being broadcast. These have been deemed to function as collective rites of communication. They say that “Dayan and Katz’s account emphasises the role of media events in integrating society, affirming its common values, legitimising its institutions and reconciling different sectional elements” (Curran and Liebes 1998 p 4). Curran and Liebes also write about “disaster Marathons.” While they see this as a category of media event Curran and Liebes write that this type of event promotes a “lynch mentality” and that “coverage of these events was governed by a show business logic of winning and keeping audience in an intensely competitive and increasingly commercialised industry” (Curran and Liebes p 7).

However, there is a strong argument that this fourth category of media event, disaster coverage, has a very strong and positive public service role when assessed as local media coverage. Following the alliteration used by Dylan and Katz we could call it ‘conflagration’ and this coverers floods, fires, storms, earthquakes, acts of terrorism and wars. Moving away from the alliteration, this is ‘emergency broadcasting’ undertaken for the sole purpose of community service that informs the public in times of emergency and disaster. From my experience as a radio and online station manager, covering disasters this form of broadcasting often covered by all media simultaneously, also galvanises the community in a very powerful way.
In disasters, Klinenberg (2007 p 66) notes, “the consequences of … dependence on voice tracking and syndication were devastating.” He was referring to lack of local content during protracted blackouts across a number of states within the U.S. in 2003 where local communities were left without information while all of the systems such as traffic lights, elevators, refrigerators, pumps, computers, telephones and other electricity dependent facilities failed to operate and community anxiety and health risks rose. Because of syndication, there was an absence of local media coverage. Similarly Klinenberg noted that despite advanced warning of Hurricane Isabel approaching Virginia in 2003, syndicated radio stations did not respond to official’s requests to put post disaster coverage on the air after the hurricane passed. Klinenberg found that “the problem with a lack of adequate disaster coverage became apparent where thousands of local residents needed basic information about how to protect themselves.” This was because the main radio network, “having dramatically reduced the local reporting and in-studio staff, had neither the personnel at its stations in the field to cover the crisis, nor the public service commitment to suspend its regular programming for the good of its listeners” (Klinenberg 2007 p 69).

Dagron (2001) reviewed the role of community radio and the internet in bringing about social change through participatory communication. The most successful form of participatory communication came from community radio, funded either by the local community, NGOs or other organisations, but essential to their success was the involvement and control of content by the local community or community groups. (Dagron 2001 p 12-13) The internet has often been seen in recent years as the medium with most capacity for social impact at a macro and micro level. However, Dagron (2001) believes a “reality check” paints a different story. Fundamentally the internet is not available to the vast majority of people in the world. Those with lower socio economic status and education in many developing countries do not have access to the internet. Dagron states “Currently, around 50 percent of the Internet users are in the U.S.; about 25 percent are in Europe; and only 12-13 percent in Asia, and South Asia, with 23 percent of the world’s people, has less than one per cent of the world’s Internet users” (Dagron 2001 p 21).

In Bhutan, with less than 6% of the population who have internet access and low affordability of computers and internet access (Kezang and Whalley 2008), it is unlikely that the internet will become a major medium of participatory communication in the foreseeable future.

As noted on the previous page, the coverage of disasters with continuous rolling broadcasting has the capacity to bring the community together, at times of need, in a very powerful and important manner. This was emphasised during the June 2007 Newcastle (Australia) storms which killed seven people, caused over a thousand evacuations, washed the bulk carrier ship Pasha Bulker ashore in Newcastle city, destroyed over 5,000 motor vehicles and caused hundreds of thousands of listeners and online audience to have input and participate in the coverage and also to acknowledge...
how strongly the coverage had served the community and brought it together (ABC News 2007). During the storms the ABC Local Radio and online service received hundreds of thousands of messages and telephone calls, predominantly from community members wanting to share information and assist one another. The Lord Mayor John Tate praised 1233 (ABC Newcastle) for maintaining emergency broadcast mode for four days, describing it as "a lifeline and a comfort to people throughout the Hunter Region. The efforts of all staff at 1233 went well beyond normal duties and demonstrated genuine care and support for the Hunter community as a public broadcaster." He also stated “People of Newcastle and the Hunter Valley and Central Coast were able to support one another, inform one another, alert one another, and comfort one another, in a time of need, and through the medium of radio we were all able to join together as a strong and unified community” (Scully 2007 p 1).

An even more powerful example of emergency broadcasting occurred in February 2009, when more than one hundred and seventy people were killed and thousands of homes were destroyed across Victoria, Australia, by severe bushfires that formed the worst natural disaster in Australia’s history. ABC Local Radio in Victoria carried emergency coverage, purely to inform listeners in their local areas about safety and essential information as the emergency unfolded over more than two weeks. In addition they covered news and information for people across the nation and internationally (ABC Melbourne 2009). This coverage was recognised as an integral part of the official emergency agency’s response. In the Parliament of Australia a number of Federal Members stated their appreciation for the emergency service role of radio. On 11 February Mr Darren Chester Member for Gippsland said “there are so many other heroes emerging from the tragedy across our region, from the ABC journalists and presenters who worked incredibly hard to keep us informed throughout what was a long, painful campaign of fighting the fires on Saturday right through to now—it is ongoing; the threat messages are coming out almost on a daily basis.” On the same day Mrs Sophie Mirabella Member for Indi stated “the coverage, information and dedication of the ABC right across Victoria has been commented upon in this House…. They have formed part of the fabric of north-east communities, giving assurance and information, which were particularly important last weekend, amidst much anxiety and much fear. They give of their time and they are truly part of our local community” (Hansard, Parliament of Australia 2009). What these Australian parliamentarians have stated reflects the significant role of localism in broadcasting in the provision of an essential service. In contrast to the disaster marathons mentioned by Curran and Liebes (1998), where news coverage of prolonged events is used as a tool to inform the broader, global audience and in many ways to keep audiences viewing or listening, local emergency service coverage provides a legitimate and important role in informing and reassuring the community. Klinenberg (2007 p36) emphasises that the need to have local media, that serves the public interest, has never been greater.
The recent experiences in Australia, and those outlined by Klinenberg in the U.S., demonstrate how locally focussed media can run disaster events or emergency broadcasting in a manner that is not driven by a media agenda, a government or institutional agenda, nor an agenda of opposition as suggested by Curran and Liebes (1998), but rather the event evolves as the disaster unfolds through interaction with the community leading to the agenda being determined, at least in part, by the community itself. However, this can only effectively occur when the media has the capacity to concentrate coverage on the local community to which it is broadcasting. What has not been mentioned by Curran and Liebes (1998) in their analysis of the Dayan and Katz (1992) model of media events, is that in order for these ‘rituals’ or events to galvanise the community, there must be sufficient capacity in the local media to cover events that relate to local communities as opposed to simply covering the events that are significant enough to have global coverage carried by the global networks.

2.3.3 Relevance to local communities

In their book, *Public Service Broadcasting in the Age of Globalization*, Banerjee and Seneviratne (2006 p 3-4), state that “in an increasingly globalised world it is essential to have broadcast institutions that address viewers and listeners as social beings and citizens rather than as mere consumers. In a world wrought with wars, conflicts, disasters and ethnic and religious strife it is critical to have committed public service broadcasting institutions which enlighten citizens with accurate and unbiased news and information, educate citizens and help overcome the numerous divides that characterise the world today.” The importance of localism in maintaining cultural identity as well as providing content with strong relevance in diverse cultural communities in Papua New Guinea was emphasised by Rooney (2006). He stated “community radio stations, whether NBC or other, can overcome the linguistic divide in PNG, which hinders information dissemination from national broadcasters, and strengthen cultural diversity that has been weakened through the spread of English and Pidgin” (Rooney. 2006 p 336).

Alexander and Jacobs (1998) summarised earlier work by Liebes and Katz (1990) relating to how media interacts with society stating that “media allows for the transformation of a limitless and unbounded space into a symbolically fixed place, a process necessary to the durability of civil society” (Alexander and Jacobs 1998 p 27). The limited effects paradigm as it was termed, demonstrated the importance of media impacts at levels of agency, community and culture at a micro-interactional level , however later work by Dayan and Katz (1992, argued that there is also a similar interaction at a macro-societal level. Media events, as previously discussed, are not within the normal routines of media and Alexander and Jacobs (1998) summarise that viewing them becomes an almost mandatory ritual for the whole community. And they have a very powerful influence at the macro level on society, because they “attract larger audiences than any other form.
of communication media, have tremendous potentials in terms of media power, because they erase
the divide between private and public, and also because they dramatise the symbols, narratives and
cultural codes of a particular society. … they provide common rituals and common symbols, which
citizens can experience contemporaneously with everyone and interpersonally with those around
them” (Alexander and Jacobs 1998 p 27). This effectively argues that the limited effects paradigm
or micro interaction is acting in conjunction with macro or broad social interaction with a strong
galvanising effect in the broad community as well as close or defined community circles.

Alexander and Jacobs (1998 p 30) argue that the semiotic system of civil society applies the
structures into which every member may fit. They state “the discourse of civil society, just like the
discourse of religion constitutes a language system that can be understood semiotically, that is as a
set of homologies and antipathies, which create likenesses and differences between various terms
of social description and prescription.” According to Alexander and Jacobs civil society is
organised around a bifurcating discourse of citizen and enemy, the worthy and unworthy, providing
a relatively stable system for evaluating events and persons. The media plays a pivotal role in this
community discourse and assists people within the community define for themselves what is sacred
and what is profane (Alexander and Jacobs 1998 p 31). They write that discursive constructions
(of which mass media is a prime component) “create reaction in civil society itself. They can
trigger violent reactions, dislodge powerful people and motivate the formation of social
movements. This is particularly true of the cognitively oriented news media, and even more so of
media events and civil crises” (Alexander and Jacobs 1998 p 32).

Klinenberg (2007 p 30) highlighted that centralised ownership of media networks led to lack of
diversity of media ownership in the U.S.A. which in turn led to significantly reduced local media
content across the country. He noted the high levels of dissatisfaction within local communities
because they felt the media companies were not providing relevant content to their local markets.
Diversity of media sources and content has been shown to be very important (Forbes et all 1998 p
166) and this should apply to social discourse as well as to news and information content.
Diversity is also important in the context of relevant content that relates to social structures, values
and beliefs. This need for relevance applies in political issues and events that occur within a
community. Patterson (1998 p 95) states that “the cultural product of the international television
news agencies serves to perpetuate a western hegemony hostile to developing nations. The
diversity which the ‘marketplace of ideas’ news would ideally represent is diminished.” Local
content is therefore vital in the provision of news that has relevance to the diversity of needs and
interests of the people in the country in which it is broadcast.
2.4 Changes in social life and culture

As stated, Bird argues that even though there have been ethnographic studies of media communities within Communication, it is legitimate to undertake ethnographic studies relating to mass media because there is no developed anthropology of mass media as yet. She states that researchers use a variety of different ethnographic methods, to meet the “goal of finding better ways to understand the dynamics of culture through the eyes of others” (2003 p 5). Bird states the importance of understanding “real people” and “looking beyond the audience toward a richer ethnographic understanding of life in a mediated world (where the media is fully integrated into social fabric)” (Bird 2003 p20).

It is the aspiration of this work to consider the introduction of satellite television into Bhutan in a way that sees its significance within the ‘social fabric’ and to understand changes in society and culture through the eyes of the people interviewed. There have been studies in many countries during the time when television was first available. However, the studies of social impacts were mostly conducted in western countries and were usually framed in relation to its potential for harm for children, rather than considered for the whole society. Unfortunately, the widespread use of survey measures and a narrow definition of ‘effects’ means that most of these studies do not come close to considering broad changes in social life and culture. A group of studies of film in the lives of young people, the Payne Fund Studies in America, were conducted at an earlier time in the 1920s and 30s and show what might have been revealed using ethnographic and descriptive measures of television’s introduction if qualitative methods had been more widely used in the 1950s and 60s. The extensive studies included tens of thousands of research subjects and looked at the social effects in the USA of many different films; “The movies did seem to bring new ideas to children; to influence their attitudes; stimulate their emotions; present moral standards different from those of many adults; disturb sleep; and influence the interpretations of the world and day to day conduct” (Lowery and DeFleur 1988, p51).

Since then, studies of smaller communities of interest or audience groups in relation to specific programs that did not arise from within their own culture. Miller (1992), for example, examined the way The Young and The Restless, as a soap opera, is consumed in Trinidad and how the narrative of the soap opera itself assists in the development of the unique Trinidad culture. He states “it is clear that soap opera is symptomatic of a shift by which myriad local cultures are increasingly reconstructing themselves in articulation with what has been termed global forms” (Miller 1992 p 163). Miller found that The Young and The Restless was so popular in Trinidad that he could not find people to speak to him during the broadcast times of the program. He believed that other anthropologists may find similar issues with Hum Log in India or a Brazilian telenovela, where certain programs have incredibly strong mass appeal within a community. Miller argues that the
themes of certain programs find a niche within the classic moral tales of many parts of the world. This opens up the prospect that people within a society can interpret the messages and social context of the program in relation to their own social constructs and meaning, rather than having social constructs or behavioural models imposed through their consumption of the program. In relation to The Young and The Restless in Trinidad, Miller states, “paradoxically, an imported soap opera has become a key instrument for forging a highly specific sense of Trinidadian culture” (Miller 1992 p 165).

Miller points out that Trinidad “was never, and will never be, the primary producer of the images and goods from which it constructs its own culture” (Miller 1992 p 180) however he argues that “at the level of consumption we can observe both the recreation of the soap opera as Trinidadian and also the role in the refinement of the concept of Trinidad as the culture of bacchanal” (Miller 1992 p 179). Miller previously described bacchanal as an essential quality Trinidadians had adopted as part of their own identity. Miller (1992) has outlined the possibility of global and foreign media being consumed in a manner that allows the audience within specific cultures to use the content in a manner that builds and adds to their own cultural identity and in such cases may even enhance the capacity to develop certain elements that are essentially characteristic to their own identity and their own culture. Bhutan is also a country that is unlikely to be a major primary producer of television content and therefore the majority of programs appearing on television in Bhutan will be produced in foreign countries and consumed by Bhutanese within the context of their own culture.

Recent studies of the introduction of western media into Asian countries or satellite broadcasting from dominant Asian neighbours have been useful in the design and interpretation of the current study and will be reviewed here.

2.4.1 Television and girls in Fiji

Becker 2004 outlined a study in Fiji conducted to examine the impact of the introduction of television into a rural community in Western Fiji in 1995. In this study interviews were used from the field work in 1998, 3 years after television was first broadcast in the region. Narrative data was collected from 30 purposively selected ethnic Fijian secondary school girls, using semi structured open ended interviews. Two previous studies were conducted in Fiji, one in 1995 and another in 1998 (Becker et al 2002). The study suggested that media imagery is used in both creative and destructive ways by adolescent Fijian girls in navigating the rapidly changing social environment. Becker stated that, "study respondents indicated their explicit modelling of the perceived positive attributes of characters presented in television dramas, but also the beginnings of weight and body shape preoccupation, purging behaviour to control weight, and body disparagement.” She also
concluded “response to television appeared to be shaped by a desire for competitive social positioning during a period of rapid social transition” (Becker 2004 p 1).

While this study was looking at specific effects of television on body image in Fijian adolescents it has drawn attention to the perceptions of rapid social change following the introduction of television to a community that has not previously had television access, as well as the perceptions from individuals that television exposure has significant effect on perceptions of role models including the way young people respond to these perceptions. In summarising her findings Becker states, “understanding vulnerability to images and values imported with media will be critical to preventing disordered eating and, potentially, other youth risk behaviours in this population, as well as other populations at risk” (Becker 2004 p 1). It is worth noting that Bhutan represents a population that had been, up until mid 1999, almost entirely without television access. As a result the same capacity for rapid social change and potential for significant influence on perceptions, and responses to those perceptions, existed in Bhutan in 2006 as was identified by Becker in Western Fiji. In addition Becker et al stated for media naïve communities, “further qualitative research is warranted on television's impact on adolescents in other settings to compare vulnerabilities to media exposure and enhance understanding of how media imagery mediates the risk of disordered eating” (Becker et al 2002 p 514). If further research for the effects of television on eating disorders is warranted in other communities, it is also warranted to determine a wide range of perceptions of change and activities resulting from the sudden introduction of television to other media naive communities. In addition, Becker et al (2002), looked at the effects of the sudden introduction of media on a specific sector of the community, namely adolescent women. In Bhutan my purpose was to examine the perceptions of the impact of the sudden introduction of television from a cross section of community representatives, rather than a selected target group, and this will be discussed in later chapters.

2.4.2 Family impacts from media

The role of the media in affecting the day to day lives of Australians has been seen as very important by Australian media regulators for many years and investigations into the role of media in serving local communities as well as impacts on family life have been undertaken. The Australian Communications and Media Authority or ACMA (ACMA 2007) commissioned a major in-depth study of children’s use of electronic media and the way parents mediate that use. “The research considered a range of children’s leisure activities and investigated how the internet, free-to-air and subscription television, radio, mobile phones and games fit into the lives of Australian young people and families (ACMA 2007 p 2). The report included detailed information from 1003 children (aged 8 to 17 years) about the time they spent on leisure activities, including electronic
media, as well as a questionnaire to 750 parents/guardians examining the attitudes and behaviours that families adopt to manage the use of electronic media by children.

This report found that despite Australia being very rich with wide access to mobile phones and a rich variety of internet activities, the major media accessed in the home was still television, which is taking up just under two hours per day of children’s viewing time and is only ten minutes less than the average daily television consumption for children measured in 1995, despite the significantly greater range of other media opportunities available for children to access in 2007 (ACMA 2007 p 2). In addition, the ACMA report showed children aged 8 – 17 years accessing mobile and internet activities on top of television and there was no significant measured change in listening to the radio, going out or doing homework since 1995. However over the past 12 years they did find there was an increase in sport and physical activity, watching DVDs and listening to music on CDs and MP3 players. The explanation offered to this was that children are multitasking much more than in the past allowing them to undertake more activities including diverse media consumption (ACMA 2007 p 3-16).

These findings indicate levels of Australian parental concern relating to some elements of media consumption and that the majority of parents do try and put in place some rules governing media usage. In addition ACMA, as a regulator, has expressed concern relating to health and aggression that may be affected by television and internet consumption by children and has undertaken a review of Children’s Television Standards in Australia. (ACMA 2007 p 13)

While these issues relating to family media consumption in Australia have been reported as consistent with literature findings from other countries in the world, a number of key differences relate to the Australian and Bhutanese media environment. Firstly Australia’s local media, either at a national, state, or regional level has multiple radio and television channels and content providers. In Bhutan there is only one local television provider, which is the publicly funded Bhutan Broadcasting Service. At the time of my study in Bhutan there was only one Bhutanese radio station, also run by the BBS. However, since that time there have been three new radio stations, although only broadcasting in parts of the country, so that the majority of Bhutan still only has access to BBS Radio. Secondly, as discussed earlier, while more than 80% of homes have access to the internet in Australia, the estimate for Bhutan is less than six percent of the total population. (Miniwatts Marketing 2008, Ministry of Information and Communications 2008). Also from my own observations while in Bhutan and as reported by Kezang and Whalley (2008), while Bhutan has had significant mobile phone uptake since its introduction in 1996, there has been little uptake of MP3 and mobile CD devices due to high prices for this technology and low Bhutanese average incomes. In addition the lack of access to the internet would mean that the capacity to download content on to mobile devices would be severely restricted. Nevertheless, viewing and listening to
television and radio has become a major component of people’s daily lives in Bhutan and there is significant interest in how this impacts on personal and family life.

Wadley (2002) writes about the changes taking place in rural northern India (which borders with Bhutan), especially relating to family life. She indicates that among people’s perceptions of change is a widely spoken view that there is “a lack of caring that exists now. While speaking of the family, people lamented the lack of care for ones elders” (Wadley 2002 p 21). Wadley states there are a number of factors influencing the changes taking place in rural life in northern India, including democracy, migration, education and the new ideas conveyed through films and television. She states, “India’s village communities are facing enormous social change due to economic shifts and other factors related to globalisation. The extent to which the village is still a ‘little community’ varies considerably, but in most places is surely less than even two decades ago….. there is a sense of a confluence of factors that before the past two decades was more stable than what exists now” (Wadley 2002 p 22). A number of responses from interviews with participants in Bhutan have indicated significant change in their personal activities, their family’s activities and also in the way the media is influencing their behaviour. The impact of television in the daily lives of Bhutanese people will be explored through personal accounts in later chapters.

2.5 Bhutan’s neighbourhood - aspects of media in Asia

As previously discussed, the majority of Bhutanese television comes from India and other countries in Asia. Romano (2005) examines the perceived role of journalism in Asia and how there has been an evolution from perceptions of journalists as nation builders in the 1950s and 1960s, to a concept that journalism could partner with governments in aiding development and education. In these ways the term development journalism was applied within much of Asia by scholars, some practitioners and some in political power. However, Romano states that more recently journalism in Asia has been described as an agent that empowers, and that journalism should at least be a guardian of transparency in a society. Romano quotes a United Nations Development Program (UNDP) policy document, Integrating Human Rights with Sustainable Human Development (1998), which described good governance where government systems were “participatory, transparent and accountable” (UNDP 1998 in Romano 2005 p 11). This assisted development organisations in building the capacity of journalism “to ensure governments communicated openly with their citizens.” This led to the perception that “journalists were entrusted with the task of exposing official conduct in order to create pressure for governments to act responsibly and efficiently” (Romano 2005 p11). She outlines that in this way journalists are now seen as agents of transparency, acting as a watchdog on society and also as a channel for public opinion. Xiaoge (2005) examines the concept of Asian values that arose in the 1980s which was in part an attempt to try and explain the value proposition that described Asian attitudes and activities that led to the
economic boom from the Asian tiger economies. In addition, Asian values have been used by Asian political leaders and academics as a means of confronting “their Western counterparts in the struggle for ideological dominance and control. The ideological battle has centred on the arguments and counterarguments regarding the nature and existence of Asian values” (Xiaoge 2005 p 102). Xiaoge also examines the evolution of media in Asia over the past few decades, which he argues since the late 1990s, has moved considerably more towards Western media in terms of press freedom and professional standards (Xiaoge 2005 p 100). In Asia, according to Xiaoge the media is expected to be cooperative instead of adversarial in terms of its relationship with government. He says that in Asia, press freedom is “relative and contingent upon the social, religious, political and cultural fabrics of society. The press is expected to be socially responsible when it exercises its freedom and to be mindful of the causes of events and the potential consequences of its news coverage” (Xiaoge 2005 p100). Xiaoge describes these as normative elements of news media in Asia which state what the press is expected to be and do in society. In relation to internet access, Romano (2005) points to work carried out by Dagron (2001) where he states “The typical internet user worldwide is male, less than 35 years old, with a university education and high income, urban based and English speaking – a member of a very elite minority (Dagron 2001 p 21). Romano makes a very compelling argument that in countries such as India, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Nepal and others, the internet largely serves audiences of “expatriates, urban elites and the highly educated” (Romano 2005 p 13). She states that the internet is unaffordable and largely impossible to access for the majority of the population in these countries, particularly in rural areas where computer literacy is low and illiteracy is high.

Thusu (2006 p 65) cites Hobson (2004) stating that, “the economic growth of India and the ‘peaceful rising’ of China – the two ancient civilisations with huge potential to influence the emerging global ‘knowledge society’ – is likely to affect the way international communication is conceived and conducted.” Thusu describes the historic development of mass media in India and outlines how India inherited from the British “the combination of a private press and government-controlled broadcasting system” (Thusu 2005 p 55). In the late 1980s and 1990s India’s media market, which is now one of the world’s biggest television markets, deregulated and opened up to private and international broadcasting ownership. This lead to a large diversity of radio and television channels produced from within India as well as internationally from cable operators. Thusu satates that by 2004 there were more than 300 digital channels where “a large, growing and increasingly Westernised middle class, estimated at between 250 and 300 million (people) provided global media corporations with unrivalled opportunities for running a wide array of satellite channels. Among the main channels were major transnational broadcasters - CNN, Disney, CNBC, MTV, Star, Sony Entertainment Television, and the BBC and scores of Indian channels operating and national levels” (Thusu (2005 p 57).
The proliferation of channels from both international and domestic operators in India has continued to increase. Whereas international providers delivered only English language news a few years ago, now there is strong competition for news in Hindi (Thussu 2005 p 59). In addition, Thussu (2005) argues that there has been a strong push into infotainment, mixing information and entertainment and adding human interest content, in order to increase ratings. Thussu expresses concern relating to infotainment, stating “this trend demonstrates a shift from serious to a more popular news agenda, driven by pressures to maximise profits. As television increasingly defines how public opinion is shaped – in its national, regional and international spheres – such trends can only be described as worrisome, particularly since networks such as STAR (Rupert Murdoch’s Satellite Television Asian Region) are part of multimedia empires” (Thussu 2005 p 59). He acknowledges the positive effects of television and multimedia content on education and modernisation and in many ways the subsequent prosperity of many people in India, but he is also expressing concern that despite the large number of channels, and despite the fact that many broadcasters are reporting news in Hindi, there is concern that the tendency for content to be pro global capitalism, means that “in fact there may be narrowing and shrinking of the parameters of the debate in ideological terms.” He also says “this is evident in the fact that rural poor are remarkably absent, not only from news stories, but also from dramas and serials, and not just on Murdoch’s channels” (Thussu 2005 p 65). His argument includes the concern that, despite there being an avowedly Indian identity, international networks such as STAR are clones of the US model of market led television. Because of the very high levels of illiteracy, as high as 40%, the electronic media has a very high capacity to influence and create a market place for media corporate clients, and Thussu says that “thus the apparent media plurality may in fact be contributing to a democratic deficit in the world’s largest democracy” (Thussu 2005 p 65). As previously discussed, Bhutan in 2006 was a nation preparing for its first democratic elections, with national illiteracy levels exceeding 40%, and much of the urban population was receiving more than 30 international television channels from Indian satellite TV providers.

2.5.1 Cultural change and satellite television – India, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka

While there has been extensive work undertaken looking at the impacts of globalised and transnational content in south Asia and its effects on culture, nationalism and the economies of the region, there has been little work focussing on the very small, isolated countries such as Bhutan, having little or no exposure to electronic media and with a high proportion of people who cannot read or write, so were not exposed to print media either. In the case of Bhutan, the opportunity exists to examine the perceptions of citizens relating not only to the introduction of globalised networked content through satellite services, but also to examine the perceptions of change from a time when no media was available to a time when a rich diversity of television content became universally available (at least in the urban areas).
A significant work looking at the impacts of satellite television into South Asia, by Page and Crawley (2001) titled *Satellites over South Asia: Broadcasting, Culture and the Public Interest* was unable to include Bhutan because satellite channels (and television in any form) were only introduced after their study had commenced. They state “We have not included in the study either of the two smallest south Asian states - the Maldives or Bhutan. When the project was started Bhutan had no state television; the trigger for change was to make the 1998 World Cup accessible to football enthusiasts in that deeply traditional society” (Page and Crawley 2001 p 12). As they note, interest in football in Bhutan is very strong. In 1998, the World Cup live screening in the capital city, Thimphu attracted crowds and as reported on the BBC Website in 2004 “The 3-0 victory of the home side over Brazil was watched by thousands on a big screen in Bhutan's National Square.” The BBC article then goes on to say, “it was such a success that a year later, on the 25th anniversary of his coronation, King Jigme Singye Wangchuk decided to begin the Bhutan Broadcasting Service (BBS). Six months after that, global TV broadcasting was allowed in” (BBC 2004 p 1). However, as early as 1961 the processes for the modernisation and opening up of Bhutan had begun under King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck (Kezang and Whalley 2008 p 3), and his son King Jime Singye Wangchuck continued the process of modernisation in Bhutan well before the introduction of television. As reported in the Guardian Newspaper in June 2003, the Dragon King “had lifted a ban on the small screen as part of a radical plan to modernise his country, and those who could afford the £4-a-month subscription signed up in their thousands to a cable service that provided 46 channels of round-the-clock entertainment, much of it from Rupert Murdoch's Star TV network” (Scott Clarke and Levy 2003 p 14). Therefore, the 1998 world cup is unlikely to have been the sole catalyst for the introduction of television.

The research approach used by Page and Crawley (2001) involved a number of phases. First of all there was a compilation of media profiles of the different south Asian countries they were studying. They used descriptive accounts of the state of broadcasting, in news and current affairs, entertainment, development, education and health. In total more than four hundred interviews were conducted over two years as well as focus groups with six categories, to gauge public reactions to satellite programs. These focus groups covered key areas of influence including: “language, dress, music, sport, cultural practices, patterns of consumption, social relations and the impact on women and children as well as the use of radio and television” (Page and Crawley 2001 p 404). In addition there were six district surveys with three in India, and one each in Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka. These surveys measured reactions at different levels of society outside metropolitan cities. In total, Page and Crawley held one hundred and ten discussions with groups. The methodology for group discussions was “broadly based on guidelines for focus group discussions followed in other social surveys in South Asia” (Page and Crawley 2001 p 403). Discussion groups included approximately ten participants. The same method was also used in a number of small scale sample
surveys conducted in different districts across South Asia which was designed to test opinion outside large metropolitan areas.

Page and Crawley (2001) cite students from a local college in Nepal in the late 1990s having a discussion in relation to their own perceptions of international satellite and cable television channels compared with their own publicly run broadcasting channels and there is a strong preference for the quality of program content as well as for the integrity of information from the international channels. “Nepal TV programmes are not effective and neither are they good” said one of the same students. “In fact every month, NTV programmes disappear from Biratnagar for days. This does not happen with the satellite channels.” Another said: “Before City-cable came to Biratnagar, we had to watch the boring programmes of Nepal TV and I can say no-one actually sat completely through any of them.” “If we only had Nepal TV” said a third, “we would have come to know of the nuclear tests of India and Pakistan really late” (Page and Crawley 2001 p 20). In addition, these same students in discussion could see a significant cultural influence from the networked channels. “Personally” said one boy “I don't like Star movies and Channel V. The life shown on these channels is far removed from the reality of our own country. Because of these channels, Nepali girls too have started wearing short skirts.” “I think films are much more dangerous to society” replied a girl, “Nepali boys are very quick at copying. That's why we see boys wearing earrings, bandanas on their heads and teasing girls. This is all due to films” (Page and Crawley 2001 p 19).

The impacts of cross border networked channels or transcontinental content are significant. According to Page and Crawley (2001) new communities are being forged through electronic connection that not only transcends political borders but even cultural and language barriers. “Satellite TV is no respecter of borders. It has created new electronic communities which transcend old political boundaries. The same programmes can now be watched in Karachi, Kandy, Kathmandu, Kolhapur and Khulna, even if the language isn't always understood. It is a challenge not just to the national broadcasters but to nationalism itself” (Page and Crawley p 20).

However, borders alone do not define a culture. Lull cites Eagleton 2000 in articulating that people who belong to the same geographic location or place do not necessarily form a culture. Culture he says comes from shared “speech habits, folklore, ways of proceeding, frames of value, a collective self image” (Eagleton 2000 p 37 in Lull 2005 p 48). Lull goes on to describe how culture is less stable in a globalised world and that “cultural loyalties, customs, rituals and identities have become less and less confined or determined by geographical territory or human surroundings” (Lull 2005 p 48). He describes the significant rise of individualism, where individuals through the diverse opportunities of media can identify with an ever increasing array of cultural resources from anywhere in the globe. At the same time these people are affiliated by ethnicity, religion, tribe,
race and other collective identity traits. Lull describes this as the push and pull of culture where society and the collective can push cultural identity to people, and pull where individuals can select their cultural identity through individual action. Largely this is through media experience that allows them to cross borders and participate in society anywhere in the world. Social norms and conformity come from the push of society, while personal wants and needs and diversity arise from the pull of individuals (Lull 2005 p 26). With respect to the people of Bhutan, participants in this study perceived the push of society as being the main determinant of social identity prior to the introduction of television, while their descriptions indicate that they welcomed the opportunity to pull cultural influences from other parts of the world through television viewing after 1999.

There was concern in the 1990s that networked content in India, largely provided by the international media giants and broadcast in English was leading to a new form of cultural imperialism. However, according to Page and Crawley (2001) the introduction of Hindi language networked content did not remove the capacity of the international network providers to have strong influence on the local cultures and economies of India. “The satellite revolution enables the international media to speak to the English-knowing middle class in one language and the greater Indian middle class in others. The programme preferences of these audiences may not overlap very much - though there are some indications that the overlap is increasing - but the fact that these audiences watch programmes in different languages does not prevent them from being targeted with similar products and lifestyles. For the advertiser, whether national or multi-national, the language is the means to reach the audience. To this extent, the development of programmes in Hindi by Star TV or of popular soap operas by Zee TV is assisting the integration of India into the global consumer economy” (Page and Crawley 2001 p 24)

The influence across South Asia from Indian produced television or Indian targeted television that emanates from global satellite television providers is enormous. Content intended for Indian audiences can spill out into surrounding countries as these channels are provided into those smaller markets as part of a suite cable or satellite channels at a relatively low cost. Page and Crawley (2001 p 24) state “The westernised middle class in Colombo or Karachi now watch the same English-language programmes on CNN or BBC, Star News or Cartoon Network. Pakistanis watch programmes made for India, particularly the Hindi entertainment channels. Tamils in Sri Lanka have access to satellite channels in their language aimed at south India. Bengali satellite channels have audiences in both Bangladesh and West Bengal. Much of this communication is still one way - from India outwards - but it has already affected the nature of relationships between states and peoples.”

There is concern that not only the Hindi language, but also powerful cultural groups within India could emerge as the dominant voices of networked media content. One of the consequences of the
multi channel, multinational environment through satellite content delivery, according to Page and Crawley (2001 p 29) is that bureaucrats and politicians are being held to account and that “audience participation in debates, discussions and interviews have added a new dimension to the public sphere.” But they say Hindi is the language used in most content because it has the capacity to reach the largest audiences (in addition to English). Therefore “the market has reinforced the dominant position of Hindi as the lingua franca of India and by its very success and attractiveness raised questions about the future of other cultures” (Page and Crawley 2001 p 29-30).

This is a particularly relevant point relating to the satellite and cable television services being shown in Bhutan. Many of the programs watched in Bhutan are the Indian soap programs, broadcast in the Hindi language, which are watched by women, including those with no, or low, formal education levels. However, they are watched by a broad section of the population as well (Ehrlers and Yeshi 2006).

Appadurai (1990) discusses what he calls the “tension between cultural homogenisation and cultural heterogenisation,” in which he outlines the common concern that globalisation will inevitably lead to an Americanisation (which is homogenisation) of cultures around the world. However, he argues that it is equal, if not more importance, that regional cultures can be greatly influenced by their larger neighbours in a form of heterogenisation of cultures around the world. Appadurai states that for “the people of Irian Jaya, Indonesianisation may be more worrisome than Americanization, as Japanisation may be for Koreans, Indianisation for Sri Lankans, Vietnamisation for the Cambodians, Russianisation for the people of Soviet Armenia and the Baltic Republics” (Appadurai 1990 p 295). In Bhutan, the influence of the dominant Indian culture through media content as well as through economic and other factors, (Bhutan Ministry of Economic Affairs 2008) could be far stronger than that of the USA, Europe or the United Kingdom. What is relevant here to an isolated community like Bhutan, that has only just introduced global television content, is that the images they gain from the media they are given, may be the only exposure they gain from the outside world. It is also worth noting that for rural people, or people who’s exposure to other cultural influences is very limited, the media, particularly television through images, narrative, drama and news, may be the only real acquaintance with diverse cultural landscapes, and effectively could become the window through which the world is seen. As Appadurai (1990) states, this window has the potential to lead a viewer to perceive an “imagined world.”

McDonald visited Bhutan in 2004 and assessed aspects of commercial media and its relationship with Buddhist principles and the goals of Gross National Happiness in Bhutan. He argues that television is intrinsically attention absorbing and that this reduces the level of social intercourse, especially at the home and family level. With reference to Television viewing in the USA He
wrote “The collapse of verbal culture is most apparent in those nations most saturated by television, where its attractions appear capable of pushing out even the most intimate of social relationships” and added “in the United States, people devote more time to watching television than they do to talking with their spouses (four to six times more) and playing with their children (an average of twenty minutes each day compared with four hours of television viewing)” (McDonald 2004 p 70-71). He notes that television viewing is replacing the “verbal culture” of people talking with one another as they spend more and more time in front of the television. He also argues that for Bhutan, with its cultural foundation in Buddhist principles, the nature of commercial media and advertising encourages global capitalism, materialism and consumerism which are not consistent with Bhutanese Buddhism or the goals of Gross National Happiness. He states “From a Buddhist perspective and thus from a GNH perspective, cultivating excessive consumerism is wholly inappropriate” (McDonald 2004 p 85). His argument that television viewing is replacing the verbal culture, especially in the home, is explored in detail in this study.

In a conference on Media and Public Culture run by the Centre for Bhutanese Studies in 2007 McDonald said “in any analysis that seriously wishes to comprehend the impact of media contact in Bhutan it is important to distinguish between the aspirational aspects of Western culture and the non-aspirational sub-culture of the market” (McDonald 2007 p 192). He argued that free market commercial media did not have the values of Buddhism, even though the “high” culture of Western society did share the same values of “freedom, equality, justice, peace, compassion and generosity.” He added that for commercial media and globalised capitalism “moral maturity is undermined and here we find the fundamental challenge that market culture poses for many traditional cultures worldwide” (McDonald 2007 p 193).

As will be discussed in later chapters, my interviews with Bhutanese people and the Bhutanese Media Impact Study (Ministry of Information and Communications 2008), draw out some perspectives of a changed society in Bhutan as a direct result of the media’s impact. Scannell (1988) outlined how Radio and Television have reflected upon and influenced the patterns and timeframe in everyday life. While he focuses on the community more at a national level and his work predates the influence of the internet, his analysis is particularly relevant in a country like Bhutan where the internet has, as yet, not taken hold beyond a very low percentage of the population (Miniwatts Marketing 2008, Ministry of Information and Communications 2008). Scannell (1988 p 17) states radio and television broadcasts in the United Kingdom in the 1920s and 1930s “stitched together the private and the public spheres in a whole new range of contexts.” He articulates that “radio and later television unobtrusively restored (or perhaps created for the first time) the possibilities of a knowledge world in common, for whole populations…. broadcasting brought together for a radically new kind of general public the elements of a culture in common
(national and transnational) for all” (Scannell 1988 p 29). As will be discussed in later chapters, the perceptions of Bhutanese people I have interviewed reflect Scannell’s assertion, as a number of people perceive that they have been brought into a new knowledge based world through the ability to watch television, which has provided them a window into the world for which there was previously (prior to 1999) no access for most Bhutanese people (Larmer 2008 p 131).

2.5.2 Local media in Nepal

Wilmore (2008) cites Liechty (1998) as stating that “the history of television in Nepal does not follow that of the historical trajectories mapped out for other locales, especially … in Europe and North America, within which many mass media technologies were first developed.” Wilmore (2008) used 3 elements to his research, examining the development of independent, local media in the urban community of Tansen, in Nepal. The ethnographic study included a preliminary survey to familiarise the author with the diverse people who lived within the town. The survey also formed a basis for a later more detailed survey and interviews which gave further background to the people of the community. The second element of his methodology was immersion in the community of Tansen for a full year, using ethnographic observation. The author stated that, because Tansen was an urban community, rather than smaller scale village there were limitations to his capacity to be an ethnographic observer over the whole community, even by staying there for a year (Wilmore 2008 p 19-20). He therefore added to the survey and field observations a number of open ended or unstructured interviews “to develop a better understanding of several important areas of life in Tansen. Wilmore focussed on people involved in the production of local media in the town as well as 3 topics that were identified by citizens of the town as core elements of its economy. These were health care provision, education and tourism. The author also collected a huge range of other sources including photographs, video tapes of local television broadcasts, music recordings, copies of books and articles and leaflets on tourism and other socially and culturally generated sources. He expressed the argument that no matter how much source material is obtained and examined, a researcher has limited capacity to analyse only a fraction of the available sources and data of this complex urban society (Wilmore 2008 p 21).

Wilmore’s work describes the emergence of local television in a local Nepalese community and its survival through significant turmoil and upheaval within the country, both in terms of political upheaval and social change towards modernity. Wilmore’s work is substantially different from my research in Bhutan in a number of ways. Firstly, the emergence of the local media Wilmore studied, Ratna Cable Television, was a result of local business and community leaders coming together to develop television for both political, social and economic reasons. In this sense a niche was seen for the value of local media, produced by local people. While Wilmore acknowledges that “it may well be that those who control the media technologies seek to position themselves as
‘gatekeepers of cultural memory’ (Kuenhast 1992 quoted in Wilmore 2008) but …. they remain only one of the many acts of mediation that are simultaneously enacted in and enactments of community life” (Wilmore p 202). The media environment of Nepal at the time of Wilmore’s study in the mid 1990s was very different to that of Bhutan, both then and in 2006. The introduction of parliamentary democracy in the early 1990s in Nepal sowed the seeds for a transformation from fully state owned mass media to allow independent media operators to develop and flourish two decades later (Wilmore 2008 4). However, in Bhutan, with a population a fraction of that of nearby Nepal, the only viable local electronic media in 2006 were the radio station and television station run by the Bhutan Broadcasting Service (Ehlers and Yeshi 2006 p13 & 23). It could be argued that the economic viability to run local commercial stations in a country with a population of around 672 thousand people (Census Commissioner Royal Government of Bhutan 2005 p 1) and current growth estimated at 1.3% (Miniwatts 2008) is not viable. Indeed half the population of Bhutan us under 22 years of age and around 90% of the population is in a rural environment with very low disposable incomes (Larmer 2008). In addition, Bhutan did not have any television until 1999 and according to Armington (2002, p 91) this made Bhutan the last country in the world to establish its own television broadcasting station.

Wilmore has conducted extensive ethnographic and analytical study of the media environment in Nepal and the capacity of local media to thrive and become a vital part of the local community. One significant element of his study, is the relationship between the local, regional television in Tansen and the community that it broadcasts to. Wilmore notes that Ratna Cable Television in Tansen was only able to negotiate content from network providers and to stay relevant in the local community because it “has been accepted as a legitimate representative of the town and district by both the local community and the state” (Wilmore 2008 p 182). An inference from Wilmore’s work is that success of local television, in terms of audiences watching and perceiving value from the content, is dependent on the relevance and legitimacy that the community gives to the local station.

Liechty ( 2002) outlined the relationships between modernity and tradition on youth in Nepal. One of the significant areas of his study was the toughness displayed by male youth, apparently modelled on images from television programs and movies with kung-fu themes or themes of tough adventurers. Liechty gives as an example one of the informal interviews he conducted with a twenty year old male:

Interviewee: I like certain kinds, like Rambo, commando films, and the kung fu, karate films, you know, Bruce Lee, Jackie Chan and all that stuff. Interviewer: Why these kinds? Interviewee: Now, while I’m a youth, I like to be brave and active. This is what I like to do (Liechty 2002 p 43).
Liechty points out that there is a tradition with these young men, that as they come from “martial tribes” they have a tradition of toughness, built up over centuries through reputations of the Gurkha fighters and Sherpa climbers (Liechty 2002 p 42). He argues that heavy consumption of foreign media leads to Nepali youth constantly comparing themselves to the lives lived in distant power centres in the West and Far East. Consumption of significant levels of foreign media, which is prevalent in urban Nepal he says, leads young people to become aware of the limitations of their life as a Nepali (Liechty 2002 p 39). This view is also consistent with the findings of Kim (2008), that women in Korea had reflected on the limitations of their own lives through exposure to foreign media.

2.5.3 Global television and Korean women
By studying the impact of national and global television on Korean women, Kim (2008) was researching how television intersects with the everyday lives of Korean women of different generations and classes. She undertook an ethnographic study of six different socio economic categories, with seven women in each category with a varied sample of women of different ages and classes. She used unstructured, open ended interviews that delivered information about television viewing in addition to information about their own lives. Kim found that during the course of the interviews about television, the women became reflexive [sic] and started talking about their personal lives, relating to subjects such as “life conditions, private complaints and discontents.” Kim identified that “reflexivity is an integral process of TV talk and the women’s reflection upon their self and upon their world is the major element of the experience of global television” (Kim 2008 p 32). Kim found that the young women in her study delivered a form of storytelling, reflecting aspects of television programs that they had viewed, then moving on to aspects of their own lives. In my own in-depth interviews in Bhutan, I also noted that discussions of television programs, or discussions about television viewing habits, often moved beyond the programs to a discussion about their daily life activities and how these were changing. Kim found that the young Korean women interacted reflexively with their view of the world through television and that allowed them to apply meaning from the content, which contrasted with the discontent of their daily lives. She observed that the young low socio economic women travelled vicariously, through the international content they saw on television, and that this added value to their lives while also allowing them to reflect on the “dullness” of their own lives. As will be discussed in later chapters, the ability to watch international content on television was perceived by Bhutanese participants as an ability to participate ‘vicariously’ in the global community.
2.6 Theoretical perspective - duality of structure

The introduction of television into Bhutan in 1999, where it became available to a large proportion of the urban population, increased the number of choices available to individuals in deciding upon their actions in everyday life. The changes in culture and society are complex and an underlying framework is required in order to understand the mechanisms for change and how they impact on society. The theory of structuration, proposed by Giddens (1982) offers a suitable theoretical framework for this study, where his notion of duality of structure describes how actions by individuals will influence a social system and changes in a social system will influence an individual’s actions. The introduction of television into Bhutan represented a change in the social system, and this has allowed individuals to make choices that were not previously available to them. In making those choices – such as to watch television instead of attending a meeting or watch television instead of talk or play with their children – these individuals influence the social system in which they live at any instance of time. This is a recurring process. I have used duality of structure as the framework for this study in the context of the Bhutanese society which is undergoing rapid change caused by the deliberate introduction of new technologies – such as television and mobile phones – and new social systems – such as democracy – and at the same time change is caused by the choices and actions individuals are taking in utilising the new resources available to them.

Giddens (1982) criticises the limitations of positivism and functionalism when they are used as the logical framework and sole methods in the broad context of social theory. He also conversely outlines his concern that hermeneutics, with its dichotomy of verstehen (meaning to understand) and erklären (meaning to explain) is not in itself sufficient to “resolve the logical and methodological problems left by the disappearance of orthodox consensus” (Giddens 1982 p 5). He is referring to the disappearance of orthodox consensus relating to positivism and functionalism in the study of social theory. Giddens instead proposes a “hermeneutically informed social theory” which captures some of the important contributions of functionalism but allows for the interpretive aspects of hermeneutics. He states “a hermeneutically informed social theory …. would recognise the need for connecting an adequate account of action with the analysis of its unanticipated conditions and unintended consequences. In place of functionalism I want to offer what I call the theory of structuration” (Giddens 1982 p 7). Structuration is described by Haralambos and Holborn as “the way that structures relate to social actions, so that certain sets of social relationships survive over space and time.” They also note that Giddens had developed the concept of ‘Duality of Structure’ which suggests “both that structures make social action possible and at the same time social action creates those very structures” (Haralambos and Holborn 1995 p 904). In relation to structuration, Giddens defines structures as having only virtual existence and is made up of rules
and resources relating to social systems at any instant (Giddens 1982 p 9). In describing the basis of structuration, Haralambos and Holborn (1995) comment that the rules referred to by Giddens are the procedures followed by people, and are not necessarily laws or codes. Rules could be described as understood patterns of behaviour that are turned into actions by a person when they make decisions. Resources, according to Haralambos and Holborn come into being by the actions of humans, and even when natural resources exist, they are not resources in the context of structuration, until human action utilises them. The resources described by Giddens have two forms, both allocative and authoritative, where allocative resources exist tangibly through nature and human creation while authoritative resources are non-material and exist in relation to social dominance and power, where some individuals can dominate others. (Haralambos and Holborn 1995 p 904) In addition Giddens states that structuration has an essential element of being recursive, where “structure is both the medium and the outcome of the practices it recursively organises” (Giddens 1982 p 10).

Moores (1993) notes that action (by agents) and structure are both given equal weighting in the theory of structuration and that neither can be taken as primary. He states that duality of structure “attempts to escape the problems of previous dichotomies” (Moores 1993 p 139) where agency and structure were seen as divided. Moores cites Giddens stating that duality of structure is “crucial to the idea of structuration” (Giddens 1984 p 25). Moores goes on to comment on the necessity for “a critical ethnographic perspective in future forms of cultural analysis” (Moores 1993 p 140). duality of structure indeed provides a good framework for the ethnographic perspective of this study.

According to Lull (2000 p 77), rules in society “help us construct and perpetuate the fundamental themes, trajectories and tones of our social world.” He notes that there is “a profound, often subconscious acceptance of the terms of social rules,” and that “all communication experiences develop against a field of background expectancies whereby persons hold each other to agreements, whose terms they never actually stipulate” (Lull 2000 p 78). He notes that most people willingly abide by social rules, especially the majority of unspoken rules. However Lull notes that while “rules are pervasive and influential, they are by no means uniform, permanent, or universal” (Lull 2000 p 80). He outlines two basic tasks for rules in directing social thought and action. Firstly, by asserting “what is normal, acceptable and preferred (the constitutive rules)” and secondly “by specifying how social interaction is to be carried out (the regulative rules)” (Lull 2000 p 76). These rules, Lull argues, lead to coordinated understanding between individuals and allow for social activity that is structured and patterned. He also notes that social rules are flexible and are not uniformly engaged by people. Rules are often interpreted and transformed by people into ways that benefit them. This is in line with Giddens’s theory of structuration where individuals actions, in relation to the rules and resources of their society, are transformed recursively. Lull (2000) also notes the significance of flexibility, where rules can be ignored, broken, or modified. This is
particularly important as the recursive transformation of society takes place when rules are modified or changed by the individual’s actions. Rules are employed to regulate family television viewing and can be formal or informal and applied directly or indirectly (Lull 1990 p 68). In Bhutanese society, after the introduction of new technological and social resources, which included television, as part of the deliberate modernisation approach of the government, there has been a significant change to social rules within the family and community that have impacted on daily life. These changes will be explored in later chapters.

At the core of Giddens’s theory of structuration is human agency, where people can act either with intention where a person is deliberately positioned to take action or they can act with “unconscious motivational factors which in turn are tied to the unacknowledged conditions and unintended consequences of action” (Dallmayr 1982 p 20). Haralambos and Holborn (1995 p 904 – 905) state that according to Giddens a social system is a pattern of social relations that exist over a period of time and space. In his theory of structuration, Giddens does not state that individuals create society or that society causes individual behaviour. Rather, his concept of ‘Duality of Structure’ articulates that human action or agency leads to transformation of a social structure or system and changes in a social structure or system will influence the decisions leading to the actions of individuals or agents. The recursive element of Giddens theory also means that as structures and systems change, they lead to new sets of rules and new resources that in turn influence individuals’ actions in a specific time and space. While Giddens’s theory does clearly articulate that social systems and structures influence the actions of individuals he allows that all individuals have the capacity to exercise free choice, except in the most extreme circumstances.

There is a strong link between the rules and the way individuals relate to their culture. Institutionalised rules “reflect material and ideological relations wherein power is a central feature” (Lull 2000 p 89). But rules can be used for guidance and security and as such the power of rules is not necessarily about oppression, because people can find rule structures comforting. Lull defines rules, as “cognitive and emotional frames of reference that encourage the construction and maintenance of certain behavioural patterns” (Lull 2000 p 90). He notes that the mass media has strong influence in relation to rules at the macro and micro social level; “rules link public agendas with private worlds” (Lull 2000 p 95) and media has a significant role in forming that link. Given Bhutan had almost no mass media prior to 1999, the significance of introducing the resource of multi channel international television to the Kingdom could be expected to have significant impact on how the individual Bhutanese people take action in relation to a changed perceptions of rules in their society. Lull (2000) cites Giddens noting the impact of the mass media on society at the macro and micro level where “distant events may become as familiar, or more so, than proximate influences, and integrated into frameworks of personal experience” (Giddens 1984 p 189). As will
be discussed in later chapters, Bhutanese people perceived significant change as a result of familiarity with events in the rest of the world through exposure to international television.

Structural constraints in contemporary society are less dominant according to Lull (2005) and this means that “the deeply resonating synergy between structure and agency has become more dynamic than ever.” He argues that “the fundamental explanatory power of structuration theory – the idea that societies structural influences and the individualising power of human agency should not be thought of as opposing forces – clearly applies to matters of contemporary culture as it does to traditional sociological issues and concerns” (Lull 2005 p 54). Lull describes how the concept of the push and pull of culture, in line with structuration, is an ongoing, interactive, undetermined, mutually constitutive process. He advocates that Giddens’s theory of structuration has a significant role in explaining fundamental elements of contemporary societies.

While Dallmayr praises Giddens for developing the theory of structuration, especially in correlating agency and structure, he also criticises the theory, noting there are several ambiguities surrounding the notion of “agency” that are not fully extinguished by Giddens, especially relating to “his tendency of tying agency closely to everyday conduct understood as activity or doing. (Dalmayr 1982 p 22) Similarly, Archer criticises the theory of structuration because she believes structure and agency are tied too closely together and defined in terms of one another; “structural properties (defined reductively as rules and resources) are held to be outside time, having a ‘virtual existence’ only when instantiated by actors.” As a result, “one may doubt whether structuration does integrate the temporal dimension adequately” (Archer 1995 p 87). In addition Archer criticises the theory of structuration in relation to the concept that materials only become resources when people make use of them. Resources have constraints that are not the product of human will, such as coal, once being burned, no longer being available to be burned again (Haralambos and Holborn 1995 p 907).

Moores argues that regular activities and routines allow individuals to be media audience at different stages of their day to day structured life, and he states that there is a need to have ethnographic investigation into “who in a household is watching and listening, when, where and with whom, if anybody” (Moores 1996 p 22). Moores states that media consumption itself must be factored into investigations of routines and structures in daily life and states, “of course, TV and radio in the home are not the only institutional determinants of time space paths – public workplaces and leisure facilities, schools, shops and so forth can also serve as stations on the journey – but the broadcast media do make a significant contribution to the structuration of quotidian life” (Moores 1996 p 23).
Moores outlines that notions of community are related to collective identity and that modern media plays a significant role in determining this identity through the symbolically constructed character of a community. He states that communities are “fictional realities – things that are experienced as real and appear to have an objective existence, but which are actually made by the mind in the workings of an imaginative geography” (Moores 1996 p 25). Moores cites Giddens who articulates that in pre-modern society space and place largely coincide but “the advent of modernity increasingly tears space away from place by fostering relations between absent others, locationally distant from any given situation of face-to-face interaction” (Giddens 1990 p 18). Moores also states that “ethnographic field work, conducted in local settings can contribute to our knowledge of this transformed arena for identification” (Moores 1996 p25). He notes that “national broadcasting institutions” allow people to tune into a common schedule in the privacy of their own homes and “imagine themselves to be part of the wider general public that is produced through broadcasting day in day out, week in week out, year in year out,” and that this has “instituted a new relationship between state and people (Moores 1996 p26).

Part of the basis for Gidden’s theory of structuration relates to “the spatial and temporal dimensions of modern culture” (Moores 1993 p 73). Moores describes how a key element to Gidden’s theory is that there is a fundamental restructuring of time-space relations in the transition from traditional to modern societies. He states, “whereas social activity was once centred around localised face-to-face interactions – dominated by presence and a strong sense of place – it is now frequently organised in terms of relationships with absent others, which may extend over vast geographical areas” (Moores 1993 p 73). This transition from traditional to modern society, at both the macro social level and micro family level, are particularly relevant in Bhutan where participants have outlined significant changes in the way they interact with one another, both in the home and the community. These changes to social interaction and activity are explored in later chapters.

Lull describes the concept of a world Superculture, where “the historically unparalleled development of communications technology and the sweep of globalisation that surrounds us today are changing the very nature and meaning of culture” (Lull 2001 p 132). He describes nation as a cultural resource where a nation is both a political state but also a geopolitical structure which “has a personality and is experienced emotionally” (Lull 2001 p 153). While he states that transnational media literacy can enhance a sense of cultural equality, Lull also notes that media content can be a very strong challenge to the dominant culture in even the most stable nations. In Bhutan, the impact of introducing multichannel international television to a media naïve society has allowed rapid and significant challenges to the actions and attitudes of the people who determine the culture of Bhutan. In this way the nation, described by Lull as a resource, when considered within the theory of structuration, is changing as its culture transforms, and this has impact on the actions of
individuals and the rules that apply within the micro and macro level of the nation, in a recursive manner.

Notwithstanding the criticisms of Giddens’s theory of structuration, and limitations relating to materials only being resources when they are used as outlined by Archer (1995), the duality of structure offers a framework to examine the changes in perceptions of individuals in Bhutan in their everyday life and how the resources available to them and rules that they use impact on their actions. In addition the perceptions and actions of individuals in Bhutan impact on and in many ways determine a change in the rules of their society. For example, the rule of which clothing to wear when going out may be changed by the influences on fashion through television viewing. In addition the action of choice of viewing certain types of content could lead to a desire to purchase certain goods, which could in turn cause a merchant to acquire those goods that were not previously available. The duality of structure provides for qualitative ethnographic enquiry to examine people’s perceptions of change in Bhutan in broad terms; how social systems are impacting on them, the actions they are taking in their daily life as a consequence and how these actions may then impact on Bhutanese social systems.
3 Materials and Methods

3.1 Research questions

The purpose of this study is to consider whether, at least in one media market, there have been changes in communication at the local community level brought about by changes in media content and consumption, and the cultural significance of such changes within the community. The study also attempts some explanation of how media availability and consumption is able to change the daily lives of people in Bhutan as well as broader aspects of their culture. Bhutan was chosen to examine some of the impacts of viewing networked content when it replaces local forms of communication or local media content because of the introduction in 1999 of multi channel international television, along with one local station into Bhutan, a country that had no prior access to television. As outlined in section 2.6, the notion of duality of structure (Giddens 1982) offers a model where actions by individuals influence a social system and conversely, changes in a social system can influence an individual’s actions, especially relating to the resources in a community. Social systems relating to culture and to forms of communication are likely to be altered by the introduction of television, especially where the majority of the channels are from foreign countries. The primary research question is:

How has the introduction of global media changed local forms of communication and culture from the perspectives of Bhutanese people?

As discussed previously, global media in Bhutan at the time of this research was predominantly international television, as the internet, newspapers and other forms of international content were not readily accessible or consumed by most Bhutanese people. Giddens’ (1982) theory of structuration describes the duality between structure and agency, which is a recursive process, where the actions of individuals or agents are reflexive and influence structure at the same time as structure influences the individuals or agents. Lull (2005) describes how people pull information from media and society, yet this is complimented by the push of social structures which in turn influence individuals. In Bhutan, the introduction of television represented a significant change in the resources available to people and following duality of structure it would be expected that people’s actions would consequently be affected. These actions would further influence the resources in their society which would give further influence over their actions and continue in a reflexive manner. Therefore the research questions relate to the way Bhutanese individuals perceive changes in their culture and in their communication, following the introduction of television in 1999 as a major new resource in their society.

1. How do people in Bhutan use and value local content in relation to international content on television?
2. How does viewing of international content impact on local communication and community life in Bhutan?
3. What are the broader influences on tradition and culture in Bhutan as a result of the consumption of global media? (Global media, in this context refers to television stations and networks from foreign countries)

3.2 Constructivist epistemology

Crotty (1998) describes the research process as one in which the researcher eventually determines the best elements to be used. However he emphasises the need to approach the choice of method, methodology, research perspective and epistemology based on an understanding of previously applied research techniques. He also states that while qualitative and quantitative research techniques may be able to be applied with respect to almost any epistemology or theoretical perspective, he cautions against trying “to be at once objectivist and constructivist” (Crotty 1998 p15). He states this as a contradiction in terms and therefore advises the researcher to take one or other epistemological approach.

While Crotty (1998 p3) suggests that the researcher decides the eventual process they will use, which is unique in endeavouring to answer their own research questions, he does nevertheless provide a clear model outlining four fundamental elements of research. As part of his model he outlines methods as techniques or procedures, methodologies as strategies or plans of action, the theoretical perspective as the philosophical stance informing the methodology and the epistemology as the theory of knowledge embedded in the theoretical perspective. While this framework is by no means universal, (nor did Crotty claim it to be) I have found it a useful tool as a basic model in describing my own research process.

In relation to epistemology Crotty describes constructivism as a legitimate understanding of knowledge that makes it “clear that different people may construct meaning in different ways, even in relation to the same phenomena” (Crotty 1998 p9).

Saule (2000) views constructivism as one of the dominant philosophical frameworks along with critical theory and post-modern ethnography. In relation to constructivism Saule states “each individual possesses sentiments about what is true. This notion of truth guides individuals in their continuing interpretation of events, social phenomena, and the behaviours of other people” (Saule 2000 p 164). In Saule’s analysis of constructivist research she outlines three key implications. Firstly, that a single version of reality is not the outcome of constructivist research, because each individual has their own interpretation of reality. Therefore ethnographic interpretation is required and interpretations of one phenomenon can be multiple. Secondly, a constructivist researcher cannot be completely objective because they are partially within the study. On that basis a constructivist researcher should “make their potential influence on the interpretation of the
narrative explicit within the ethnographic text, thus allowing the reader of the text to have an understanding of the researcher’s background and position.” Thirdly, constructivist research uses “an inductive approach to methodology, listening to the issues addressed by participants in the study, and building analysis and theory from that” (Saule 2000 p164).

Given one of the key objectives of this study was to seek views relating to the introduction of television and electronic media into Bhutan, from the perspective of Bhutanese people, I have focussed on a constructivist epistemological approach in order to gain more insight into the diverse “realities” that some Bhutanese people perceive as well as to examine some of the common themes that have emerged.

3.3 Qualitative inquiry, ethnographic research and in-depth interviewing

Moores (1996) notes that Britain has a well established tradition of sociology and anthropology with emphasis on “local identities and relations, not on identifications with the globalising flows of electronic transmission.” This could be seen as a limited definition of community, however he argues that “even in a late modern mass mediated culture – those senses of community which are put together in circumstances of co presence, of face-to-face interaction, still deserve our close attention” (Moores 1996 p 27). He notes that his own research looks “to combine a study of mediated and situated social identity” and he states his particular interest in the “urban neighbourhood setting” which is “beyond the local place of the home” (Moores 1996 p 27).

In the context of Bhutan in 2006, only seven years after the introduction of television, the aspect of social identity in the home and in the neighbourhood was very powerful as the country emerged from a pre-media environment without telephones, television or the internet with the only form of mass media or non face-to-face communication being one national radio station. In addition, with more than 40% of the population unable to read or write, face-to-face communication, confined to the home, village or local community meant that the capacity of people to have a sense of community outside their local ‘place’ was very limited prior to 1999. In order to understand the links between spaces of identity that are on offer from media and the existing cultural circumstances of viewers, Moores argues that “we should be trying to see the transnational, globalising tendencies of media ownership and message flow from the standpoint of localised reception practices – in order for us to grasp their influence on the ground in everyday life” (Moores 1996 p 74). Ethnographic research was chosen as a method for this study to focus on the perceptions of change at the home and community level. This was to allow participants to articulate their views in relation to changes from their perspective of community and sense of belonging at the local level and in the new wider world, once the limitations of geographic place were lifted through the wider image space of mass media, predominantly international television.
Hammersley and Atkinson (1995 p 6) note that ethnographic research requires an awareness by researchers that they are not just describing what is ‘real’ or ‘natural’. This idea that the social world should be studied as closely as possible to its undisturbed natural state without artificial settings such as laboratories, experiments or formal interviews fails to take into account that the researcher is almost always exerting some influence on the people being studied. They state, “ethnography exploits the capacity that any social actor possesses for learning new cultures, and the objectivity to which this process gives rise” (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995 p 9). But they also note that reflexivity, or the capacity of the researcher to have influence on the subject matter they are studying, should be taken into account. Hammersley and Atkinson state that “research is an active process in which accounts of the world are produced through selective observation and theoretical interpretation of what is seen, through asking particular questions and interpreting what is said in reply” (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995 p18). Reflexivity does not invalidate ethnography as a research method, rather the researcher can minimise the effects or preferably exploit them, but most importantly, the researcher is aware that they are not separated from the system being studied. They note, “the image of the researcher is brought into parallel with that of the people studied, as actively making sense of the world” (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995 p19). However, Gillard also warns that due to the unequal relationships between audiences and researchers there is a need for “care and creativity in designing research” (Gillard 2002 p 185).

Ethnographic research “involves producing detailed interpretive descriptions of social life – usually of everyday activities which are situated in specific settings” (Moores 1996 p 28). He notes that there are “marked differences in method” in ethnographic research and that “in studying domestic media consumption – or in researching any aspect of daily life – it should be acknowledged that there are genuine difficulties in sustained access to the space of the home” (Moores 1996 p 30). Moores notes that one off conversational or in-depth interviews offer the possibility “to identify key patterns of meaning in families and households and to open up a series of issues concerning the interpretations and experiences of media consumers” (Moores 1996 p 31). Interview situations offer brief opportunities for simultaneous observations of the social setting and group interactions. With respect to the concerns that interviewees are changed by the social interaction between the researcher and the researched, the power difference, the possibility for interviewees to be reserved or not to be open, Moores states that the researcher must take these dynamics into account, but he defends in-depth interviewing as a valid method of research within the broad field of ethnography (Moores 1996 p 32).

Participant observation and depth interviews are “ideal methods for understanding the role of media in everyday life in ways that experimental or survey research, without the rich contextual detail and holistic approach of ethnography, cannot duplicate” (Priest 1996 p 29). However,
qualitative research cannot always be completely holistic and look at every aspect of a society or culture being studied. According to Lindolf (1995) “unlike ethnography, qualitative study does not always take holistic account of a fully integrating group.” Lindolf adds “many studies using qualitative methods often focus on only some partial set of relationships in group life or on one aspect of a scene” (Lindolf 1995 p21). According to Bird (2003) flexibility in approach to ethnographic study, involving a variety of qualitative methods is important in ensuring methods are appropriate for a particular project. She states “classic ethnographic fieldwork may not be appropriate for studying dispersed media audiences, at least for the ethnographer working alone. Many media ethnographers are studying cultural phenomena for which they are already familiar as participants….We should not agonise unnecessarily about pure holism as a goal… but write ethnographies that explore specific questions or issues” (Bird 2003 p7). In addition Bird states that many feminist and critical audience researchers have embraced face to face in-depth interviewing. While articulating this as a valid tool Bird also states that the researcher should actually discuss not just the data, but also the interview process in itself and “consider all our qualitative methodologies as different types of ethnographic encounter that will necessarily produce different kinds of discourse depending on context” (Bird 2003 p10). She states that it is her “core belief that it is possible to learn about culture through ethnographically inspired methods” (Bird 2003 p19). Bird is making it clear that her view is that there are a variety of valid ways of conducting qualitative research that is inspired through ethnography, and that part of this goal is to find “better ways to understand the dynamics of culture through the eyes of others as well as our own” (Bird 2003 p20).

Priest (1996) describes the role of in-depth interviewing and participant observation in media research. She states that in addition to participant observation “a second key ethnographic technique is the depth interview which is an open ended conversational exploration of an individual’s worldview or some aspect of it. Unlike a survey or questionnaire, the depth interview does not have a rigidly set structure” (Priest 1996 p 26). By using insider knowledge, that is gaining perspectives of members of the culture through in-depth interviews, “isolated practices or beliefs which may seem odd to an outsider, will make sense to a cultural insider - the member of the culture of which these practices or beliefs are part” (Priest 1996 p 25). In addition, participant observation is an important aspect of ethnographic study. “Participant observers try to become a member of the group they are studying. They try not to impose their own cultural worldview – their assumptions about how things should be done or what they mean. They make systemic notes about their experiences and observations … They take note for example about how people spend their time, who seems to be in charge and the explanations that people offer for their actions” (Priest 1996 p 24-25).
Alasuutari also notes that ethnographic field studies are often “qualitative in-depth interviews of a group of people, which is of course quite understandable as one bears in mind that most television or video viewing takes place in very small or private settings.” Alasuutari notes that long-term participant observation studies in someone’s home has “restrictions” (Alasuutari 1999 p 5-6). In addition, “any active part of data gathering depends on the particular study in mind” (Alasuutari 1999 p 8).

In Bhutan, these limitations were also encountered along with the limitations of staying extended periods of time in the country as discussed under the heading Limitations, Advantages and Challenges in Field Work.

3.4 Research design and methods

Ethnography was used as an underlying methodology to guide the research design of this study. In-depth interviews were chosen as the central method of fieldwork. Conducting in-depth interviews allowed me to draw out from each participant detailed perspectives and perceptions taking into account my presence in the community at the time and my long history of working as a radio reporter, interviewer and manager. A secondary method in the research design was the collection of documents and media research I was able to access while in Bhutan and afterwards.

Williamson describes her earlier research (Williamson 1995 in 2000b p 60) where she was investigating whether information is purposefully sought or incidentally acquired by ICT users. The relationship between purposeful information seeking and incidental information acquisition led her to a diagrammatic representation of everyday life information theory. This model takes into account values, lifestyles, the physical environment, personal characteristics and socio economic circumstances in relation to institutional sources, mass media, and personal networks. According to Schroder et al, people’s media use is “anchored in the contexts of everyday life in which people live their lives as members of partially overlapping large and small groups, at the global, national, regional and local levels.” They also state that while peer groups have grown significantly important through social networking (online and on phones for example) for adolescents, “it is still the case that the family by far overshadows any other social institution as the most important context of media use” (Schroeder et al 2003 p5). This is in accord with findings in the Media and Communications in Australian Families Report (ACMA 2007) discussed earlier. The focus I have used in my research is to seek perceptions of how media is used by individuals in Bhutan, predominantly from descriptions of their own home usage as well as from descriptions of how members of their family and household use the media.

An important aspect relating to an ethnographic study using individual perspectives is noted by Saule (2000 p169) who states that “those who are being studied will not be entirely representative
of the phenomena and/or social grouping under analysis. Nor are they representing themselves in their entirety.” With this in mind it must be understood that in-depth interviews, such as those I conducted in Bhutan will only articulate part of the story from the interviewee’s perspective, offering their own interpretations of accounts and events. These individual perspectives and accounts need to be analysed in relation to other accounts, other perspectives and be interpreted where possible by the researcher in relation to a present understanding of the community, society and culture being studied. Considering the purpose of this study is to further develop the understanding of perceived impacts on daily lives to people in Bhutan, the depth interviews I undertook with each individual were expansive with the objective of eliciting as much information from each individual as possible. In talking about media research Schroder et al (2003) state that “ethnographies are all ideographic studies – that is an interpretive investigation of a culture based on the textural, rather than numerical, analysis of data culled from a small number of cases, at least when compared with survey design” (Schroder et al 2003 p74). Therefore within the limitations of the time and opportunity for the field work, I collected extensive in-depth information from the 27 individuals that I interviewed, rather than interview more people with less depth to each interview. Williamson (2000a p 225) quotes Slater (1990 p114) stating “the more fully and accurately any interview can be recorded in the respondents’ own words, the better analysis and conclusions will be.” This is compatible with the approach taken by Berg (1989) where he states that semi standardised interviews (semi-structured interviews) “allow interviewers sufficient freedom to digress; that is, the interviewers are permitted (in fact expected) to probe far beyond the answers to their prepared and standardised questions” (Berg 1989 p17).

Another important point relating to the value of individual in-depth interviews rather than group discussions relates to people opening up about personal matters, private issues and personal views that they may not wish to have exposed in the public domain. This is especially important in Bhutan where the community is small and it is quite possible that many people in a group discussion could know one another, even if selected randomly. Robson and Foster (1989 p 51) point out that “a respondent may be happier to be alone than be in a room full of strangers” and many interviewees may feel better in a one to one, non-conflicting environment where differing views may be brought out, than in group discussions. These feelings may apply much more in Bhutan where people are much more likely to know one another or at least know of one another. However, it is clear, properly constructed and conducted group discussions would be possible and useful in eliciting perceptions associated with media and its impact in Bhutan.
3.4.1 In-depth interviews

Taking into account the previously discussed advantages of in-depth interviewing, the limited resources as a sole researcher and the limited time I had in Bhutan, I chose in-depth interviewing as the key component to my field work and data gathering.

The main themes explored in the interviews are summarised below and details of the consistent themes that occurred during the interviewing are provided in the appendix. Interview themes included questions about;

- Use of media every day in the routines of their lives
- Description of viewing context at home and the place of different media
- Likes and dislikes of current media
- Recollection of how they spent their days in 1998 and perceptions of the main changes
- Feelings about these changes
- Discussion of one example in more detail of the social changes and their feelings
- Description of the ways that Bhutanese culture is responding to media in their midst.
- Opinions of what others are saying about the media and its effect on the daily life and cultural habits.

Interviews were conducted with a cross section of the community including individuals who stated their role to be one or more of the following; farmer, monk, housewife, professional, journalist, doctor, parent, manager, retailer, student, artist, architect, forester. People were selected for interview from urban and rural areas and from a diverse range of Dzongkhags across Bhutan. Only adults over 18 years of age were interviewed and each interviewee signed a consent form to participate on the basis that their identity would be kept confidential. Interviews were recorded in the field at a place of choosing by the interviewee (to ensure they felt most comfortable), either at people’s homes or places of work, or if they chose another location such as a hotel room. If the interviewee did not speak English an interpreter was used who was chosen by the interviewee. This happened for two interviews. Interviewees were selected on the basis of diversity of region, diversity of gender, background, occupation and age. Word of mouth using social networks of Bhutan Broadcasting Service colleagues were used to find a diversity of interviewees. Interviews were conducted in a semi structured in-depth (or depth) interview technique as defined by Williamson (2000a p 225) and advocated by Priest (1996 p 29).

Ehlers and Yeshi (2006 p 41) state that “the impact of radio and TV programmes on the audience is not easily to be found out by survey research.” In Bhutan this is even more the case because of the
low literacy levels and the potential for survey participants to find difficulty responding to questions they might not fully understand, without the opportunity to clarify questions or have them interpreted. This added further weight to the approach to in-depth interviewing as a technique for eliciting information by actively listening to the interviewee. Deeper questioning elicited a better understanding of the question and therefore a more detailed response.

As noted by Hammersley and Atkinson (1995 p 9), researchers can have influence on the subject matter they are studying. Therefore, while every effort was made not to lead the interviewee, the very nature of asking a specific question can direct an interviewee’s consciousness to focus on a topic that they may have not previously considered. For example, in response to a question that asked about older and younger people’s behaviour with respect to laws and religion, Interviewee 19 said “I’m moving into areas where I haven’t thought, really. But If I were to talk from the top of my head, what I’d say is…” Similarly Interviewee 3 responded to a question asking about changes in the way people communicate with one another by saying “actually to be very frank, I haven’t given thought to that yet. But overall generally, I would say that…” In both these examples it was clear that the interviewee was discussing a subject that had not previously come into their conscious thought. Nevertheless, the responses by the interviewees were clear and considered. It is also important to note that responses from interviewees also had influence over the questions asked by me as the researcher, by offering me opportunity to ask follow-on questions to explore the viewpoints expressed by the interviewee. In this manner interviewees were, at times, prompted to discuss matters they had not previously considered, while in the same discussion the researcher was prompted to further explore a response or viewpoint from the interviewee.

3.4.2 Documentary evidence

My initial research design had included the intention of conducting a follow up survey of a cross section of the population to assist in validation and triangulation with the qualitative stages. However, after spending some time in Bhutan, taking into account the issue of 40% illiteracy rates in the adult population and the multiple languages spoken across the country, and my limitations as an individual researcher, I determined a better process was to continue to carry out in-depth interviews eliciting as much information as possible from participants and then to use, for comparative purposes, a new large scale study into media access and impact that I had learned about once in Bhutan. This was only then being provided for the Bhutan Broadcasting Service, who had commissioned the study when I was there. The subsequent publication of the Media Impact Study conducted by the Ministry of Information and Communications (2008) added considerable data for purposes of comparative analysis.
Other kinds of documentary evidence collected during fieldwork were those available through newspapers, government agencies within Bhutan, in addition to thematic analysis of data available resulting from the BBS and Ministry of Information and Communications in Bhutan. Comparisons of results and explanations emerging from the interviews and the official audience survey provided the possibility of triangulation and validation of interview results. In addition to the audio taped interviews I made a video tape of many of my interactions with people in their daily life.

### 3.4.3 Researcher observation and experience

Schroder et al outline that media ethnographies are designed as kaleidoscopes applying multiple sources. These can take the form of different investigators, various types of empirical data, different methodologies or a combination of theories” (Schroder et al 2003 p74). During my time in Bhutan, which was only for a 3 week period, I was immersed as a working media consultant delivering courses to journalists from across the country as well as travelling with colleagues to cultural events, festivals and into people’s homes. I also had opportunity be immersed in the everyday life as an employee in the capital city Thimpu and had opportunity to travel accompanied by a colleague, to people’s homes in villages and rural areas across different Dzongkhags, within Bhutan. This being only a short period of three weeks limited my capacity to be an observer. Also the fact that I was delivering courses to broadcasters and journalists, which was separate to my field work for this project, left me even less time to observe in the true ethnographic sense. However, through my personal experiences of living, working, travelling and being with people in their homes as well as attending sporting and religious activities, I was able to add value to my analysis and interpretation from the perspectives I had gained, even from this limited level of immersion within aspects of the broad Bhutanese society. I videotaped my many aspects of my interactions with people in their daily life whilst I was in Bhutan and was able to review these during the data analysis. In a few places I will be using my own observations and experience as an additional tool to aid in the interpretive processes. This approach is in line with Saule (2006 p171) who states that ethnographic study has “become a process of the researcher interpreting the ways in which individuals and groups interpret their own realities.” In these cases, I will be careful to make the reader aware that my own experience is being used in addition to my interpretation of interviews or documentary evidence.

### 3.5 Analysis

Williamson and Bow (2000 p276-281) outline key components to qualitative research analysis that involve transcribing the data, reading through transcripts of the data for familiarisation, categorising the data, developing ideas, using memos as familiarisation and ideas development progress, conceptually organising the categories, undertaking word searches, forming tentative
theories and finally checking assumptions as well as posing questions. While making it clear that
these steps are not prescriptive, they articulate the need to follow a clear process that assists in
answering the research questions. Berg (1989) also outlines the need for analysis to follow a clear
research course but states that qualitative analysis does not lend itself to certainty. He states
“qualitative analysis cannot be undertaken quickly, neatly or lightly, but this should never be
viewed as a liability or limitation. Instead this characteristic of qualitative analysis is perhaps, its
greatest strength” (Berg 1989 p 42). Nevertheless he does articulate a system of analysis using
indexing, categorising and subcategorising as a strong suggestion (Berg 1989 p 43).

Some categorisation of the field data was undertaken using field notes written whilst in Bhutan and
presented only a few weeks after returning from the field work at the University of Newcastle
School of Design, Information Technology and Communications Research Higher Degree
Conference in November 2006. The field interview data from Bhutan was transcribed
as a complete verbatim record in 2007. By reading and re-reading the transcripts the themes and ideas
were established and categorised, sometimes using word searches to amplify the data included.
Categorised themes were then compared with one another as well as against ideas and categories
that stemmed from other data gathered in the field and with my own notes from field observation.
These three elements of comparison and categorisation were used in a triangulation approach, as
outlined in 3.6.

3.6 Evaluation and validation

Lindolf (1995 p238) states that for many reasons “the canons of (quantitative) validation do not
apply very well to qualitative research based on interpretive assumptions.” However, a variety of
techniques are recommended for validating quantitative research including triangulation which
involves “a comparative assessment of more than one set of evidence about an object of enquiry”
(Lindolf 1995 p 239). According to Pandit (1996) “the current heavy reliance on triangulation in
grant applications testifies both to the respect accorded to this concept and to its perceived value in
demonstrating rigour. However, triangulation is difficult to perform properly: data collected using
different methods come in different forms and defy direct comparison. This is true for different
types of qualitative data, such as interview and focus group transcripts, as well as for the more
obvious differences between qualitative and quantitative data” (Pandit 1996 p 10). Barbour (2001)
referring to triangulation states, “triangulation relies on the notion of a fixed point, or superior
explanation, against which other interpretations can be measured. Qualitative research, however, is
usually carried out from a relativist perspective, which acknowledges the existence of multiple
views of equal validity. Therefore, it does not readily lend itself to the production or observance of
such a hierarchy of evidence. Qualitative research, with its distinctive approach to harnessing the
analytical potential of exceptions, allows a research question to be examined from various
angles…. According to this approach, apparent contradictions (or exceptions) do not pose a threat to researchers’ explanations; they merely provide further scope for refining theories” (Barbour 2001 p1116).

Taking into account the limitations outlined by Pandit and the various angles suggested by Barbour, the approach in this research is to use a triangulation style of evaluation process using the data from the in-depth interviews plus documentary evidence, including audience studies gathered in Bhutan and afterwards, in addition to my own personal observations while working in the field in Bhutan. Given that the documentary evidence and audience research content gathered from Bhutan was not my own work it will have limited capacity to be completely effective in the triangulation process. Nevertheless the Media Impact Study conducted by the Ministry of Information and Communications (2008) did investigate a number of perspectives on television and radio content that were also addressed in my in-depth interviewing such as perceptions of media influence on behaviour, language, culture and values. However, as outlined by Lindolf “multiple sources, methods or investigations add their own distinctive spin on a common problem. Even in situations where triangulation produces divergent outcomes, which is not uncommon, the problem may not be in the method or source itself, rather we learn that phenomena behave differently through the specific media of our methods. Explanations become more credible, not less so, in such instances” (Lindolf 1995 p239). This is in alignment with Pandit (1996 p10) who states that “the production of similar findings from different methods merely provides corroboration or reassurance; the absence of similar findings does not, however, provide grounds for refutation. This is because different methods used in qualitative research furnish parallel datasets, each affording only a partial view of the whole picture.”

The Media Impact Study 2008, identified a number of limitations in relation to studying the impacts of Media in Bhutan. This included that “Bhutan was traditionally, a hierarchical society, and the information flowed top-down. Culturally people generally did not speak up. Public engagement/discourse is now an important element of a democratic culture. Public engagement was limited among rural people by a lack of confidence” (Ministry of Information and Communications 2008 p xiii). In addition the study noted that people wanted anonymity and did not wish to be interpreted as being negative.

Taking these research views into account I used analysis of the in-depth interviews I have conducted in the field, in reference to documentary material gathered while in Bhutan, including newspaper articles, letters to the editor, Ehrlers and Yeshi (2006) and the Ministry of Information and Communications (2008). In addition I have used my own personal observations while I was in Bhutan for a 3 week period in reference to the analysis.
3.7 Summary of the research process

A summary of the research process, including the methodology and methods is outlined in Table 3 below. Please note details of the rationale and justifications relating to other literature are given in the preceding text and what is included in Table 3 is only a summary. This table is not meant to be a chronology of the research design and many of the research phases overlapped and occurred concurrently. I also took a leave of absence from this study during 2008 due to changed work commitments that slowed down the progress of the study during that year. The table below is structured following an example by Pandit (1996), but the content and purpose are completely different.

Table 3 Summary of Research Methods and Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Phase</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Defining the research questions</td>
<td>• Review literature</td>
<td>After assessing the initial broad research question relating to localism of media and cultural change a revaluation and refinement was necessary to focus more clearly on the specific area to be researched and validity of the research question relating to perceptions of media impact in Bhutan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Evaluate research need</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Reassess and realign research topic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preliminary related research</td>
<td>Research undertaken relating to audience perceptions of local radio content in Newcastle</td>
<td>Analysis of research in Radio in Newcastle was undertaken with reference to how audiences value local content in terms of news, information and entertainment compared to state, national and international content.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review of literature relevant to media in Bhutan</td>
<td>Search literature and examine related themes</td>
<td>In order to design the research method reviews were undertaken of studies and literature associated with media in Bhutan. In addition literature was reviewed relating to the introduction of media into media</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Design

- Research epistemology, theoretical framework, methodology and methods were developed.
- Ethics approval granted from Newcastle University Ethics Committee.

Because of the nature of Bhutan being a media naïve country before television was introduced in 2000 an ethnographic style of research method was decided upon. The epistemological basis was constructivism and the ethnography focussed on localism and media influence. Methods were in-depth interviews and documentary evidence and some personal observations. A follow up survey was originally planned but later seen as unnecessary when other survey data was available.

Field Work

Three Weeks in Bhutan in September 2006, interviewing, observing, participating in the community, collecting other documentary data.

I conducted interviews while in Bhutan to collect rich, in-depth content relating to the introduction of media and perceptions of media in Bhutan. The initial plan was for 25 interviews and 27 were conducted. Semi-structured interviews allowed for consistent themes for each interview. In addition some probing was used to explore emergent themes. Themes identified during my time conducting the interviews and while immersed in Bhutanese society were further explored in subsequent interviews and recorded. Other material was collected including newspapers, photos, and a video recording of some aspects of the field work. Opportunities for private travel with some Bhutanese people to different Dzongkhags in the
country offered further insight and observations into aspects of life in Bhutan, including private homes, rural and urban communities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial themes summarised</th>
<th>Initial emergent themes presented at a conference</th>
<th>Initial themes gathered and identified during the field work phase were tabulated and partially analysed and presented to the University of Newcastle DCIT Research Higher Degrees Conference a few weeks after returning from Bhutan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transcription</td>
<td>Interviews were transcribed over several months</td>
<td>Complete verbatim transcription style was adopted due to English being a second language for all participants as well as some interviewees needing interpreters. Each interview required very careful attention to detail, and repeated listening and rewriting while transcribing due to heavy accents and grammatical irregularities for most participants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis of data</td>
<td>Emergent themes were noted and categorised, tabulated and analysed in comparison between interviews and with other information</td>
<td>In order to be thorough in analysing the in-depth content collected from interview transcripts a system of theme identification using reading, note taking, word searches, tabulation and repetition of the process was undertaken. Tabulation was used to assist ordering of the data. Individual quotations and concepts were identified and collected. Emergent theories were written down.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triangulation with other sources</td>
<td>Interview content was further analysed and compared with collected</td>
<td>The analysed themes were assessed against themes and concepts from collected material, especially documents relating to</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
documentary material

media, social perceptions and cultural change in Bhutan. A triangulation style of analysis compared emergent themes, ideas and theories from the analysed transcripts as well as collected documents, in addition to my own recorded observations as a result of being immersed in Bhutan (albeit for a limited period of time).

| Comparison of themes and theories with literature | After final themes and theories had been identified, through triangulation themes were compared against available literature | Comparison ensured emergent themes and theories had validity relating to previous work or other similar studies. I assessed whether certain themes or theories could be generalised or were specific to this study. |

3.8 Limitations, advantages and challenges in field work

This work does not claim to be a representative sample of Bhutanese people’s perceptions of the influence of television since its introduction in 1999. Rather, this work is an exploratory study into the influences of television following its sudden introduction, and the current use of media in the daily lives of a diversity of Bhutanese people.

As a single researcher operating in Bhutan I had only limited time and access available to me to do this research. Firstly, I conducted the field work while working as a volunteer media consultant to the Bhutan Broadcasting Service on journalism, interviewing and presentation for radio. Unless engaged in volunteer or important business activity, the Bhutanese Government requires a tourist fee of $75 US per day on top of accommodation and travel arrangements. In addition, entry to Bhutan is only permitted, if sponsored by an employer or other agency, or by travelling through an officially registered tourist operator. This means that, at the time of this field work, it was almost impossible to travel or stay in Bhutan for less than $200 US per day (Armington 2002) unless engaged in official Bhutanese business or sponsored from within Bhutan. An extension to my visa beyond the three week period was not possible, despite a formal request for this from my sponsor.

While I did have limitations of time in Bhutan, including the fact that over 10 days of the 3 week period I was conducting media classes, there were some significant advantages that I received as a
result of working within the Bhutan Broadcasting Service (BBS). These advantages took a number of forms. In the three week period I was there I was able to attend national sporting events (soccer and archery) which were being broadcast by BBS, and cultural activities (shopping, dance and disco) as well as religious institutions and monasteries. Accompanied by colleagues or their friends I was able to eat with people in their homes, mix with their extended families and thereby be able to talk with people openly about their issues, interests, aspirations and daily life activities. Secondly, I was also able to travel freely and unaccompanied throughout towns, villages and the countryside and thirdly was taken for a seven day trip across the country with a colleague, visiting her relatives, friends, and other colleagues in various parts of Bhutan. This afforded significant opportunities to explore, observe and note aspects of people’s lives in their homes, villages, towns and places of work across the nation. It also gave me opportunity to interview people in various locations other than the capital city of Thimphu. I found that by working with colleagues, mixing with colleagues and their friends, I was able to achieve much more rapid immersion into the local culture than would have otherwise been possible.

A number of factors made it logistically difficult to organise interviews. As discussed previously more than 40% of the adult population cannot read or write, there are four different main languages in Bhutan and many other languages specific to different Dzongkhags. It takes a long time to travel between regions of the country due to the number and quality of roads. At the time of my field work telephones were not common throughout the country (although mobile phones are now available and being used throughout most of the more populated parts of the country). Given that the population of the country is less than 700 thousand people, social networking (where one colleague knows a friend or family member in a different occupation, location or demographic) was a particularly effective method of sourcing diverse people to be interviewed from across the county. In two of the twenty seven interviews, an interpreter was used because the interviewee did not speak English. The same interpreter was used on both occasions and the language spoken was Dzongkha. All other interviews were in English although clear enunciation and questioning was required and to ensure the meaning of the question was conveyed, questions were often repeated and rephrased where required.

3.8.1 Technology

Despite good preparation with field recording equipment and taking a back up recorder to Bhutan, both of my recorders failed while on the road. One cause could have been the bumpy roads we were travelling on or fluctuations in electricity. Regardless of the reason, in failing, one of the recorders wiped the memory, so that I lost the audio files for a number of interviews already recorded. This made it necessary to find an alternative audio recording device in Bhutan. It was not possible to purchase an audio recorder while travelling in the regional areas, due to the limited
number of retail outlets selling this type of equipment. I was finally able to borrow an operating audio recording device after trying out several that also failed in situ during interviews. This equipment failure required me to retrace steps and redo a number of interviews constituting many hours of work in the already tight timeframe and limited my capacity to do more interviews.

3.9 Bhutanese participants

Twenty Seven in-depth field interviews were conducted in Bhutan with selected participants signing a consent form (see appendix) which stated that their personal information would remain confidential to the researchers and that their identity would remain anonymous and confidential. For this reason each interviewee is referred to by their number, Interviewee 1 to Interviewee 27. In addition, in the graphs, tables and descriptions below as well as in any quotes or statements about the interviewees I have removed references to their employment or specific type of work. The reason for this is that Bhutan, with a population of under 700,000 people is a close knit and small community where people could easily be identified by what they do. Many of these people are one of a few in their region or even the whole country undertaking their specific line of work.

Professionals across a diverse range of fields were targeted, to give a broad view of the changes in their professional experience and networks as well as from personal and community life. In addition a range of people from diverse backgrounds across the country were interviewed, largely from rural communities and villages where the majority of the population lives. While many of the interviewees are now in professional roles, living in the capital city, Thimphu, the majority of them are originally from either farming or rural village backgrounds.

More men than women were interviewed due to the significantly higher availability of men in professional roles and in the limited time I had for gathering the field interviews, I was more successful in finding and gaining consent from men than women. As previously discussed there are significantly more literate and educated men in Bhutan than women, and this may be one of the reasons for fewer women being available in professional roles and also for more men agreeing to participate in an interview. In this project women represented just over 25% of the interviewees.

The majority of the interviewees were educated and had travelled to other countries for education and professional training purposes. However one interviewee was a woman who lived in a remote village and was a subsistence farmer and another was with a monk living in a monastery.

The range of professional roles or descriptions of business or community activity is listed below and represented in Figure 2 on page 78. For the reason previously stated, these roles are written as generic descriptions to ensure the anonymity of the participants. In addition, many of the participants were university educated and where they stated their qualification, these are also listed
below. The list below is not in the numerical order associated with the interviewees, and includes information about education attained.

- Biomedical Engineer
- Finance Manager - Bachelor of Commerce (Hons)
- Hardware Shop Manager
- Arts and Crafts Dealer and Art Teacher
- Medical Doctor – Medical Degree
- Forestry Project Officer
- Office Administration Professional
- General Manager, Government Business
- Radio Professional – Bachelor of Arts
- Media Manager
- Forestry Field Worker
- Government Employee Media Focus - Masters Degree
- Agriculture Specialist
- Infection Control Officer
- Environment Worker - Masters Degree
- ICT Officer - Degree in ICT from India
- Hospital Technician - Certificate in Medical Technology
- Journalist - Masters Degree
- Architect
- HR Manager
- Government Employee
- Environmental Conservation Project Officer
- Traditional Medicine
- Subsistence farmer, small amount of produce for market sale.
- Electrical Engineer, also helps parents run local business – Engineering Degree
- Buddhist Monk - Studied Buddhism
- Public Health Worker
These interviews were not a representative cross section of the Bhutanese community, but rather the interviewees were selected to give insights and personal perspectives from people with backgrounds as broad as was possible in the time available. The questions related to changes in Bhutanese society, as perceived by diverse individuals and professionals, as a result of, and since the introduction of television and the internet in 1999. Many of the participants were highly educated and had travelled outside of Bhutan with the assistance of scholarships, grants and/or training organised through their employer. This gave individuals additional perspectives about change in their country in relation to other parts of the world.

Table 4 on page 79, summarises relevant details and backgrounds of the Bhutanese participants with respect to where they came from, the languages they speak (in addition to languages listed, most participants also speak an additional language from their own region or Dzongkhag), their religion where stated and some personal details as well as their travel history. A notable aspect is that many of the interviewees speak more than two and up to four languages as a regular part of their communication requirement. This is because there are 19 different languages in Bhutan, relating to different Dzongkhags and regions, with the four most common languages being Dzongkha, English, Sharshop and Nepali (Armington 2002 p68). Only Dzongkha, English and
Nepali are written languages, the other Bhutanese languages are oral and it is only through being spoken that these languages are maintained. Of course Hindi is also a written language, but it is an Indian language that is also commonly spoken in certain parts of Bhutan. In one case, a particular interviewee stated that they spoke Dzongkha at work, they spoke Nepali with their spouse and spoke a mixture of Hindi and English as well as Dzongkha with their children. They also spoke their own native language with their relatives from their home village, making 5 languages that were spoken on a regular, sometimes daily basis.

Table 4 Summary of Participants’ Background and Details

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Age/Gender</th>
<th>Languages</th>
<th>Travel/countries</th>
<th>Rural/Urban Background</th>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Personal Family Situation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>50 male</td>
<td>Nepali, Dzongkha and English</td>
<td>India &amp; Thailand &amp; Korea for training</td>
<td>From rural SW near India now urban -Thimphu</td>
<td>Not Specified</td>
<td>Married, 2 daughters, one at high school, one working</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>38 male</td>
<td>Dzongkha and English</td>
<td>Sri Lanka, India, Nepal, Malaysia and Sweden for 3 weeks for training</td>
<td>From south rural village, farming family</td>
<td>Not Specified</td>
<td>Married, 2 Children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>39 male</td>
<td>Dzongkha and English</td>
<td>Singapore, Europe and Malaysia and Thailand for training</td>
<td>From Central Bhutan Village, father was a cowherder and then became business man</td>
<td>Buddhist</td>
<td>Married with children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>36 male</td>
<td>English, Dzongkha</td>
<td>Italy, India, Japan, for study and</td>
<td>Has lived in Thimphu all his life -urban</td>
<td>Buddhist</td>
<td>Married, 1 son (6 yo), 1 daughter 2 yo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Mother Tongue</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Origin</td>
<td>Occupation</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>English, Dzongkha, Sharshop</td>
<td>Training</td>
<td>India for study</td>
<td>Comes from East Bhutan Village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Dzongkha, English</td>
<td>Training</td>
<td>India for trade and supplies</td>
<td>Rural Village, Central Bhutan, moved to Thimphu to run hardware shop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Dzongkha, English</td>
<td>Training</td>
<td>Nepal, India, Bangladesh, Philippines for training</td>
<td>Parents had Rural background, central Bhutan, he was born in and lives in Thimphu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Dzongkha, English, Hindi (understands)</td>
<td>Training</td>
<td>India for study</td>
<td>From South, Central, Rural Bhutan, now living in Thimphu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Dzongkha, English</td>
<td>Training</td>
<td>UK, US, for study</td>
<td>Lives in Thimphu and works during week in Regional Village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Dzongkha, English</td>
<td>Training</td>
<td>Some European Countries</td>
<td>Lives and raised in Thimphu - urban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Languages</td>
<td>Education and Work Experience</td>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>Marital Status and Family</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Dzongkha, English, Hindi, Sharshop</td>
<td>Has lived in India, was once in Bangkok</td>
<td>From Eastern, Rural Bhutan</td>
<td>Not Specified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Dzongkha, Sharshop and regional local language. (Used translator)</td>
<td>Never been outside Bhutan</td>
<td>Lives in Rural central Bhutan</td>
<td>Buddhist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Dzongkha, English</td>
<td>India for study</td>
<td>Lives in Village, Central Bhutan</td>
<td>Buddhist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Dzongkha, Hindi, English, Sharshop</td>
<td>India studied Buddhism</td>
<td>Eastern Rural Bhutan</td>
<td>Buddhist monk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Dzongkha, English, Sharshop</td>
<td>Australia for study</td>
<td>Central Bhutan Village</td>
<td>Buddhism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Dzongkha, English</td>
<td>India for Study</td>
<td>Lives in Thimphu-urban</td>
<td>Buddhism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>English, Dzongkha</td>
<td>Bangkok only for study from central Bhutan village, lives in Thimphu now</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>Nepali, English, Dzongkha</td>
<td>US for study from western rural Bhutan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Dzongkha, English, Sharshop</td>
<td>travelled to India for study from rural Eastern Bhutan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Dzongkha, English, Sharshop</td>
<td>UK, Germany, Japan for training From Eastern village</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Dzongkha, English</td>
<td>Has not travelled outside Bhutan Lives in Thimphu, from SW Village</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Dzongkha, English</td>
<td>Has studied in Australia Lives in Thimphu, raised in Thimphu</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Dzongkha, English</td>
<td>Denmark and Australia for study Lives in Thimphu, from Eastern village</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>Dzongkha, English</td>
<td>India for study Rural town</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Married, 3 children, 16, 15, 11 yo
- single, lives with parents and family
- married, 2 children at school
- Married with children
- single and lives alone
- Married, 3 primary school age children
- Single, lives with parents and family
- Married, 4 children 3-11 years old
3.10 Determining emergent themes

Each interview has been reviewed with interviewees’ statements categorised under a range of emergent themes. Themes were categorised using both numbering and colour coding. These number and colour codes were used throughout the transcript of each interview to identify relevant statements from each interviewee according to a theme as it emerged. Where new ideas emerged that were not consistent with a theme, topic or concept that had been expressed earlier in the same interview or in another interview, a new number and/or colour code was added. Themes relating to similar topics were given different numbers but the same colours were used to cluster similar theme topics together. In addition where the topic was different, but the concept was similar, different shades of the same colour were used to cluster these concepts together. For example the statement “men like news programs” was a topic mentioned by a number of interviewees, as was “housewives like Hindi soaps”. Both of these statements were given a different topic number but the same topic theme colour as they both related specifically to what people watched. A number of people mentioned “we want to know about news of the world” and this represented what people watch, being international news, as well as why they watched that type of program. Therefore this latter topic was given a different topic number and different shade of the same topic theme colour reflecting that this was still relating to what people watch on television, but with additional meaning reflecting why these people watched this content. Similarly, a statement such as “people used to play more outside before the introduction of television” was not reflecting what people watched but rather reflected a social consequence of watching television. This was therefore given a different number and different colour.
Each topic and cluster was further reviewed and where similar meanings were identified, they were grouped together to create a set of emergent themes that were sufficiently different from one another. This process was repeated until further breaking down and clustering could no longer deliver meaningful differences in the emergent themes. The chapters following analyse in detail the perceptions of the different interviewees relating to each emergent theme.

As mentioned previously, four of the interviews had the audio either fully or partially lost due to faulty audio recording discs, which were not able to be retrieved when I returned to Australia. The content of those four interviews was taken from the post interview notes I took immediately after each interview. All other interview statements are direct quotes from the verbatim transcripts of the interviews. However, where identification of the person may be made from what an interviewee has said, such as specifically describing their job and location, I have removed that segment from the interviewee’s quote. I have also removed most of the repeated phrases, pauses and interjections such as um or ah, where they did not add meaning to the statement, to improve the flow of the statement in relation to the theme being discussed. However, where the meaning is ambiguous or the repetitions or interjections add to the meaning, I have left them in the quote. Where the meaning is not obvious because a word is missing in a sentence, and I have added the word for clarity, those words are in parenthesis. Where I have included my own question in the direct quote, to assist the context and flow of the interviewee’s statements I have used square brackets around these questions. For most quotes a reference to Interviewee number is given, however, where the occupation of the person is provided as a context of the quote, the interviewee number is withheld to ensure anonymity. Where it adds to the context of the interview I have included interview segments detailing the questions from the researcher and answers from the interviewees.

In writing up the results I have added comment and interpretation accompanying the direct quotes. The purpose of this is to give context from my own observations in Bhutan as well as locating the quote with respect to the line of questioning being taken in the interview. My interpretations are designed to add clarification to the quotes. In some cases further interpretation of the meaning is needed because of the context, grammar or sentence structure, which is sometimes very different to English. For many participants English was a second (or third or fourth) language. The very eloquence of the content is even more surprising considering this language difference.
4 Content – what people access and how long they spend using media

Since its introduction in 1999, television had become a very important asset for Bhutanese people both as an information and entertainment resource. As discussed in the following sections, participants in the research identified television as being very significant in their life. From their perspectives it had brought about significant changes, some seen as positive, others seen as impacting adversely on Bhutanese society. To give an indication of how important television was perceived by Bhutanese people, figures from another study, the 2007 Bhutan Living Standard Survey, tell an interesting story. Part of the survey looked at assets owned by individual households and found 79.4% of urban households in Bhutan had television, compared with 60.2% of households with radios. At the same time for urban households, 60% had refrigerators, 50.9% had a modern stove and 12.9% had a washing machine. In rural households figures for all items, except radios, were much lower; 19.8% owned a television and 62.8% had radios. Only 11.3% or rural households had refrigerators, 18.5% had a modern stove and 1.7% had a washing machine (National Statistics Bureau 2007 p 94-95). The higher level of radio ownership in rural areas was largely because television was not available. Where it was available, television ownership was higher than for refrigerators, stoves and washing machines. Many Bhutanese people prioritised owning a television set over owning other labour saving devices such as stoves and washing machines or food preservation tools such as refrigerators. Also as will be discussed, many households had more than one television. In addition, the figures indicate that in urban areas, the number of households with radios is lower than the number of households with television sets and this relates to the amount of time Bhutanese people were spending watching television compared to listening to radio as discussed in following sections.

Participants articulated significant differences in what they liked to watch related to gender and age, however, there were also many programmes that all people liked to watch. Education also influenced what content people watched especially as did their ability to speak English or Hindi.

4.1.1.1 Content preferences for men, women and children

The women in the study with access to television had a strong preference to watch Indian soap operas while the men of Bhutan had a very strong preference for international sports programs. All participants generally enjoyed watching international nature and documentary channels. Anglo-American movies, Indian movies and entertainment programs were a strong preference for young people, as well as, interestingly, the older members of the community. In addition, there was a very strong desire, from both genders and all age groups to access information content and news from around the world. Seventeen of the twenty seven interviewees described their own viewing
habits and their observations of other people’s viewing habits. Several of the participants had more than one television per household, despite the low average incomes of the families in Bhutan, because different members of the family wanted to watch different programs.

While several participants stated that they watched local news and local information on BBS TV, none of the participants stated that they watched local BBS television for entertainment, except to watch significant festivals or major national sporting events that were covered by BBS. Entertainment for all participants was gained through the international cable channels. However, where people could not speak English or Hindi, they tended to watch local television. These were usually older members of the community who had not been to school.

Showcasing the diversity of content watched on the television, Interviewee 9 noted that his father preferred BBS because he did not speak English while other family members preferred content from the cable channels; for example my father, who not so well versed in English, he spends more time on local media. And then for someone like my nephew, looks at mostly like ESP and Star Sports you know, all these kind of channels, different channels. So he spends most, more of the time on that. And for myself, I tend to spend slightly more on you know National Geographic, you know Discovery and History Channel and sometimes Star Movies and things like that. And my wife again is different, she is focused more on this Indian serials you know, soap operas, so she tends to spend more time on that. So, so even ah, ah how people spend time is also varied depending on the program.

As discussed later under the heading What people talk about has changed, Interviewee 2 observed that women watched significantly more soap operas than other content and that younger people watched more entertainment and reality TV content than older people. He observed people over the age of 25 were watching more news and information content. Of the types of content younger people were watching or accessing from the internet (where available) and newspapers he said “especially the younger group they go more for entertainment of course they will be downloading music and they read about some character or they read about Renaldo and other footballer, they read about all the profiles.” His observation was also that the topics of conversation between these gender or age groups tended to reflect the type of television they were watching.

As a 26 year old woman and mother, Interviewee 10 did not watch much television. However she noticed in her family that the women tended to spend considerable amounts of time watching the Indian soap operas. She found this to be disturbing because the amount of time her relatives were viewing had displaced time that they had previously spent doing chores or in active engagement with members of the family. She stated,
I think when it comes to housewives for example my aunty, she spends like at least three hours watching soap operas in the evening, so during that time she has no time for her kids, nor for her family and sometimes she doesn’t even have time to cook for her husband. So you know that kind of thing it does I think, been a lot of influence on the housewives especially.

Interviewee 26, a 53 year old man, also noted that housework and home duties were being neglected, because his wife had to watch the daytime as well as night time movies and soap operas. He said, “my wife watches a lot of television from India, the soaps and Indian movies and because of this she has less time to do the tasks in the house and other things in the home.”

Also 26 years old, Interviewee 11 reinforced the view that women tended to watch the Indian entertainment content and he thought many Bhutanese women showed almost an addiction to Indian soap operas. Speaking about his family he noted,

    my sisters and all, I feel they’re not really interested in other things, other than some interesting movies, nice movies and some Indian soaps, serials and which almost every Bhutanese woman is addicted right now.

Trying to explain why he had a perception that women loved Hindi serials Interviewee 3 stated “there are certain English, Hindi channels which are very well much watched by our people, and because we are so close to India, our people can very relate to Hindi language that is spoken so most of the housewives will stay at home ah watching ah, serials, nine o’clock, eight thirty; these serials are very, very important to them.”

Gender was a key factor in influencing what people watched on television from the perspective of 23 year old Interviewee 16 who saw, in a similar way to Interviewee 11, that women especially were strongly drawn to serials on television, to the point of compulsive viewing while men were, in her view, much more focussed on sport and documentaries. She observed,

    I think here the gender plays a major role. Especially for women, I mean females, they’re more infatuated into serials, lesser of movies and for the male, I mean for the male people they are more interested in news, sports and geography channel, all these animals, planets and all these things.

A very similar view was expressed by Interviewee 18 who had noticed that when she comes home from work at night, her family were often glued to different television sets watching different programs, and she did not get a chance to speak with them until bed time. She stated “My family, especially my parents, they have different choices. Like my dad usually goes for sports and things like that and my sisters, the housewives they go for the Indian serials, so I think there is a variety and it depends on what they like.” This same view that different members of the family watch different content was expressed by Interviewee 17 who stated,
my children prefer to have a different channel, mostly they prefer Hindi films and Hindi movies, and then actually I myself was interested in news channel and sports channels only so I watch most of the time sports and news channels. Actually my wife, she is uneducated. She only had a formal education in the latter stage while she was a mother of two children so she also prefers to watch Hindi movies.

There was concern that daytime viewing as well as viewing during the evening was reducing productivity of people in terms of their home duties. This is how Interviewee 19 explained his suspicion that housewives were watching a lot of television. He stated,

I suspect that they are at least partially glued to the television a good part of the day. Especially if they are housewives. If the husband is off to work, the children are off to school. I believe there are quite a few of housewives who put the TV on, they have an ear out for the news or for some serial going on.

To avoid family conflict, Interviewee 20 had three television sets. He was very happy about that because it meant that the family didn’t have to make choices collectively, and he felt that happiness was achieved when the family members were able to watch what they wanted on their own. He stated,” my wife used to watch a lot of serials, Bhutanese serials, and my daughter and son, they are always watching this G Café, English movies, and I am interested in Indian movies. So we have to have 2 or 3 sets in the house, because if we have only one set, then father, my wife, my kids, we have to quarrel with each other, I want to watch this, no I want to watch this, so I keep smaller TV sets individually so they can watch individually.”

Women were not the only people ‘addicted’ to certain types of programs, Interviewee 10 observed that her husband watched so much sport on TV she was frustrated that he paid her so little attention. She had also observed that her male friends watched more television that her female friends, so that it was difficult to maintain the relationship. Most of the content that was viewed by her friends, mid to late twenties, was sport;

**Researcher:** And what about your husband? **Interviewee:** He’s on to soccer, so he watched television like, in the morning he’s watching soccer, and he is watching news, and as soon as he comes back from work the first thing he does is switch on TV and starts watching soccer, and last thing he does before he goes to bed is still watch soccer, so I think ah, he watches television mostly for sports. **Researcher:** Do you find it’s harder to get time with your friends than it used to be prior to when television was introduced? **Interviewee:** I think with the male friends we’ve lost them all to TV because it’s like their access to sports is all through television, international sports and all, then since there are at least around two channels that is being shown in Bhutan ESPN and Star Sports which provide lot of sports content. I think I get to see my male friends like once in a while, and during the World Cup session we didn’t get to see them at all.
As if he could have been one of the friends she was describing (and to the best of my knowledge was not) Interviewee 11 described himself as addicted to sport on television and much of the other news and documentary content on the international cable channels. He said,

I think personally you know I welcome media because I am an avid sports fan and I would love to watch every sport on TV and I want to keep myself updated in news right. Personally I’m an addict for soccer, kind of any sports fan you know, so and besides being an environmentalist myself, I cannot afford to miss any important programs in say National Geographic or animal planet or anything, so any kind of programs you know on TV and say seventy percent of the programs, channels here are in Indian.

Interviewee 4 illustrated one of the prime areas of interest expressed by participants, being nature programs, especially for men and boys; “my elder son, he is really engrossed into you know all this National Geographic channels and all the things, so in that way, at least you know what is there in the world, what is happening in the world and get to see a lot of animals in the world.”

Interviewee 1 was clear that younger people preferred entertainment content to news and information, but he found it difficult to quantify his perception of the percentage of entertainment to news that was being viewed by younger community members, because of the number of young people who lived with their families and were exposed to information content that was watched by their parents and older people in the household. He stated,

I think it is quite difficult to divide up people who are accessing information for news (from those) who are accessing information for entertainment. But I think we can divide in a very simple way the young people because of their age, because of their choice, because of their demands, they look for entertainment. But people who live with their family, they understand the importance of news I think they are still accessing (it). So it is quite difficult to say so many people are accessing (news) and so many people are not.

### 4.1.1.2 Amount of time spent watching television

Consumption of television was stated as the most significant component of daily media consumption by the twenty six participants who had access to television. There was a tendency for younger professionals to use the internet more than older participants, however, this was largely undertaken at work, or as some participants stated at internet cafes, as the majority of Bhutanese people did not have internet access at home. Radio listening was mainly in the car with the exception of the one participant who did not have television and one participant who outlined how friends listened to the radio while at work. However, in the home all participants stated that television was almost exclusively used.
Seventeen of the participants estimated the number of hours they spent at home accessing media, predominantly television, as between two and six hours per day of ‘foreground’ viewing. At other times of the day the television may have been on in the background, however the times specified related to actively watching television by themselves and/or members of their household. Table 5 on page 91, summarises the participants’ estimates of time spent viewing per day or per week. I have included comment from participants where they have not specified a time, but have described the amount of time, or the perceived impact of time spent viewing.

Table 5  Participants’ estimates of the total household amount of electronic media consumption per day.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee Number</th>
<th>Amount of television, radio and internet consumption per household</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3 to 4 hours/day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>3 hours/day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2 hours/day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2 hours/day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>More than 3 hours/day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>3 hours/day on weekdays and Saturdays – 6 hours on Sundays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>6 hours/day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>2 hours/day - weekends 3 to 4 hours/day.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

17 participants specified viewing in hours per day or hours per week. Other participants described the amount of viewing.

*Hours/day or hours/week refer to television viewing unless otherwise stated.*
<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>20% of waking hours spent watching television</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>5 hours/day - weekends more. Weekly more than 40 hours.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Most free time watching television or on internet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>No Television available. Listens to radio in the morning and evening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Did not specify amount but stated – “my father is a football fan and he’s always after football and the news, and mother she watches a little bit of television serials at night, actually we are not really a television fan. The whole family isn’t.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Did not specify amount but said he spends a lot of spare time watching television or on the internet (when available.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>5 hours/day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>3 hours/day – some of that time spent on internet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>3 to 4 hours/day - Almost one hour in the morning before work and two to three hours in the evening.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Amount not specified but family watches television all evening and set the family schedule around television program times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Watched television in spare time. Stated – “I’ve known myself to watch movies or television a good half the day.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>3 to 4 hours/day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>3 hours/day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>2 hours/day</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Observed – “friends and family spent most of the time in front of the television watching, and forgot their normal duties”

2 hours/day

Hours not specified. Relating to children’s viewing articulated it was their human right to watch what they wanted when they wanted, except when at school or doing school work.

Hours not specified but stated – “My wife watches a lot of television from India, the soaps and Indian movies and because of this she has less time to do the tasks in the house and other things in the home”

Hours not specified. Relating to family viewing stated “members of families are always watching different programs and so spend less time with each other”

One of the people with the highest estimated amount of viewing in her household was 26 year old Interviewee 10, who herself watched some television every day, but preferred to spend time with her baby. However, her husband, who loved watching sport, watched 5 hours on weekdays and more on weekends so that she estimated he was watching 40 hours per week, predominantly sport from the international channels. With viewing characteristics similar to Interviewee 10’s husband, Interviewee 11, a 26 year old man outlined that he found it difficult to get away from television, largely because he loved news and current affairs as well as sport and documentary channels. He noted, 

personally I am a media addict, I really love watching television and I keep updated myself through news and television and browsing news on internet. In fact television is one of my best friends. So whenever I feel bored and all I make sure I watch interesting programs on television and I’m quite fluent on Hindi right, Indian language so you know any channel is suitable for me, so I should say I am an addict.

Twenty four year old Interviewee 21 also loved watching a lot of television, predominantly from international channels, although he did watch some BBS TV for news. Describing the extent of his viewing he said,
I watch BBS, that’s the local television and apart from that I watch CNN. I like CNN more than BBS, much, much more than BBS, that’s my personal thing and I go for National Geographic Channel also, I like the animal, you know and History Channel, I like History Channel so much. Apart from that I watch football quite a lot. So all in all, I keep watching TV when I don’t have any homework to do. So I watch TV, till 12 (midnight.)

Interviewee 15, also in his mid twenties watched television early in the morning before going to work, then watched television from the time he came home to the time he went to bed. However, it was not only the men in their twenties that watched television extensively. 45 year old Interviewee 17 said that he watched television for up to an hour before work and watched between two to three hours in the evenings. Likewise Interviewee 15 stated,

Interviewee: I would watch in the morning, then to the office then coming home television would be on from 6 till 11, which is like 5 hours  
Researcher: So you watched television from 6pm to 11pm?  
Interviewee: Yes and I could go longer if there were some interesting movies or some comedy or other.

A number of participants stated they would probably watch more television but work was restricting the time they had for television viewing. There was a perception from some interviewees that housewives were watching quite a lot of television at home and that the whole family would sit either together or in separate rooms watching different content if they owned multiple sets. Describing the extent of his family’s viewing Interviewee 20 stated,

my wife, she is always in the house, she watches quite often, say about three to four hours a day and like my daughter and my son and myself we hardly watch 2 hours or three hours, because it gets too late because we have to go early in the morning to the work.

Interest in news and information content drove Interviewee 3 to watch television two hours a day, while his family ranged from half an hour to two hours on different programs. He described his viewing and his family’s viewing by stating,

news I watch for one hour a day, half an hour in the morning, half an hour in the evening, and if there’s any interesting news that day I will keep on updating myself, but news one hour, then maybe ah, national geography, this I watch for one hour. Two hours during the weekdays and weekends maybe around four hours watching movies…. My wife she only watches one serial, which is just half an hour a day, that’s all and my children also they watch ah, two hours a day and on the weekends, maybe four hours.

The amount of time people spent viewing television was partly related to the types of programs people wanted to watch. Interviewee 4 set high value on watching news and educative content and
limited his viewing to those kinds of programs, while the women in his household spent more time watching serials. He summarised his family’s viewing.

Television for me I go for the eight o’clock news, and if there are some good, you know reality TV’s, I watch and then I watch the morning news. For my wife and for my mother, from eight o’clock it goes on to eleven o’clock, they engross into to all these television serials, I think they watch around two hours per day. [On weekends as well?] On weekends too, I mean like these serials are throughout the day you know, twenty four / seven.

Time spent viewing, and the types of content being accessed may also have been related to education levels and exposure or accessibility to other forms of media content. For example if a person could not understand English or Hindi, then they would not have been able to watch the majority of television content from the international channels. Similarly an illiterate person could not easily use the internet, even if it were available. Interviewee 5, who was concerned about his wife “wasting time” on television, was not at all concerned about the internet, because she would not have been able to access it. He said,

using internet is not much of a waste of time because it is something to do with exposures to (it). For my family, my wife is a housewife, so she has no knowledge on internet at all, she has studied to class six, but she has no access into that. But she spends most of the (day) around, I should say seventy percent of the time is spent on the TV I think.

However, in terms of the amount of time his wife, and other members of the family watched television he estimated 3 hours a day, watching Indian soaps in the evening, but he was also aware that there was significant daytime viewing. He noted, “Watching more in the day time, when I go off they watch… I don’t know if she is watching all the time, but sometime I go at home around three, she’ll be watching that serials.”

Interviewee 1 outlined his family’s average television viewing and radio listening time by estimating “from my point of view I think three to four hours I think we usually watch and listen per day. Usually half an hour in the morning, and after lunch they may watch a bit, but evening they watch a lot because, the soap operas and that so they watch a lot” However, after an additional question he stated that his family listened to very little radio and it was his view that radio was primarily listened to in “mostly rural areas. In metropolitan areas like Thimphu people rarely listen to radio only when you are travelling you are listening to radio because radio you don’t have to watch.”

While interviewee 6 restricted his children’s viewing, stopping them from 9pm so they would go to bed, he and his wife watched until later in the evening. He described his viewing.
I finish my duty from 8pm, that is eight PM, so I come and watch a little bit about BBS and then my wife will go for serials, and we watch up to eleven that means two and a half, three hours that we normally watch per day. [You watch the serials with your wife?] Yes, yes I do that.

However, while on weekends he also restricted the children’s viewing, they nevertheless watched more on weekends than during the week. He said,

On weekends normally we try to watch from eleven only, after that we stop in afternoon for break, because we have to restrict with our children because if we do not give them change they will go all of the day with TV, so we stop. And we also have to stop the TV and get involved in other things. [How many hours would you watch?] On Sunday I think, I should say around six hours. Saturday they have to go to school.

This indicated a preference for the family to use significant amounts of leisure time watching television, however the family was restricting viewing to ensure essential tasks, activities and sleep were fitted in.

While most of the participants stated they did not listen to the radio very much, and if so only in the car, slightly more radio was listened to by Interviewee 3 who observed that people tended to listen to radio when doing other things. He described his family’s radio and television consumption in the house.

People who work in the kitchen and the wife and if I am in the kitchen also I listen to radio. But once I am out in my living room or in my bedroom I watch the television and early in the morning also after I watch the television I switch on the radio, switch off the TV, and just get the ambient radio sound, that’s all. When I am driving I listen to the radio very much.

4.1.1.3 Proportion of local and international content

Participants varied in the amount of international television they estimated that they watched compared to local BBS television viewing. These estimates varied from 95% to 50% international. All interviewees who had access to television and could speak either English or Hindi, estimated their viewing time to be at least 50% international / 50% BBS with the majority of interviewees stating that they viewed 75% or more of the time on international channels. Reasons for preferring international content included the strong perception that the international channels provided a window to the world with news, information, culture and nature content as well as entertainment. The majority of participants also said that they found the quality of the international content to be significantly superior to local content and that they would therefore only watch local content if they felt they needed to for gathering local news or significant announcements from the King or other dignitaries or major festival or national sporting events were televised. Only two of the participants
stated that they enjoyed the cultural content on BBS, however, the majority felt it was important to have local music, dance and other cultural content on their national television station even though the majority chose to watch international content in preference.

Table 6 on page 97, summarises the way the participants expressed the amount of time they estimated that they watched local television and the amount of time they estimated that they watched international television as a percentage of total media consumption. Most people stated they practically never listened to radio (as they had prior to 1999) except sometimes when driving and while some people read the local newspapers, most either did not state the amount of time they read newspapers or stated that they read them only seldom. Most participants said they used BBS TV for local news and most did not use BBS TV for anything apart from news, announcements and special sporting or cultural events. Not all of the participants estimated the amount of media consumption spent on local or international television as a percentage, however, many did. Where they did not estimate it as a percentage, they stated instead which type of content they watched more or they stated the specific purpose for which they watched local content combined with their preference for international or local content. A range of 10-50% local media consumption and 50-90% international media consumption was calculated for the 15 participants who estimated their media consumption in percentage terms.

Table 6 Participants’ estimates of the amount of their individual consumption of local media or international television.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee Number</th>
<th>LOCAL: Watch BBS TV or Listen to BBS Radio - % of total media consumption or comment</th>
<th>International: Watch Cable International Television - % of total media consumption or comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>BBS Radio was no longer the only choice, most people in urban areas didn’t listen to radio any more, watched BBS TV for news</td>
<td>People liked international content, watched a lot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>15% - watched only news on BBS TV – 10% radio, mostly BBS but also BBC</td>
<td>75% - plus some BBC radio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50% TV</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>20% TV</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>10% TV</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>20% TV</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>40% TV</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Watched only news on BBS TV</td>
<td>Strong preference to watch International content - majority watched on Cable TV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Watched very little BBS</td>
<td>Mostly Cable, Preferred international programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Watched only news on BBS TV</td>
<td>Liked to watch international content, majority of time watched Cable channels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>25% TV</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>100% BBS Radio. Television Not available. Could not speak foreign languages</td>
<td>Not Available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Friends listened to BBS Radio at work, she listened to BBS Radio in car and watched BBS TV for news only</td>
<td>Children watched international TV only a couple of hours a day. She watched international programs in the evening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Watched only news on BBS TV</td>
<td>Watched cable TV predominantly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Watched only news on BBS TV</td>
<td>Mostly watched cable TV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Read local newspapers and did not watch much local TV</td>
<td>About an hour a day watching international content. Observed most friends watched international content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Wife watched BBS predominantly because she didn’t speak foreign languages. Total family viewing of BBS was 25%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Local news predominantly and some other content</td>
<td>Majority of family viewing on cable TV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>10% (Also listens to some BBS radio but prefers CNN &amp; NBC TV for news)</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>20% Watched only news on BBS TV</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>30% - BBS TV and newspapers for local news only</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Very little</td>
<td>Liked to watch mostly international content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Not very much</td>
<td>Predominantly Indian content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Even though there was absolutely no content on any of the international cable television stations that related to issues, events or subject matter dealing with Bhutan, the majority of people watched significantly more television from international cable television channels than they did from their local station. Reflecting the view of most participants, in stating why he watched more international television that local television, Interviewee 7 stated that he only watched BBS TV for the news. His reason was,

Except the news is most important otherwise we don’t get programs you know on our local television like we are getting in Indian television (from) outside, a movie except something very special, now days we have lot interesting channelling yes and you know like power fighting boxing and something like this, I really like that you know, and then I think most time we spend in international channels.

Interviewee 19 was even stronger in his assessment of BBS content. He said that BBS content, apart from news was not at all like the standards on the cable channels and he noted,

I don’t think we can compare any of the good channels, well BBC; Animal Planet; National Geographic to what BBS does. It’s getting much better than say a couple of years ago, and there are loads of actors who are doing a wonderful job, but by in large, the teams for our movies, the presentation and some of the acting, they’re definitely not watchable.

It was very difficult for BBS TV to compete with the international channels according to interviewee 23 who felt that Bhutanese society was not commercially oriented and that there was not very much money available within the nation to support high quality television production. For this reason, BBS was largely being swamped by the quality and marketing capability of the international channels. He said,

I would say that the outside media has suppressed our local media. And BBS as you have mentioned being a public broadcasting sector, needs to do a lot especially in bringing up the quality of the program that they show to the people. Basically if you don’t have a good quality, people will shy away from it. They say we don’t want to watch it, it’s the same old stuff and we are getting bored. When you don’t advertise too much the sector doesn’t make money and when you don’t have money you can’t train your people and when you can’t train your people you have very bad content. In that way yes, BBS is not doing very much right now. But I would say that after 1999 till now they have improved a lot.

Improvement in local content had been an observation by a number of the participants, however, their view was that its standard of content was still not good enough to make them want to watch anything more than the news on local TV. Interviewee 6 confirmed that he watched about five hours a week of local BBS content out of a total of around twenty four hours a week of viewing,
and the rest on international channels. The preference for international channels was not just entertainment, it was information and news as well as entertainment from other countries. Much of the local content, such as agriculture programs, had no interest to him or his family.

Several of the participants stated that they felt obliged to watch BBS TV because it was their national broadcaster and that they should support their national product. However, they also felt that the quality and interesting nature of the content from the international channels was so good that it drew them away from the local content, and they saw the local content as inferior. This led to a feeling of guilt as expressed by Interviewee 2;

**Interviewee:** When I say I watch BBS, I watch just the news part. Apart from that I am not interested in other programs. I shouldn’t be doing that because as a citizen I should be trying to watch and encourage other people to watch BBS. Come on this is Bhutan and we are just starting with it, so if you don’t watch, who is going to watch it. So we should have this kind of feeling. But somehow deep inside you know, you watch the news part and forget that there’s (other content) except when it is announced prior to the thing that there is such a program, a very good program coming up. I’ll make it a point I’ll watch that, otherwise no. so most of the time I spend watching history channel and other satellite services. **Researcher:** What percent of your television would be the local media? **Interviewee:** Yeah, around 20%.

Even though local news was the main reason for watching BBS TV, there was a view that while the local news was important, it was often already known by people within the small Bhutanese society by the time it was broadcast, which meant compulsion to view for local news was reduced. Many of the interviewees felt that international news had far more significance to Bhutanese people because it was unknown and informative. In outlining why he watched predominantly international television channels Interviewee 22 stated,

> And I think the problem with watching BBS is that the news that comes up in BBS we already know most of the news. Maybe some localised we don’t, but most of the news we are aware of. I usually watch BBS to gather information on different government announcements. They have important announcements that come up every evening. Unless they have special program like where the King is addressing or where the Crown Prince is addressing then make it a point to sit there and watch the program.

This view that the news on BBS TV was not particularly new was reinforced by Interviewee 11 who felt that the news was often repeated in different languages and that he only needed 15 minutes of viewing to catch all the local news of the day. The rest of the time he watched international content. He estimated his family watched an hour of BBS content a day out of a total of four hours daily viewing of television, meaning that approximately a quarter of the time he was watching local television. Relating to the news on BBS he said,
I’m not accusing the BBS media in particular but right now, maybe in the initial phase the programs are quite somewhat monotonous right, and if you watch the news once then you know, ah for fifteen minutes then the entire news is the same. And moreover we are living in Thimphu so we know what is happening around, so the news is not much news for us, because we know what is going to come in today’s news because we are in Thimphu. I just catch any language news either in Dzongkha or in English whichever time is suitable for me and then I just catch up the news and then if there is some interesting you know talk show. Sometimes BBS are doing some wonderful job like you know they’re going to communities and they’re you know addressing some religious and cultural sites and they are managing their stories, so that time I catch up that program but other programs I should say I hardly watch or my family members hardly watch.

The different type of content on cable channels, offering news, information and entertainment from other countries and other cultures was emphasised as being of high interest to Bhutanese people by a number of participants who also said that while BBS was improving, only the news and special announcements were of interest. With over forty international television channels introduced at exactly the same time as the local BBS television began broadcasting, it was seen that there was insufficient time for BBS television to establish its local identity and audience loyalty before the massive competition from the cable stations was introduced. This meant that BBS television was competing for quality of content and interest in topics at a time when Bhutanese people were infatuated with the new ‘window to the world’ as described under the section titled Knowledge, education and connectedness. As audiences built up their interest with the diverse content on international channels they were less likely to find the local content satisfying according to Interviewee 10 who stated,

**Interviewee:** the thing is you know our TV station it’s still growing, and the kind of content we have on the TV station like, I’ll tune in just to watch the news content. But I may not be interested to watch the remaining content because first of all, we’ve been right from day one, when BBS TV was introduced, we also introduced a system of cable television. So, we are like you know, we have a different kind of programming that we can see on cable TV which is much more interesting, more exciting, and I think that the packaging is not available in the local content. So because of that I think it makes a big difference and also because most of our people in the TV are very amateur, they have not been trained. Because of that, the kind of content they can provide is not so exciting, it’s not really interesting to watch. I think, for example tomorrow if there’s some exciting or you know or maybe a good packaged program on the BBS TV, I’m sure we will definitely tune in and watch, but right now the only interesting thing that I see is the news. **Researcher:** And your friends, do you think they’re much the same? Or is that hard for you to say? **Interviewee:** I think most of them, especially my group of friends, they also watch news content from BBS, but ah they don’t watch the program content as such.
In talking about the local media, which was BBS television and radio, Interviewee 3 believed there was a strong impact on people’s knowledge about important Bhutanese matters, but only if it mattered to them personally. His comment was “thanks to the media, people have been able to understand the law, and the religion also, many things much better way. So we make a self-concerted effort I think we can learn a lot of religion. [But that would only come through the local media, though wouldn’t it?] That’s the local media.”

Local television was watched every day by Interviewee 4 who noted “as for BBS television; I watch it every day at least the main news and the headlines coverage almost every day.” This indicated a strong preference to know what is happening locally and BBS TV or Radio was the only daily method of receiving local information at the time of the in-depth interviews as the local newspapers were weekly. Since that time a daily eight page newspaper was launched in October 2008, although there were reports that it could take up to a week to distribute the paper throughout the country. (Bhutan Broadcasting Service 2008, Drablier 2008)

Asked if there was a change in the amount of time people spent talking with each other Interviewee 1 said “maybe a certain group of people are watching television a lot. But I think from 1999 to June 2006 there have been a lot of soaps this year. So people watch these kind of programs, you need to see these type of programs.” As the soaps only appeared on the international cable television, this would indicate that there was a dominant pattern of watching of international content.

Participants varied in the percentage of time they watched, listed to or accessed international media compared to local media. Interviewee 3 stated he accessed international television and BBS mostly for information and spent about 50% of the time on each. However, Interviewee 2 consumed significantly more international content for entertainment and stated his main reason for local content was information. He outlined his listening (at 10% of total media consumption) and viewing (90% of media consumption) as,

radio I listen only BBS, and BBC once in a while. Television, I think fifteen percent would be Bhutanese content and seventy five percent would be international channels for me personally. And for people in general I think the percentage would be almost the same, they too watch BBS for news and very less for programs, then they go for international channels.

The dominance of news and information content on BBS deterred Interviewee 5’s household from watching local Bhutanese television because he said his wife preferred entertainment programs. He estimated his family watched significantly more international content that local. “I should say around ninety percent. [Ninety percent is cable?] Yeah, because my wife doesn’t watch BBS at all because as you see the public broadcast media is … mostly of the education nature, more
informative nature, more interviews, hard talks, some sort of politics talks going on, minister coming talking. I mean there is no alternatives for that.” He then went on to say that if he could watch more BBS he would, but his wife and family determined the television viewing.

4.1.1.4 Television can waste people’s time

While all of the participants who had access to television liked to watch it for information and news, some felt that too much television watching was wasting people’s time and causing them to be less productive because it took them away from doing their work or other important tasks. Television content described as wasting time generally related to Hindi soap programs, Hollywood movies and entertainment content that was being viewed in excess. In addition the pleasure people had from being ‘passive’ and sitting in front of the TV set for hours at a time, was criticised by a couple of interviewees because it was leading to contentment from non productive activity. Interviewee 39 expressed this view by stating,

we seem to be quite content with sitting in front of the TV, dozing off. Not very constructive use of time.

There was a perception that Bhutanese people had already become used to not undertaking many of the pastimes, activities and duties that they had been undertaking prior to the introduction of television. This was more evident in younger people in the community according to Interviewee 23 who said that large amounts of time, sitting and watching television was leading to younger people finding it even harder to relate to older members of the community. He stated,

like kids, they don’t like to study more because they would like to spend more time watching television, and old women and old men they get lost themselves, previously they spent the whole evening either praying or doing some rituals and things. After the television came they were totally lost because they spent most of the time in front of the television watching, and you know, they forgot all these normal duties.

While valuing television for information and learning, Interviewee 4 argued that the soap programs watched by his mother and wife held little value for him. “It’s a total waste of time, but still they are engrossed into it, I mean, they take out some time for all these things.”

However, non productive time, where people could enjoy fiction, drama and entertainment was very important to one of the pillars of Bhutanese society, Gross National Happiness. In relation to a question concerning perceived changes in the amount of time people spent with one another, Interviewee I said,
Yes there are group of people who are into the soap operas, they love to see the soap operas. But that’s because they like fantasies, their dreams which is nothing wrong I feel. I mean, people say yes you waste time. No, it is for your satisfaction that why it matters to our gross national happiness. I mean happiness is what form? It comes in so many different forms. Warm clothes, roof on your head and some money in your pocket. But happiness is important so that we are creative.

Television both enhanced local knowledge about important Bhutanese matters as well as taking up valuable time that could be used more productively according to Interviewee 4. He argued,

I mean like there are two sides to this, the positive side is, I mean even the farmers are being educated these days and now these days in general TV channels show almost everything, starting from you know, paddy fields up to the methods and process of farming, so that information also is being delivered to the general public especially to the farmers. And there is some kind of educative materials that is being obtained through television, which can be used in a good way. Now the negative impact is they don’t know what to watch, now I mean like these educative channels be it National Geographic or the Discovery channel. Ah, most of the people, you know they say that ah, if you are not educated enough to watch all these channels then they really going to these movie channels and other channels and they forget these good educative channels, so even down to the farmers also, I think it will affect them in the long run. First of all it will affect their work. So now even in the villages they can watch television, cable network has been now coming right into the districts, even in my village from, I think coming December they are going to put cable television there. And I think it will have a serious impact on them. It is going to affect their time on work, it will affect their quality of work, once you are engrossed into these channels it’s like an addiction you know, it’s like a drug to them. Ah my Aunty, who is already in the village, is already being affected. She’s watches around four to five hours, and now with the channels available to her in the village I think it will affect her time and the management, be it farming, (or) anything. I think it will affect her greatly.

From this description Interviewee 4 is expressing concern about what will happen in the villages from observing the way his own family and friends consume television. However, he did not have hard evidence that television had impacted on reduced working capacity for farmers.

From the perspective of interviewee 5, people spent a lot of time watching television, and from his Buddhist perspective, people could have spent at least some of their time more affectively.

I mean for youth, is not really good. I mean it is really at times a lot of time on the TV. But I’m also really hard line on the Buddhist, I practice some Buddhist things, for people who are practicing Buddhism religious things, it’s not really a good thing for them because it’s really waste of time, watching this.
4.1.1.5 Controlling children’s viewing

A number of Bhutanese people told me they had more than one television to allow children to watch different programs to parents and to allow the adults to watch different programs from one another. Interviewee 13 found that her children competed with one another continuously in order to be able to watch their choice of content. She said, “The elder one is seven, and younger is three and three he has his own set of time, so they tend to fight. The elder one wants to watch cartoon and National Geography and the son is after the World Wildlife Channel so you see even the impact with the children.”

Interviewee 5 decided to dispose of his second television because of the concern he had that his children were watching too much television and not sleeping enough. He described his decision, “one TV I have only, because last year I keep two TVs, but somehow it was affecting my daughters. So then I sold it off to one of the relatives.” He described why he sold his second television.

It was in the bedroom. And I kept in the sitting room but my daughters they go to sleep and then sometime we get lost and then we are watching TV. We thought that my daughters might have slept but they’d be just watching the TV. Till eleven o’clock so I sent off that and give to someone else.

His decision to sell the second television so that his children could get more sleep was one method of controlling the amount of television the children watched as well as a way of monitoring what particular programs the children were watching. It also encouraged the children to sit with the parents while so that the family was together while watching the programs.

Interviewee 6 decided that it was important to put controls in place to ensure his children were also accessing local content as well as the international programs. In addition he believed restricting viewing times was very important. He described his family’s approach.

We have fixed our children’s time to watch TV, we normally do from when they come from school that means at three, at three PM, then we give one hour chance to watch whatever they like, I think they mostly go for cartoons and then we encourage them to watch BBS; that is national TV. Because these days in the school they used to ask also what the news is given in BBS, and we encourage them to watch BBS only, then after that we restrict them to stop at nine, then we send them to bed.

His family’s approach was not universal among the interviewees, as some people indicated that it was the ‘human right’ of children to be allowed to watch what they wanted, when they wanted. An interesting observation from this comment was that schools were encouraging the students to come back and report on the stories they observed in the local media, such as BBS. This would indicate
there is some teaching in Bhutanese schools encouraging children to learn about the media and its role in relation to local issues and events.

4.1.1.6 Internet is predominantly used for business

The internet was not widely available in Bhutan in September 2006 and was still not available in 2008 to more than ten thousand users (Kezang and Whalley 2008, Ministry of Information and Communications 2008) which represented less than 2% of the total population. However, several of the participants did have access to the internet through work or using internet cafes, of which there were 53 in Bhutan in 2008. (Ministry of Information and Communications 2008)

There was also a view amongst the participants that the country should further improve its internet services to allow more people to have access. 37 year old Interviewee 7 stated,

my family doesn’t use internet, because they are not accessed to internet because still our government of Bhutan needs to develop these kinds of media because as such ah it doesn’t have that facility even in our home, so therefore we do internet system during Saturdays, Sundays. We go to Internet Cafes.

34 year old Interviewee 9 also noted the internet had little impact on Bhutanese society because it was not readily available and people, largely, did not have access, nor did they know how to use it. He said,

I think the impact is probably slower because you have to have access to the network and to also have a computer and also you are to have some prior knowledge in terms of operating that system. So that also is ah somehow limiting the speed of access, the speed of impact.

Some people used the internet at work. However, even those found it to be very slow and also found that they didn’t have very much time to explore the internet and learn how to use it to full advantage. Describing his experience with accessing the internet, Interviewee 21 noted that his friends were having similar limitations. He said,

on behalf of my friends also, that depends on the type of office you work in and the type of environment you have at home as well as at your work, so giving my personal experience, at the office, the work is very active, very challenging and since we have this scarcity of manpower in the office, we get to perform almost multitasks also, so that way it keeps us so busy, tied up, and that way of course whenever you get some free time you would always want to go browse the internet, like Google and whatever you want and try and learn something and also you log into massagers and stuff like that and get to chat with your friends all over the globe. That’s it, internet.
One observation from Interviewee 2 was that in certain wealthy families in urban areas, the income was sufficient to allow access to the internet from home. When this happened he observed that young people with internet access tended to stay home more than they had previously and meet with their friends less. He observed,

sometimes they’ll be with friends but most of the time they are also in their rooms because now with facilities and their income going up I think that parents can afford a lot. Internet lines at least in the retail families.

The internet being available for business was a huge advantage to the country according to Interviewee 3 who found that access to technological information had sped up enormously, enabling him to undertake his work much more effectively.

Overall it’s a positive, I mean even internet, if there was no internet, I would not have been able to do most of things I have been doing here. The most of the planning, most of the (things) that I look for, all the information’s available on internet. Before 1999 I would have to wait months or years until some Asia exhibition is around, go to the exhibition, try to get as much information as possible. But now it is possible without even going to the show to have all information first hand and then we make a choice. Even for example with ITC, if ITC is faulty, I want to know what ITC is for, I go to the net, I just click in the necessary key words and I’m getting all the information that I need. So immediately I can do the trouble shooting that’s required. But before 1999, before the introduction of TV or the internet, this was not possible. It would take us months to get equipment repaired. So I think these are the positive impacts.

This view of the internet significantly assisting people’s business activity was also shared by interviewee 4 who worked in a field that relied significantly on changing technologies. He stated,

My personal opinion is that prior to 1999 we have to depend a lot on information and especially in my field you know, I used to be a little behind the rest of the world. I mean I don’t know what’s happening, since we (did) not (have) access to internet, also television. Television is something different but internet, we used to get information via post, postal services, which takes months sometimes even years to get information on what you require. And it’s very difficult to keep ourselves up to date with what’s happening and … it’s my duty and responsibility to see what’s happening in the world so that we can get the right technology into the country. And prior to 1999 it was very difficult for me to access information, whatever information we got, we got it from postal service as I said, and we had to rely on the Indian site; the Indian counterparts and we depended on the Indian counterparts a lot, so it was quite difficult to get information.

One interviewee, a shop keeper, also uses the internet for work purposes only. He has no internet access at home and only uses the internet for business activity. He described his usage,
I have to get supply order from corner of my country, that I must tell you can send three mil, as well as my business partners in India I used to tell them you can freight to me as three mil. And so sometimes I place my orders as three mil only, then I used to access internet searching the (sites) and getting catalogues everything, so I should say I spend around thirty minutes, one hour sometimes if I get time to go through this.

His usage of the internet had saved him significant time, but also allowed him to be able to place orders for items customers were now ordering, ‘as seen on TV’ so that his business was more capable of meeting demand through usage of the internet.

Because Bhutan has been a media naïve country, the people’s ability to assimilate and understand internet content, without harmful effects needed careful planning according to Interviewee 4

Millions of sites (are) available in the internet and there are some positive sites and there are some very bad sites, negative sites. I mean, now through internet people are getting cheated, in the newspaper you know, so many people got cheated through the various scams that is there in the internet. So I think you know a way and a means needs to be developed to deliver this kind of services to the people.

While he did not elaborate on what type of “ways and means” need development, it was clear that his concern was that people need some form of protection from being cheated or exposed to very bad internet content. He expanded on the aspect that Bhutanese people are vulnerable to harmful internet sites and thought banning some might be one solution.

Bhutanese people are very traditional and very reserved you know, and nowadays a lot of people are being educated but still around eighty percent of Bhutan is dependant on farming, and the kind of information that is being given to them has to be, I mean like scrutinised. And if the information that is there on the internet is given as of now, and if it depends on the person on how they access the internet, I think a negative impact is going to be there. So a means has to be developed to, scrutinise those kind of sites and block it permanently. But saying so, I mean it is very difficult to do that at the same time.

4.1.1.7 Mobile phones improve connectedness

Landline telephones were not available or in widespread use, except for businesses in major cities and towns or for some wealthier urban residents, until the introduction of mobile phones in 2003 (Kezang and Whalley 2008). Their usage has increased significantly across the broad population to the point where in 2008 the number of users was estimated to be approximately 33% of the total Bhutanese population. Landline users remained low and was estimated to be below 4% of the population in 2008. (Ministry of Information and Communications 2008) One of the great benefits of mobile phones that was expressed by several interviewees was that it greatly improved
connectedness and allowed communication across the country to be greatly improved, especially because travel between the Dzongkhags and villages can take several days on slow roads and walking tracks. Interviewee 2 stated,

I take mobile phone very positively actually in a place like Bhutan, where communication was very difficult. So at least now, I think it has become very quick to communicate. It has really improved the communication. Of course the numbers have really shot so fast even the mobile company didn’t expect, I think it tripled their expectation. They were expecting 20,000 mobile users within two years but it has gone around 60 so it has tripled actually.

This interview was conducted in 2006 while the rollout of mobile towers was still underway and therefore the numbers of mobile phone users had more than quadrupled in the subsequent two years. Interviewee 2 was not only very positive about the value of mobile phones in connecting the population, he also believed that mobiles provided an affordable alternative to landlines, where they otherwise would not have been affordable. He postulated,

I think that a need was felt because land line, was not visual in many areas and very few places could get a landline access. And, I don’t know, I don’t think mobile phones are so expensive compared to land lines, they are cheaper than landlines actually. And most of the peoples using mobiles, they call only inside Bhutan, so not so expensive, I think people spend around 300 ngultrum which is o.k. actually.

Mobile phone usage in Bhutan has in a few years revolutionised communication and connected people right across the country very quickly. While I was travelling in Bhutan, I was able to use the mobile phone to organise a meeting time for a number of the interviews. Interestingly, in one location, the mobile service had been put in place only one week before I travelled to the region for the interview. Despite this, the people in the town were using mobile phones, with apparent adept capability indicating that people were using the phones and adapting to the technology very quickly. As 23 year old interviewee 16 stated, “Oh yeah. Everyone’s infatuated with mobile phones.”
5 Knowledge, education and connectedness

From the discussions I had it became clear that exposure to the media since 1999 had significantly impacted on Bhutanese participants in terms of their knowledge and feelings of being informed about the world. Being educated and kept up to date about global events was a major theme that emerged from all of the interviews. This was seen as a very positive impact of media exposure for individuals and the community. This impact was predominantly from television, and where people had access, also from the internet. Mobile phones were also seen by a couple of participants as allowing connectedness with the world outside Bhutan. Several participants stated that radio listening was mainly from the BBS, and was listened to for local news and information while people were doing other activities such as cooking or driving. Radio listening was discussed under chapter 4, Content – what people access and how long they spend using media. However, the news of the world, and educative content, available from cable television dominated the comments of participants in terms of where they felt the educative and information benefits of media were originating. The view that people are more educated, worldly and confident as a direct consequence of exposure to television was expressed consistently from the participants. Not all of the television content was trusted or seen as valuable, but the overall perspective of television exposure was that there had been positive learning that had given people opportunities for improvement. This view was consistent across all interviewees regardless of age, gender or occupation. However, there were some slight differences between participants relating to which content they felt was more educative and beneficial. There were also some differences in the perspectives relating to why the education was beneficial and how it benefitted the community.

5.1.1.1 Television as an education tool

Many of the participants said that Bhutan had changed for the better in terms of people being more educated, knowledgeable and in the words of one of the participants, more ‘intelligent.’ In response to a question about the differences between urban and rural living as a result of media exposure, Interviewee 1 stated “I think only the metropolitan area people are more exposed, people have more intelligence, that’s significant change I have seen.” In this context “intelligence” refers to people being knowledgeable and learned as a result of media exposure, which related to the availability of international cable television services in urban areas, but not rural areas. This same participant had attended a discussion between parents and children and found himself to be confronted by the knowledge and confidence of the young people. He recalled from the meeting,

it was called children and parents meeting, and there I was talking to children and I was very afraid because they were sounding more intelligent. They were more aggressive not in terms of physical but they were more intelligent they were sounding more intelligent. They were talking, like asking,
in a sort of way that they were demanding that parents should understand them this way. And they should be understood in this way. So I have never seen this in my life. I grew up with a very strict father. So I have never dared to speak this way to my father. I am not saying this is wrong this is highly intelligent, but … whenever I interact with these (young) people I am very afraid today that I may not be able to cater to their needs, their demands, their expectations. So I feel that people from the younger generation have become very, very intelligent, more than we were in our days.

It is possible that Interviewee 1 actually did perceive that the increased knowledge base, from both media exposure and possibly education as well, did make the younger people seem more intelligent than they were prior to 1999, but it is likely that he was using the word intelligent to mean that they were more informed, knowledgeable and confident.

In many ways television was seen as an educational tool, not just for young people. In relation to a question about positive influences of television, Interviewee 1 stated,

I feel that people are now more educated, people know more about the world, people know in that case, you normally derive the bad habits you also derive the good habits. You (are) also seeing a positive angle, you also try to introduce that system. Today we can see that we have a system that we put a lot of influence on education but we also see that you not only have education you actually have some gains so that not only is your intellectual development necessary, physical development is also necessary. So you can see the difference between the young and the old people.

The impression that television exposure offers people a chance to learn, develop and enhance their skills was articulated by one of the interviewees who was a shopkeeper. He noted increased confidence and improved communication between people, even his own young staff. He observed,

now, these days people become more active … and talking to people with more expressions, more confidently and more exposure. Before they used hide somewhere in the corner and they get little scared about the foreigners as well as some big shots, they used to hide everywhere. Now these days they are not doing like that, they go to them confidently and speak whatever they want as my sales girls are doing, and this has been changed really in these days.

Even entertainment programs were seen as educative. Interviewee 15 outlined how he used all content to learn, not just information programs and news. He said,

I think I am the kind of person who wants to seek something out of life, and it’s quite amazing sometimes that you watch some artist on the television, and you watch some really philosophical television, and you just try to pick up the pieces that they say and then you try to connect yourself with that, that’s the main reason I watch television. Even if you watch a movie on TV (it) can you show something in life…. For me with television, entertainment is secondary. I watch TV to find out something. And I realise lately that the television in Bhutan has got nothing to show.
In stating that television in Bhutan has nothing to show, this 25 year old male was outlining his view that the local television in Bhutan was not offering him what he wanted so he watched predominantly international cable television for his “learning” experiences.

5.1.1.2 Knowledge provides confidence

As a result of people, especially young people, being more knowledgeable and informed there was also a perception of increased confidence and assertiveness in the way Bhutanese people communicated with one another. In responding to a question about whether there had been any changes in the way youth spoke with older members of the community, Interviewee 2 did not perceive that there was a loss of respect from younger people for older people over time. Rather he saw younger people becoming more questioning and seeking verification of information, as opposed to simply believing what they had been told, as he had stated was the case in the past. He said,

_the younger people would like to reconfirm this information because now with facilities, they can always reconfirm with that you know, the knowledge passed down, is it true? They are being more rational, let’s say, they can go and ask their teacher or they can go to net and find out if that is o.k. I’m specifically (talking) in terms of traditional medicine, which is very popular in rural areas or traditional method of healing, so they would like to reconfirm you know, whether that information is available on the net or does anybody know? Maybe they don’t believe their father only who will tell them, or you have to cut grass like this and this will do, or you have to do a chant. [So they have become more questioning?] More questioning, yes.

Interviewee 2 summarised his view “I think the major positive changes are people are more informed, more educated, more knowledgeable because of the introduction of media” Assertiveness and questioning of what people are taught was seen as an important and positive result of younger people being well informed through television viewing. Interviewee 22 said,

_we are taught in school never to speak up against your teacher, even though he’s wrong. So that mentality with the introduction of television coming in and a lot of media information coming in, I think people should be more aware, more analytical in terms of what they want to do and what they want to see and what they want to say. So I guess we can say that is a positive change, a positive impact of media.

More confidence was a key factor behind the behavioural changes in children according to Interviewee 19 who noted,

_the behaviour of our youth today is not so much a thing about being antiestablishment, it’s just that the children today have much higher level of confidence. Variety of factors: parents: education global – you know. They have much more confidence of themselves. They are perhaps more
articulate then we were at their age. They’re more aware of things happening around the world. Again, I see that as a positive thing about the media. They know a lot of things, they pick up a lot of ideas, concepts, you know. Part of my children’s education, if I may speak from personal experience is a lot of their thinking structure, essay writing is guided and influenced by what they see on TV. And some of it is good. One of my child, the way he writes is quite interesting. And I was just thinking to myself ‘where could this influence come from’?, because they don’t read much.

Because of the strong drive in Bhutan to improve the country’s literacy rate, which was 76% in urban areas and 48% in rural areas (Census Commissioner Royal government of Bhutan 2005) the statement that television was replacing reading for his children was of concern. He worried that if this were a general trend, while children may be improving their knowledge base, the improvements in reading could have been hindered as a result of television viewing replacing reading.

This aspect of being more learned, knowledgeable and informed about the wider world was seen as a significant change and improvement in Bhutanese society by all the participants regardless of their demographic or geographic background. Interviewee 8, who was a 37 year old male stated his view, “so the big changes, number one is especially some channels who are very educative and informative, especially BBS, CNN and Discovery channels, animal channels.” Expressing a similar view, Interviewee 10, a 26 year old female said, “well I think one of the major changes has been with a lot of other channels being available in Bhutan, people get to know more about other parts of the world. You know and then because normally Bhutanese people are not much of travellers I think the cable television when it opened it also gave Bhutanese people a medium to experience what is happening in other parts of the world. The good things that happened for Bhutan we have got more exposure now….If you look at the advantage I think it’s really very educative now, Bhutanese people are more aware of what’s happening in the world.” Interviewee 10 was raised as urban while Interviewee 8 was from the rural south. Similarly Interviewee 17, a 45 year old male from a village in central Bhutan stated, “I think in terms of information about the world, children are learning so much better because of the cable TV. I feel that children learn more about other cultures, not only about Bhutan, it is almost like they have been there, it is a good thing.”

The consistency and agreement between interviewees about television providing knowledge and giving confidence, especially to young people was remarkable. All interviewees agreed that this educative aspect of television had brought a positive benefit to themselves as individuals and to Bhutanese society generally.
5.1.1.3 Media information and content is predominantly useful

While the perception that people learned more was seen as positive and beneficial, some learning or knowledge gained from television or the internet was valued differently by some of the interviewees. Interviewee 8 saw that increases in information and knowledge were very positive influences of television, however he also saw that exposure to television content led not only to more confidence in people, but also to some undesirable behavioural changes. He noted first, the positive changes he had seen,

information and awareness of the news (and) global issues are one thing and second thing is specially for the children general knowledge and programs. But the negative impact, my feeling is this, with that exposure more people (are) adventurous they want to experiment like that, and especially with the youths. And so many peer pressures in schools, even in other phases of life. One thing and with that of course I mean domestic violence, street violence, sexual assault cases are actually more and more being reported now.

From a more negative perspective Interviewee 17 commented that “after having television, because now television is showing everything which actually happens in India and all those things, like early pregnancy, early sex, drugs, violence, especially nightclubs which are now there. They were not there before cable TV. I don’t know why parents are not taking care of it but it seems like some of them are enjoying the nightclubs and having unnecessary things which spoils our children’s life actually” Descriptions of increases in anti social behaviour or law breaking as a result of people being influence by what they watch on television are further discussed under chapter 6, Social, community and family impacts of media.

The call for “parental care”, relating to television viewing as outlined by Interviewee 17 above, even when it was being considered a valued educational tool, was shared by Interviewee 4 who noted children were especially able to learn a lot from television. He advocated that parental guidance was essential in assisting the children learn the most from their television consumption. He stated,

the effect on children as such for educative channels I think is very good for them, and ah, with proper guidance from their parents, if they know how to watch television I think it’s very educative. And they learn a lot through television also they can keep themselves updated like myself. They know what’s happening especially for my elder son, he is really engrossed into you know all this National Geographic channels and all the things …. And for my daughter you know, she is too young just now so she doesn’t know what’s happening, she likes only those, you know, dancing and singing serials, she’s into that.
There was a view that adults also needed to be discriminating about what was beneficial and entertaining to watch and content that held little value to the viewer. While not liking all content on television and choosing not to watch certain types of content, Interviewee 4 saw television as a way of keeping himself informed about what was happening in the world. His view was,

**telephone for me, I mean like personally, as an information to what’s happening around the word, especially through the news channels, I mean like it’s straight, so that (you keep) yourself up to date on what’s happening around the world. And also for other channels for educative channels, I think those are also nice, but there are some rubbish channels also, which are not required, these things are there.**

The ease of availability of multi channel content was of concern to some of the interviewees who thought that Bhutanese, in a media naïve country, were not necessarily equipped to discern quality and relevant content from that which may have negative value, or that which may be truthful from that which is manipulative. In the words of Interviewee 9,

**We talk about access to information but at the same time you’re bombarded with information if you don’t know how to utilise the information. O.K. information by itself is not very useful, and if you know how to use that information it is quite critical. So, so I don’t have any data like that but I think the information that is being related through this different media, print, radio and TV, I think they also have lot of positive impacts in terms of giving information, people (being) given opportunities, knowing people, what is going on outside (in) the world.**

A view was expressed by one of the participants that while the media content was informative and entertaining, it was not always trustworthy. 34 year old Interviewee 9 recognised that vested interests existed which could lead to deliberate deception or misleading content. He expressed this point by saying,

**I think now days we tend to see that it’s very sad that even some reputable media are so much driven by capitalism, by you know market forces that sometimes their own core values are so much undermined. For some, you know we have some very good public media, nationally, globally so objective reporting is not done so much now days is very sad to see that. It’s all about bad news and I think it’s also audience but at the same time also the people that provide that information, I think that responsibility is slightly waning you know.**

**5.1.1.4 Media has opened Bhutan up to the world**

Several of the participants expressed the feeling that prior to 1999 Bhutan was closed off, isolated and that they as Bhutanese felt enclosed within their own country. That changed significantly once television became legally and freely available. Television became very easy for urban Bhutanese people to access as expressed by Interviewee 9, “you know, you have a television, just plug it in
and you get the whole world in front of you.” The decision of the King to allow multi channel international television into Bhutan, combined with the formation of local BBS television was a very welcome and significant moment in Bhutanese history. As Interviewee 21 so eloquently stated,

Media … was introduced into our country coinciding with the silver jubilee of His Majesty the King. And I would say that is on landmark in history in the world of media as well as in our society. Because prior to that, Bhutan was a little aloof in the sense that we were a little isolated, people were not as much aware as they are today. But with the introduction of media in the country the position, the horizons of understanding of people, has greatly changed over time, now it’s almost 6 to 7 years down the line and within this time bracket, we can see lots of difference in the position of people and its influence in the society. Media has brought about so much of changes in the lives and living of the people.

The opening up of the world, from the “aloof” or closed off society, to an informed, internationally connected community through television content, was seen as essential to the people of Bhutan from the viewpoint of a number of participants. With the perspective of a 26 year old male, Interviewee 11 stated that people in Bhutan were much more enlightened in the present than prior to the introduction of television and the internet in 1999. He stated, “I feel like when I see Bhutanese people right now ah some positive changes in them and then some things happening in the modern world right now in Bhutan, I feel like sometimes we have been in the dark you know in the world before. So I don’t see the better time then or better time now, but with the time I think we are coping, so it’s all the better.” 32 year old Interviewee 14 used an even stronger metaphor to describe the way he felt prior to the introduction of television and the internet. He felt almost imprisoned within his own country.

So I used to feel this kind of being detained into particular you know cell, where you don’t have any freedom or anything like that, but after the coming for June ’99 so everything was wonderful. Whatever facilities I used to get accessed in India was at a level here. So communications wise, the introduction of television, opened the doors of communications for Bhutanese people to the outside world, and then they were able to see a lot good things what is happening outside and then it became a source of great information. Right from the beginning I found it so informative and educative sort of medium.

This feeling of wanting to know about the outside world was expressed very strongly by Interviewee 12, a 50 year old women who lived in a very small rural village with no television access. She was keen to have television available where she lived because she really wanted to experience what life was like in the outside world within her lifetime. The translator interpreted her view, “she would love to have TV, because she is saying that she doesn’t have to learn her own
culture but still she wants to know, the different culture, that Western culture and all. So actually she loves to have TV because she is worried that she might die before the TV comes to her house.”

Not only did international TV give Bhutanese people opportunity to experience the outside world and feel that they were part of the global community, it also gave them the opportunity cross reference the news coming in from outside their country with the word of mouth information sources that were previously available. As 25 year old Interviewee 15 put it,

now you have all the information that you need. You can turn on the television and you can get all sorts of news that you want. Back then you had to wait for ages and it used to be an aural news, you know like, people would say (things) but you know it was quite undocumented. If it is shown on television now you would believe it but back then it used to be kind of hearsay you know. The message used to come from other people and by the time it got to you it sometimes used to get depleted.

5.1.1.5 Informed people are independent decision makers

Independence and the ability to be able to make their own decisions was very important to a number of participants and was stronger in younger people than it was in older people. From the perspective of a 23 year old female, Interviewee 16 found that exposure to the outside world, with news, information and entertainment helped her make independent decisions that were positive for her life. She saw this as positive in a number of ways. These were,

the first thing is the exposure. When we switch on the TV and we see something new we get exposed immediately. The second thing is knowledge of course. We really don’t need to depend on someone else to tell us what’s going on in the world. Or we don’t have to get something much real to read, but we just have to switch on the TV and we get the news all over the world, right. And the third thing is it helps in grooming a person to a certain extent. At least in the way the person thinks. If there’s something, for example a good movie or a good show being shown, and it gives a watcher, be it a kid or an adult, whoever, can at least gain something out of it. Right.

This expression of the need to be informed, allowing independence in decision making and action was also seen by older people as a new aspect of younger people’s behaviour. A young woman, 26 year old Interviewee 10 said that she did not find value in entertainment channels, but she was excited about international television channels giving her access to information programs from across the world. She said,

with cable TV content we have entertainment channels which doesn’t make sense but they also have channels like national geography, animal planet, in a way you get to know a lot of things. You know the history, then about animal wildlife. So all these things I think it makes us think, and it also
makes us aware that there are things beyond Bhutan, which is interesting, which is exciting. And also you get to be, kind of, more worldly.

Another of the younger participants, 25 year old Interviewee 15 was very happy that he was living in the modern, information era. He stated “right now it is better, in the sense that now I am living in the information age, I can get all the information I need, in the sense I am there, internet, TV, Radio, telephone. You have everything and this is good. And this is good because you can make an informed decision yourself.” People being informed and assisted in making up their minds about what to do or how to act was seen as a significant benefit from television exposure according to Interviewee 6. His view was “the people get more information from TV, what to do, what wear, what to get, then what are the good things, what are the materials that we get everywhere from the market. They normally get this information from TV only, as well as internet I think that has really changed.”

Decision making was also considered important in relation to local information and local media content. With the 1988 democratic elections looming at the time these interviews were conducted the media was being seen as a great educator that would assist local people to make up their own minds about who to vote for and how the electoral system would operate. While many of the interviewees did not value the quality of the content on BBS highly, many of them still understood the value of having a local television station that would keep the population informed about local issues. Interviewee 9, a 34 year old male talking about the value of television said, it is very important too, especially in decision making. in terms of now we are launching, getting into parliamentary democracy and democracy is all about making informed decisions, you know. If people don’t have information, really it’s not going to work.

From his perspective local content played as significant a role in education and information, as international content. Local content was also seen as important as a means of providing information about local culture and local events. Some of the participants viewed the BBS as important for local news, but it was not watched for other content to any great extent. This was discussed under chapter 4 Content—what people access and how long they spend using media. From the perspective of Interviewee 8 it was very important that the media show content that was about Bhutan and reflecting Bhutanese heritage. He outlined, and now of course we see the BBS programs and even private media they do bring to us some articles about history of Bhutan, or some personalities, and even some villages and some events in the past. So that’s the positive aspect about the media.
The benefits of knowing what was happening in the world, being up to date with world events and news was seen by the participants as being very important, even to the point of willingness to accept some aspects of cultural change that they did not like. Exposure to the global community and world events was a very important aspect of television access according to Interviewee 5. Despite his concerns that television “wasted time” and was leading to “cultural degradation” he held the view that the positive contribution of television, bringing Bhutanese people in touch with the world, outweighed the negatives. He said,

more than the negative, there’s a positive impact, I mean we can hear things we can see things. If something happens there, it’s instantly there in the TV… I mean for example like there’s some bomb blast. You can see that, like twin towers, we see life, going on. This is all information, the knowledge is there, I mean globalisation, that means people are exposed to the world. This is the positive impact.

Similarly, Interviewee 7 believed that approximately 75% of the changes that were good as a result of accessing international television and 25% of the cultural changes were negative. It was the significant advantage of living in a connected, information rich society that made him lean towards the view that positive changes were significantly stronger than the negative changes. He stated,

I think it is totally changed, and now days the people behaving different, and they talking different, and they try to change themselves, they try to learn lot of things. They try to even talk better way, I think there is lot of changes in that also. Without the outside world, seeing outside world through television, talking through mobile, through radio media, I think it is a positive changes made in our country here rather than like in the remote places. You know our country will stand still if it doesn’t have such kind of media. Bhutan is really changed, and maybe around seventy five percents are towards positive side.

As an example of how global events could sometimes impact on local communities, even within a small country like Bhutan, The World Trade Centre disaster of September 11, 2001 was used as an example. Interviewee 9 stated,

even in small countries like Bhutan, you know, when during September 11 attacks in the US, the whole thing changed. Even our Yak herders you know, they’re impacted, so severely because the whole tourism sector changed, you know and then they, during that tourist season they’re depended on for Porters and things like that, and they had such this ripple effect to the smallest communities. So we live in such a globalised, such an interconnected world, that sometimes it’s also quite essential to have access to this kind of media.
It is an important aspect to consider that people in Bhutan were largely not aware of international issues and events prior to 1999 and the introduction of global media. The word of mouth information and local radio station run by BBS were not particularly informative about world issues and world events, at least from the perspective of some participants. Interviewee 23 stated, “til television and internet came to Bhutan we were not aware of what’s happening around the world, we were basically more focused on what is happening around our own country. Now after this new phenomena came into the market, now we are in a better position, now we are very much updated, we know what’s going on in the western countries, we know what sort of governments, the good about the governments, the bad about the governments. We also know about the other culture, the western culture, which is, some cultures are very good, and we learn from that.”

5.1.1.7 International media access makes Bhutan connected and progressive

The view that the country could go backwards or stand still without the information that global media access provided, was also a theme that emerged from several of the interviews. Interviewee 24, a 24 year old male, who was 17 at the time of the introduction of television, stated,

The media has to be there, this type of modern media has to be there because we have got to go with the world. We can’t afford to live so isolated when so much of the world is going for globalisation, world trade organisations, all those kinds of things. We can’t afford to be so laid back and make ourselves isolated. So keeping this in view the positive impacts would overtime outweigh the negative developments that are taking place.

For Interviewee 23, who was six years older, there was a need to find middle ground between preserving Bhutanese cultural traditions and keeping abreast of the events of the modern world. He emphasised, “we have to follow western culture too because we are living in the age of globalisation where everything is happening around the world. If we isolate ourselves from the rest of the world I guess Bhutan will not develop. We need to develop, but what is more important is the well balanced, what I mentioned, the middle path, I think we have to follow the middle path.”

Linking to the outside world, and moving with the outside world was expressed as a key need for Bhutanese according to Interviewee 11. He said "I think media definitely has an educative role. But you know the world is growing, so should Bhutan, when the world is stepping forward, so should Bhutan.” Not only was the information and education that people received from the media seen as essential to ensure the country would thrive and move forwards, it had also changed from a luxury commodity to an essential item in the view of some Bhutanese people. This was articulated by Interviewee 14,

Bhutan has actually become quite admirable place, like initially in the past they come from let’s say land locked area, unexposed to anyone else, so when they just standing up and facing certain kind of
change it was incredible to believe for them. But now it has become so normal. And should this kind of infrastructure be stopped they would very stop liking it. Initially it started (as) some sort of luxury to get access to this kind of communications, but now it has already stand up as a necessity for living in Bhutan.

Of course not all the people in Bhutan had access to TV and even fewer had access to the internet. Estimates of internet usage in Bhutan vary from between 6 to 10 percent of the population (Ministry of Information and Communications 2008, Minniwatts Marketing 2008A) and television availability in regional areas was improving, but was still below 20% in 2007 and below 38% nationally, combining urban and rural areas together. (National Statistics Bureau 2007) therefore while international television might have been seen as a necessity for Bhutanese people it was still unavailable to more than 60% of the population.

5.1.1.8 Increases in the divide between connected and non connected

Differences in literacy, standards of living and income were evident in Bhutan and present in most of the measured indicators in the Bhutan Living Standards Survey (National Statistics Bureau, 2007). As television was introduced to urban areas first, and at the time of the interviews in September 2006, many rural areas in Bhutan were still without international television reception. The perception of a number of participants was that the access to television in predominantly urban areas, with its educational value and access to global information and entertainment, meant that the people without television access in rural areas were further disadvantaged over their fellow urban citizens. This was expressed by 34 year old Interviewee 9 who stated,

There were actually a lot of areas in Bhutan which actually did not have television, the infrastructure was not quite ready, so basically in more developed areas like Thimphu, Phuentsholing, more these major towns, they had this burst of introduction of this kind of media… in a way that sort of created this you know, stratification, very strong, because they had access to information, others didn’t have access to information.

People in many regional areas could not receive television services in 2006 and although they might listen to BBS Radio, they had little access to the international content. Interviewee 1 argued that there was a consequent differentiation between in development between non connected rural and connected urban areas. He expressed it this way,

I think the most important factor today you can see that people are more exposed but sadly only those areas where we have the cable services. The rural people still have the same lifestyle they (used to) have. Yes they listen to BBS because BBS is more educated so you talk about the culture farming style, animals and that kind of thing so they opt to this kind of stuff. But I think only the
metropolitan area people are more exposed, people have more intelligence, that’s significant change I have seen.

As discussed under heading 5.1.1.1 *Television as an education tool*, the word ‘intelligence’ in this context referred to people being knowledgeable and learned as a result of media exposure, and that this type of knowledge was available to the people in urban areas who had access to cable television. Also he is possibly observing improvements in education as well.

Similarly, Interviewee 2 stated that there were still only a limited number of families with televisions in Bhutan and that these were largely in the urban areas still. He had read recent media reports which showed, “according to the survey I think there is only about 34,000 television sets, so I think that group, the owner of these sets, I think it has affected.” He was making a point that only the owners of the estimated 34 thousand television sets are those that were impacted by watching television.

### 5.1.1.9 People should have choice

One third of the participants believed that it should be the right of Bhutanese people to make their own choices about what they watched on television. When the King of Bhutan introduced television in 1999, according to Interviewee 23, he outlined to the citizens of the country that they would have to make choices between what was good and what was bad from the international television content available through cable television. From the King’s perspective every citizen in Bhutan had the responsibility of choosing useful information and entertainment. However, Interviewee 23 also felt that Bhutanese people needed to be equipped to make the right choices through education and media awareness. He was concerned that they were not equipped at that time to assess quality from poor content, or good information from propaganda and felt that perhaps some form of limitation on media content might be appropriate until Bhutan built up media awareness and knowledge within the general population. Interviewee 23 was expressing his concern that many aspects of Bhutanese culture, such as language, dress and festivals were, in his opinion, at risk because young Bhutanese people were mimicking and copying the people and actions that they saw on television programs. He said,

we cannot shy away from the media because without the media I guess, we cannot do anything. We learn a lot from media, we learn the bad part, we learn the good part. I think its all up to the individual to judge and decide which is the best. How to go about it. **Researcher:** Which is what the King’s message was in the first place? **Interviewee:** Yes, he said that from now on Bhutan will have internet and television and I know that internet and television will profit both good and bad, but he is optimistic that the youth of Bhutan will pick up the best part. So in that way I think we should try our best to that, because otherwise one fine old day I guess Dzonkha will vanish also.
A similar view was expressed by Interviewee 9 who felt that members of the community, including members of his own family, were not coping with how to watch television and were both watching too much as well as watching content or using computers in a way that was unproductive and sometimes detrimental. He said that Bhutanese people needed to develop more self discipline and added,

I think the challenge now really lies in sort of instilling that sense of responsibility to every citizen, to every individual of how you assemble that information, how you use that information. I think the challenge really lies in ah, self monitoring. **Researcher:** What about the other members of your family and the people who are living here? **Interviewee:** I’m really concerned about my nephew, who is now about fourteen years old. And if I look at his timetable, he watches a lot, he’s really in front of the TV a lot of time. And if he is not watching television, he is playing Playstation you know video games and things like that, so um, and I always keep telling him but ah, it’s very difficult I think because we are the generation where this television was also sometimes looked at a luxury you know? Sometimes when you say that you sometimes deprive someone of that luxury, some people take it that way…. In a developing country like ours, at the end of the day, we have to really instil this sense of responsibility in every individual. To be able to analyse that information what comes out, ah of this media. It gives a lot of freedom. Freedom of expression, freedom of thinking, in that sense. But at the same time information actually gives you freedom but then sometimes, too much if you don’t know how to analyse also it sort of takes away your freedom.

This aspect of freedom through being informed and able to choose what to watch and what information or entertainment to access was making Bhutan a better country in which to live according to 25 year old Interviewee 15. He felt equipped to be able to make his own decisions about what was right or wrong, good or bad and did not want the government to censor content. He stated,

I would love to live life now, rather than back then because I am certain that I can make informed decisions myself. And media can give me the information, that doesn’t mean that they can necessarily influence me. I can make my own decision, so I prefer having the information than not having the information or I can make an informed decision myself than making things go wrong.

The view that people should make their own choices was shared by Interviewee 1 who said that people needed to be exposed to different cultures and educative material in order to be able to make their own choices. He saw this as a very positive impact of media and stated,

this is positive because this is education. For me anything you do is education because it helps you to get more exposed and look into different kinds of fields and you learn actually, that this is how you take this step. You take different steps and you learn. This is the right way and you move in the direction because if you do not try, you know, salt and bitter; you do not know what you like, what is best for you, so you have to try different ways.
Censorship of media content was also strongly opposed by Interviewee 22 who felt that television content had increased the capacity of Bhutanese people to think differently and act independently. This was because media content from other countries allowed Bhutanese people to see how people acted and responded in many different ways in different countries. He argued that,

our Government really tries to censor certain things. I don’t see why the government should take that rule, censoring things. I think people should be allowed to make their own decisions. Like they should be able to choose what is right, what is wrong. Because they are exposed, although not through an experience, but through media, through television, through what they see on TV. They know that life is not that simple. You can make your own choices in life. You do not have to be dictated, you do not have to be told what to do. So I think in that way I feel that that impact has been in some way good for Bhutanese society.

Interviewee 2 said that he had participated in discussions with his friends relating to whether or not there should be more restrictions to international television through Government regulation to curtail youth anti social behaviour. He outlined his view that there was,

a general feeling among the people many times, their solution was to stop many of the satellite channels, so that we can solve the problem. But I personally feel that that is not a solution, because I think it has to come with the change of time. And, when television was introduced even His Majesty said ‘the choice is up to you, television has brought good and bad but you are the one to choose, what to watch, what not to watch’, so he was actually urging the younger generation and everybody in Bhutan to be responsible actually, so I think choice was left to the people.

Interviewee 4 strongly argued for freedom of choice, linking it to the coming of democracy. (These interviews were done prior to the first Bhutanese democratic elections of 2008.) He talked about people’s freedom to choose their religion and watch what they wanted on television, “Now and with the coming of democracy in 2008, I think people should be free to do what they want.”

38 year old Interviewee 25 firmly believed that it was their right to have their own choices about what they watched. However, there were limits that she was also setting, to ensure that television was not dominating to the extent that they could not complete school and homework. She said, “I believe strongly that children have human rights, it is their right to watch what they want without control, but I have to control them on weekdays only so that they can do their school work and study, but otherwise I let them watch what they want because it is their right to do so.”
However, there was another view that controls should be put in place about what type of content should be shown on television. Interviewee 17 had teenage children and was concerned that his children and their friends pick up a wide variety of ideas and concepts from television relating to sex, drugs and antisocial behaviour. His opinion was that these problems had escalated significantly since the introduction of television and he was concerned about the influence on his own children, both from television and from their peers who were in turn influenced by television. For this reason he was more strict, he said, than most parents and restricted his children from going out all the time and doing what he termed “unnecessary things.” In advocating for better parental control he said, “I think we have to worry now. The population is increasing day by day and any people can do anything, so I think it is a worried situation. So I don’t know how to control it, but it has to be controlled. Actually, especially the parents must have to take care of this.”

According to Interviewee 4 there was also a strong need for instruction from schools, so that young people could guided in what to watch and how to interpret media content. He did not believe there were very strong parental controls in Bhutan, and there was a strong need for youth guidance. He said,

some kind of information that needs to be taught to them, be it through their teachers that they study in school or be it through their parents, I think this has to be taught to them, which is not happening I think. In general now the immoral activities (of) all the children in the town is quite minimum but, given the time I think it will increase. So although there is the information and communication, and the awareness has been created, showing what not to do, but I think this has to be broadened and widened.

Interviewee 4’s statement indicates that he is an advocate for guidance in television viewing and in educative programs to assist young people in interpreting media content appropriately. However he was not advocating that there should be restrictions on media content.
6 Social, community and family impacts of media

The time family and household members spend with one another has significantly decreased from the perspectives of the majority of participants. 22 of the 27 interviewees articulated that they felt families spent less time together than they had prior to 1999. This view was held right across the demographic mix of the interviewees with the perception that television was the prime cause of families having less time talking and undertaking activities together. In many cases multiple televisions meant that the families were not even passively together watching television, because they would sit in different rooms watching different programs. Other aspects were also identified in taking away from family time, in addition to television, which included the perception that people were busier than they had been prior to media introduction and this is discussed further under chapter 7 Cultural impacts of media. In addition, a couple of the younger participants, under the age of thirty, both men and women, found that they spent less time with friends, or that friends were less accessible than they had been previously, both due to busyness and their friends not being available because they were consuming media. However, as will be discussed later, one interviewee found time and availability of friends for socialising. One interviewee, a Buddhist Monk, was of the view that socialising had changed, and family gatherings had changed, but his view was this was not a reduction in time together, merely a reflection of the changes that the media have brought.

6.1.1.1 Socialising and sharing activities together has reduced

One of the most significant social changes observed by participants was the reduction in family members as well as neighbours and friends, getting together for activities and discussions since the introduction of television. At the same time as observing that television viewing is taking up considerable time that used to be spent socialising, some interviewees also noted that they were working harder, were busier and had generally less time. Interviewee 21, who was a 24 year old male stated,

Bhutan has a very closely knit society, very rich, and we believe in, a joint family system and when tradition takes the theme, talks, what happens is that we have in our culture so many things like rituals when all family members come together, very frequently and before the introduction of media, to be very specific. Like television itself, we used to listen to radio for some international news and that was very rare. And before that, because you didn’t have any entertainment like during the evening you know you would come back from your office, no internet also, you sit down with you family, have a chit chat, or do whatever you like. But now with the introduction of television we could see people interacting very less. They are so much glued to television. Almost always, they have their own favourite channels to watch, so that people’s obsession have diverted to
His observation that family members interacted less since the introduction of television was also emphasised by Interviewee 11 who believed there had been a decline in social activities within and between families. He described,

> if I take a particular example of some typical village life, for instance my own home, we used to enjoy the particular social life, when media was not here, when television was not here. We used to gather together, eat together, ah and then sometimes when we really feel bored, we used to go out for outings, picnics and all.

Opportunities for family members and friends to come together prior to the introduction of television were not constantly available all through the day. Members of families had to work in farming, forestry, civil service or other activities as well as children attending school. Therefore Bhutanese people prior to 1999 also had to make an effort to meet and socialise. According to 52 year old interviewee 20,

> it’s not like before, you used to get together after hours, so even in weekends we’d get together, now suppose the younger age, those with a computer, some kids are busy with the internet, chit chat and these things, and some kids are very busy to watching cartoon movies, all these things and old ages are watching other movies, like Bhutanese film or Indian films. It’s changed quite a lot, because now they are not getting together. Before you used to get together because there were no such activities in Bhutan. So now I think to get a family together is very difficult. [Is it difficult getting together even in your own family.] Even right now, yes I think it’s very difficult, because I am very busy with my work and my wife is very busy with her work and in the evening my son will be coming very late because busy with the work, office work and sometimes he goes for the internet, all these things, and my daughter she is busy with her friends then sometime checking the email, all this thing and that thing, so its very busy and difficult to get together.

28 year old Interviewee 18 lived with her parents and extended family and worked until 8pm or later on weeknights. She found that when she came home at night it was very difficult to find time to get together and talk as had been the case prior to television. She found this frustrating and felt that this would become a problem over time as it would reduce the family’s connectedness with one another. She stated her perception of how this had changed,

> “there was a time when there never used to be television and it used to be kind of one to one talk, you spent time in a circle, everybody’s there and you spent time talking about what happened on the day or what’s going on in one person’s life, and now it’s all of a sudden, everybody’s tuned into their timing with all of the soap operas and the news that they want to watch. Like after I am done (from work) I go back everybody’s watching television. So it’s like they’re busy and they wouldn’t
want me to barge in and ask them what’s happening. So those kind of situations are there where these television shows have taken more priority, rather than like spending time and talking with each other.”

Even from the perspective of a village farming family that did not have television there was a perception of change in younger people in the aspect of wanting to spend less time talking with their grandparents. This perception came about on the few occasions that they had visited their children and families in Thimphu. The perception of interviewee 12, a 50 year old woman who lived as a subsistence farmer with a few small crops for sale at the markets was that her children still paid attention to her when she visited them, but her grandchildren preferred spending time with the television than with her. Through the interpreter she said,

Interpreter: She’s saying that no, when she went to Thimphu and all, her children, those who knows about the culture and all, they see her they respect her so they don’t watch TV so they talk with her and they stay together and all. But the thing is the grandchildren they are very small, that is the problem they don’t come to her, they just watch the TV, and pass their time, so that’s what she’s saying. Interviewer: Her children listen and respect. Interpreter: Yeah, yeah but the next generation down, her children listen yeah, but generation (down) don’t, they just watch the TV and all.”

When watching television, the household was not always together, because of the desire for people to watch different content as discussed under chapter 4, **Content – what people access and how long they spend using media.** This led Interviewee 17 to purchase an additional television so that different members of his family could watch their preferred content at different times. He outlined how his family’s viewing had changed from shared to segregated.

Actually in the beginning we had only one television set, so we watched the same channels, so everyone is united. So later on there is a lot of problem watching, because some of them like, preferring the different channels, so almost one year now I have two television sets are there in my home.

This aspect of watching different programs in different rooms at times when the family used to be together prior to 1999 was seen as a loss of some quality family time being spent together. 41 year old Interviewee 27 stated that he had observed members of families were always watching different programs and so spent less time with each other, talking as a family as they used to. Similarly, 37 year old Interviewee 8 noted that he watched his programs and his wife and children watched their programs so that he felt the family was not spending time together while they were viewing the television and that it was now hard to find time when the family could be together in “quality time”. He also observed that friends some friends spent even less time together as a family especially when considering television viewing in combination with other forms of social activity. He stated,
I’ll be watching my program and my children, wife will be in the different room watching their programs so there is not family quality time being spent…. Friends also, I have neighbours who actually they watch till one, two in the late night, television, and some of them I know, they go to the discotheques and Karaoke and thing, social gatherings. And I have seen some, families, ah couples, not spending together, or the wife will go out one thing, the husband will be on their own.

One of the key driving factors behind the perception that families were spending less time together and talking together was the actual schedule times for television drama and other popular content. Clearly, television stations were scheduling popular content at times of peak audience availability which happened to coincide the times that families had previously been together talking with one another and sharing their experiences. The almost compulsive viewing of drama, sports content, news or certain documentaries meant that much of the evening was spent watching television programs. This was summed up by Interviewee 8 who said, “in terms of the family, dramas and serials they actually take up lot of family time. Because they come at certain times and the wives and even some men also, they are actually hooked onto these serials and they actually don’t miss those programs, almost every day, except in the weekends, so that is the thing, consumption of family time.”

Television was seen as highly entertaining by most of the participants and there was a perspective expressed that some families talked a lot more in the past because there was no alternative in the form of other entertainment as the following interview segment with Interviewee 20 indicates.

**Interviewer:** Prior to 1999 did you spend more time together, talking together, being together than you do now? **Interviewee:** Yes before we used to because there was no other entertainment, only on the weekend we used to go to some sports, like a picnic all these things, otherwise, always together because there’s no such activities existed (then) as in the future.

However, one of the participants did feel that families could use a tool to assist in improving the balance of television viewing with families’ quality time. While acknowledging that family time together is affected by television viewing, Interviewee 4 advocated time management as a way of overcoming his perception of the reduced opportunities families had to come together and interact with one another. Television viewing time, he said, had to be considered, like work or school time, so that a balance could be achieved and allow the families time to spend with one another. He stated, my family also it has affected. And the time that a family needs to be together as family that has been cut short. Since our office time is from nine to five, sometimes the office hours continue till seven o’clock, six o’clock you know. So in a day I mean like as a family we tend to stay together for only a few hours, four to five hours and from that four to five hours two to three hours have been taken away by television, so definitely it is affecting the social life and it does affect the family I
think. But also a person can take it positively if you want to take out quality time. I mean there’s
definitely from five to eight, I mean there’s three hours there, so you can spend some quality time
there also. It’s basically time management I think. But in the overall I think it does affect.

6.1.1.2 Quality time at home and with friends is hard to find

Family meals were times when families and guests came together and enjoyed discussions and
interacting with one another in both an informative and entertaining way. However, 12 of the
interviewees mentioned that their families now ate evening meals in front of the television and that
this significantly reduced their family’s capacity to talk together and share their daily experiences.
One of the interviewees noted that meals were now rushed so that the family could get to see their
favourite television programs without interruption. However there was one interviewee who felt
that while sometimes they ate in front of television and at other times they ate without it, he felt
that on balance they probably talked as much as they used to, because now, with television, the
family members spend less time in outdoor activities such as playing, and more time indoors
watching television. However, 50 year old Interviewee 12, from a rural village without television,
through her interpreter stated that her family still does eat and actively interact together,

during their free time you know, since they don’t have TV, so what they do is they sit together and
do some prayers and you know, they talk and then have discussions and all, that is what she is
saying.

Prior to television, most families ate together and interacted together and mealtime was considered
communication time. However, the compulsion to watch certain programs, such as soaps, dramas,
news and other content scheduled to coincide with peak audience availability had led to some
families finding that was very difficult to find a time throughout the evening when everyone would
be available to eat together. This was expressed by 30 year old Interviewee 23 who observed that,

before internet came into Bhutan, that’s before 1999, we were a social kind of culture, you know,
the parents, the kids, everybody sits down, we eat together, there’s always a bond in the family. But
after the television was introduced I see that this is getting a little distanced. The reason why is for
instance, maybe there is a very interesting television program coming up, maybe the mum would
love to watch that and its almost time for the dinner, but she cannot make the dinner because she
would like to watch that television program. Or there is a very interesting program on the television
and the kids would like to watch that, so in that way there is hardly a good time to sit down together,
because when you eat, that’s a good time when you discuss a lot for example what sort of problem
you are facing with each other. I think that if the kids have a problem in school they may say that I
have a problem in school, but now, things are changing a lot because of that, because there are so
many channels, and I think television is also like a drug, you get an addiction to it and then you
don’t like to part with it.
A similar observation was expressed by Interviewee 9 who spent a considerable amount of his time away from the family on work trips within Bhutan. When he came home, he found it very difficult to find time to talk with his family because he found that many members of his family had to watch specific programs at specific times. He believed that prior to television, 20% of the week he and his family would be together, talking or eating or interacting in some way. However, his view was that this time was subsequently replaced by television viewing. He therefore noted that meal time, which was once the central scheduled event that brought the whole family together had been displaced by the schedule of television programs which, at times, kept the whole family segregated. He observed,

before television especially during dinner time you know, everybody eats together. And our timing was determined by the timing of the meal, and meal was the focus. And the food was the focus of this family’s centre. But then, the timing of the serials and the soap operas are the determining factor, so it determines when you eat your dinner…. Everyone is not interested in the same serial. So people like to watch different serials, so basically as a result of that people tend to eat at different timings. So you don’t have this kind of communal eating, and the communal eating I think is one of the oldest human kind of celebration.

Eating together was more than just a social function of a single family, it was also a social function of members of the community coming together to sit, eat, talk, pray, share experiences and socialise. However, from the perspective of a 26 year old male who grew up in a rural village, Interviewee 11 now perceives that mealtime is no longer a time of family and community gathering. He noted,

every meal used to have feast, sitting together, eating together, having fun, chatting and then getting together. We used to invite families from other homes; our relatives, come up for dinner. Today if I say come up for dinner, someone in my house will complain, no-no, we have this wonderful program on TV. Well that’s one disadvantage … on the society and particularly in the Bhutanese homes.

Sitting in front of television and eating was described by Interviewee 13 as not being the general lifestyle of the Bhutanese people. However that lifestyle appeared to be changing so that many more families appeared to be either eating in front of the television or finding that not all members of the family would come together at meal times. As the following interview segment illustrates, she also noted there was a trend with other families to sit around the television and that this reduced family interaction. Her response to being asked if the family talked and ate together was,

Interviewee: earlier I remember the whole family sits together and eat, but now everybody, like dad would go along with his tray of food and he says o.k. I am going to watch something else, and then, sometimes it also happens with us that we sit in front of the television and eat, but that is not mostly
our lifestyle, we (usually) sit together and eat and ah not with the television. Researcher: O.K. so in terms of your friends and the people you’ve observed, do they tend to eat meals and talk together or do they go their separate way and watch television more? Interviewee: I think in general people sit around the television and eat, yeah and then there is not much of family interaction but more concentrated on the television.”

It was not only television that was having impact on the capacities of families to sit, eat and interact together. As described under heading 6.1.1.1 Socialising and sharing activities together has reduced, participants had expressed that people are now busier than they used to be. Members of the family were no longer, necessarily, at home at the same time to eat together. This, when combined with increased television viewing had reduced the capacity for families to find common time to come together form meals. In addition, after television had become available in people’s houses, it provided an opportunity for people to conveniently find an excuse to avoid the conversations that they would rather not have or that simply did not interest them. 34 year old Interviewee 22 explained his own family situation in the following interview segment.

Interviewee: Sometimes, not only because of television, sometimes because of my wife working in odd hours and my children, especially during the school days needing to sleep early – they eat before us. So during weekends we do tend to eat together most of the time. During the school days and working time we don’t eat together that often. Researcher: What about relationships with the broader families, especially when you’re with your in-law family, or your own family? Has there been any change in the way you relate to those people? Interviewee: When I speak of my own habits, sometimes when my wife’s family come to visit us if their conversation or their talk don’t interest me I go to the living room to watch television – we have a separate room for television. I think yeah, it does to some extent, but not to the extent where it can make like a drastic impact on the relationship. But yeah, it has occurred to me that I often go to watch television if their talk doesn’t interest me sometimes. “

One observation was that prior to 1999, when radio was the only electronic media available, family time and active interaction had not been hampered. However since the arrival of television into Bhutanese homes there had been a significant move away from sitting together, eating and talking together according to Interviewee 3 who stated,

before television we had radio, and radio is basically an audio medium so we do not have to give a one hundred percent attention to listen to the radio. So while chatting, while talking, while doing work we can listen to the radio. And in those days, especially in the evenings we used to have the fireplace so the whole family used to sit around and then we had time to talk with each other. But with the advent of television now, err people are more interested in watching TV, and even sometimes now when we eat food also the television is in front of us. So all conversation now, we don’t have that old, that conversation as much as we used to before the advent of television.
6.1.1.3 Families and friends spend less time together

The relationships between members of the family, members of the community and between friends had changed since television had been introduced into Bhutanese households from the perspectives of several of the participants. It stemmed from a number of factors, including opportunities to spend time together and eat meals together as discussed in the previous sections as well as the nature of what people did with one another, what people talked about and the new reality that a lot of the time when people visited one another’s houses, the television was left on. A combination of working life becoming busier, meaning he comes home later, and having the television on continuously at home is reducing the opportunities for talking with family members according to Interviewee 6. His observation was for not only his own family, but for other families as well.

I think most of the Bhutanese families are having that for long I think, because after having dinner we sit in front of the TV and most of the family is involved in TV so we never talk to each others, that is sir what we normally have right now. This is the changes that (have) come, I think before ‘99 we used to sit and talk up to ten, eleven as we (didn’t) have anything to watch, sometimes we bring some cassette, DVD and CD’s and watch, but normally we sit and talk, but these days I think we mostly involved in TV only, so we normally talk very less as a family I think.

The television was also on all the time in the household of 38 year old Interviewee 5 who believed the television was having an impact on family relationships. He noted “the one thing with the family life before there was no TV system, the family integration was much better actually. Because they eat food also, we have no TV to watch. So we eat with food with all the families together, sitting together in a table room. And then eating together, discuss, o.k. tomorrow’s plan, discuss, I mean we have plenty of time to mingle with your family.” He was describing the time before television came to Bhutan, however he said since 1999,

with this television I should say that I have also (heard the same) from all the families. Some, they want to watch this serial, so I not eating for just know. Then some they want to watch other serial and they don’t eat just now, some they eat fast, some they eat late, and then you don’t talk much if you’re watching, eating you know? [Because the television’s on?] Television’s on all the time because cable TV’s all the time there. They’ll be watching and then when they talk also there’s not much fun in the family. That means some sort of family relations is breaking, slowly.

This aspect of the television being left on in the house even when guests arrive is supported by the observations of Interviewee 2, also 38 years old. He said television distracted the guests and people talked with one another and their guests less than they had prior to the introduction of television. He outlined that “when you come as a guest to my house I think the television is on, and you are forcing your guest also to see the program instead of really concentrating on the talks...
or why you are there and the purpose of your visit and discussion is disturbed because, especially in the urban areas I have seen or I have read it happens in some houses, the television is on and you are watching, so I think you are not really concentrating on what you are talking, you are talking as well as you are seeing the program. I think that is quite, not a good trend actually.” My own experience as a guest in a number of houses in Bhutan supported this observation. In one instance (a rural village where they had television) I was seated on the floor of the bed/lounge room with the television on and baby playing on the bed with aunt and siblings. They were also watching the television which remained on, right throughout the meal that we ate together. Discussion was certainly distracted as our hosts kept turning to watch what was appearing on the television from time to time.

Television dominating people’s time together had significant impact on the relationships between Bhutanese people according to Interviewee 9. His view was that people were interacting more with the television than they were with one another. He described a picture of how television could impact on a rural household.

When I look at somebody watching the television, somewhere in this remote area in Bhutan, where there is one television and everybody is glued to the television, and then I look at it and then the human relationship has changed so much, ‘cause at that moment in time you are interacting with that box you know. With that maybe then the opportunity for you to interact amongst your fellow beings, is really gone you know.

Interviewee 9 posed the question, “I wonder how that’s going to change human societies in general in terms of our relationship to each other, our understanding of our needs. Both at individual level, at community level, even at a national level you know?” From his perspective this reduction in interaction between people, as a result of them connecting more with television content was very important at a community level. He believed that this could lead to people having less capacity to resolve issues with one another. He stated,

at the end of the day a country’s made by people you know, citizens. And then even you don’t have that kind of connection at the citizen level, I think that’s why we have very silly reasons for countries fighting over silly things, ‘cause we cannot relate to each other as human beings and although that is taught to us by human beings of course but our relationship has changed so significantly.

Also relationships at the most personal level, from husband to wife had been altered by television viewing and this was not in a positive way from the perspective of 26 year old Interviewee 10. Her observation was that her husband spends 40 hours a week watching television, which was so much
time that he has significantly reduced in his interaction and activities with her and the whole family as the following interview segment outlines.

**Researcher:** Now this is a personal question, does that impact on your relationship? Because he’s watching so much television do you spend less time talking to one another? **Interviewee:** Yeah, I need to talk to him about it, because, as soon as we come back from work because, we don’t work in the same place, we hardly get to meet each other, and the only time we have is at home. And there he spends like hours at the television, so we don’t have much time for each other, and on the weekends especially, because I don’t like to watch so much of television I would rather do something together, go out, take the kids out for outing or something like that so yeah it is quite difficult because he refuses to move away from the television, which is quite troubling sometimes.

From a young single woman’s perspective it is hard sometimes to find people to socialise with because they are so occupied with television. In her circle of friends there are also people who do have internet access at home, although less than 5% of Bhutanese households had computers (National Statistics Bureau 2007 p95), so even fewer would have had internet access at home. Her perspective was that both television viewing and internet browsing had significantly decreased the amount of time people spent with one another socially. She said,

I think most of the people choose to stay within their own rooms. Occupied, they might have their serials, movies or if they might have a PC at home – off course work is a different situation, but if they have a PC at home, and especially these techno-freak people, they’re you know really occupied, and they have very little time for social kind of things, and maybe once in a while, probably once in a week they opt to go out with friends. But that’s very occasional.”

In describing the changes in his close personal relationships at home there had been a significant loss in the amount of time people spent talking with one another according to 36 year old Interviewee 4 who often went to bed without having a chance to speak with his wife or mother because they were watching the television. He described his feelings.

Oh, yeah I mean it has changed my life a lot. Prior to 1999, we used to have you know, every, dinner used to be a family, we used to get together, we used to sit down, chit-chat you know, talk about the day and what you going to do and make plans all that. So day time everybody is busy in their in their own world doing private business, or governmental. Now post ’99, this has changed. Now family dinners are very occasional. You know our dinners are usually between eight and ten and that (chatting) is not there anymore now, so, I mean like even my wife she eats her dinner with television on. For my life I had to change my timings so whatever my personal works I tend to do it between those times, when they watch their own television, and by the end of my work, I get tired also, so I go off to bed.
As a 26 year old male, Interviewee 11 suspected that the closeness between people had decreased as a result of reduced interaction between Bhutanese people since the introduction of television. He was not sure whether this was a permanent situation or a period of settling in for the media naïve Bhutanese society, as television embedded itself into the Bhutanese culture. He stated,

what our grandparents or what our parents used to enjoy, you know being together and all, that is definitely reducing in terms of closeness, in terms of being together. But maybe the media is quite new and maybe we are very excited about it. It may really impact the society in terms of reduce the bond. We can suspect that way but what I feel since media is new and we are quite excited, maybe sometime later we might ourselves realise the media is really causing some definite negative impacts … definitely there are some signs

He goes on to say that in his own house he feels that the relationships are different and bonds between people are not as strong as they used to be prior to television being present in the household. He was particularly aware that the Indian soap programs were specifically timed to coincide with peak availability of people at home in the evening and that because these programs were so popular this led to people having less connectedness with one another. He stated,

I think like within the family bonds, in terms of some particular program is coming on TV in particular dinner time, these people are mostly crazy after these India soaps, so that Indian soaps there time is particularly at dinner timing so that this woman in our family and in many families in Bhutanese homes, they are addicted to these Indian soaps so they want to watch that and they you know like, there are some conflicts going on actually. Personally I used to feel that charm you know, living together as a family, eating together, but now … to eat it is not a feast anymore.

Independence and the desire for young people to mix with their own peers without parental interference and involvement was a new aspect to Bhutanese society and one noticed by 24 year old Interviewee 21. He observed that there were already differences between himself and his younger brother because his younger brother and his friends had been much more influenced by the content on television and was discernibly seeking more freedom than he had as a teenager. Interviewee 21 stated,

let’s go back to the past now, unlike the past, prior to the introduction of television, I was quite young also to really think about what was going to happen, what would the impact be like after the introduction. But viewing the past and looking at the present scenario, children are now more determined, they tend to know today, live on their own, be a little more independent than what we were like before. Even my younger brother who 5 to 6 years younger than me, he tends to be a little independent compared to me.
However Interviewee 21 was himself much more independent and believed he was very different in the way he socialised and lived than his own parents and grandparents had been. Largely he believed that he and his friends were greatly influenced by the content on television, especially western cultural content from movies and serials as well as sport. He noted “I have a very good circle of friends, a very cohesive group. We go for picnics, we go trekking, also we play football so much, we play a lot of football. And after football we hang out in some of the bars, some of the restaurants, have our dinner there, most of the time at the weekends I don’t reach home, I sleep at my friends house. By the way, so many of my friends are living like me, staying alone or two sharing an apartment. So that way we can really get along well” This freedom and independence for young people to live separately to their parents was a significant change noted by several of the interviewees it was stated that the trend towards nuclear families and young people living alone was a growing trend.

However, at a slightly older age, Interviewee 23 was still single and staying with his parents. He held the view, that the extended Bhutanese families were still holding together when parents were in the same village or city as their children, but he also observed that there was a trend for this to be changing, because people were tending to follow western lifestyles they were observing through television, and he was concerned that extended families could soon disappear, diminishing the bonds, in his view, between family members. He said

I am still single, I am not married, I still stay with my parents, which means the bond is still there, but I don’t know how long this will continue, because there are too many imitations and the minds of the people are changing day by day.

This is further discussed under heading 6.1.1.4 Changes to family structure and relationships.

From the perspective of an older person, Interviewee 52 observed that younger people behaved differently in the household and wanted to be more separate and on their own. He noted they were adopting western style of eating, washing and even sleeping. He said,

changes, means, hygienically, cleanliness, and way of using the house articles, like plate all these things, its changed quite al lot because this is the modern age now. We used to use one sleeper for the whole family, now because of the education they need individual sleeper, individual mattress, yes it has been changed.

Exposure to television was one of the reasons attributed to a change in family relationships according to Interviewee 2 who observed that younger people wanted their own space, their own time and that they spent less time with the rest of their family than they did prior to 1999. He noted,
the structure of the society order is changing I think the young people have more privacy, they have separate rooms now which was not there many years ago, or they would gather for dinner together, now I think in many houses the dinner timings would be different. Young people you know they go out and they come, just go to the kitchen. I think it is changing, I think the time with parents and children to be together is decreasing I think.

While Interviewee 1 was very positive about the influence of media on Bhutanese culture and society, he was concerned about his perception that certain aspects of the culture were being eroded as a result of the influence of television on younger people. Specifically he mentioned family structure stating “what we have today as Bhutanese is a close knit family. You know you have a huge family you start with grandmother, great grandmother and all that. But today I think this is bad educating you know, the children want a separate home, they are talking about their independence they want to own their own house. They want their own surrounding they want to have their, not independence actually, they call it all alone. More a nuclear family, which I feel is not very good because in Bhutan, despite the fact that you are living with your grandfather or you are living with your father you are still a close knit family. That is the whole Bhutanese concept.” He also expressed the fear that his own children may soon decide to move out of home to be on their own. He said,

I mean I can see that because of the exposure we have, because of the facilities, because you are all alone, you are independent and you can do so many things that you want to do but which you cannot do in a close knit family, this is the thing that is coming to their mind. I can see the changes, I mean my daughter is still with me but I wouldn’t be surprised if tomorrow she said that I want to stay in a different house and I don’t think that I would be able to stop that.

6.1.1.4 Changes to family structure and relationships

The way people related to one another had been significantly impacted by the introduction of television from the perspectives of more than a third of the participants. Impacts were identified by male and female participants, both younger and older. One of the impact areas was related to the respect of younger people for older people, identified by some as having declined, while others had not perceived a decline of respect, but rather a change in communication that reflected the development and modernisation of Bhutan. In what I thought to be converse to an expected position of two women, 50 year old Interviewee 12, felt that younger people were still respectful to older people while Interviewee 16 at age 23 had observed a decline in respect. Interviewee 12 stated “the respect they have also for the elders. I think that’s still there, so they respect their elders,” while Interviewee 16 said “respect has become less courteous now. Youngsters now (are) beginning to learn newer things. Now I think I’ve said it’s from TV, let’s not repeat it again. The respect for the elders has reduced I should say.” It is possible that because Interviewee 12 lived in
a village where television had still not arrived, she was not observing changes that may have been evident to Interviewee 16 who was living in the capital city, Thimphu.

Lack of politeness with one another was noted by Interviewee 6 as having increased in Bhutan since the introduction of television. He observed,

Bhutanese are normally very polite. They give good respect. Now new generations, some they are really harsh, I think they copy from the film or whatever, some serials are coming up maybe and some films, bad films are coming, I think they copy from them, they speak little roughly copying form that TV serial or films now coming up.

Respect was also related to the tendency for younger people to want to spend more time by themselves accessing media, which had an influence on family relationships by reducing the desire for younger people to spend time with elder members of the family according to Interviewee 2. He noted,

the time for social gathering, or being together, being close is decreasing, so with that they might develop some kind of cold feeling, or they might become colder or they might need more privacy. They have their priorities actually, maybe they would say one hour is you know, for me to watch this program, my favourite program is here so don’t disturb me or something, you know, so they might react that way which is not very positive. Because if I give an example, perhaps a mother wants to talk to her son, in the evening maybe the son will say ‘no I don’t want to talk to you now because for one hour I am doing this’. So that way he is already reacting in a negative way, and he is not listening to his mother. [So less respect?] Lack of respect, yes.

Added to the growing independence of younger people in the household and the community was an observed increase in confidence, especially in younger people. 39 year old Interviewee 19, from the rural east of Bhutan, felt that the essence of being Bhutanese was diminishing in some families and he attributed this change to a combination of parents as well as children being more worldly, more educated and more influenced by the media. He stated,

children are more aware of their rights. They seem to be also more assertive, they seem to be also, in that respect to be less Bhutanese. Now we Bhutanese are culturally more, there is a hierarchy in the family. You’re not supposed to do certain things, there is decorum. These things are things that are gradually breaking down. The reason is probably that the parents are also educated. They allow much more laxity and decorum. I remember as kids, we can’t talk back to our parents. You’d get reprimanded and you’d get beaten up. We defiantly got a lot of spanking.

The reference to educated parents allowing more “laxity and decorum” is a reference to higher levels of tolerance relating to what was accepted by Bhutanese parents after they had become more aware of other cultural traditions through media, but also a reflection that higher levels of education
in the community meant that there was a greater freedom of expression allowed to younger people in those families where education and exposure to other cultures existed. For Interviewee 19, this was a change in Bhutanese traditions and family life.

Changes in family life were also observed by 26 year old Interviewee 11 who noted that the dramas that were being played out on television were impacting on Bhutanese audiences because the freedoms and tolerance observed in other societies, as observed on television programs, became desirable and in some cases demanded by members of Bhutanese families. As an example he stated,

particularly again I am coming back to these Indian soaps with things like the way women quarrel and then you know it’s all family dramas. So even in our family you tend to see those changes like sometimes you know the wives in Bhutan are normal wives you know, they’ve started making noises now in the family after seeing such drama, family dramas and some movies. So maybe it’s my person perception but I do see that change in behaviour because even the children watching too much of this Indian soaps and dramas you know, their attitude changes. So even in my own home, like nephews and nieces following those cultures on media, television those similar characters. Maybe it’s my personal perception, but I do see it.

However, Interviewee 1 was convinced that despite younger people now being more challenging to their elders, and expecting more interaction in discussion, this was not a negative nor disrespectful aspect to the changing way younger and older people related to one another. He saw rather that as Bhutan modernised, so too would there be a modernisation in the ways people communicated with one another. He stated, “I don’t think it will change. We grew up (traditionally), now we are brought up here modern, so in such a society its quite difficult to change, the respect is there, I don’t think there is a negative aspect, I mean I hear people talking that way, I don’t think so.”

The influence of the foreign channels on young Bhutanese people was strong and negative for Bhutanese family life from the perception of 45 year old Interviewee 17, who described the content coming from cable television stations as “unnecessary” and he believed there was a tendency for people to copy what they saw from other cultures. Movies and serials from India had especially strong influence. He articulated his perspective as,

All the channels are showing these unnecessary things, like early pregnancy and then how it happens, so they are showing so many ways of twisting the family’s life, like having married to somebody else, then again somebody else, then somebody else, especially the Hindi serials these days we are seeing. I think in this respect it really spoils the family’s life also.

One aspect of family change according to interviewee 1 was that parents had developed different aspirations for their children, they wanted their children to succeed more in a professional sense as
a result of seeing opportunities that media exposure to the outside world was demonstrating. He stated “There is social education also, people know that now my son has to go for this kind of profession OK. So today I mean you want your son or daughter to be more professional or he wants to be doctor or he wants to be engineer so this is the social changes I have seen among the Bhutanese families because of this cable exposure.” Desire for improvement in opportunities for future generations and improvements in current living standards was an aspect that I observed in many Bhutanese people while I was in the country. My observation was that the strong desire for exposure to other cultures and the positive educative aspects described by Bhutanese people as deriving from television and internet access was partly a reflection of the desire for self improvement as well as curiosity and entertainment.

6.1.1.5 Children’s activities affected by television

Four of the participants stated that they had observed changes in children’s activities relating to play, exercise, reading and interaction, all of which had reduced as television viewing had increased.

When asked to describe the changes she could see and changes in the way people spent time with one another and communicated with one another, 26 year old Interviewee 10, who was a young parent stated,

one of the biggest things it’s affected mostly the younger people you know? Before they would rather spend time reading and maybe playing and sports and all that stuff, now after school all they want to do is watch television.

She stated that she believed this was a negative consequence for children, not because they were watching television, but rather because they were playing and being active less and were not actively interacting with one another as much as they had in the past. In addition she observed they had reduced other important educative activities such as reading.

Also from the perspective of a young parent, Interviewee 6 stated there was a significant benefit from television as an education and information tool. However, he was concerned that children were spending too much time in front of television and as a result this led to a negative change that he had observed in relation to children’s activities since the introduction of television into people’s homes. He related his observation.

Children and young generation spending more time on TV and they used to watch TV and waste their time rather than getting more with their books and other activities. They don’t go for sporting, they sit very next to TV and watch TV only. I think that is the worst thing that is happening.
Remembering his own childhood, Interviewee 19 stated that while there was very little entertainment in Bhutan prior to the introduction of television, life was nevertheless enjoyable and fulfilling. In contrast he now finds that his own children come up to him and state that they are bored from time to time and that they are not self motivated to take up activities with children from other families as had been the case in his youth. In describing life as he was growing up he said,

I vividly remember many of the activities that we as children used to indulge in, because there was very little television. Indeed there was very little entertainment. But I don't think any of that was a detriment to our having fun and enjoying life to the fullest. It's ironic now that my children themselves talk about “Oh, I'm getting bored” you know, “there's nothing good on television”. As children we grew up cycling, swimming, running around, hiking. I mean going for picnics almost every other week. I mean outdoor activity was something that we enjoyed it. Perhaps we didn't have anything else to do, but I suppose you don't know what you miss if you don't have something. But no, we never missed these things and at this present moment I see that we were better off without many of these, visual media.

Interviewee 19 was a person who had also strongly valued television as a tool for education, information and entertainment, so he was a strong supporter of television being a positive influence on Bhutan. However, because he had seen a reduction in children’s creative play and reading, he believed children were better off, in this respect, without television.

Social interactivity and play in the streets had reduced from the perspective of Interviewee 3 who had observed that children played outside with one another in the neighbourhood less than they had prior to 1999. He observed,

now in terms of before the television came, there were a lot of children you know, they used to go out of the house after school, they used to be playing out in the streets or out in the ground. On the weekends you see many children playing, all the neighbour children’s they used to get together, they used to play around. But now with television it’s very difficult to find any children playing so much as they used to do before. So when I go abroad, and I am travelling in a residential area it is very, very quiet, it’s like as if there is nobody around. But basically here is people living inside their houses. So you go to the residence and you see the residence packed. But here before television it used to be very noisy, boisterous and a lot of children around, but that has now; we have lost that. The time is set by the television, we have at seven o’clock I have to watch this cartoon, at nine o’clock I must watch this serial, so our times are more dictated by the television time now.

The observations that children played less in the streets, that they played less with one another and paradoxically were more likely to complain they were bored than they had prior to the introduction of television was not a reflection that these participants wished television was not there, nor that they thought life was better prior to the introduction of television. Rather, some of the participants
argued there should be better controls on children’s television viewing and better parental guidance and that this would evolve as Bhutan emerged from being a media naïve nation into one that integrated the media into its everyday life. Some participants however advocated that children should be allowed to watch what they wished, when they wished as a basic human right. This will be discussed more under **Controlling children’s viewing**

### 6.1.1.6 Media exposure is leading to some anti social behaviour

Antisocial behaviour, such as fighting, drug abuse and theft had increased since the introduction of television and the internet in 1999 according to the observations of 10 of the participants. Some of this perception may have been due to media reporting and some was due to participant’s personal observations. However, two of the interviewees who had identified increases in criminal and anti social behaviour were in positions where they had access to official medical and police information and offered their perspectives from both their professional assessment and their personal observation. Of the 10 participants who identified increases in antisocial behaviour, all believed that exposure to international media, predominantly cable television, was the primary cause, due to the influence the content had over Bhutanese people, especially some of the main characters in movies and serials and the subsequent mimicking and imitating behaviour exhibited, especially by young adults and youth. One participant was of the view that while there had been increases in behaviours that could be described as antisocial, he did not see this as negative, because it was an integral part of the improvements in awareness and intelligence, as he saw it, within the Bhutanese population resulting from television and modernisation. However, another participant, from his personal observation, thought that theft had decreased and behaviour had improved as people had become more informed about what was right and wrong, partly informed by their television viewing.

Two 37 year old males, Interviewees 7 and 8 held similar views that some young impressionable Bhutanese people like the imagery that goes with the negative rather than the positive role models from television programs. Responding to a question asking him if he saw any negative aspects relation to television and the internet, Interviewee 7 stated “regarding to the negative I should say, some boys they go for drug addictions. You know some channels they give bad impression you know, some people they like to go for that kind of things.” Interviewee 8 expanded with more detail about what behaviours he found to be antisocial, which from his perception, often took place at disco techs and night clubs which he said were new in Bhutan, having been established only since television and the internet were introduced. However he also noticed that criminal activity had increased, even in the home. His perceptions are outlined in the following interview segment.

**Interviewee:** Not only discotheque we have even ah, what would you say, night clubs.
Also, Karaoke and thing, where the people go, chill out, dance, smoke and thing, even though smoking`s banned in Bhutan, they still do. **Researcher:** Have you noticed changes in behaviour, whether or not there are increases in crime or increases in what some people might call anti-social behaviour? **Interviewee:** Yes, definitely I have seen so many interpersonal violence, especially gang fights are there, that involves usually who visit the discotheques, nightclubs, one thing. Then the second thing, substance abuse also, and with that I have some people badgering their parents, mothers, fathers. And many cases of domestic violence also, so more and more people actually reporting with these injuries, domestic violence and even sexual offence also, so other day also I (know of) two cases of sexual assault. **Researcher:** So, you’ve seen an increase in reporting, you’re not sure of whether or not there’s an increase in reporting because media offers people more opportunity to be aware or whether or not it’s causing more of these incidents to occur. **Interviewee:** Now that actually I’m not very sure to correlate to the effects of the media. Of course definitely media has played important role in actually creating a sense, awareness sensitisation of the people, they’re more aware of their rights and thing so they come forward one thing. And one thing they’re exposed to all this social, cultural values imported through the media, so people are more exposed, maybe they want to change, they want to actually experience more, especially like substance abuse, and things, so that maybe reason also. … And so many peer pressures no, in schools, even in other phases of life, and with that of course I mean domestic violence, street violence, sexual assault cases are actually more and more being reported now.

Increases in drunken and abusive behaviour were perceived to be happening in Bhutan according to 24 year old Interviewee 21 who had observed increases in drunkenness as he was going out and about in Thimphu city. He thought this form of behaviour had increased due to the influence of foreign media, predominantly television by giving Bhutanese people role models of social behaviour that they had previously not been aware of. He described what he saw when walking at night.

> Take a walk in the late evening, you would see people drunk, you know drug abuse all around. So these are direct influence of media. Had there been no media at all these people would have not known what this stuff is all about. Anyway, what I’m trying to illustrate is these things would have been very much less had there been no media. There would have been exceptions anyway, exceptions proving the rule but now with this media in place we have so much of it.

The participants were not claiming that Bhutan was free from crime, alcoholism or antisocial activity prior to the introduction of television, however, there was a view that observation of and reporting of crime had both increased since Bhutanese people had become exposed to television programs. These perceptions, that anti social behaviour was increasing, were not restricted to older people. Interestingly younger participants such as interviewee 21 quoted above and 23 year old Interviewee 16 both held a similar view that while there may have been crime and social behavioural problems in Bhutan before 1999, there was significantly more once television had
become widely available in urban Bhutan. She was still a school student when television was introduced and as the following interview segment illustrates, she had concerns that there were increases in criminal activity.

**Interviewee:** I think television is playing a major role in you know idolizing people’s motives. Because in, let’s say 1999 I’d just finished my class 10. Then we used to hear less number of crimes or any kind of misbehaviours and all. With the introduction of TV and all sorts of actions, even movies they show all kinds of bad ideas and odd scenes. So in this context even small kids are picking up the ideas. Like, just a few years back we had two little boys strangling another minor. So these kind of things, we feel in the larger way that TV is responsible for that. **Researcher:** And you don’t think that that amount of crime and antisocial activity was happening before TV came into being in 1999? **Interviewee:** Ah. Not that they weren’t there. They were, but in lesser number. With the event of TV these kinds of crimes and antisocial activities have increased, I feel on my personal behalf.

Feeling safe while walking the streets of urban centres in Bhutan had not been an issue prior to 1999 according to Interviewee 22 who felt that there were places in Bhutan where he could no longer be certain that it was safe, nor did he feel that people trusted one another as much as they used to prior to media exposure. He said, “crime, murder, those things are coming up in televisions, so people are becoming quite suspicious now about who you talk to, where you go, at certain time of day.” Interviewee 22 also held the view that while television might not be the absolute cause for the increases in crime that he had described, however, he did perceive that increased awareness of behaviours and commodities was one of the main factors behind Bhutanese people’s changed behaviour.

**Interviewee:** And also the drug abuse and all, yes, I would not blame 100% impact on the media, but yes, media does have a little hand in that also. **Researcher:** Part of it would be creating awareness. The growing awareness of the availability of these things and what you can do? **Interviewee:** Yes. You are right for example, like before 1999, since we were not exposed to that, we were not aware, especially Bhutanese youth were not aware. When I was a kid, I was never aware of some of these substances called drugs, that will help you in trying to be a little different from, you know, when you’re depressed you’d take some tablets to calm you down or so, I never knew this kind of information and this information were shown only after the media came into Bhutan. The reason why is because we were exposed to all these kinds of Hollywood movies, these are commercial movies, but as I mentioned, we are a more curious kind of people, so maybe they may have tried for pleasure maybe in the beginning, and once the pleasure, then turn into an addiction and that’s the reason why they have done it.

However, not all the participants agreed that increases in crime were a negative result of television.
exposure. With respect to media exposure leading to anti social behaviour or law breaking, Interviewee 1 was very clear that while there may have been increases in police reports showing increased crime, he believed that this was largely a manifestation of other factors as well as younger people being more informed and willing to challenge the status quo. As Bhutan became more aware of other cultures and there was an improvement in people’s intelligence as he saw it, Bhutanese people would be more likely to challenge traditions, each other and even the laws of their own nation. He also believed this to be an essential part of modern, democratic Bhutanese society.

What change we can see today is people are asking questions. This is a more intelligent way. If you go to the police report, there is some increase in vandalism, there is an increase in stealing, but this is mostly people who do not have any job and, when they come to think they are attracted to new cars on television and so when they are not able to acquire this through their (own) means they do that (steal), so that there is a police report. But as far as the law is concerned, they do not disregard to the law, but they are asking more questions, like why we have this law? It is better for us because, now the new generation, born to a new era of election of democracy, I think we require these kinds of people, because we need to question the leaders.

There was actually a reduction in stealing according to an interviewee who ran a shop in a major town. He observed that the improved standard of living in a modern Bhutanese town has reduced the incidence of theft. “Before’99 I used to have that as more of the sales boys get involved in stealing the goods from the shop and selling to other shops. Now days I think because of the salary we have increased them and the benefit they get from us, it has been decreased in these cases. I should say my sales boys are other shops as well and do less in these cases sir. And customer we hardly get one or two, some cases we used to have, but customer doesn’t do like that sir.” His perception of a reduction in theft, due to improved income for people was tied to the timing of the introduction of television. One possible explanation for this could be that retail sales have significantly improved since the introduction of television, leading to higher incomes for retail employees. As discussed under heading 7.1.1.5 The new consumerism in Bhutan, there was a perception from a number of interviewees that television exposure, from advertising and programs had led to increases in consumer purchasing.

However, Interviewee 2 was firm in his opinion that there was a problem with drugs, crime and anti social behaviour in Bhutan, particularly in the youth, that was not evident in the early 1990s prior to the introduction of television and the internet, although he was not convinced that the media was the sole cause of the problem. He stated,

I don’t know if it is because of the media or the increasing number of youth in the country. But it has come out many times in the papers, we have discussed many times in the broadcast also. We
have increasing youth problem, drug problem which has never seen in the early nineties has been increasing and it has become an issue to be discussed. And also our parents are becoming more concerned you know, or they are more worried about their children, whereas our time when we were young our parents never worried. Ok they are in the college they are studying, no drug problem nothing, you know. But now yes we have substance abuse problems, teenage pregnancies, these are some of the negative social issues among the younger generation, yes.

Later, when talking about what was positive and negative about media influence he mentioned “negative influence would be like going into drugs, gang fights that we have never seen before.” While not stating that the media was the sole cause of the problem, Interviewee 2 was nevertheless convinced that the media was an influencing factor leading to the problem he described of youth antisocial behaviour. “Definitely I think the, the media influenced because, many of the young people I think they were influenced from TV programs and of course we were blasted with forty eight satellite TV channels so they had all the choice to see all the channels. And generally it is thought that TV had a great influence in anti-social among, especially among the young people. I think that the drug cases came in also from this media.”

Children and young people need guidance in what they watch and are not receiving very much guidance from their parents according to Interviewee 4 who stated his opinion that certain types of television programs are influencing behaviour. “In my age group I mean we don’t like to watch all these wrestling matches and you know all these things, but the younger generation they have picked (up). I think it depends on person to person and the guidance they get from their parent as to what to watch and what not to watch. Since in Bhutan I think that kind of guidance, in my personal opinion, is not being given by the parents, so a lot of teenagers these days, they get badly influenced by television, and many are picking up bad habits also. I mean like, they may be picking up some good ones also, it’s just that we don’t know them personally, but from the physical activities that they carry out, I think some bad effects are really affecting the teenagers these days.”

His perception was that people tend to notice the negative influences young people pick up from television, even though there may be positive behaviours that stem from television influence as well. One reason for this was that people notice anti social activity more than positive activity and it tends to be reported in the media. Interviewee 4 gave some examples of what he meant by bad habits.

For younger generations, I mean like children aged between nine and twelve, they are really into watching all those wrestling matches, and they think that whatever they see on television is happening in reality, and they tend to perform that in their actual lives and you know, so many accidents occur. And the other things is now these days, so many drugs and you know narcotics substance, psychotic substance are being shown widely on channels, educatively, but they are taking it otherwise. You know, and they think its o.k. to do that. And they tend to take drugs you know,
like that, and they copy the characters in the television. They tend to smoke, they think that smoking looks really cool for them you know, so they tend to smoke. They even now, these days you tend to get cigars in the country you know, I don’t know from where they get but they are getting it you know. And ah, through movie channels you know, you get to see so many characters, in yielding drugs through various sources, different forms be it in a cigarette or be it rolled in a paper or a leaf. So bad effects are there.

Parental guidance and control was essential according to Interviewee 17 who had no doubt that anti social behaviour and criminal activity had increased as a direct result of the influence of foreign media. He was much more strict, in his opinion and from my own observation, than most Bhutanese parents. He was concerned, especially for young girls about the increases in drugs and sexual promiscuity which he believed was increasing as a result of people copying the characters and actions of programs they saw on television. Most of the young people had not been outside Bhutan and because of the strict tourism regulations in Bhutan they met very few foreigners. Therefore the information and awareness relating to other cultures was almost exclusively from cable television except for the few people that had internet access, who could also access content online. The following interview segment outlines Interviewee 17’s approach to parental guidance as well as his perception that television viewing was leading to antisocial activity.

**Researcher:** Are your children happy to do what you say or are they rebellious at all? **Interviewee:** No they don’t feel anything about it, they are used to listening to what I was saying. I don’t find any reason why they don’t like it, they like it actually. I have only three children so I think it is very much time to take care of the daughters especially as early pregnancy is one of the issues in the world which we seeing TV and all these things, they, they don’t actually do it but happen to be in such circumstances, so I was advising them not to have such things. **Researcher:** So you think television does effect the community generally so that they are likely to have sex at a younger age, participate maybe in other activities that they might not have in the past. **Interviewee:** Yes yes, after having television, because now television is showing everything which actually happens in India and all those things when we see Indian channels, like early pregnancy, early sex, drugs, violence, especially nightclubs which are now there. They were not there before cable TV. I don’t know why parents are not taking care of it but it seems like some of them are enjoying the nightclubs and having unnecessary things which spoils our children’s life actually.

Perhaps surprisingly, the view expressed by Interviewee 17 that there is an increase in anti social and criminal activity was reinforced by the view of 25 year old Interviewee 15, who enjoyed nightlife and partying with his friends. However, he also observed that along with opportunities for entertainment were some activities that he did not like. He felt that media influence was causing young people to experiment with drugs and to mimic the aggressive behaviour sometimes seen by characters on foreign television. He noted.
I think young people are changing. Not realising that they are changing like myself. But to a certain extent the changes are very negative. Sometimes I feel so sad to see that young people, they easily get into the drugs, then ultimately into the fight. So even if you go to disco, which I go occasionally, you would find so much of media impact there. Like the outfit, they have some kind of big American rapper kind of outfit, and they try and pick up the language they have no clue what it means, and I think that certain negative aspects of the media are being picked up by younger people. Ah, it is sad though.
7 Cultural impacts of media

All participants identified a range of changes relating to aspects of their culture. These changes related to activities, topics of discussion, consumerism, attitudes and aspirations, appearance, language, religion, and social interaction.

7.1.1.1 Evident changes in daily life

All participants stated that they had observed significant changes to their way of life since the introduction of television. Many aspects of the Bhutanese way of life had changed in a variety of different areas which included, the way people socialised, the amount they socialised, the activities they undertook, aspects of family relationship, family structure, what people spoke about and how people felt about themselves. Some of the perceived changes were mentioned by all participants, such as how young people had changed into western clothing from the traditional Goh and Kira, how language and the way people spoke with one another had changed, with more English and less formality coming into the language as a result of media influence. However, some changes were described by only a proportion of the participants and were not commonly experienced by all, such as impacts on adherence to Buddhism or perceptions of increased crime and anti social behaviour. In some instances there were differences of opinion expressed about how a change was impacting on individuals, families or the community from either a positive or negative perspective, such as when children watched television a lot they could be either learning from the experience in the view of some participants or, in the view of other participants, inhibiting their capacity to learn, especially with respect to reading and practicing cultural activities.

From the perspective of 28 year old Interviewee 6, life in Bhutan had changed significantly in many ways since the introduction of television and he described some of the changes he observed,

yes, now I should say that from 1999 onwards, when Bhutan started TV, I think that is in June, Bhutan is really changed and now the young generation has (and) everything has changed and now, the way they talk, the way they act. So everything has been changed up to now and the people are now more exposed … and they have more confidence in talking, before that we used to have a hard time on everything, now that changed everything sir now. The people have changed in fashion, people have changed in language, and they try to bring other language, they try to copy some of the good things also as well as the bad things … after coming TV in our country.

Significant change was also perceived by Interviewee 7, and he saw it as highly positive, especially in the way people have a global perspective. He said “if I am talking about media and changes brought after the television…has come to Bhutan, I think there is lot of changes, you know, like eh…you know, peoples are looking up ah, outside country, how they are being dress up, and how
they act and...a lot of good things like, you know, you can see a lot of outside impact you know, a lot of developments.”

Interviewee 16 remembered growing up in a rural village, not far from Thimphu but then moving to the city in 2002. She explains in the following interview segment how life was and how it changed since her move to Thimphu city. She referred to being raised in Thimphu, but that was relating to Thimphu Dzongkhag (or district) which has Thimphu city as its main centre. Her family came from the east of Bhutan and as she outlined, her family felt a kind of displacement because they had moved between the Bhutanese Dzongkhags.

**Interviewee:** Originally I am from East Trashigang, but I was born and brought up in Thimphu itself. And in the late 90s.. I mean my parents lived in Thimphu I think since the 1950s, they have been here. And then, I mean, it has been really difficult for us to go back to our village, you know we left our homeland. So now I mean, three or four years back we shifted our centre to here. So we are kind of lost: neither do we belong to a homeland, nor have we adapted our self to the new homeland here in Thimphu.  

**Researcher:** So in your opinion has there been a change in the way people are with one another, the way they communicate with one another, the way they respond to one another. I’m talking about prior to June 1999 and the time since then.  

**Interviewee:** Of course in the course of 7 years the life style has changed a lot. When I was a child I used to stay in the outskirts of Thimphu (rural). Not in the core of it (city). There I found the community was kind of more closely linked. And we used to have what would you say now casual and regular correspondence (discussions) with each other. But having shifted to Thimphu (city), 2002 we came here. As a student we used to have a lot of time, you know. We used to get to go out together and meet up for so many occasions, for these or some gathering or the other. Now a working woman, things are a little different. So on an individual ground it’s like life has become a more monotonous kind of a thing. Office, home, office you know, just the two way traffic.

Her reference to the monotony of city life and the less personal and social nature of city life compared with country life was similar to changes people noticed generally after the introduction of television. The view of more than half the interviewees was that people spent less time together and talked with one another less than they had prior to 1999.

This was seen for people in rural areas as well as urban areas, on the other hand there was a strong perception that many aspects of life had improved as a result of modern facilities and services being developed around the country. While there was still no television in the rural village where 50 year old Interviewee 12 lived and she and the members of her village were very keen to have television, through her interpreter she explained how village life had improved because of modern health care.
Interpreter: Now she’s saying the place has become more you know comfortable and more happier because people they didn’t have Beatu you know. Researcher: What was it they didn’t have? Interpreter: Beatu, Hospital. So now they have Beatu and can you know show their children to the hospital and get injection and they get information from there how to keep hygienic and all so now she is saying most of the children they don’t fall sick because of the hygienic and all, that’s what she says.

Modernisation was bringing significant change into Bhutan at the same time as changes due to television. However, while Interviewee 12 (quoted above) did perceive changes to her village life, she did not express the same changes of language, dress, communication and activities that had been expressed by her compatriots who described changes through viewing foreign television. From her perspective, rural lifestyle in relation to work and socialising had not changed. She described some of the elements of her rural life, which required hard physical work indoors and outdoors. However, she also said she enjoyed her life and it was improving, even though she was waiting for television. In describing her work, with the assistance of the interpreter, she said,

she does the work inside, and she does the work outside like looking after the cow and then also they grow chillies for the sale and also they grow some vegetables and also some fruits and all like cucumber and they sell and they get income from that. And also cheese also they sell, they make cheese and curds so I think from there they can make their living.

Interviewee 3 now lives an urban life in Thimphu, but like many other Bhutanese he lived a very different rural life when he was younger. He described how his father’s business activities influenced where and how they lived. “Basically my father he was a business man, I think he was one of the first timber contractors in Bhutan, and before he became a business man he was a cow herder, we had a lot of cows, so we basically led a nomadic life, going from one place to another taking the cows and the animals. And after that he became a businessman and then these cows were taken over by some other people who looked after the animals for us.” Many Bhutanese people have made the transition from rural to urban. The 2005 Bhutanese census showed a net urban migration of approximately 92 thousand people as lifetime migrants at that time and indicated that urban migration is growing (Census Commissioner Royal Government of Bhutan 2005).

One of the elements of change in society that many of the participants observed was the move to a different family structure. Young people were moving out either on their own or away from the traditional extended family towards a nuclear family with parents and children separate from the broader family members, the latter had been the traditional family structure. Interviewee 9 described the traditional family structure by saying, “we have extended families such as my father is there, my nephew is there, my wife, my kid.” This description was reinforced by Interviewee 18 who as a single 28 year old woman lived at home in an extended family and she accepted that this
was the standard household structure in Bhutan. She said “we live with our family. I mean, that’s basically how the culture is here, everybody lives in this kind of joint family system. And my brothers, even though they are married, we all live together. It’s a joint family basically, so I live with my parents.” However, as discussed in more detail in a separate section, under 6.1.1.4 Changes to family structure and relationships, there were a number of interviewees who had perceived significant change to their own and other people family structures.

A surprising characteristic of Bhutan is that 17 languages are spoken across the small nation with its population of under seven hundred thousand people. Most of these languages are spoken, not written. They have no written form and there is no current of historic literature relating to these spoken languages. An aspect of change noted by ten of the participants was that young people are speaking more English and are speaking their own language less, or in a hybridised form with English and Hindi. The rich mixture of language in the country could be seen, even at the family level where multiple languages were spoken. The following interview segment with Interviewee 17 illustrates how multilingual home life could be.

**Researcher:** What languages do you speak at home?  **Interviewee:** Actually I have been staying in the southern part for almost 10 years, so my children sometimes prefer to have this Nepali rather than Dzongkha at home. My children speak English, and if they want to speak to me they speak Dzongkha. My wife speaks Sharshop so the children speak Sharshop with my wife. We have 4 languages at home, and I also have my own mother tongue from Trongsa, unique to the area.  **Researcher:** I’m also thinking your children and wife watch Hindi movies, so they must understand Hindi at least?  **Interviewee:** They can fully understand Hindi but don’t speak it.

The changes in speaking and concerns relating to language are further discussed under heading 7.1.1.6 Influence of language impacting on culture.

Most of the changes perceived in Bhutan through modernisation, most seem to be as a result of the influence of media exposure. This was partly due to the way, as a researcher, I was asking the questions relating to television and the internet, but it was also partly due to the perceptions of the interviewees that exposure to the outside world through television, bringing news and information and awareness of other cultures was having a very powerful influence on the daily lives of Bhutanese people. Television access was seen as an important information source as well as an important form of entertainment, with both of these aspects being previously unavailable to the people of Bhutan. On that basis all of the participants stated they preferred life more now, although not every aspect of it, than they had prior to 1999. This was summarised by 39 year old Interviewee 19 who said, “I think to all of us, given a choice would any day opt for the life that we are living here, the life of our comparative ease, convenience, comfort. Amenities are now available.”
All of the participants were positive about the impact of television and the internet in enhancing Bhutan’s capacity to become part of the global community and to educate the people of Bhutan. However, there was concern expressed by 21 of the interviewees that aspects of the Bhutanese culture were at risk of being lost as a result of exposure to foreign media, particularly television content. This risk to elements of Bhutanese culture stemmed from a variety of factors all acting concurrently. They included:

- displacement of the time people spent with one another with television viewing leading to reduced capacity to pass on traditions from elders in the community to younger generations
- influence of language from television leading to younger people speaking their local languages less than English and Hindi
- displacement of sporting and participatory activities, such as archery and festivals with people staying home and viewing television
- adoption of western or Indian influenced community values and customs by copying what is seen on television, especially by younger people
- changes to dress, language, appearance and activities as a result of the influence of television content from outside Bhutan
- changes to recreational activities to include those seen on foreign television displacing the traditional activities of the country

While these and other concerns were expressed by the majority of participants, two of the participants were positive about the capacity for television to enhance the cultural traditions of Bhutan through the local content on BBS and through the broader knowledge and understanding of the Bhutanese people who had exposure to television content.

One of the interviewees was clear that television access could enhance the preservation of local traditions and culture. After stating that Bhutanese people spent a lot of time watching soap type programs on international channels Interviewee 1 then stated how it was nevertheless important to maintain local cultural traditions. His view was that access to international content on cable television and through the internet, enhanced the capacity for Bhutanese people to be able to understand that their local culture was unique and in need of preservation. He said,
possibly I feel that today I can look at my culture and tradition in a different angle. Today now I understand why I need to maintain my culture and tradition. Till yesterday I used to think that I was unique. But why am I unique? By looking at other channels, other programs, other traditions, other countries I can see that I need to protect my identity and culture because I am unique. I am sure and the importance why you have to protect and why have to save this thing has come into my mind and people have to understand. Today you see a lot of children, young people are wearing pants, but still if there is a religious festival, they are very good to wear our Goh and Kira, this national dress, because this gives you an importance and an energy.

However, this same person also stated that he feared the changes, and the influence of media was a risk to some aspects of Bhutanese heritage. He stated “this is what we are forwarding and in the process I fear that to lose our culture, because history is our culture, what you had yesterday is what you had yesterday and that’s why you have today. This is what I fear.” By using the term forwarding he was referring to progress and his fear was directed at the potential to lose historical knowledge and understanding of the relationship between the past and the present. One of his expressed concerns, that nuclear families were increasing, was also a reason for his concern that history and Bhutanese tradition might be at risk. He used his own children as an example, “I can see that tomorrow it might alter if my son says that they want to stay away from us. I cannot stop them. But in the process what happens (is) that the certain things I wanted to tell my children, they may not be available to listen to me. They may not like to listen to me. This is the fear I have.”

This concern that younger people may not want to listen to the older generation was shared by Interviewee 6 who stated,

I should say that it is now becoming little to pass down to our generation because these days it is really coming many changes. I think new generation won’t be listening to the old one, some might be but normally most of the young generation won’t be listening the old system. I think they mostly go for new system on this.

He expressed this as a statement of fact, rather than necessarily a concern, because he was describing the way things were rather than a value judgement of whether this was a negative or positive result of television and media exposure. He was referring both to television viewing taking time away from talk between younger and older people to talk, and to the attitudes of younger people who may prefer television as an information source, rather than information passed down from the older generations.

In order to ensure his daughters received traditional information, Interviewee 5 turned off the television from time to time, so that he could talk with his children. However, he saw a “degrading” of traditional Bhutanese culture as an inevitable part of modernisation in Bhutan, largely through
television exposure. He provided the following detailed observations of changes already appearing,

I am head of the family there, I always make sure that I put off the TV and sit there, I discuss with my daughters mostly, this is the Bhutanese way. I mean my daughters have so much influence in the Hindi culture, they watch all the serials. When they see some people see on that sticker (a sticker on their forehead) you know that Hindis, is married or getting married or something. And then sometimes they put some paper here, then they say 'I’m getting married now'. There’s so many influences there, so I go in with them and I say that is not our system, our system is totally different. You should not follow this, this is a TV, which is not totally true at all, so all these are made up stories, so our culture is a bit unique. And then is everywhere, when you go to school they are taught different cultures and other Buddhist culture. There’s not much effect on our culture actually, but slowly it is going to degrade. [For the future you think?] Yeah, in future it will be, I mean my child’s children time it will be a problem because, now it is losing all of it in a sense you might have seen people watching, walking with all this fashion there’s, dressed in fashions, I mean pants shirts even women are dressed differently. It is all TV’s influence actually, it’s the media, I mean cable channels influence.

Interviewee 5 was outlining his view that international television was responsible for influencing the Bhutanese people, especially youth, to an extent that it would degrade the local culture over time.

‘Tradition is being modernised’ might seem like an oxymoron, however that is the way Interviewee 4 expressed his view that new stories, from the media are assisting a much more articulate youth in replacing the old stories handed down from grandparents, through parents to grandchildren. He observed,

I was fortunate enough to have talked to my grandfather so at least for me the traditional way has been passed down from my grandfather to my father. So a lot of information has been passed onto me, which I intend to pass on to my future generation. But now with this television as I said, people are having less time to stay together. And less and less time is being taken out for the immediate family and all the time prior to 1999. Now especially the younger generation, they have very less time for their parents especially for their grandparents, who has through their age, a lot of information and they’re not talking that out appropriately. And due to this television I think that is affecting this time that is being spent between the parents and the children. And so I think it is affecting the tradition that is being passed onto the younger generation also. I mean like if you look at the younger generations now, the way the sense of tradition and culture to them, they can demonstrate and then they can speak out in a different form also, of what we used to do or what my grandparents used to do or what my parents used to do. So now that is being brought in more in modern terms, so I was say even the tradition is being modernised now.
There was a more particular concern that English was starting to overtake Dzongkha as the most commonly spoken language, because of international media exposure. Interviewee 2 responded to this possibility positively:

It is debatable, and it is being debated, but my personal opinion is, I think it is good. Since English is a global language I think why not go for it? I would take it as a positive trend actually, because cultural identity is in your mind I think, if you want to take care I think it won’t disappear. But, merely using our foreign language for communication would not, should not hamper actually, towards preservation of our cultural identity, the traditions they still remain.

The passing on of traditional and cultural stories was being maintained in rural areas where the media had not become available according to Interviewee 2, who stated “instead of information I would put maybe more traditional knowledge, which gets passed grandfather to father and the younger generation. And that still happens because in the rural area the new media haven’t really captured them. That is still happening.” He believed stories were being passed on in urban areas, however as he commented, “I think that it still continues but maybe at a lesser rate.”

Living at home with her family, 28 year old Interviewee 18 was a professional working woman who was convinced that Bhutanese people were talking to one another much less than they had in the past and she felt that in many families, active two way communication had been replaced by passive listening to the dialogues from television. She noted,

I think the talking has basically reduced a lot and the only thing talking right now is the television in front of us. That’s the one that’s talking and everybody else is listening. And we’re basically not listening to each other. There are times in between where there’s no soap operas, there’s no BBS, there’s nothing and there are times when people do spend a little bit of time with each other, let’s say on weekends… But if this continues, eventually we might just stop talking with each other about what’s happening with us.

Lack of talking in the family or home environment was seen by a number of participants as reducing the capacity of the younger generation to learn Bhutanese history and traditions from the elders in the community. Bhutanese traditions were based on word of mouth stories being passed on from generation to generation, because most of the population had not been literate. Written histories and stories and traditions were not previously part of the Bhutanese way of life. While Bhutan was modernising and literacy was rapidly growing as a result of free and compulsory school education, it was also in a transition phase where the traditions and history of the country was still “stored” in the collective minds of the older generations. If the opportunities to pass on these stories to the current younger generation was diminished then not only would cultural practice change from the traditional practices of the past, but much of the history and knowledge
could be lost irretrievably. Interviewee 8, who had two school aged daughters perceived that in his family, and in the families he knew, stories were no longer being told at home as they once had been. He observed,

from my personal experience, not much is being done in that context from the narrations and things, story from parents to their children and thing. I have also so many cousins, brothers and sisters, most of them they will be … with their friends or in front of the televisions. My grandpa who is ninety two years now, most of the time he is alone, with the grandma of course, but his son and daughter-in-law most of them are away actually, either engaged on some work or some other activities.

Bhutan had changed significantly from the time television was introduced according to Interviewee 23. He saw that people dressed differently, spoke differently, spent time in different forms of entertainment such as discos and parties, which had not existed prior to television. He felt that young people were not available to listen to older people and that their preference was to use television (and where they had it, the internet) to access information and entertainment, so that people were not learning about their own cultural past from the older generations anywhere near as much as they had previously. He also felt the cultural heritage of Bhutan was very important and stated,

that is a rich culture that has been passed from the forefathers until now. And I guess, we as youth, we have to preserve that. But now things are changing a lot. If you walk around the street, towards evening side you may find there are a lot of youth wearing western outfit and they feel more comfortable in that. Now the trend is they even start using English as the language to communicate with each other. Previously they used to use more of Dzongkha, now the English have come as a media, which means it is also a part of the impact that we are getting.

Interviewee 23 felt that the exposure of previously isolated young people to western influence led them to copy what they saw and attributed the observed changes to the inquisitive nature of the Bhutanese people. He said,

after the internet and television got introduced the life has changed a lot. The reason why I am saying this is because the Bhutanese people are very curious. The reason why we are curious is because we have been isolated for a very long time. Isolated in the terms of not getting exposed and also we know what sort of culture India has, as I mentioned because of the movies influence but we never, but we never knew how the life was in the west because we have never seen the west culture. And after the introduction of cable television and internet the life has changed a lot because the moment the cable television was legalised in Bhutan the cable operators started operating their cable industry and they started bringing almost like 50 different channels, the channels that comprised of all sorts of cultures from different parts of the world. And then the Bhutanese people were exposed to all these western cultures, the way they dressed, the way they behaved in the bars, the way they
spent, all these kind of thing has come. And after that especially in Thimphu, there a lot of discos
mushrooming up everywhere, and then people started going to the discotheques, they started acting
like the foreign people you know, you go to a discotheque, you smoke and you drink, you dance
and all which never used to happen before. And also, especially the youth of Bhutan, they were so
much influenced by the fashionable, the dressing style, because til then we were wearing our
national dress for a very long time and maybe they felt for a change, they would like to try
something different. And then all this hip hop culture came into Bhutan. What’s going to be a major
problem is the way the youth behaves. For example, the western influence, they are more
comfortable wearing the western outfit than the traditional Bhutanese Goh and Kira.

Interviewee 23, who was 30 years old, had concerns that many of the longstanding traditions of
Bhutan could be lost in one generation. This view was shared by 53 year old Interviewee 26 who
thought that television viewing was leading directly to significant and observable changes in
Bhutanese culture. He said, “I am very concerned because the traditions are changing, the culture
is changing as people watch all these different things on TV”

Concerns for loss of culture were shared by both older and younger members of the community.
23 year old Interviewee 16 said that she thought that the Bhutanese culture was a national treasure
that needed preservation. In the following interview segment she outlines how the visual changes
she had observed in Bhutan were extremely rapid and had a strong emotional impact on her.

**Researcher:** What makes it sad to you? **Interviewee:** Losing a treasure in our culture that we love
is a sad thing for anyone. **Researcher:** So you actually do think that there is a loss in culture to
some extent in young people? **Interviewee:** Oh yeah. There is a cultural revolution going on at the
present time. **Researcher:** OK. Now I will ask you to describe that cultural revolution in just a few
sentences. **Interviewee:** See initially its like, we were never told to respect, but that is to happen
naturally. We never had this thing called half Kira that I’ve noticed Bhutanese women wearing. We
were so comfortable with this full Kira and there was never a demarcation between all these kind of
things. But with time of course people have come up with their own ideologies. Now, like even with
the ways of dressing, it’s taking a dramatic change. And if you walk out in the street you will see
kids dressing up. I mean something quite unacceptable. Not that Bhutanese society is so
conservative, we understand that, but we’re not so liberal to extent that to you know, to get
westernised so soon. So now with the present generation picking up things so easily, especially
western culture – it is a sad thing to notice. **Researcher:** So you’ve mentioned that you’ve noticed a
significant change in the way people dress. Have you noticed any other changes in people’s
appearance as well? **Interviewee:** Oh yes. I’m sorry, but I have to pick up on these youngsters.
They usually like to – you know - follow the suit of their favourites, if it is an actor. They want to
dress like that, have their hair style like that, their hair colour. If it’s some kind of artist they want to
dress up like that. They just want to imitate what their kind of style looks like.
In a rural village, where television or the internet had not yet arrived, 50 year old Interviewee 12 was very keen to have modernisation, development and the benefits that came from being connected through television. However, she was also very concerned that Bhutanese people should embrace development while keeping with their own traditions. The following interview segment, through an interpreter, demonstrated her concern that the strong influence of television content and exposure to other cultures could lead to people copying and following different cultural pastimes.

**Interpreter:** Actually everything comes from the ancient and she’s saying that their grandfather always advised them you should, do this one, don’t do this one. And with the development that’s happening in Bhutan, we shouldn’t forget our own traditions she is saying you should go as per tradition, you should go along with the development but you shouldn’t forget our culture and all, so she’s saying you should keep in the traditional as well as developments so this way they won’t let us forget our traditional and way of respecting and everything. **Researcher:** And, are they (her and her father) afraid that that’s being lost at the moment in Bhutan in some families, in other places?

**Interpreter:** She’s saying, you know looking at other culture, and people might get influenced by the other culture, so she is quite worried also that the original culture might go down so she is quite worried about that. Of course our government is trying their best to keep our culture and tradition. But still you know, they are afraid that the original might, you know get lost, so that’s what she said because of the increase about the Western’s culture and all.

Bhutanese people used to live their life much more according to their own culture and traditions than was the case since the introduction of television and the internet according to 30 year old Interviewee 23. He had noticed that discos, dance, and modern western entertainment had taken over the traditional activities of young Bhutanese people. It was noted that when he and his friends were students that they were not aware of western style entertainment. He was concerned that with the tendency for a large number of young Bhutanese people spending most of their time in the new western style of entertainment, that traditional Bhutanese activities would soon be forgotten. He said, “till 1999 we have never experienced ourselves this kind of culture infusion into Bhutan. So basically I would say that until post 1999 I would say that Bhutanese people used to be more oriented towards our own culture, we like to dress up the way we dress you know, we like to talk the way we talk.”

Changes in the Bhutanese family structure were also observed with extended families being replaced by a western style nuclear family structure. A number of reasons were given for this change, including the need for young people to move away from home to be able to find work in urban centres as well as the desire for younger people to be able to be independent and undertake their own activities and forms of entertainment without family influence hindering them. In addition exposure to the freedoms and independence depicted on television was seen to have strong influence on the young people of Bhutan who thought independence and freedom could be
achieved by living independently from their families as was depicted in television content. Interviewee 9 believed that the move away from extended family structures, as he perceived was happening, was occurring very rapidly and as he explained he believed this was another reason why stories and traditions would no longer be passed on from one generation to the next to the extent that they once had been. He explained,

In a place like Thimphu I go to my friends place and my own place and in my family, you don’t have that much storytelling. You know normally when I was small, we used to have a lot of that you know, when my grandparents were alive and we used to live together and all that, but now the whole society has changed you know, in terms of becoming more nuclear and everyone has a job and everyone has access to transportation and things like that, so that has really replaced very significantly and we don’t see that much now.

However, even when still living in the extended family, there was a trend for younger people not to be able to spend as much time talking with and undertaking activities with parents and grandparents. This was not only because of the young people wanting to break away and undertake their own activities, but also because the older members of the extended family wanted to watch television during the spare time and were therefore engaging less with the younger people. As a young mother, Interviewee 10 found that, even though she was in the home of her grandparents, they were not spending time with one another, talking and sharing information and stories as they had when she was younger. When people did have limited amounts of time together it was now so much more rushed than it had been. She described her situation,

if I give an example, my own grandparents. I remember when I was younger, we didn’t have any other forms of entertainment so yes our grannies will tell us stories, we will talk to them and that’s how we would pass time. But now with my child I find out that whenever my grandparents want to watch television, or maybe like in the evenings is the time for them to watch television, certain things on TV. So because of that, they don’t have much time, even at dinner time also, we seem to just rush by dinner, so that we can all get to watch our favourite TV shows, so I thinks that, that’s changed a lot.

The same experience occurred in the family of Interviewee 22, who was a 34 year old father of 3 school aged children. He recalled how in the past, the stories passed down through the generations were very important because they conveyed the history as well as the cultural heritage of the past. However, he felt that all members of his family no longer had the time to come together, including children, parents and grandparents because they all spent their spare time watching different television programs. He noted,

from a personal experience we don’t communicate that much, because most of the time we’re watching television. I remember when I was young that my grandmother used to tell me stories
about religion and stories about mythology of what happened in the past. So now those things don’t happen. Even I think our grandparents are sometimes like glued on the BBS. They usually watch the Bhutanese program on the Bhutan Broadcasting Service. In that sense there is an impact.

The strong concern that rich stories of heritage, handed down from generation to generation would be lost due to cross generational talk being displaced by television viewing was surprisingly strong in a number of the younger participants. They observed they were already missing out on the stories from their parents and grandparents. Interviewee 21, who was 24 years old said,

I had a grandmother, till this year she has expired and she used to tell us so much of beautiful stories of the past, real stories like what their grandfathers were doing, what they looked like actually and all that kind of stuff, it used to be such a beautiful thing, ah environment altogether, but today look at us, look at my parents, OK, I have two older brothers who’s kids are still, we have kind of a joint family still, not exactly joint family, but two of my brothers, their wives as well, they live together, my parents live together also at my home. Now I haven’t seen them telling the same stories as my grandmother used to do.

He also thought this loss of storytelling was going to lead to a loss of knowledge about Bhutanese traditions in younger people. He stated,

So that way I have a fear deep inside, I have a fear that the chain that we have developed over generations and generations, that’s going to get cut off because now our attention, our concentration, our focus, our preoccupation or whatever you call it, it has been diverted to all those kind of you know, television.

The majority of interviewees felt that religious heritage, especially the valuing of Buddhism, was strongly embedded in all age groups of the community and was not changing as a result of exposure to foreign media. However, the youngest participant, 23 year old Interviewee 16 was convinced that many young people who were studying or highly exposed to western culture through television viewing, were adopting western cultural activities and participating much less in traditional Bhutanese activities. From her observation this included religious activities and she stated,

I think religion has taken a back seat now. Especially with the younger generation. I guess the younger generation are more infatuated with the western kind of culture.

There was consensus about the importance of cultural heritage in relation to dress, language, architecture, history, religion and general traditional festivals and activities. However there were some differences expressed by younger participants relating to what value should be placed on some aspects of culture over the advantages of modern life. This particularly applied to clothing. The traditional Goh and Kira were not seen to be as comfortable as modern western clothing, nor
were they seen to be as fashionable. Some people felt modern western dress made younger people look better. While the way people dressed was a clear visual marker of social change that had taken place after the introduction of television and the internet, other cultural elements were equally important in being redefined by younger people. 25 year old Interviewee 15 felt that he had similar but not identical values to his parents but he was purposefully exploring other cultures through television content so that he could assimilate what he felt was suitable for his own identity. The following interview segment illustrates how he saw the evolution of Bhutanese culture through younger people borrowing and blending what they saw from around the world into their own life.

**Researcher:** Do you share the cultural values your parents had or do you have completely different values to them? **Interviewee:** I don’t have completely different values. I don’t have that strong cultural values in a certain sense, like they do right now. For example I am wearing jeans and a T Shirt, which is not actually our national dress, but what I personally feel is that culture is really loosely defined. Well, culture in itself, I think has to adapt with the times. I’m wearing these clothes because I feel comfortable. It doesn’t mean I don’t like my dress. But in media I think there are two things I think you can get out of television or whatever you are watching. I watch TV, I listen to radio, I listen to music of all sorts because I’m trying to find myself a connection, I’m just trying to find myself a comfortness in doing that, I’m not trying to change myself, culturally, but mentally, you know if you wanted to become a little stronger, if you wanted to become better, if you wanted to be more productive, there is no prescription that anyone can give you as a whole, but what I am looking for in trying to consult media is more than information and entertainment, I try to find prescription to identify myself in there. So I think my cultural ties are not as strong as my parents are. **Researcher:** You don’t think you are losing your culture, is that what you mean? **Interviewee:** No. I may not be clinging on to the cultural values that my parents did during their time, or like during my grandfather’s time, but due to the change in time, I’m still there with the culture. But I’m just trying to redefine myself with that set of culture. **Researcher:** And do you think all young people are like that or just your friends? **Interviewee:** No. I think there are a few people now. Maybe this is a point of qualification. In Bhutan I think, it is my feeling that not just young people, but even the people who are older than me or more qualified than me, I kind of think that mentally they are not educated enough. They are not really interested to respect the generation they come from, and it happens so much with most of the well to do people in Bhutan I think. I think the media has influenced them (the people from towns) more than we the people who have come from rural communities. So I think the people who were brought up in Thimphu have a different set of values, the way they look at their own origins, than I do. **Researcher:** So in a sense what you are saying is people who are wealthier, more well to do, they aren’t valuing their heritage as much as you do. Is that what you are trying to say? **Interviewee:** That’s right, you’ve got the point.

The teaching of Bhutanese history and international geography was stated by a number of participants to be the role of the schools and the education system, and that it was the role of the
government to preserve culture through education. As a Buddhist monk, Interviewee 14 felt strongly that the changes in culture as a result of younger people being more westernised was an acceptable aspect of Bhutan as the country developed and he was confident that school education would take care of any tuition that young people might need in relation to traditional knowledge and values. However, as previously discussed under chapter 5 Knowledge, education and connectedness, all the interviewees felt that TV was a strongly educative medium, as was the internet when available, and that young people were being influenced and educated by exposure to media, predominantly foreign media. In addition some interviewees were of the opinion that parental influence was being replaced by the influence of the content seen on the foreign channels. In many cases it was said that parents preferred to have their children watching television, as it was easier for the parents, rather than having to be continuously engaged in assisting the children with suggested activities. However, the consequence of this was that parents were spending less time with their children, which meant that their influence in passing on cultural stories, traditions and activities had been reduced. 45 year old Interviewee 17 when answering a question about the way children access information from parents and grandparents observed,

I think it has changed because previously we used to give some advice to our children on what to do and not to do. Of course we do it now also, but it was more before cable TV was there. So after cable TV most of the people prefer to have their children watching TV so they also don’t find much time to spend. Also and my son is also interested in sports channels so he has got a lot of information from the TV channel like if he is interested in cricket my son knows almost all the countries cricket players names so he is really wonderful to watch cricket especially.

His observation that his son could recite all the cricketer’s names indicated a perception of the great instructional benefit of accessing television content, yet paradoxically this instruction was replacing the instruction and information he would have given as a parent, prior to the introduction of television. There was a view that television was a more thorough and informative teacher than any parent could be, and that it was a child’s right to be able to access this content, yet there was also concern that because all the cable TV content was foreign, it was displacing the information and learning young people previously received about their own country and culture.

This paradox of allowing Bhutan to develop and have the Bhutanese people open up to the world through media exposure, yet not lose the history and rich traditions of Bhutanese culture was expressed by a number of the participants. Pride and understanding of the uniqueness of Bhutanese society was evident from the interviews as well as my general conversations with Bhutanese people while I was visiting the country. Younger people and older people in the community had similar views that it was important to preserve Bhutanese heritage yet it was vital for the country to
progress with modern communication, technology and activity. This was summarised by 26 year old Interviewee 11 who said,

with due respect to maintaining our wonderful culture and then, you know wonderful society, I think we should also step forward with the world. But in Bhutan I think cultural, you know, dignity and then you know maybe we are quite proud of our culture, I think we should always maintain that, but of course as I said we should move forward with the world and we should take with us what we have also together and then you know [LAUGHS] wherever it takes us.

Interviewee 11 was recognising what he saw as the great challenge for Bhutanese people, which was to preserve the heritage and traditions of the country and to move forward and be part of the progressive modern world.

Bhutan’s need to modernise and embrace aspects of western and foreign cultures was consistent with the views of nearly all the participants. There was also a view from the majority of participants that Bhutanese culture needed to be protected or preserved in some form, either as a unique and special part of the world or as an evolving and changing, yet independent culture within the global community. This need to preserve the unique Bhutanese culture, yet live in a modern progressive Bhutan was articulated by Interviewee 23 who observed that many Bhutanese people were, in his view, saturated with western influence and he felt there needed to be a balance achieved. He stated,

Bhutanese people love to try so many things, so we get carried away and once we get carried away its very difficult to come back to your own form because you are already into that form and something needs to be done. You know, I don’t mean that we should not follow the western culture, we need to follow the western culture also, but at the same time we as the Bhutanese, we have to know what is our own culture. Because, what I’m saying is when you move towards the other culture, you lose your own culture, so then, and right now Bhutan is known to the foreign, outside world mainly because of our strong culture, because of our well preserved traditional. I don’t think we are known to the outside countries because we are rich enough. We are not rich enough. We are rich in our own culture and traditional, so that’s our real asset. I guess if you lose that, one fine day, people might not even know, or I don’t think they would even like to come to our country or they would like to know something on Bhutan.

Interviewee 23 also felt very strongly that the influence of the media, particularly foreign television was having a strong impact on younger people who, he thought, were at risk of losing their own special Bhutanese identity because they wanted to identify with the characters and activities they observed through television content. He summarised below his view relating to the need for Bhutanese people to embrace their own independent cultural identity, yet become even more connected to the rest of the world. He said,
I would say that yes the media has a great impact on the Bhutanese society. Though specially it has more impact on Bhutanese youth and basically I’m not saying that we should not get carried away with the western culture we have to also look at the good part of the western culture and if possible adopt. But when you look into the western culture what is more important for us is we should not forget our grass roots. We have to know our own identity and own culture and own background. If we tend to forget these things then I am sure Bhutan will be lost. So in summary I would say that we should preserve our culture but at the same time we should go along with other cultures because it’s a globalisation area, we cannot stay away. The moment you stay away you are isolating yourself from the rest of the world. And that should not be our motivation. Our motivation is that we go along with them at the same time you preserve your own culture and identity. That would be the most important phenomena. That’s what I feel.

7.1.1.3 Buddhism guides acceptance

Buddhism is the dominant religion in Bhutan, although in certain sections of the western part of the country Hinduism is also a practiced religion. Freedom of religion is a fundamental right in Bhutan and article 7.4 of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan states that “A Bhutanese citizen shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. No person shall be compelled to belong to another faith by means of coercion or inducement.” (Royal Government of Bhutan 2008 p13) However, Buddhism is also enshrined in the Constitution as the primary form of spiritual heritage of the country. Article 3.1 states, “Buddhism is the spiritual heritage of Bhutan, which promotes the principles and values of peace, non-violence, compassion and tolerance.” (Royal Government of Bhutan 2008 p9) The Druk Gyalpo, who is the King of Bhutan, is also the protector of all religions in the country. This means that while Bhutanese people are free to practice any religion they wish, Buddhism is culturally and constitutionally embedded as the main religious identity of the country.

Ten participants commented on how television viewing and internet access impacted on religion, and the majority of these felt that Buddhist practice was not significantly impacted by the influence of foreign media content on people. A few felt that people were spending less time undertaking religious practice, however, the view was generally that Buddhism was embedded into the Bhutanese culture. Interviewee 14, who was a 32 year old Buddhist Monk believed that part of the Buddhist way of life was to perceive change optimistically, so that in his view, all the cultural and social changes in Bhutan as a result of access to media had a positive outcome for the country and its people. As the following interview segment illustrates he believed people’s commitment to Buddhism was being maintained.

Interviewee: Well thinking about negativity is something that has to do with your mind only so as a person I am optimist, so whatever I have seen so far was all, all sort of things, changes, influences
was mostly positive ones. Especially in Buddhist practices we make certain sort of commitment like in each day how much time you need to spend on meditation, how much time you need to spend on doing some kind of recitations, saying prayer, going to a service, so it is actually fixed one. So if it was let’s say 1980, if a person on a regular basis was doing some kind of prayers, religious activities was pursued all the time, so he must of done it for two hours and even that two hours he would be doing that today also.

This view was reinforced in part by 25 year old Interviewee 15 who sees himself as a Buddhist, but felt that his understanding of Buddhism and religious practice had changed since he was able to read and access literature as well as the influence he had from the media. Responding to a question asking if he and his friends had a strong association with religion in comparison to the time they could remember prior to 1999, he said,

Me and my friends, we are born Buddhists. That’s what we would like to call ourselves because we didn’t adopt the religion after doing the research. It’s just kind of part of the culture we’ve been brought up in and back in school days we used to pray every day, 2 times a day, in morning and evening, that used to be to form yourself as devout Buddhist. But later, I went through (not much) but a few Buddhist scriptures and they would say that you have to look for the truth, you know, just for praying, it’s a ritual, so in a way, before media, or before I was mature enough to handle religion in a very true concept I was pretty much like ritualistic. And now it’s like meditative kind of stuff, you try to look, analyse and try to argue and I think, maybe it’s partly because of media, but how I perceive religiously is different from what it used to be back then and now.

While there had been many changes brought about to the Bhutanese culture as a result of foreign media exposure according to Interviewee 18, this had not reduced the attendance of Buddhist places of worship or religious festivals or rituals. She was of the opinion that firm Buddhist belief was an integral part of most Bhutanese people, something that non Buddhists may find hard to comprehend. She articulated how people were still coming together for religious purposes by saying,

as far as festivals go, Bhutan being a Buddhist country, people have a different purpose why they visit (temples) and everything is like a religious oriented festival, they go there because they have this thing that if they watch the dances and the performances they are going to have an easy path to heaven and all those kinds of Buddhist philosophies and beliefs that are there. So they go these kind of festivals for a different reason than say would a tourist. A tourist would go there because they are fascinated with what’s in front of them because they haven’t seen that, but for a Buddhist, a common Buddhist, it has a different meaning to them, it has a different significance. So I think in that sense I think people do still go for those big religious festivals. It hasn’t really intruded into that religious aspect I would say.
Concerning the acceptance of religion, which is largely Buddhism, in their lives, Interviewee 1 had seen evidence that young people were still attending religious festivals even though there was open discussion and questioning about religion and young people were exposed to divergent religious viewpoints and belief systems through media content. When asked if he believed there had been any change in adherence to religious practice he argued,

no I haven’t seen any change. Because we still respect each other. I think within the law it clearly defines that you are not required to follow religion. It is up to you whatever you want. Even today the religious festival, the enthusiasm of people I think it has not changed. I am very surprised today at this, at this modern age when we talk about religion, I mean you should see the crowd especially in Thimphu when they go to see the religious festival. You know we have special dances where you recite your story from the dances. And you believe that if you go and sit there and watch the dances your sins are washed away the young people today there today, they go down to that place and stay in their cars and watch the dancers, for the whole day. This is very surprising.

However, Interviewee 5 was concerned that there were a number of people, especially young people wasting a lot of time on television, when from his Buddhist perspective they could have been practicing religious activity more. In relation to television watching he suggested, “for the people who are practicing Buddhism religious things, it’s not really a good thing for them because it’s really waste of time.” This time wasting was significant for Interviewee 5 because he noted that his wife spent up to three hours a day watching Indian soap programs, which he said distracted her from Buddhist practice. “The more impact on Buddhist life is more from the TV serials, from Indian TV serials like soaps…. My wife watches all the TV serials from starting from around eight to eleven o’clock to eleven-thirty, she watch Ghandi news then.” Interviewee 5 stated that he would have watched more BBS television, but as his wife and family preferred the content of the international channels, he had very little opportunity to watch local television. He said his family watched over 90% international content and he preferred religious practice to “wasting time” with television. He continued, “So I watch more of BBS but I have no say in the house. So I go for more for the practice than watch TV, I go for Buddhist practice, do some prayers, sit there and then I don’t intervene on the TV thing.”

Not only through media influence, but also because more Bhutanese people could travel to other countries than were able to in the twentieth century, there was a perception from Interviewee 4 that new religions were making their way into Bhutan. He believed there had been a significant decline in the amount of religious instruction in the community, however, because of his Buddhist belief he was also comfortable that this change should be allowed to occur. He stated

me being Buddhist, and also Mahayana Buddhism, in terms of religion we are not orthodox also, we are moderate. So even the younger generations, I think I think they follow it accordingly. But before
Buddhism was the only religion taught to us and given to us, now with so many other religions there, and ah, through people travelling abroad, and you know television being there, now some other religions are also coming in and some younger generations they are already accepting some other forms of religion. I think this should be acceptable in modern times.

There had not been significant change in Bhutanese belief and the following of Buddhist practice according to Interviewee 6, who noted that BBS TV broadcast Buddhist content that was liked and watched by many people. However, he did believe that younger people were not following Buddhism as strictly as had been the case in the past. His observation was “In religion cases I think BBS channel also telecast about Buddhism… sometimes they used to show these good ceremonies … instructing people about religion …. So I think that hasn’t changed much, but in our young generation I should say little bit, it has some impact of that TV.”

7.1.1.4 Dress and appearance is influenced by TV

Appearance and the way people dressed and groomed themselves had significantly changed in Bhutan according to more than half the participants. The reason, according to the fifteen participants who identified dress and appearance as a significant aspect of change in their community, was the role modelling of television personalities and influence of entertainment programs, especially on younger people within the community. In addition to the programs and television role models, advertising had a strong influence in creating desire of young Bhutanese people to use products that allowed them to copy and emulate the actions as well as appearance of the characters they identified with as seen on television. The change reflected a strong desire for younger people to not wear their national dress, the Kira and the Goh, when socialising with their contemporaries. While government policy and office rules were seen as requiring civil servants and office workers to wear their national dress to work, there was a strong preference not to wear national dress at other times by many young, urban Bhutanese people and this was seen as a significant and visually dramatic change that had taken place in Bhutan since the introduction of television in 1999. These perceptions were held by younger and older men and women.

Describing the changes in people’s appearance, 39 year old Interviewee 19 outlined that the wearing of western fashion clothing was not apparent when he was a young adult. He said, that he felt that younger people were generally “aping fashion from the west” and that there were a myriad of factors that influenced the changes in people’s appearance, including more gregarious social opportunities, better access to foreign trade as well as the influence of media.

Of course in our days we didn’t have major export-import. Very few people went out, so you didn’t have the opportunity of wearing trendy clothes. I suppose the entire global scenario has changed and is interrelated in such a manner that what you see is what you want, and what is available is also
because of various trade. I suppose in that respect maybe we didn’t do it because we didn’t have a choice. Maybe we didn’t know better. But behaviourally many of our children, the youth – they seem to be consciously mimicking behavioural patterns that you see on television. The way they dress, the way they want to talk, the way they want to even dance. I suppose it’s trying to identify you know. Identifying with something that is more global again. Not necessarily anti-Bhutanese but it’s probably more of a global thing that they want to wear something that they see on television, that the Americans are wearing.

Mimicking characters that were on television was a strong reason for many young people to wear a particular haircut or style of clothing according to Interviewee 7, who saw that this change in people’s appearance was often associated with big sporting stars, especially international football stars, who were very popular with Bhutanese boys as were the stars of the Indian serials with the Bhutanese girls. Very young people were influenced by their favourite characters and the influence he saw was from English as well as Indian language content. He noted,

even looking at the games and the sport channel, now days the young boys they change their hair style, looking at Mr Beckham, something like that you know? They really change and even young girls they changing their dresses, looking at the serials, how Indian ladies are dressing you know, like how they make–up themself and then like a lot of things changes with the peoples, by looking at the dresses…. The youngest age group also, you know, comedy and then some cartoons they like the most and also good English films, they want to act that way they want to dress that way. I think mostly the young age-group they like that way.

Modelling media personalities was also a key factor that led to observed changes in the way people dressed according to Interviewee 3 who stated, “well I think there has been some impact on the way people dress especially the younger generation. They tend to copy all these, the music artists and all the stars.”As a 37 year old male, Interviewee 8 saw that there was a combination of media influence leading to younger people wanting to dress and appear differently to their own national and traditional costumes as well as the regulations or expectations relating to dress code becoming more lax. It was not just dress code, but also the way people groomed themselves and their overall appearance had changed significantly, largely because people were mimicking the characters they saw on television. In responding to a question about what changes he had seen, Interviewee 8 stated,

the changes are in terms of actually the way the people dress, the cultural maybe even, I think also like after 1999 the people, rules are so lax now, you can see people in trousers, dresses and before that we used to be in our national dress only and the police used to monitor the thing. But when you have to go to the offices, you have to be in formal attire, one thing and you must have noticed also in the town, the people, the way they have dressed, the way they have actually kept their hairs long and even here I see peoples with tattoos no? Earlier it was actually virtually very non-existent or
maybe there was very few. And even those few also we used to have maybe traditional (tattoo) patterns no? But now you see all that exotic type of thing, tattoos and thing.

From the perspective of a young women, 26 year old Interviewee 10 observed significant difference in the appearance of youth, compared to her own teenage years. She attributed the changes to the influence of television,

I think especially the youth, youth you know, the way they talk, the way they dress, I think it’s been a huge influence on them, especially music culture, all this hip-hop culture and all, it’s coming to Bhutan also, and I think obviously it’s through television. You know, so we have a young people dressing like kind of rap and hip-hop people that we see on MTV’s and also if you visit the discotheques and all, it’s quite obvious, the changes there, the way of dressing, they way they carry themselves it’s all quite different.

As a young man, Interviewee 11, 26, thought the changes in appearance were not good, though he did not see television as the sole influencing factor, just a major factor. He lamented the loss of an element of Bhutanese culture, while at the same time valuing aspects of the new, more modern Bhutan. He explained,

particularly now our children, you know the dressing and all has drastically changed, and in fact because during our teenage years we have never dressed up that way, so we still feel guilty you know right now that seeing our younger generations, and of course if you hop into a party or a club in Thimphu it’s all the youngsters and then it’s all western culture copied. I do not exactly blame the media but media has some role to play in it so of course there are a lot of changes. Maybe the changes are good in terms of a modernisation, maybe the changes are not so good in terms of the society in Bhutan. You know the wonderful society and the wonderful culture in Bhutan, in terms of maintaining it the change is not so good.

It could have been expected, because of continuing traditions in villages where less change was observed, that the perspective of an older person from a rural village might be that changes in dress from traditional costume were not welcome. Contrary to this however, an observation made by Interviewee 12, a fifty year old woman from rural Bhutan, who did not have television, thought that the changes in the way she observed younger people dressed looked very good. She noted that the move away from the full traditional women’s garment into a more hybrid skirt suited young women. Through her interpreter she conveyed, “you know before they used to wear the full Kiras, how she is dress now, and now she is saying that the half Kiras has come and then, and the wrap and all, so she is saying that they are looking good with that also, like it’s more younger, younger girls and all, so I think they are looking nice she is saying.” However, in a village in central Bhutan, Interviewee 13 felt television was negatively influencing teenagers in terms of appearance and behaviour. She said, “especially with teenagers, I guess they would like to dress up in the
television way then they behave in the television way, even for writing essays they tend to copy from the television, so I think there’s a lot and lot of changes and most of them I think are not really positive.”

Television was allowing the young people of Bhutan to be fashionable, and as a result they were wearing the clothes and fashions that they had seen on television according to Interviewee 4. His views were more in agreement with Interviewee 20, perceiving that people looked better and were able to be more practically attired in modern clothing. While he saw this as a loss of tradition, he was also positive about the outcome in terms of the modern Bhutanese’s appearance. He stated if you look at the urban towns, especially in Thimphu I mean the younger generations they are up to date on fashion, they know exactly what to wear, what kind of sandals are there in fashion, what type of earrings, you know, lipsticks. [So, this is western fashions?] Yeah, western fashion, exactly. And although there are some groups, in Gohs too you know, bring forth the modern Bhutan, Bhutanese fashion. First of all I think modern fashion is quite cheap compared to Bhutanese modern fashion, and ah, and it’s very adaptable, so a lot of changes are taking place, especially in urban towns. Now while that changes are taking place in urban areas, that has a direct impact on the rural areas also, I mean like those days in my village you know, people used to (wear) the Gho, our traditional dress used to be the dress, even in the field or be it at home or wherever they go. Now if you look at the country side eighty percent of them would be wearing pants. And the kind of dress they are wearing in the villages since there are no dress codes in the villages, most of them are into pants now, and it is very easier and comfortable for them I think, that’s what I feel. And in that way the traditional aspect is being diminished a little bit. And even the young girls in the rural areas they are very fashionable now and they are better looking I think so I think that is a positive way of looking at it.

Interviewee 14, from the perspective of a Buddhist monk, tended to see change as a positive part of Bhutanese development. He saw the changes towards more international styles in the clothing people were wearing as well as people’s tendency to speak in foreign languages as a way of harmonising between his own Bhutanese people and the rest of the world’s population. This, he believed improved people’s confidence and ability to communicate more effectively. He said,

The way the people dress, the way the people speak, they way they get interacted with foreigners. All this things has you know becoming so nice and at a standard level. Like initially some Bhutanese person you wouldn’t just pick up for an interview or something like that, they would hesitate and they would just shy away, walk away, wouldn’t dare to speak, so people are so accustomed to it and then they feel at ease even to face the cameras, whatever.

From the perspective of Interviewee 2 people did, and should continue to wear their national Bhutanese costumes when working or at official activities in Bhutan. He noted that younger people
were changing the way they dressed in copying some of the clothes and styles they saw on television. He stated that in Bhutan “all of us wear national dress, so casual dress are seen only in the evenings for a brief period or during games period. So it’s wholly national dress. This cannot be changed, this cannot be made fancy or there is no fashion update. Yes we can see young people when they get a chance in the evening to go in casual dresses or their games or when they are at home. They are in tune with, they do try to be fashionable, they do try to copy what they see on the television, bandanas, t-shirts with all of those logos there that they want to put (on). That is also limited to I think only the younger generation. [Do you see that as positive or negative or neither?] I don’t know how I would put it. It is o.k. actually if it doesn’t cross the limit.” His positive reflection on accepting this change, where young people were wanting to copy western style clothing from the television, was a reflection of his overall positive view that the media was highly beneficial to the people of Bhutan.

As a parent of teenage children, Interviewee 17 was a firm believer in parental control to restrict what he saw as some harmful influences relating to his children’s appearance and the consequences that could follow. He stated family values and traditions were very important to him,

in general I have been finding so many changes in the market when I go out. Like they are mostly with the pants and jeans and shirt and even nowadays the girls as well as boys prefer to have pants, long drawn down outside, like low cut. Also the people wearing the shoes, the very long one, which doesn’t look nice for us but I don’t know why people prefer to wear these. The pointing shoes. But in my house we don’t do it much and I don’t prefer to have it from my children. I don’t allow the children to do what the others are doing because if the girls are spoilt it will be really bad for the family.

By the pointing shoes, Interviewee 17 was referring to high heels and his observation that they didn’t look nice, reflected a view that I had heard from a number of older people in Bhutan. They also didn’t like the look of low cut jeans or pants that sat on the hips, nor did many of the older Bhutanese people I spoke with, like women wearing pants.

However, as a 24 year old, Interviewee 21 was comfortable in both his traditional costume, the Goh, or in western style clothing and he dressed according to where he was going and what he was doing. He always wore the Goh to work, but practically never at any other time. The following comment reveals how he had changed his social activities and to some extent what he believes is the expectations from his peers, and some older people, as to what was socially acceptable since the introduction of television and the internet.

I don’t want to stick to my national costume, as long as it is a comfortable outfit, that’s fine, but as dictated by the rule, you’ve got to wear in our office, Goh’s. You can’t go to your office in trousers

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and all these types. You have to be putting on this Goh, or if it is ladies the Kira, So it is a rule, so we don’t feel it, you don’t feel anything, because everybody’s doing that. So why just me an exception. On the other side OK, putting on the trousers and western clothes is very comfortable also and during leisure or off time, I don’t have any choices, it has become a part of life rather.

Back in the village, people are quite used to putting on this Goh, traditional type of clothing, but as soon as they come to the town, expose themselves to the town, they gradually start putting on, going for all those western clothing and all. So that has been quite obvious. Now the number of disco tecs that have come up, night clubs that have come up in Thimphu could be partly because of the development, craziness, ever escalating population. That’s one. Other one is obviously media, because if you don’t have the media in place, this television in place, then how would we people, because we don’t go anywhere as I said before, we hardly get any chances to go outside and to see, experience things by ourselves so that’s the only channel where we can get a view of what the outside world looks like or what people all around the globe do. So that’s a direct influence you know, from the way people dress, pants right down, all that kind of stuff, tattoos all over. I would say, 2 to 3 years down the line. Before that it wasn’t there, and now you can see so many hippies type of people all around Thimphu area.

Entertainment stars have influence on the very young children according to father of three, Interviewee 22, who saw his own children emulating entertainers that they liked and had seen on television. He said, “the youngsters are very much influenced by the pop culture. They tend to dress up like the singers, and they behave like the black singers. And also, especially among the smaller children I’ve observed that in certain places, like in family gatherings of my friends they try to imitate the west celebrity icons.” His reference to his children copying black singers, may relate to his statement that young children tend to copy the singers they related to, or liked the most and while he did not expand on this point, it is possible the Afro-American performers were more appealing to Bhutanese children. His main message was they copied the people and styles they liked and what the ones to which that they could most readily relate.

The influence of television programs from foreign countries had significant impact on the way people dressed according to Interviewee 1. His comments revealed that as people’s tastes in clothes changed, they were also looking for cheaper clothes that would allow them to wear different styles for the cheapest price. He observed that, “today people wear clothes but the fabrics are from different places. Although people still prefer to wear business clothes, but for day to day wear there are people who want to buy cheaper ones, they are more available ah, they look for different patterns, that type of thing, there are shoes and socks and any other clothes they wear in fact has changed a lot because of television only.”
Globalisation was visible on the streets of Bhutan in the form of changing fashions and the wearing of high heeled shoes according to Interviewee 5, who believed young women were especially drawn to the new styles of clothes they saw on TV. He described,

how they dress, I mean all the students maybe in a year they are changing three times the version of their dresses. Even now the people that come to the chapel. High heel shoes I mean, and they come in last year or so, it was very high heel shoes then. Now they have come to very low heels, no heel at all. I mean it’s all because the influence of the TV. They watch like popular, I mean heroines, heroes all those stars they see, in the market they buy it, so all the influence is there actually; its globalisation I think.

Even though Interviewee 1 saw a change in the way people dress, he also believed that when traditional Bhutanese dress was required that young people were still willing to wear the Kira and Goh.

I think it is the younger people who have changed a lot, especially in the sense of their dress. People like to try different dresses, which is natural. But the important factor despite their taste, despite their choice whenever it comes to such an occasion where you need to dress formally I have see that they are not uncomfortable they are very, very happy.

However, the copying of western fashions and wearing western style clothing was seen as a negative impact from television exposure by Interviewee 6, who said,

now bad thing is they copy, the fashions, wearing those fancy dresses. Before they normally don’t know how to wear the pants as well as some jacket. Now they wear some big stickers on the shirt as well as on the pant, they wear half cut pants, and some used to wear torn pants and these are I think that bad impression on coming after TV. Before the TV they don’t used to do that, they used to go for only national dress and sometimes little casual dresses, now they become very active in wearing fashionable dress.

In addition to the observed changes from participants, during my time in Bhutan the perceptions of a change in people’s appearance was often mentioned by other Bhutanese people during the course of general conversation.

7.1.1.5 The new consumerism in Bhutan

Participants observed that Bhutanese with access to television were becoming more consumer focussed. However, as Bhutan modernised, there were other factors the participants identified that contributed to increased consumerism. Before listing these factors, it is important to understand the context which was that prior to 1999 Bhutan had a very low shopping and consumer focus. Bhutan was much more agrarian and trade was largely undertaken at local markets and stalls.
However, since 1999 a number of concurrent changes have taken place that had led to an increase in consumer spending and consumer demand.

Participants told me how incomes had increased significantly with a rise in education levels and opening up of borders to foreign trade, which in turn had allowed businesses to operate with higher turnover and greater profits. In addition the interviewees had noticed that with access to television and in some cases access to the internet, Bhutanese people became aware of a wide selection of goods and services available in other countries, that they had hitherto been ignorant of. This meant that with the increased incomes of the urban working Bhutanese people, they were able to shop for goods or place orders for items they saw on television so that retailers would purchase them and bring them into the country. This combination of factors led rapidly to the appearance of new food, apparel, appliances, cosmetics, furniture and other consumer items. For many of the participants this led to significant, reasonably rapid observable changes in appearance and behaviour as people wore, ate or used the items that they purchased.

Describing rapid change, Interviewee 9 outlined that he had observed significant changes in behaviour, but also he described the “tangible changes” as things that could be seen. In the following interview segment he described his belief that there were a number of factors that had led to the increased drive for consumption.

Well I think it’s certainly got very crowded, suddenly. I can remember Thimphu early on and now it’s very different, lot of cars lot of things …people’s drive for consumption. Before it’s difficult to buy a fan in this country, (LAUGHS) (but now) what you need you can buy. You know, increasing globalisation, increasing movement of capital between different countries. And if you imagine, Bhutan is like so land locked you know like right up in the mountain but, when I look at ah some items and it’s like made in Los Angles, (LAUGHS) it’s like crazy.

The younger people interviewed were clear in their opinion that television advertising was persuasive. Only nineteen at the time television was introduced, Interviewee 10 said that television was influencing people to spend more money on goods from other countries. Advertising, which was not targeting Bhutan but Indian audiences, was one of the most significant drivers of consumerism. She said,

I think in the, through advertising we also know there’s a lot of products available. Also what I feel is like earlier, you would not know much about the product, but now through advertising that we watch through cable TV content, we know lot of things about particular product. You know, what kind of product is there in market? What is available? What kind of different varieties are available? So I think it is what choices also we can make because here, especially in Bhutan, most of our products are from India. So it makes a big difference for us. One thing I realised among my group of friends was, they like the fact that we get to watch some Indian commercials, maybe know that a
particular product that is being sold, also get something free. But now even the shopkeeper and retailers, they do give it, the free item, they give it with the product itself. Because they cannot keep it away, hide it away, because it was available in cable TV, is being shown all over.

Her comment relating to getting something free, relates to the effectiveness of free giveaways as marketing incentives for consumers to purchase items. In Bhutan, where the population had only been exposed to mass advertising for a few years, the free giveaways were considered to be a great incentive to purchase one brand over another. Interviewee 10 also outlined her view that consumerism was not an easy fit within the Bhutanese culture. She felt that wanting more and more goods was not harmonious with the goal of Gross National Happiness. She stated,

Especially for Bhutan I feel that consumerism is something that is against that kind of happiness pursuits that we look for. So for example let’s say, you see with mobile phones being introduced into Bhutan, you know? Suddenly everybody wants mobiles, and now with advertising, you know the latest mobiles available in town, if one is carrying it, other one wants it, and then they pressurise the parents for example for children. There are a lot of things available on the market, they know, they can see it on TV, and they want it. So those kind of things I think is brought about through television.

Interviewee 11, 26 years, regarded Bhutanese as media naïve. This was based on his experience in India, where he had observed that viewers almost ignored advertisements altogether, while in Bhutan advertisements were seen as a form of entertainment and information. He noted,

when I was in India those kind of advertisements don’t used to influence us much because we know they are more exaggerated sometimes. But here in Bhutan particularly sometimes I used to find my female friends, who want to try out cosmetics, and then you know those creams which says like you know in fifteen days pimples are gone, in fifteen days you are fair. Sometimes I feel like some innocent people are fooled. More of our channels are Indian channels so we see lot of these interesting advertisements, very wonderful advertisements and we all sometimes tend to follow it and then we go for those products.

Interviewee 1 argued that Bhutanese people had become much more consumer and product focussed. “I think there has been a dramatic change, because we have seen that advertisements always have a different impact on people, they literally brainwash you. In a sense, people who have seen that advertisement will literally start to go – ‘oh there is something in that so let’s try to buy that thing.’” However, Interviewee 1 also held the view that advertising itself had a strong and positive influence in educating people about what products were available which helped them financially by allowing them to make informed choices. He said, “you know in terms of economics, like for example, you are now more intelligent in your spending, you know what you require you go for only the things which you require.”
One aspect of cultural change that was observed by Interviewee 13, 29 years old, was that people were wanting more items that they had seen on TV and as a result of wanting those goods, they were working harder in order to earn more money so that they could buy more items. As a consequence, people were busier than they had previously been, having less time for one another and for undertaking the activities they did prior to television. The following interview outlines her view that, the impact of advertising on the family budget and family time was negative.

Ah, I think people tend to look at the advertisement, then if somebody is an avid viewer of television, then that person tends to talk about a certain brand and then people tend to go after those brands, so I think buying has definitely grown a lot. I think definitely people work much harder, including myself to get something that I want. Maybe, probably that product must be even in the television, but yes people really work hard to get their life you know, uplifted. **Researcher:** What about with your children and the friends of your children, have you noticed any changes in those friends as well? **Interviewee:** I think ah with my friends children, because they are of a little older age, they are teenagers, so I think impact is even more on them. Children tend to be very choosy with their clothes and then the expenditure my friends say has really gone up. They look at the television brands and then they say they want to have those things. And I think for smaller kids, for them it’s some fancy clothes or shoes or even guns, so I think maybe it’s positive but when it comes to spending and then copying stuff, I think its little negative.

Cultural change as a result of consumerism was expressed by Interviewee 1 who noted that, “because you are on the television for almost 6 or 7 hours, it is changing. The things you use at home, the brand, the quality, the taste also has changed with the people, the food habits, the eating habits, the way you want to drive foreign cars, the way you want to use foreign stuff. This has dramatically changed here especially, areas like Thimphu, whether you have a television has a big influence, I have seen dramatic changes.”

As a twenty three year old, Interviewee 16 noted the change over a seven year period from a society where people had to really try hard to find an item they needed or wanted to a society where people wanted what they saw. She noticed the strongest effect in children, as she explained.

It’s like 7 years back, let’s say anything we wanted we had to look around. I mean, we had to depend on things to come to us. But, now that everything is being shown on TV and India being the nearest market to us, even the desire in people has increased a lot. I have an eight years old niece at home. She watches the shows and keeps on pestering us that she wants that book and those clothes. I believe that that’s the same in every family.

A number of the interviewees noticed that Bhutan had become more materialistic and with materialism there was a desire to have new products and high quality products. From the
perspective of a shopkeeper, one of the interviewees stated that television has increased consumerism significantly and that it has been a significant benefit to his business.

That’s really helped us because the product we sell sometimes many of the products we sell used to come in TV as an ad and the people come and see, do we have this product, which has shown in TV? They search for that product only so I should say that, it really helped us to market the product. Normally only Indian product we have but now internationally. .. It has become very easy to market. Therefore we can tell that this is the product that has shown in the TV, this is very good. [To what extent do you actually buy products because they’re on the TV?] Yes, I do that also, we used to watch TV and get certain product newly in market, we wish to go for that product that is shown in the TV, we do that sir.

This explanation indicated that not only were the shoppers being influenced by television programs and advertising on what they wished to buy, but also the retailer was being influenced to stock items that he had seen on television and he believed people would want to buy. Consumerism was therefore impacted from both sides of the cash register as a result of television exposure. A significant question arose in terms of the affordability of items for many Bhutanese people where average wages were low and the United Nations Development Program’s human poverty index ranked Bhutan “86th among 108 developing countries for which the index has been calculated. (UNDP 2008 p41). However, the retailer’s response was that people make careful choices and buy fewer items. He said,

now people have become so conscious about the quality, the people think that they should spend only one time, whether it is expensive or higher weight, they don’t think that, they go for quality only now. Because of the TV’s impact I think they go for quality, before they used to think that this will do, that will do, but I should just spend less money. Now it is becoming more conscious they go for quality only and they search for good quality only.

A similar experience was noted by Interviewee 5 who found that television advertising as well as program content was guiding his children to want to by clothing and products they see on TV. He observed,

The clothes (they) wear, I mean the clothes they want, they demand, for shoes, even the pencil they want from the cartoons. I mean all this like advertisements comes in that is really have impact on everything. [And you notice this?] I notice and then somehow I help them to tell them this is not true. It’s all fake, this is something is created by some people and then, they want to sell off this product and then somehow they listen and somehow what they like, we have to buy for them and have to give them.

Despite his attempts to articulate to his children that the content is fictional and the advertisements are designed to make people want things, he ended up buying some of the items his children desire
as a result of television viewing. This is undoubtedly noticeable in Bhutanese families where the average household size was 4.6 people (Census Commissioner Royal government of Bhutan 2005) and the GDP per capita was only $1,325 US in 2005 (UNDP 2008). As previously discussed, in 2005 the country had an average per capita income of Nu 1,200, or just over $24 US a month in urban towns and just over $20.00 per month in rural areas (UNDP 2005 p 6).

However, Interviewee 3 held a different opinion that consumerism was being driven primarily because of availability of new products within Bhutan, as part of the modernisation of the country, rather than being driven by advertising and people wanting the products they see on television. The interview segment below outlines his opinion, contrary to opinions of other interviewees, that people tended to buy what was available. Although he noted that younger people did indeed buy clothes that were not previously available in Bhutan.

**Interviewee:** In terms of shopping I don’t know whether TV would have an impact on the way they shop. Because now there are many people who are travelling outside of the country now so they come back with a lot of goods, and then, even more foreign goods are being made available in the town, whereas in the old days we had to have been outside the country to get all these goods but now it’s available in the shops here. **Researcher:** So you’re not sure that the media is necessarily affecting the way people shop and the desire for people to buy things? **Interviewee:** Yeah, it’s that they’re available, and I think in other ways, you could say that the advertisements especially on the BBS, there’s not much of consumerism advertisements like on other channels, so I don’t think so. I feel what’s available in the shops, people tend to buy those. I mean we are not a fashionable society as such and we have to wear our Goh. Goh is not fashionable, there’s not much change. Except for the younger children who, tend to wear fashionable clothes which is influenced by the television, but in other things no I don’t think so.

**7.1.1.6 Influence of language impacting on culture**

There are 19 languages spoken in Bhutan (Armington 2002) and of these 19 languages, only three languages are written. These are the national language Dzongkha, English which is the predominant language of instruction in schools and Nepali, which is largely the language of Nepal. However, Sharshop, which is the main language of the east of Bhutan and 15 languages relating to different regions of the country are aural and are not in written form. This is not surprising given that 48% of the population in rural Bhutan is not literate and the literate members of the population read and write in Dzongkha or English (Census Commissioner Royal Government of Bhutan, 2005).

A number of participants as well as members of the community expressed to me that they had observed younger people speaking in English, Dzongkha and Hindi predominantly with one another and that they had also observed the languages were often mixed together with Hindi,
English and Dzongkha words being blended together, almost into a combined language. The influence of Hindi was particularly strong as a result of television exposure according to the participants who identified changes in language as a result of television viewing. They also felt that English was becoming more widely spoken by people in the community, even when they were talking with members of their own family or circle of friends. Of the 10 participants who identified media as influencing the way language was spoken, some were concerned that they were concerned there could be a loss to their culture as a result of people speaking foreign languages more than their own language, while some expressed the influence of television on language as a learning opportunity for language improvement. An observation that television had been a better language instructor for the learning of Hindi, than actually travelling to India, was expressed by Interviewee 10 who noted that.

my grandparents they’ve travelled to India, you know frequently for pilgrimage. But they had never picked up the language. But through the soap operas now, they can speak Hindi. So, I don’t know whether I can say, I don’t know whether to say it’s a negative influence or a positive influence, you know.

She was not sure whether this was a positive or negative influence from television because she had also noted that people were speaking more Hindi, displacing their own language and she expressed that while there were the benefits of learning foreign languages, there was a disadvantage if people would decline in their capacity to speak their own language.

A decline in language skills was seen by 23 year old Interviewee 16 who saw that while some people may have improved their language skills from watching television, there were many people who picked up language characteristics she did not find appealing. She also noted that English was, at least to some extent, displacing the national language. She stated,

People picking up a lot of slangs so there’s a definitely a change in the language. And for Dzongkha now it’s a sad thing, like English is taking over Dzongkha, especially with the younger people – they are more comfortable in English than our own national language.

From the perspective of a 52 year old man, Interviewee 20, noted that the displacement of the national language and local languages was an urban change that had not yet taken place in the rural community. This was possibly because television was largely predominantly available in urban areas in Bhutan in 2006, and many rural areas did not have access to the international cable channels. The following interview segment outlines how he saw urban change as a result of people watching television and his perception that younger people were speaking a hybrid of Dzongkha and English.
Researcher: Do you think there have been a lot of observable changes that you see in Thimphu and Bhutan? Interviewee: Especially in the city, a lot. Changes means the way of dressing, the way of working, way of makeup, way of talking also changed. Researcher: How has the way of talking changed? Interviewee: Talking means, some person in the cities they talk English, only in the cities, though, but in the remote areas, people are illiterate so they have to talk only in their own language, so here in Thimphu the old age people from say 40 to 60, they talk in their own language, but the rest of the younger people they mix it say half English half Bhutanese, so this is the changes.

As a clear example of the shift from his national language to English, Interviewee 23 noted that he felt more capable of expressing himself in English than he did in Dzongkha. This was partly because he had studied outside the country, and partly because he was watching a lot of television and accessing content in English through the internet. He also noted that he when he did speak Dzongkha, he was dispersing his own language with many English and Hindi words, meaning that he felt his language skills in his native language had deteriorated. As he stated, he was more comfortable being interviewed in English than he would have been in Dzongkha.

Now because of the television, too much of the Hollywood movies and all, you watch it and then you hear it all the time and then it becomes a part of you now, so then you feel more comfortable talking in English. For example, just look at me like. If the BBS, if they came to interview me in Dzongkha I would shiver because my Dzongkha is not that good now. Because after I left Bhutan and for India and you know, I have never used Dzongkha to communicate with the people, I was talking more with my friends in English so I feel more comfortable talking to people in English. Because, Dzongkha also is a language where you need to have practice, there are so many words that you need to know, which I sometimes forget because when I speak in Dzongkha sometimes my language is not going to be 100% Dzongkha, I’ll use an English word in the middle, or maybe an Indian word in the middle so what I am speaking basically is a different sort of Dzongkha than our real Dzongkha is, so in that way the language also is a little deteriorating in the sense that people feel more comfortable speaking in English than speaking their own language. So in that way these are the changes brought by the media impact. But for example, if till now Bhutan has banned television or Internet I won’t say much, but especially television, if you banned television most of the Bhutanese would be speaking more of the Dzongkha than English, so in that way I think yes, the language, if we don’t do something to it, it may deteriorate and the Government is already trying their best to build up the good foundation of Dzongkha.

Despite believing that English is replacing Dzongkha, the national language, as the one most commonly spoken, Interviewee 2 outlined his belief that this was a positive outcome of media influence. He said,

Yes I think that it is because that all the education, the medium of Instruction is in English so as the literacy rate goes up, or as the number of literate people increases, I think they tend to use more English instead of the National language. Though we are giving importance to the development of
the national language, still because the medium of instruction is English, more people tend to spend English. All the younger generation who are in schools or out of school, they do prefer to use the English instead of the native tongue.

This ability to learn English and speak it with more fluency was a very positive benefit that television exposure is bringing to Bhutan according to Interviewee 1. He said that learning English and improving in language skills was a prerequisite to learning more about the world and about the many subjects covered on television. He noted,

The way everybody wants to learn about everything and the exposure they are getting, it is changing the tone, the talk, even the language. Today I think Bhutan is a very small country but you will see nearly 70-80% of persons can speak the English. They feel very proud, I mean I know many nations that would like to speak the English, this is something we feel very proud of it.

One of the interviewees, who was a shopkeeper in Thimphu observed improved confidence in speaking as well as significant improvements in people’s language skills. In addition he noted that people had more confidence in the way they act. He said this was a very positive impact after the introduction of television. “The good (thing is) they try to copy the language, speaking, as well as the way they act they used to copy from the TV and change their styles and they also try to behave more efficiently more actively as before sir.”

In addition to learning English, many people were learning or improving their speaking of Hindi according to Interviewee 3 who noticed improvements in his wife’s understanding of Hindi. “I think a lot of people have learned Hindi, because of the soap opera that comes on the screen, my wife watches every half an hour. She understands Hindi” The same experience was noted by Interviewee 5 who’s wife had become better at speaking the Indian language as a result of watching Indian soap programs. “For my wife’s impact….the positive impact is they learn the language a lot. My wife knows better than me, how to speak Hindi, understanding Hindi, she is more on the Hindi I think.”

The way people spoke in terms of language as well as style of speaking was strongly influenced by the characters on television according to Interviewee 1. In relation to language being influenced he stated that,

I think yes, its natural because, especially when you are watching the TV you see different characters and as a young group you always have that image you want to build up and you want to project a kind of character, because you like this guy or you like this girl so you like to adopt or you like to imitate this guys accent; his way of talking. It is there; it is there I have seen that.
Whether the perception was that language skills were being developed which represented improved educational opportunities or that English and Hindi were at least in part, displacing or hybridising Dzongkha, the participants were consistent in their view that television was influencing and changing their language, predominantly in younger people in the community. This observation was made regardless of age by both men and women.

7.1.1.7 What people talk about has changed

The topics of discussion had changed significantly in the urban areas of Bhutan where television programs were watched frequently. Discussions about television programs, current issues, world events, gossip about stars, results of sport were all new topics that had come into the sphere of discussion in Bhutan as a result of people’s shared experiences from watching television content. A third of the participants identified that there had been significant changes to the topics of discussion in families, between friends and in the workplaces in Bhutan since television had been introduced. While many of the participants had noticed that story telling and conversation had reduced as a result of people watching television, some participants also noticed that when people did talk to one another, they were no longer talking about the subjects that they had prior to television. In the following interview segment, Interviewee 9 outlined how the subjects of conversation had changed, largely from his perspective, because younger people were more aware of content they saw as factual coming from the television.

Interviewee: And even now if we have story telling now, they are different stories you know. The story subject has changed you know, the theme has changed now. Researcher: How has it changed? Just tell me how story themes have changed? Interviewee: I think when we are to exposed to this kind of media, lot of information, so there’s a lot of people take a lot of interest in myths you know, in legends you know, or history and most of your grandparents are illiterate, so they basically got that information through their own experience through their own parents you know, it was all oral tradition. And then that oral tradition it was mostly about, anything was all related to some myth, to some legend, to some belief system you know which was very important. But now even the younger generation, they like to hear but they have their own accessed information, they are becoming more analytical you know, they like to hear more factual news, more factual stories, more entertainment kind of thing so I think in that way the theme has shifted.

However, it was not just the younger people that were seen to be guiding the conversations differently because of what they saw on television. Older people were talking more about either the programs they had seen on television or topics relating to those programs. This was emphasised by Interviewee 13 who noted that all age groups were talking about television programs. The capacity to talk about common subjects experienced through television was seen as making people happy according to Interviewee 13. However, she had noticed that people over 50,
who were much less likely to understand English well, would prefer to watch BBS television, and their conversations related to the programs they had watched on their local station, while people under 50 tended to watch predominantly international content, and their conversations reflected that. She said, “even our elderly people they seem to talk more about television and if you go up fifty years and above, then the, those elderly people talk more about the Bhutan Broadcasting Service and the elderly people seem quite happy.”

Not all of the participants observed that discussion topics relating to television programs were of common interest. As a young working woman, Interviewee 23 found herself irritated by the constant conversations at work about television programs. Because she did not like watching a lot of television herself, she found it difficult to relate to the topics and participate in the conversations. Her observation was “at work places or for any social places like gatherings and stuff, they always have to talk about what kind of movies they watched or what kind of serials or what character was playing.” Because she had access to the internet from work, she spent a considerable amount of time accessing content online. However, she had also observed that because there had been a lot of television watching at home, she found it more difficult to relate to the topics of conversation at home, than she remembered from her childhood, prior to the introduction of television.

The events and intrigues of television programs as a topic of conversation was replacing people talking about important issues relating to themselves or their community according to some of the participants. This was emphasised by Interviewee 18 who noted,

Yes I think even their conversations I would say centres around what they have watched. It’s basically what happened to this guy who was in this show and whether he died or somebody slapped him. Especially the housewives or the ladies here, they watch a lot of the Indian soaps, it’s very popular among the Bhutanese housewives here and when I see them, basically what they talk about is what happened in that show, and I think it’s basically about the show instead of what’s happening in their lives.

An important aspect of this observation was that as a woman under 30, Interviewee 18 noted how significantly women talked extensively about the programs that were on television and she felt that they spent significantly less time talking about important personal matters.

Similarly, as a young man, Interviewee 21 found that media had done Bhutanese people a disservice relating to its influence over the topics of discussion and matters of importance amongst friends and family members. He stated his observation as,

what I’ve noticed in my friends, noticed in the people around me is that with this introduction, even my family members back at home, the way they talk, the way they think, you know, the attitude they
take, media has done almost an offense against them because, always they are glued to the television, watching those serials you know, Hindi serials

There was a strong distinction between men and women as to the type of programs they preferred to watch and as a consequence the type of discussions that took place according to Interviewee 2. He stated,

not to be gender biased, but I think among the female group really talk about soap operas stories, they discuss even in offices, schools. Sometimes it is so funny they’ll be discussing the story as if it happened in their neighbours place or something or the next house, or somebody…the character in the (soap) opera is somebody like the lady living next door sometimes they will be discussing it, if you happen to drop in, it would be as even though they are talking about the immediate neighbour next door, actually they are talking about the character in the serial, they do talk a lot.

He was not sure about the topics men spoke about relating to TV, and this could be because it was more news orientated. However, he was clear in his view that younger people talk significantly more about movies and entertainment programs. His observation was

among the males, I don’t have a very close observation, but younger generation also talk about all their movies, all their programs or the reality TV’s, it’s among the younger generation I think.

Interviewee 2 also stated that older people did tend to talk more about news and current information, especially at work, “let’s say above twenty five thirty. These people I think they talk more about news.” Interviewee 2’s observations also indicated that he believed there was a preference for viewing entertainment programs by women and younger people, which is consistent with the observations of a number of other interviewees as discussed previously. In addition he described the difference between what people discussed in 2006 compared to the time prior to 1999,

it would be, how do I put it, they’ll talk about people they’ll talk about personalities, rumours, their own social groups. And of course they would pass news from the magazines and the newspapers but not as much as happens today.

His opinion was that media content occupied more of the topics of conversation and took up more time in the conversations than was the case prior to the introduction of television.

From the perspective of an older male, Interviewee 20 believed that because younger people were more educated, both through school and through television exposure, they had changed the way that the communicated with older people in style and subject matter. He stated, “the distinct nature has been changed quite a lot, because my son and daughter is quite educated, so way of distinct talking with old aged has completely changed with the modern education.” He felt that their
education was important and positive. However, he stated that he sometimes felt intimidated by their superior knowledge.

Interviewee 1 also perceived the educative value of media exposure had led to significant changes in the topics that people talked about, because they had more knowledge about subjects and matters outside their own country. From my understanding of his views expressed throughout the whole interview I concluded he used the word intelligence to mean knowledge and worldly awareness. His perception was expressed as,

I think that now we can see there is a lot of intelligence, there is a lot of intellectual talk. We can see between people to people we can even see children talking a different way, the exposure they receive from television has been a big impact on them. The way everybody wants to learn about everything and the exposure they are getting, it is changing the tone, the talk, even the language….. So this I think I have seen that people talking within each other also even within their families also it has changed. We had series of Dramas (programs) about families, (about) the relationship between parents and the children. I mean, you hear them talk but today there is awareness among the people, so while we are talking to each other and while we are trying to understand each other’s problem there is a change. So I have seen a dramatic change with the people when they talk to each other.

Similarly there was a perception that topics had changed as a result of news and information being available from both international and local sources. This was summarised by Interviewee 3 who articulated,

I think it has changed because now it is possible to get a lot of information from the outside world, from within Bhutan also through the BBS but in those days it was very difficult to get that information, it was more like rumours that we used to hear, so this, when we sat around the fire place we used to just talk about gossip in the community, basically this kind of topics, but now, I think now we talk of something more international, like what happened, what was shown on the BBC News, like what was shown in the CNN live reports now, people (are) able to watch what’s happening, on their doorsteps I mean in their house, living rooms.

While topics of discussion prior to the introduction of television did, from time to time, relate to news and global issues, people did not have significant knowledge of or information about most world events prior to 1999. Interviewee 2 outlined that the introduction of television had led to changes in the topics people talked about, so that there was much more discussion about news of the world in today’s conversations than had been the case prior to 1999. His opinion was,

I think people, when they gathered I think they used to talk about their village, their neighbours, not much news. But after that I think they did discuss about news in other countries and what happened in Bhutan also. But before that I think the source of news was very limited, I think the only source was weekly newspaper, which I think still not reaching to all corners of the country, and other areas
I think they used to read Indian newspapers which come of course two or three days late. So with the introduction of TV I think the news became fast. So when people gather for meetings, for small community gatherings, I think they do talk about now news actually, but before that I think it was happening very less.

Clearly, his opinion was that discussions about news and events from other countries had significantly increased since the introduction of television in 1999.

Topics that were either unknown or even taboo subjects in a family discussion were now able to be discussed more freely according to Interviewee 1. He said that this was,

a positive change in the sense that people are interacting more to each other, people are talking those issues which we were not talking earlier for example diseases. People are talking more about if you have these diseases that you should not be having this kind of relationship or feelings. Like for example today people are talking about AIDS. Although the AIDS patients in Bhutan is very insignificant but today people do know that if you have AIDS the biggest stigma you face is social boycott. And I think that’s what People are understanding that you should not socially boycott a patient because he is suffering from AIDS.

In this context, Interviewee 1 was expressing the view that media exposure was leading to more open and public debate, as well as private discussions in families and between friends, so that there was a social change towards acceptance of diversity of opinion and tolerance.

7.1.1.8 Changes in social activities

Since the introduction of television, people who lived in the urban areas where television was introduced had noticed significant change in their activities, especially relating to the amount of time they spent with one another in joint activities and the activities they undertook. Television watching in the home had replaced many activities between families and friends as well as having an impact on broader social gatherings according to the perceptions of participants. While all participants recognised that there had been a change in social and personal activities, where television watching had replaced other pastimes previously undertaken, 16 of the 27 participants articulated what kinds of change they had observed. The most commonly mentioned change had been that people spent more time alone, or with other family members, at home than they had prior to television. A number of participants outlined the reason for this was that they preferred to sit and watch television for enjoyment and it made them happy, which they identified as a good outcome in relation to the nation’s goal of Gross National Happiness. They also identified that
they wanted to improve the knowledge and awareness of global issues and that watching television, instead of doing other activities, assisted them in achieving this.

However, while people spent more time at home watching television, when they did go out, there had also been a change in the types of activities that people undertook. The influence of television content, particularly popular culture programs led to younger people as well as older people undertaking different pastimes, such as disco techs which were new to Bhutan. In addition, people perceived that they were busier than they had been previously, meaning that they had less time for socialising, and with the spare time they had, would like to watch television rather than socialise. Interviewee 8, a 37 year old professional noticed that younger people were going to the disco techs and really enjoying the experience of this new activity that was not present in Bhutan prior to 1999. He also noted that his own involvement in sport and other social activities had declined since he had television at home and the internet at work. He stated,

Speaking personally, before 1999 when I was in the districts there, we didn’t have television, we didn’t have access to satellite channels and there we are mostly involved with social functions like archery, and thing. But after television has come also, and we have no additional newspapers, so now I have actually not participated in like archery and thing. And most of the time I am engaged in official office work, but beyond that I have been, watching television, or maybe surfing the net. So personally I can say myself, I am more of actually engaged in these media, internet and televisions.

People were attending town gatherings less than they had prior to the introduction of television according to the observations of 45 year old Interviewee 17. He noted that people spend much more time at home, but while he noted less participation on community events, he felt people were enjoying the new way of life. He outlined his perception by stating,

After the introduction of the cable network in 1999, people spend their life, most of the time in the house only, watching the TVs and since it is new to Bhutan people, we don’t see people much in the town area also, most of them are in the house watching the TV. So it really is an enjoyable one, and people have changed their habits, staying at home united and they are enjoying their television sets.

With this observation he is clearly of the opinion that by watching television at home, people were able to spend family time with one another and enjoy that time together watching television while noting that people spent less time socialising in the wider community.

However, young people are even more impacted according to 26 year old mother of a young child, Interviewee 10 who was concerned that while television might be educative itself, it also displaced other educative activities such as reading, and reading and literacy improvement was a significant goal for Bhutan. She felt that excessive watching of television, if it was displacing other important activities was disadvantageous to children. She articulated her view,
I think young people is being much more influenced, because I think as a young person, there are more things you can do besides watching TV. You know? So, even during winter vacation, my niece and my nephew, they would like, instead of going out with their friends, or you know, sitting with the family, they would just want to watch cartoon network, and watch all cartoons, or animations and all. So I think those are some of the things that has been quite negative on them. Especially because Bhutan, we don’t have much people who read, you know that reading culture, people are working so hard to cultivate a reading culture, then with television I think is quite a difficult challenge.

Young adults were copying many of the activities they had seen on television, and this led to new activities that had previously not been undertaken in Bhutan prior to the introduction of television. One of these related to courtship and Interviewee 10 noted that courtship and relationships had changed because of the influence of foreign television programs. She observed,

And also I think even like dating, you know the entire thing about dating is now changing. [O.K., tell me about that] Because there are a lot of young cousins and all so it’s quite obvious because earlier I remember when we were younger, how things like dating was not such a thing. Like we date somebody today and then tomorrow we’re dating somebody else. That kind of thing was not there. It’s like you date somebody means like o.k. he’s, he’s a special one, you don’t want to, I don’t know, just see somebody for sometime then just move onto another person, but here I think now, like we watching lot of English movies and then the western kind of culture is there. Where dating is an accepted kind of thing, so a lot of people dating each other now, so some things like that are happening also, so more of young people are dating each other, and even the parents they have sort of accepted that, so not much of resistance is there.

Her observation, that parents were accepting dating and the moving from one boyfriend or girlfriend to another was an indication that at least some Bhutanese families were accepting this form of cultural change.

People staying home together, watching television and learning about new and interesting aspects of the world was seen as a great advantage to some of the participants. It was expressed that staying at home, even if people spoke and communicated less and sometimes watched different televisions in different rooms, meant that the family was together. It was also stated that people were enjoying themselves more with television, because it gave a shared form of entertainment. One of the participants, Interviewee 17, felt that there was a community benefit in the form of safety by people staying at home, and avoiding accidents. His stated his view as “this will help us, save us not to go out roaming and then everybody can stay together in their home which can avoid some accidents also. It keeps people together.” Despite this view that watching television had the effect of keeping people together in the home, this was not necessarily leading to people spending more active time in one another’s company as was discussed under heading 6.1.1.3 Families and
friends spend less time together. This view was expressed by Interviewee 18, who believed that people were spending less time out and about with one another or at social events. Yet she felt that while people were at home a lot, they were not interacting as much as they had in the past, nor were they interacting with visitors as much as they had prior to television. She said,

I don’t think there’s much of a gathering right now, except for once in a while, but the gatherings that used to happen before, like let’s say there was a holiday or like a weekend visit to some family or relatives or friends, I think it has reduced a lot because before, people want to stay in tune with their timings and even if they do go to someone else’s house, I think the TV would be on, and I guess instead of them talking, they would just be together and actually not talking and watching their serial together, I guess that’s how it would be.

Social gatherings still occurred, despite people spending significant amounts of time at home watching television according to Interviewee 2 who stated, “I think this is still happening, yeah same rate because social functions are, I think is called for, there’re occasions - so it still happens. I think other media haven’t distracted or really taken away the schedule or the occasion that really calls for the gathering.” However, this opinion was not shared by Interviewee 5 who believed there were significantly fewer social gatherings and that people were expressing their preference to stay at home and enjoy themselves watching television rather than attend social gatherings. He observed,

actually TV has affected the social life of the family. As individual family and as a whole, I mean one family, two family, three families is community affected. Before there was some sort of festival going on, people going in groups with packed lunch and all this. Others go there together, now it has become less, very less. This is the effect of the TV I think. They say that why do you go to places like different in the forest and spend life, why not watch TV and have a nice time at home?

However, in relation to people spending time with one another, Interviewee 2 was concerned that people were spending more time alone using media and less time with one another. His view in relation to whether people spent less time with family and friends was “internet, television and computers. So I think that the chance to be together and talk would be decreasing actually. I think, I don’t know how to put it, maybe it is not a good trend because not to socialise would be not so good.”

Not having enough time for his children, leaving his children with the television and sitting down and watching the television himself was leading Interviewee 22 to feel that he was not fulfilling his role as a parent as well as he could. He also believed that while he was struggling to find time to spend with his family, other people in Bhutan may have been finding the struggle even harder. He articulated his feelings by stating,
Sometimes I’m quite guilty that I don’t spend more time with my children, because I sometimes get glued to the TV. You know I have to resist like watching TV. So in that perspective I think that I have changed and I’m assuming that because I’m an educated person, so I’m assuming that people who can be easily influenced by what they see on television, especially in terms of entertainment. In Bhutan we don’t have many forms of entertainment. So I feel that people who are semi educated or not educated would probably be more influenced and be spending more time watching television.

He also added that home life had changed in other ways. One particular point was that visitors coming and staying in the family household had decreased, because he felt people were more selfish and wanted to save both their time and their money for their own needs and activities. He said, “people tend to be more selfish now. Like there was a time when people from a different region could come here and stay with you, you know. If you knew them a little bit also, not a close acquaintance but someone you know. That has changed. Maybe because of media.” He was not sure whether this aspect of decreased willingness to accommodate acquaintances and distant relatives was an impact from media or just a sign of changing times in Bhutan, but he was convinced that people’s generosity, at least in that respect, had reduced at the same time as television consumption had increased.

People were busier, working harder, trying to make more money, trying to pay for a new television or some new item that they had seen on television that would make their life easier. Paradoxically, a number of the interviewees noticed that they were busier and had less time to interact with one another than they had prior to the introduction of the internet and television, because they were wanting to increase their incomes to allow them to purchase the items that would make their lives better and easier. Yet they were noticing that their lives seemed more complicated because they were short of time. 29 year old interviewee 13 thought that busyness was a factor of living in modern times in Bhutan. She said,

I think nowadays people have become much busier than they used to be, I don’t know for what reason but earlier people where more relaxing, but now time has changed, everybody seems so busy, so it has definitely changed, probably not with television, but with changing time I guess.

Similarly 52 year old Interviewee 20 believed that people’s business was leading to people actually communicating with one another less than they had previously. And he saw the beginning of this change, leading to people becoming busier directly corresponding with the introduction of television as the following interview segment illustrates.

**Interviewee:** Actually it’s quite changed from the year 2000. Till the year 2000 it was not changed, same as before. **Researcher:** And then what happened? **Interviewee:** Since 2000 it’s changed quite a lot, changes mean changes in time, less time, because they are very busy, all are
appointed so time is very limited, that’s why they have changed quite a lot. Before because they have no work, they spent time chatting to each other for one hour, two hours, now even, they hardly chat for 15 minutes, stories telling to each other, it’s like that, its quite changed quite a lot…. It was better before because we used to gather for a picnic for a longer duration, say we go for a picnic today and we camp somewhere there, then we would come back tomorrow, now, this age, there is no night halt, because all people have got no time. In that way the previous time is better, we’d get more time. More time to see the family or friends all these things. I have a short time, I’ve got many work things to do, so these are the bad things in this age.

Both younger and older participants had observed that Bhutanese people had become busier and had less time for socialising and active relationships. Interviewee 16, as a young woman of 23 was definite in her opinion that television viewing, and the fitting in of essential tasks had major influence in keeping her friends busy. This made them unavailable to meet as they had in the times prior to television. She stated,

Sometime they are at home., I mean me and young people, we used to be a group of friends. So initially we just would meet often you know like go out together. And after a few years it became that when you called up each other it would be like “Oh I’m busy” as she always says. When we go to our friends places she’s always busy watching TV or doing some house chores. But otherwise I mean communication has become just a secondary kind of a choice.

Increased workloads were also being demanded from the government and business sector, where employees were being asked to work longer hours than they had in the 1990s. Longer work hours meant that Interviewee 19 had less time for his own children. He stated he played with them less than he had previously, and spent less time with them. This meant they had more time by themselves, watching television, because his wife was also busier than she had be previously. His perception was that it was not just that people wanted to work longer hours so that people could earn more money, but that there was a requirement from employers to have their employees work harder and longer hours and be more productive. He was concerned that neither he nor his wife now spent enough time with the children and emphasised,

With the present day work schedule, with the present day, I don’t know everybody seems to be pretty stressed out. The fault I feel is partly because of our work loads. The last couple of years I’ve been extremely busy. I take them (children) out more or (play) games when I’m available. My wife is not very sporty, (Laughter) and then is busy in her own way.

The desire for prosperity was one of the reasons that people had become busier because they felt that by working harder they could improve their living standards, in line with the higher living standards observed in the characters on television. This observation was made by Interviewee 21, who as a 24 year old, was referring to his own friends as well as older members of the community.
His observations, in the interview segment below, reflect a trend measured in the 2005 census that Bhutan was becoming increasingly urbanised. (Census Commissioner Royal Government of Bhutan, 2005) In addition he states that he saw media as a catalyst that has accelerated the rate of change that has led to people’s lives becoming busier.

**Interviewee:** As well as with this introduction of television people have developed a sense of competition inside themselves as well, you know. Look at those people, they are so prosperous, why not us? There doing so fine, they live such a luxurious life you know, living so happily ever after. We’re just human beings, why do I have to struggle so much on the farm, is it that we are confined to this only or can we be in a position to go further than this? So that way it has also developed a sense of competition where people tend to work more. **Researcher:** So are all Bhutanese people working harder? **Interviewee:** My observation is confined to the town and some of the developing suburbs and satellite towns, my place, the place where I hale from is basically a satellite town. So people there have in fact started to leave farming and take up business. So that’s gradually becoming a general perception in our society. Maybe because of the changing time we get to work so hard in the office, whereas gone are the days where you were so laid back and complacent. But today, we really need to work hard, otherwise you become an odd man out. **Researcher:** Do you notice the change or live it like it is normal? **Interviewee:** No it is normal, absolutely normal, because change is the only evidence of life. Everything keeps changing. But with this introduction of media, it is becoming a little rapid. Otherwise the change was bound to be there, but with the introduction of media it has been in fact made a little rapid.

People who were moving from the country to the city felt that they had more facilities, more entertainment, more access to the media which was strongly appreciated. However, despite the opportunities to attend discos, music and other new entertainment options, there was less opportunity to socialise than there had been in the rural village according to 25 year old Interviewee 15. He outlined the changes he had observed moving from a rural to an urban lifestyle, I spent 95% of my life in remote communities in a sense like I went to school in remote communities. Back then television or radio was not the entertainment source. I mean you had a bunch of people you mix with in the schools. Now living in Thimphu, it’s kind of a modern city and I think the difference you find is you have access to everything. Literally you have TV, you have now mobile phones and you have lots of information, but what you don’t have now is the social moments. I mean, back then you used to have a bunch of people sit together and laugh. But now if you want to go and find someone, you have to personally go and make an appointment to meet him. It’s very hard to get the same bunch of people sitting around and laughing and stuff like that. So this is one of the changes I would see in terms of post and pre media times.

His perspective was that life had not improved with respect to relationships with friends and members of the community. He preferred the village life where you knew the people in your
neighbourhood very well but also thought that, perhaps paradoxically, city life offered more privacy. One of the biggest reasons for his observation was that people spent more time with one another in the rural villages, because they were less busy and did not have television, thereby relying on one another for entertainment. He stated,

back in the village where I grew up you’d know every village people (person). But right now I don’t know the person next door. I don’t know whether this is good or bad, but this is the kind of society we live in. People don’t communicate and they don’t even bother to know (one another). It would be good because you are getting your privacy, but I am not sure you know in real terms.

People were attending festivals, major sporting events and holding social gatherings less than they had prior to the introduction of television according to Interviewee 15, who’s observations were that the society was mixing together less than it used to. In his mid twenties, Interviewee 15 remembered the times when gatherings were attended by large volumes of town people, where as now his believe was people were staying home watching television. One reason he believed they were watching television rather than attend live sporting events was because the quality and variety of the sport was so much higher. He noted,

It is bad because back then we used to have a society of integration, for example pre media time I occasionally used to visit Thimphu and there was a soccer match down there and during that time the whole of Thimphu would flock down there and that used to be good fun and you could see whole terraces being filled up by the people and whole sides being filled up. Now if you go and watch a football match you’ll be the only one. You’ll be very lucky if you find someone. In a way I think this is because, and now I point the finger at the media, in a way because they have all got professional football being played on television and even if you want to go and watch, you don’t see the same quality that you see on television. And sometimes I hear news that I think I don’t want to hear. During that time you think you wish you were somewhere in like the pre media time where information wasn’t available.

His observation that the soccer matches in Thimphu were not as well attended as in pre media times was pointed out to me when I attended a national Bhutanese soccer match at the Thimphu soccer field. There were only a handful of us there watching the game and a number of the people at the game told me, how in the past, the soccer was filled with people watching the games, whereas this had dropped off to a very small number of attendees in recent years. The soccer game I watched was fast, exciting and well played, but the attendance of audience was minimal.

Participant 5 perceived that there were less cultural events in the capital city, Thimphu than there had been prior to 1999, and he stated this was one reason people were coming together less. His view was that if there were more events for people to attend, then people would come together more and enjoy Bhutanese culture together. “You go to like every place (around the country)
there’s a culture action going on, there’s a show I mean some sort of events going on. But here in Thimphu we have never seen cultural events taking place, so very less culture. When there’s some event people really rush into … because these are different, totally different. Actually they want to watch Bhutanese culture … but somehow it’s not really coming up.” One of the reasons there may be less cultural gatherings in Thimphu could be that people in the city feel that they are much busier and have less time than they used to have, as discussed under heading 6.1.1.1 Socialising and sharing activities together has reduced.

Sport on television was so popular with Bhutanese people, especially Bhutanese men, that it was ironically reducing people’s involvement in local sporting activities. This was the observation of Interviewee 23 who felt that watching sport had, at least partly, replaced playing and participating in sport. He observed,

I would say the most from the TV channels that has the biggest impact on the Bhutanese culture was the wrestling, here on the screen you know. The reason is because, as I said, Bhutanese people love all sorts of fun activities, entertainment and wrestling is one of the entertainments. Everybody used to love, not only the kids even the old, so that was one of the most significant impacts on our society.

However, from his very positive perspective, and with the understanding that change was reflecting new ways for people to improve their life in a fulfilling manner, Interviewee 14, as a Buddhist Monk, felt that while people were busier and watching a lot more television, this was merely a reflection of how they chose to spend their time, now that new and more interesting options had been given to them. He believed that what they were doing now was just as meaningful for their lives and useful to them as the activities of the past had been. He stated,

I think normally even in olden days, people used to need to have some kind of free time. They were doing some forms of you know hobbies, past times and free time was always there with them. But in olden days when there was no media access, some used to play games, go to the countryside this and that, and now that free time is actually you know taken over by the media awareness.
8 Comparisons with quantitative studies

8.1 Summary of emergent themes and findings

Table 7, page 198, is provided to assist in comparing the findings of this study with two major quantitative audience impact studies in Bhutan. Table 7 summarises the findings from the participant responses in relation to each of the emergent themes.

Table 7 Summary of findings relating to emergent themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Summary of findings</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge, education and connectedness</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Television as an education tool</td>
<td>All participants felt that television was educational and that access to television made them more knowledgeable and even more intelligent. The majority of learning from television left participants feeling better off and feeling like they knew more through watching television and accessing other media.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Knowledge provides confidence</td>
<td>With the increased knowledge and valuable content that television provided the majority of participants felt that they were more in control of their own lives and more equipped to make their own decisions. Opinion was stated that younger people were more assertive and questioning of authority and of traditional activities. Some expressed this as an improvement to Bhutanese society</td>
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<td>Media information and content is predominantly useful</td>
<td>While the majority of media content was seen as offering positive benefit, both in terms of knowledge and education as well as in the form of entertainment and happiness some aspects of media content was seen as having negative value. Exposure to drugs, violence and anti social concepts was seen as offering some people negative role models, leading to changes towards antisocial behaviour. However, there was a</td>
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<td><strong>Media has opened Bhutan up to the world</strong></td>
<td>A strong view expressed by a number of participants was that they felt liberated by media access, particularly international television, because it offered them a window to the world, which had been closed to them prior to television introduction in 1999. News about what was happening in other countries, information about sport, culture, nature and life in other parts of the world was seen as a way of bringing Bhutan into the modern world.</td>
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<td><strong>Informed people are independent decision makers</strong></td>
<td>Making informed and independent decisions was important to younger participants who felt that media content, and exposure to the outside world, assisted them in making decisions that would benefit their life. Greater independence and confidence in younger people was seen as a positive and newly developing attribute in younger people. It was also expressed that local content was also important in giving the window on Bhutan as well as the rest of the world, and assisting Bhutanese people make good decisions within their own social framework.</td>
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<td><strong>The benefits of an informed and knowledgeable society</strong></td>
<td>Participants were willing to accept changes to their culture and some negative aspects that they perceived from people copying what they observed in the media, because they felt the benefits of living in the new knowledge based society that media exposure offered them far outweighed what might be seen as negative. They felt that knowledge about the rest of the world, and their consequent ability to participate in discussions and responses to world events was stopping their country from standing still.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>International media access makes Bhutan connected and</strong></td>
<td>A number of participants expressed the view that international media exposure connected them to the rest of the</td>
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progressive

world and that this connection to the rest of the world was essential in improving people’s business capacity, productivity and stopped the country from standing still. Future development of the country was seen as essential and this could only be achieved through connectedness and knowledge of the rest of the world.

Increases in the divide between connected and non connected

There was a view that there was a growing gap between the rural people who were yet to receive television, and those who had access and were experiencing cultural change as a result of their exposure to the media. Those without television were also not able to experience the benefits of increased knowledge and connectedness. Because nearly 48% of people in rural areas cannot read, television and radio were the only viable media for nearly half the rural population (and for rural women only just over 40% could read). Therefore large proportions of the population did not have access, or the ability to consume any form of media apart from BBS Radio.

People should have choice

One third of participants felt it was the right of Bhutanese people to make choices about what they watched and didn’t watch and were opposed to limitations of media content or censorship. Although there was a view that media naïve Bhutanese people might struggle with sorting the good from the bad and worthwhile from time wasting content, the view was that it was better for people to make their own choices even if it meant they made mistakes like watching too much television. It was viewed that living post 1999 was much better than living prior to 1999, even with a perceived growth in antisocial behaviour.

Content – What people access and how long they spend using media

| Content preferences for men, | Perceptions of interviewees consistently stated that men |

200
| women and children | preferred news, sport, information content and international documentaries. While a number of women also liked news their stronger preference was for soap programs, particularly Hindi soaps. Both men and women as well as children were perceived to enjoy nature and geography programs as well as movies and documentaries. Children were stated to prefer watching cartoons, some soap programs as well as nature and geography content, but there was also a strong preference for boys to watch sport.  
When television was available there was a strong preference to watch television over listening to the radio.  
People who could not speak Hindi or English, predominantly older and rural people, they were perceived to prefer local television content from BBS TV or BBS Radio because they could not understand the other content. |
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<td>Amount of time spent watching television</td>
<td>Most participants stated they only listened to the radio while in the car or sometimes, while working. Otherwise their preference was to watch television. Significant amounts of time were spend watching television with the majority of participants estimating that they watched between 2 to 3 hours a day, however some participants watched significantly more with one as high as 6 hours a day. Participants also stated the spent most of their free time witching television. Where television was not available, BBS Radio was the listened to, especially in the evening.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proportion of local and international content</td>
<td>More than half the participants assessed the amount of television they watched as a percentage of foreign to local content. The range stated was 10-50% for BBS content and 50-90% foreigncontent. Participants in this survey watched more foreing content than BBS content. The majority of the participants stated that they watched local BBS TV for the news and it was important to them, but most did not watch</td>
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<td>Topic</td>
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<tr>
<td>BBS TV</td>
<td>BBS TV for anything except news and information content, preferring international channels for broader information and entertainment programs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television can waste people’s time</td>
<td>Some of the participants stated that watching too much television was wasting time and interfering with people’s capacity to be productive. They particularly referred to the Indian soap programs, movies and entertainment content as time wasting. However there was also a view that if this content made people happier, even if it was non productive, it was adding to Bhutan’s objective of Gross National Happiness.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Controlling children’s viewing</td>
<td>There were some parents who felt it important to restrict children’s viewing to ensure they completed homework, could sleep enough and did essential chores. However, some families had multiple televisions to allow the children to watch their content while the adults watched other content. There was some concern that children and adolescents could be negatively influenced by some TV content while others felt it was important to allow children to watch what they wanted as their human right.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet is predominantly used for business</td>
<td>While those with access to the internet found it useful and enjoyed using it for pleasure, for information or for business, the majority of people did not own a computer as they were too expensive and could not afford fixed landlines or internet connections at home. Therefore people used the internet at work or at internet cafes. Most people only spent time on the internet if they had access at work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile phones improve connectedness</td>
<td>The advent of the mobile phone was seen as a very positive development in Bhutan where time to travel from one region to another is very slow and where fixed landlines were a rarity, predominantly used for business. The mobile phone</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
was seen as a wonderful tool that was connecting the community and affordable to many people, as opposed to landlines and computers that were not affordable.

**Social, Community and Family Impacts of Media**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Socialising and sharing activities together has reduced</strong></th>
<th>Since the introduction of television, participants identified that families and friends undertook fewer activities together than they had in the past. Younger participants felt they were spending less time with friends and participants felt that families were also undertaking fewer activities than they had prior to 1999. People were talking with one another less than they had previously, especially at home but also with friends.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quality time at home and with friends is hard to find</strong></td>
<td>Prior to 1999 participants identified that family meal times were spent with the extended family being together and that this was a time for sharing stories, talking about significant matters and listening to one another. Mealtime was considered communication time. However, 12 of the participants identified that they were now eating in front of the television and not sharing stories or talking about matters, and they often ate separate from one another.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Families and friends spend less time together</strong></td>
<td>22 of the 27 participants felt that families spent less time together than they had prior to 1999. All ages of men and women expressed this same view. People were busier with work as the economy changed and when they had spare time they wanted to watch television instead of socialising with family or friends, often their own choice of program so when viewing they were not together, or not communicating with one another as much as previously.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Changes to family structure and relationships</strong></td>
<td>Approximately 33% of participants thought that family relationships had changes since the introduction of television and attributed the changes to exposure to television content.</td>
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</table>
These changes included respect and attitudes from younger people to older people, increased confidence in younger people and willingness to challenge what elders were saying, younger people wanting independence and spend more time by themselves. Parents had changed expectations for their children, wanting success and a professional future.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children’s activities affected by television</th>
<th>Four of the participants identified that children played less outside, spent less time socialising and that children spent too much time watching television as it was restricting them for doing other important activities such as homework and physical play.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Media exposure is leading to some anti social behaviour</td>
<td>Ten of the participants had observed that there had been increases in antisocial behaviour which they attributed to exposure to international media, predominantly cable television. Bhutanese people were seen as mimicking and imitating behaviour seen on foreign television and were susceptible to influence because they were media naïve. Anti social behaviour included drug and alcohol abuse, fighting and theft. Differences of opinion were expressed as to the extent of this problem but it was seen to have significantly increased since the introduction of television. There was also a view that other social factors, such as youth willingness to challenge the status quo may have been a reason for this perception. Both younger and older participants observed increased antisocial behaviour.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Cultural Impacts of Media</th>
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<tr>
<td>Evident changes in daily life</td>
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</table>
and social activities. People felt busier, more knowledgeable, more willing to challenge the authorities and one another, yet spent less time communicating directly with one another in conversation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concern for loss of aspects of Bhutanese culture</th>
<th>21 of the participants expressed their concern that aspects of Bhutanese culture were at risk of being lost as a result of exposure to foreign media. These included speaking less local languages and more English and Hindi, young people learning less traditional knowledge from their elders, who could not write down their stories due to low literacy levels, adoption of western or Indian values replacing Bhutanese values, changes in dress and grooming, changes in recreational activities from traditional Bhutanese activities. Television was seen by 2 participants as enhancing Bhutanese traditions through BBS TV content.</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Buddhism guides acceptance</td>
<td>Ten participants commented on how the introduction of media had impacted on Buddhist practice. A number of participants felt that television viewing was restricting people’s practice of Buddhism because they spent so much time watching television and less time in prayer and religious focus. However, a number of participants felt that negativity about the impacts of television was not part of the Buddhist way of thinking and that focus on the positive outcomes of social change were much more in line with their religious teachings. As Buddhism is practiced by the majority of Bhutanese people and embedded as the part of the cultural identity in the Constitution, this positive view may be widespread throughout the country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dress and appearance is influenced by TV</td>
<td>Over 50% of the interviewees expressed that young people were modelling their dress and appearance on characters from foreign television channels, predominantly Hollywood and Indian television characters. They had observed people were</td>
</tr>
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</table>
wearing western clothes significantly more than they had prior to 1999 and that the Goh and Kira were worn by young people only for work and formal occasions. Certain make-up for women, high heeled shoes and low cut pants were all seen as new and for some people undesirable changes in dress and grooming.

| The new consumerism in Bhutan | Modernisation and education in Bhutan has meant that some people have more wealth than they did in the 1990s and there are more commercial products available that had previously been the case. However, television advertising from foreign media has created awareness of products that had hitherto been unknown by the majority of Bhutanese people and people developed a desire to purchase items seen on television. Merchants were also using television in order to determine what to buy and stock. New items included food, apparel, appliances, cosmetics, furniture and other consumables. However, as the general Bhutanese incomes were still low, most people could not afford to buy expensive consumer products. The desire for prosperity caused people to work longer and harder. |
| Influence to language impacting on culture | As a result of watching foreign television many younger Bhutanese people were speaking Dzongkha, English and Hindi and there was a tendency to mix these languages together. Hindi was also influencing the language spoken by older women. Other, non written languages were being spoken less by younger people in urban areas where television influence was strongest, being replaced by Dzongkha, English and Hindi. Some people felt that improvements in their knowledge of English and Hindi was a very positive change bringing more capacity to learn and be confident. |
| What people talk about has | Since the introduction of television participants observed their |
| changed | conversation topics had changes noticeably. New topics Bhutanese people were talking about included world events, international news topics, Indian soap operas, international sport, international fashions and new products. Some people felt that Bhutanese people believed content from drama and fiction programs was factual and their conversations reflected this. Significant amounts of conversation about television content were seen as replacing the local stories and day to day activities that had been the topics of conversation prior to 1999. Men and women conversed about different types of television content. Higher education levels, combined with the strong educative aspect of television was seen as giving people more to talk about as they had more knowledge. Previously unknown or taboo subjects were now more likely to be openly discussed. |

| Changes in social activities | All participants recognised that there had been a change in their social and personal activities. Increases in time spent at home and alone were the most widely recognised changes, predominantly because people were watching their own choice of television programs. Watching television was identified by participants as adding to their own happiness and therefore improving the nations drive towards Gross National Happiness. New activities, such as going to discos and drinking at bars were becoming common but were not commonly available or undertaken prior to 1999. People were also spending more time at work in order to be more productive and earn more money. Copying activities from television such as dating were seen as significant changes to traditional activities. People were seen to visit one another less in their houses and spend less time in group activities. People were working longer and harder, reducing time for socialising. People spent less time attending sporting matches in Thimphu because the preferred to watch sport on television. |
8.2 Comparison with quantitative media studies in Bhutan

The Media Impact Study (MIS) was prepared for the Royal Government of Bhutan, Ministry of Information and Communications by Mediacom (Ministry of Information and Communications 2008) and reviewed impacts of media in Bhutan with reference to the three of the four pillars of the Bhutanese Government’s policy of Gross National Happiness as outlined by Larmer (2008), Kezang and Walley (2008) and the Royal Government of Bhutan (2008). The three pillars focussed on by the study were sustainable and equitable socio-economic development, preservation and promotion of culture, and enhancement of good governance, with preservation and promotion of culture being the main focus. The study also assessed changes in media consumption and production since the first Media Impact Study in 2003.

8.2.1 The changing media landscape in Bhutan.

The Media Impact Study 2008 was a large study across four Dzongkhags with survey questionnaires delivered to 1,191 households. The research was in partnership with 2 Bhutanese higher education institutes and the Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy. A team of 25 enumerators and four supervisors coordinated the research. In addition, 20 focus groups were conducted with 183 people from across Bhutan and there were in-depth interviews with media professionals and government officials.

The Study found that there had been substantial change in both the media landscape and in media consumption in the 5 years since 2003 including significant increases in availability of media across the country, especially improved access in many rural areas. There had also been the establishment of 3 new Bhutanese commercial radio stations, predominantly for residents of Thimphu. These 3 new radio stations, Kuzoo Radio, Radio Valley and Centennial Radio were not yet broadcasting at the time I conducted the in-depth interviews in 2006. There had been some change in the number of international channels from when I conducted to the 2006 in-depth interviews to 2008, however, there had been substantial changes to both BBS TV and international channels being available to a higher proportion of the population because of the continued efforts by the Bhutanese Government to roll out satellite and cable TV services across the country, especially to rural communities. The Media Impact Study 2008 stated that between 2003 and 2008 the number of television sets in the country had increased from 35 thousand to over 47 thousand (National Statistics Bureau 2007), the number of cable subscribers had increased from 15 thousand to 30 thousand and the number of cable TV operators had increased from 33 to 52. (Ministry of Information and Communications 2008)
The Media Impact Study 2008 stated that mobile phone usage had gone from no mobile phones in 2003 to 250 thousand mobile phones in use in Bhutan in 2008. The MIS found that “the estimated 250,000 mobile phones in Bhutan are used for communications, SMS, listening to the radio, playing games and is a thriving business” (Ministry of Information and Communications 2008 p x). Mobile phones were already in use in Thimphu and other major centres in Bhutan when I conducted the interviews in 2006. Citing Kezang and Whalley (2008) and also using figures provided by Bhutan’s internet service provider, Druknet, the Media Impact Study 2008 noted that internet usage in Bhutan remained low and while the number had doubled from the 2003 estimates, the number of users in 2008 was 10 thousand across the whole of Bhutan with an estimated population of 630 thousand. (Note that the population estimate in the Media Impact Study 2008 was drawn from the Bhutan Living Standards Survey (2007 p8) and is different to the 2005 Bhutanese census which estimated the population at approximately 635,000 as fixed residents with a further floating population of approximately 37,000 making the overall population of Bhutan to be just over 672,000 people. (Census Commissioner Royal Government of Bhutan 2005 p1) This estimate of very low numbers of internet users is in line with Miniwatts (2008) online statistics indicating Bhutanese internet users are below 6 percent of the total population. Over the same period the study states that number of computers across the country has only increased from an estimated 8 to 10 thousand in 2003 to 13,500 in 2008.

8.2.2 Media usage

Some significant differences in preferences for media content are evident between the perceptions of the interviewees in 2006 and the findings of the Media Impact Study 2008. However there are also some substantial similarities. One of the major differences was is that the Media Impact Study 2008 showed there was a higher usage of BBS TV than there was of international TV. In terms of popularity the MIS stated that “BBS television is the most popular medium (39.5%) of the sample, followed by radio (37.3%), and then international TV (9.2%), showing that local media is more popular than the international. Bhutanese newspapers rank fourth (5.9%), six times more than the persons who chose international newspapers (Ministry of Information and Communications 2008 p 35). This is significantly different to the responses from participants in this study who estimated their viewing time to range from 50 – 90% foreign stations and 10-50% BBS TV. Several aspects explain this difference. Firstly, of the MIS survey respondents, 53% had no formal education and 12% had education only up to year 6 at school making a total of 65% having education only to year 6 or below. There is a high likelihood that the majority of people in this group could not speak English or any other foreign language, meaning that the only content that they could understand would be broadcast on BBS TV or local radio stations in Dzongkha, Sharshop or Nepali. This was reinforced by a finding of the MIS which was “Dzongkha is the language most people use to watch
Bhutanese TV (48.5%) and listen to Bhutanese radio (52.2%) compared to people who watch/listen to the English programmes (10% of sample for TV and 5.6% for Radio). Urban viewers of Dzongkha programming are more than twice the number of rural viewers. Similarly, there are more urban viewers of English programmes” (Ministry of Information and Communications. 2008 p18). Secondly, when looking at the number of people with access to and use television in urban areas the MIS found 77.1% of people use BBS TV and 74.9% use international channels. This indicates that despite such a high percentage of people who do not speak a foreign language, the number of people watching at least some foreign television is only marginally lower than the number watching BBS television. Their preference may be for BBS content, because this is the content that they can understand. Thirdly, since the in-depth interviews for this study were conducted in 2006 prior to the elections, and the MIS was conducted in 2008, the year of the elections, the interest in domestic politics and current affairs would have been higher in the MIS study than was the case in 2006. Fourthly, the majority of people I interviewed had tertiary education and were professionals, whereas only 4% of the MIS survey respondents had tertiary education and only 34% worked in business or as civil servants. In addition the National survey on Radio and Television in Bhutan, 2006 found that while BBS TV is the most regularly watched television station, the international television content and some of the international channels were more liked than BBS TV. (Ehlers and Yeshi 2006 p 29) Taking these differences into account it is likely that as the Bhutanese population becomes more educated, with more people understanding foreign languages, especially Hindi and English, the amount of and preference for international television consumption will increase substantially.

The MIS found that “people in rural areas preferred the radio while urban residents prefer TV. But rural residents say they would like to get TV” (Ministry of Information and Communications 2008 p35). This finding was consistent with the views expressed by the participants of this study and reflect the comments made by Interviewee 12 who wanted access to television before she died so she could see the world. The MIS reports that “interviews with Direct to Home (DTH) users show that some of them subscribe to DTH for more choices like sports and children’s’ programmes, while others (largely from the remote areas) do so because of pressure from their families. For many Bhutanese, TV is a sign of modern living that most homes aspire to have” (Ministry of Information and Communications. 2008 p14). The study found that people without TV want to have it as soon as they can. In addition, in situations where the Government has been unable to provide television access to rural areas, some communities have managed to acquire DTH TV and as stated in the MIS “in their efforts to acquire the entertainment that urban residents have, are resorting to new services like DTH TV which does not provide Bhutanese content” (Ministry of Information and Communications. 2008 p18). If there were a significant increase in DTH beyond the currently estimated 2 thousand subscribers, compared with 30 thousand cable service
subscribers reported in the MIS (the DTH service is direct from India and is not officially supported by the Bhutanese Government,) then these people would have access only to foreign television channels. (Ministry of Information and Communications. 2008 pi)

The amount of time spent viewing television from the estimates given in this study by participants ranged from 1 to 6 hours per day with the predominant range being 2 to 4 hours per day. This is not directly comparable to the findings of the MIS which measure time spent with each section of television, being foreign TV and BBS, measured separately and they could not simply be added together to find out unduplicated viewing times. However, the MIS found that “9.1% of households viewed BBS TV for up to 30 minutes, 12.9% between 30 minutes to an hour, 20% view for one to three hours and 5.9% for more than three hours the previous day” (Ministry of Information and Communications. 2008 p28). In the same section it was also stated that “Foreign TV viewing shows much less usage and this is probably due to the fact that about half our respondents live in rural areas without access to cable TV. Again while these timings provide a sense of media exposure, it does not account for the fact that the same people watch both BBS TV and international TV thus making their total viewing time much higher.” For this reason the findings of the MIS, where the majority of television viewers fall within a range well over 1 to 3 hours, are consistent with the estimates of the participants with this study.

The MIS also found a significant number of people listened to radio from between 30 minutes to 3 hours a day. (Ministry of Information and Communications. 2008 p29) This contrasts with the estimates of interviewees in this study with the majority stating that they listened to very little radio and only a few people listening at home. However, the interviewees in this study noted that when television was not available they listened to BBS Radio for significant periods of the day, as was the case with Interviewee 12. In addition, in 2006 at the time of the in-depth interviews, the other three radio stations, Kuzoo, Radio Valley and Centennial, were only being planned and had not yet started broadcasting. In addition, the National Survey on Radio and Television in Bhutan 2006, found that nine out of ten Bhutanese people stated that they liked to listen to radio and that BBS Radio was by far the most popular and the only local Bhutanese radio available at the time. The 2006 survey also found that urban people, who had television and newspapers were less enthusiastic about radio and listened less. (Ehrlers and Yeshi 2006 p8) Therefore, in 2008 at the time of the MIS survey, significantly more choice was available to some listeners who could receive the three new services (largely around the capital city, Thimphu). International radio listening was only approximately 6% of the survey sample. While this choice of new local content radio stations explains why there would have been substantially more radio listening in 2008 compared to 2006, the fact that 50% of the sample was in rural areas, a large proportion of which did not have available television, meant that radio listening would also have been higher in that
proportion of the sample. This is supported by the findings of the National Survey on Radio and Television in Bhutan 2006 that “53% or about 283,000 people from the age of 8 years or above listen daily or almost daily to BBS Radio. These regular listeners are more common in rural areas and 42% have no formal education, i.e. are probably illiterate” (Ehlers and Yeshi 2006 p4). Nevertheless it is apparent that with choice of local Bhutanese radio increasing, more people, including those in urban areas, were listening to radio and for longer periods of time in 2008 than had been the case at the time of the in-depth interviews in this study in 2006.

There had been only a minor increase in internet usage and the number of users remained below 6% of the population in the MIS survey and only 2.7% of the MIS sample used the internet more than 1 hour on days that they used it, and most accessed the internet only a few days a week. (Ministry of Information and Communications. 2008 p29) This finding is consistent with the perceptions of the participants in this study who used the internet, stating that they predominantly accessed the internet at work or occasionally from internet cafes. Also consistent with my observations in Bhutan was that listening to music and content through either fixed or mobile devices such as CD players and MP3 players was very low in the MIS survey. Only 6.2% of respondents said they listened to music for periods up to an hour on tapes, MP3 players and CDs. Because internet usage was also so low, opportunities for podcasting, vodcasting and other forms of downloadable or on demand listening or viewing were not part of the MIS survey and from my observations in Bhutan, were also not accessed to any evident extent by Bhutanese people.

8.2.3 Content preferences

There is consistent evidence that Bhutanese people have a preference to regularly consume local media content about their country and communities. This was emphasised by the comments of the participants in this study, especially relating to watching news and programs reflecting announcements from the King or government. Some people were also interested in sporting or cultural content that was broadcast on BBS TV. However, in relation to entertainment programs and information about the outside world, which was one of the strongest motivators that participants from this study articulated for watching television, participants emphasised their preference for international content and spent more time watching international content than they did local Bhutanese content. They valued the local content and thought it was essential viewing, but preferred to spend more time for information about the world, and for entertainment, watching international television. This was supported by the finding in the National Survey of Radio and Television in Bhutan 2006 that “the overall image of BBS is very positive, a little criticism in terms of BBS being old fashioned, boring or always the same, comes from the younger, the urban and TV viewers in general” (Ehlers and Yeshi 2006 p5). This finding was consistent with the perceptions of participants from this study that they watch BBS for news and information about their local
community, but prefer to watch the more interesting and entertaining content from the international channels. This finding is supported by McDonald (2004), who spent time in Bhutan examining the impact of media on the community, with particular reference to the impact of advertising and commercial media. McDonald noted, “despite its claims that it is an educational instrument, television is primarily used for entertainment and distraction. Soap operas, movies, celebrity trivia, sex, game shows, reality TV and sports typically constitute the most popular television fare. Although it is true that television contains many news channels and documentaries these too have largely succumbed to the pervasive imperative of retaining consumer attention. The result is evident in the relative decline of integrative analysis and the relentless rise of the shrinking sound bite” (McDonald 2004 p 80).

Ehlers and Yeshi (2006) found that Bhutanese television viewers had a preference for content on international channels. However, BBS TV was the most commonly watched channel. Several reasons account for this. Firstly, over 50% of the population would find it difficult to understand international content because, while they speak multiple Bhutanese languages, they do not speak a foreign language and have received either no formal education or only education up to year 6. More educated people, who speak English or Hindi, would be much more likely to watch international television, however, while literacy levels are rising sharply in Bhutan, the current situation is that the majority of people have not been educated and therefore would not be likely to watch significant amounts of content they could not understand. Secondly, as participants in this study perceived, they watch BBS TV regularly, perhaps every day, for local news and information. However, in terms of preference and time spent viewing, most participants preferred the content on international channels and spent significantly more time watching international television than BBS TV. While Ehlers and Yeshi reported on regularity and preferences of viewing, they did not report on time spent viewing.

The Media Impact Study, 2008 found that more of the survey sample watched BBS for news and only a very small sample watched international content for news. They found “about half the respondents said they were most likely to tune into BBS TV for news and only 4.5% would select an international TV channel” (Ministry of Information and Communications. 2008 p30). This finding is consistent with the perceptions of participants that they wanted to watch news and local information programs on BBS TV. However, the very low percentage of people watching international television for news is not consistent with the perceptions of the participants in this study. This could be because the MIS did not include current affairs, information or documentaries as reported categories in their study, which could have been identified by viewers. From the in-depth interviews I conducted, participants in this study did identify that they had a strong preference for documentaries and information programs from international television channels. In
addition 65% of the MIS sample members were not educated or only educated to year 6 and it is highly likely that they would not be able to understand English or Hindi which are the predominant languages of the international news services. It is likely that as education levels rise, so does the capacity to understand foreign content and therefore so does the consumption of international television for both news and entertainment.

The MIS also found however, that for other content, foreign channels were preferred. Their findings included “people tended to turn to international stations for nature and adventure programmes, to Indian and international channels for cartoons, and to Indian channels for comedy. For movies, people preferred Indian channels (19.8%) followed by international channels (17.9%). For TV serials, 27.7% chose Indian channels and 11.3% chose BBS serials. Sports programming were most sought after on international channels. (Ministry of Information and Communications. 2008 p30) However, these percentages are combined for rural and urban populations and for the language reasons outlined above, the number of rural people, who are less likely to be educated, would be less likely to watch foreign content. Therefore the percentages for urban audiences were significantly higher in the MIS than those for rural audiences. For example the figure of 27.7% choosing Indian channels jumped to 43.7% for urban audience while the figure of 11.3% choosing BBS for serials only rose to 16.1% for urban audiences. In the nature/adventure category the MIS found rural 12.1% of rural audiences watched international channels with 4.2% watching BBS whereas 44.4% of urban audiences watched international channels for nature/adventure and only 6.7% watched BBS. Similar difference applied to other categories investigated in the MIS including cartoons, movies, comedy and sports where urban audiences watched significantly more than double or triple the amount of international and Indian content than did their fellow rural citizens. This indicates that there was a much stronger preference for international content from urban audiences relating to entertainment, sport and documentary style (nature/adventure) programming. The major difference between urban and rural audiences that was evident from the survey data, and also evident from my personal observations, that would account for this preference in television viewing, was education and the subsequent capacity to speak foreign languages.

Consistent with the perceptions of participants in this study, the MIS found that Indian serials are very popular with women across the country and that the perception of citizens was that the amount of Indian serials watched was very high. The MIS stated, “Zhemgang residents said that about 80% of women TV owners watch serials in the town area” (Ministry of Information and Communications. 2008 p32). However, the MIS also stated that perceptions of TV viewing may be higher than the survey indicated even though the results of the survey confirmed that more women do watch Indian serials. However, Ehlers and Yeshi (2006) also found that significant numbers of women watched Indian soap programs and that almost twice as many women as men watched this
type of content. This was consistent with the perceptions of participant in-depth interviewees from this study who perceived that women and housewives watched significant amounts of Indian soap programs.

The National Survey of Radio and Television in Bhutan found that education channels attract more office workers, business people and students above the age of 25, (Ehlers and Yeshi 2006) consistent with the argument that educated people who speak foreign languages are more likely to access foreign content for information programs. In addition Ehlers and Yeshi (2006) found that in the age group of 35 to 49, almost twice as many men as women watched news channels. For example 33.7% of men from the surveyed sample watched BBC TV while only 15.3% of females surveyed watched BBC. Similar results were evident for all the international news channels, although in smaller overall percentages. This is again consistent with education as a factor in selection of international content, as nearly 70% of men in Bhutan are defined as literate while only just over 48% of women are deemed literate. (Census Commissioner Royal Government of Bhutan. 2005) Five times as many men as women were found by Ehlers and Yeshi (2006) to watch international sports channels, which was consistent with the trends perceived by participants in the in-depth interviews of this study than significantly more men watch sport than women, predominantly from international channels.

8.2.4 Impacts of media relating to emergent themes

The Media Impact Study 2008 identified a number of impact areas that were consistent with the themes that emerged from the in-depth interviews of this study. Table 8 , page 216, summarises the findings of the MIS and the National Survey on Radio and Television in Bhutan 2006 as they relate to the emergent themes from this study and offers explanations where the findings of the MIS or National Survey on Radio and Television are inconsistent with the perceptions of the participants.
Table 8  Summary of findings from the Media Impact Study 2008 as they relate to emergent themes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emergent Theme</th>
<th>Findings from the Media Impact Study 2008 as they relate to emergent themes</th>
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<tr>
<td>Quality time at home and with friends is hard to find. Also, Socialising and sharing activities together has reduced</td>
<td>The MIS 2008 found that families predominantly watch television together with 44% of households stating this was the case and only 9.5% stating that they watched television alone. (Ministry of Information and Communications. 2008 p 60) However, a number of participants in this study stated that they did have more than one television and that they did watch both together and separately with women, men and children often segregating. One reason for this could have been the affluence of the participants in this study, as they were predominantly urban professionals, and therefore able to afford multiple television sets. However, they said that where they could, they would prefer to watch their preferred program, rather than sit together. In addition, while the MIS noted families identified watching programs together, the view of participants in this study was that when sitting and watching television, families no longer talked to one another as they had prior to 1999. This view may not have emerged, such as with the MIS, without in-depth interviewing and the drawing out of deeper consequences of people’s daily activities. However, in terms of shared activities the MIS 2008 showed that a number of families were sharing the experience of television viewing together and this was consistent with the views of a number of participant interviews in this study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families and friends spend less time together</td>
<td>Between 2003 and 2008, the MIS found that there had been a substantial increase in the number of households which identified that they had less time for friends and socialising, as a result of television viewing. The number of houses identifying this rose from 3.1% in 2003 to 13.7% in 2008 (Ministry of Information and Communications. 2008 p 59). However, the table on page 57 of the MIS shows that more than one in 5 people state that Bhutanese or Indian TV viewing is reducing their time for social activities. While this result appears to be different to the perceptions of more than 75% of the participants from this study who felt that TV viewing was reducing their time for active interaction with family and friends, it is possible that this difference is due to the perceptions of people in this study being drawn out from in-depth interviews. The perceptions of less active interaction together may not be evident to many people through a simple survey question, but becomes more evident through follow on or in-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Changes to family structure and relationships

The MIS 2008 noted that a substantial number of respondents stated that values and attitudes were changing significantly in Bhutan, particularly with young people. The MIS quoted a student as saying “people have become more broad-minded because of the media. For example, male-female friendships in the past was viewed in a narrow sense but are accepted by more people now as friendships.” The MIS also state that “the media has opened up the world to Bhutan. The pictures of western film stars, scantily clad women in newspapers, the informality and boldness of FM radio are influences on Bhutanese society and the change taking place in society. The younger generation is adopting new values.

“Bhutanese youth are adopting an urban, fashionable lifestyle” (Ministry of Information and Communications. 2008 p 60). These findings are consistent with perceptions of the interviewees of this study that outline changes in the way younger people are relating to each other, their families and their confidence and values that guide their actions and relationships. While newspapers and radio were cited as major influences in the MIS, which was different to the responses from participants in this study who cited television as the major influencing media, it is important to note that local Bhutanese radio has increased with three new radio stations since 2006. However, these are still largely only available for some urban audiences, predominantly around the capital of Thimphu. In addition to the weeklies, there is now a daily newspaper whereas in 2006 there were only three weekly Bhutanese newspapers.

Children’s activities affected by television

The MIS 2008 stated that “nearly a quarter (24.2%) of the households sampled watched TV between 1-3 hours a day while 9% said they watched more than 3 hours day.” However, from examining the results for urban audiences it can be seen that children’s viewing was much higher than the rural audiences and therefore also higher than the averages stated. 35.8% of urban households estimated their children’s viewing to be 1 to 3 hours and 12.9% were over 3 hours a day. This meant that nearly half, or 48.7% of the surveyed households estimated that their children watched over an hour of television a day. The MIS 2008 also stated that 18.6% of households identified that television viewing was affecting children doing their homework but that just over 10% of households stated their children were more informed about the world and TV viewing increased their confidence. Some households felt children’s reading was reduced by television watching. Over a quarter of households from the MIS identified that education was a prime reason to let their children watch TV and nearly 14% stated viewing was for entertainment while 6% stated it was used as child
minding. However, all these percentages increased significantly when considering urban audiences in isolation. (Ministry of Information and Communications. 2008 p 61-62)

These findings of the MIS are consistent with the comments from participants from this study who identified that children, along with adults, were watching predominantly 1 to 3 hours of television a day and that while television was educative and offered confidence it also interfered with their capacity to undertake other activities such as physical play, socialising, sport, reading and homework.

The MIS 2008 survey also cited comments (Ministry of Information and Communications. 2008 p 64-65) stating that there was little content for children on Bhutanese television and that children in Bhutan relied almost exclusively on international television for viewing, with a lot of this content being for adults rather than children’s content. This is also consistent with the comments of participants in this study who identified household viewing as predominantly international content and that their children liked international channels containing cartoons, nature, documentary and some sport and drama programs.

The MIS stated that people feel that media, especially the Bhutanese broadcast media, have “some” influence on their behaviour. The international and Indian channels have less influence. However, closer examination of the results from urban audiences, where television viewing, especially viewing of foreign channels is much higher, reveals that there were a significant number of the survey sample who state they were influenced. By combining those that stated their behaviour was either influenced or influenced a little the figures were 51.2% for BBS TV, 39.6% Indian TV, 35.3% BBS TV and 31.7% Bhutanese radio. (Ministry of Information and Communications. 2008 p50) This is consistent with the views of over a third of the participants from this study who observed Bhutanese people to be mimicking some aspects of western and Indian media. In addition, respondents in the MIS made similar statements to those from the in-depth interviews of this study. One example was “My daughter talks back to me like children do in the movies,” said one mother. “She even uses the exact words” (Ministry of Information and Communications. 2008 p54). The MIS indicates that while not all people feel that they are influenced by media, of those with higher exposure in urban areas more than half feel that electronic media influences their behaviour and more than a third indicated that foreign television influenced their behaviour. As stated in the MIS “The influence of Bhutanese TV diminishes as people grow older” (Ministry of Information and Communications. 2008 p56). This is consistent with the perceptions from the in-depth interviews in this study that younger people in urban areas were more
influenced by what they saw on television. The MIS did not assess whether there
had been increases in antisocial behaviour.

However, comments from survey respondents in the MIS 2008 indicated perceptions
that television was influencing young people to behave in a manner that was less
acceptable to the Bhutanese people. The MIS noted “Parents believe that youth
groups that hang out in the capital, for example, are aping a new youth culture that
they see in the media and listen to in music. As for younger children, many teachers
without a doubt say that children get more aggressive after they’ve watched wrestling
on TV. (Ministry of Information and Communications. 2008 p61)

The MIS 2008 asked respondents how watching TV affected their daily lives. The
summary noted concluded “looking at the number of people who said ‘no effect’ we
get the impression that TV watching has not, in general, disrupted people’s time for
work in any major way” (Ministry of Information and Communications. 2008 p59).
However, when analysing the tables, by combining the responses for “yes” and “a
little” the results were 37.4% of respondents saying watching Bhutanese TV has
resulted in less time for work, 32.2 for watching Indian TV and 23.7 for watching other
international TV. In each case the response for no effect was considerably lower.
Therefore, more than a third of the respondents believed watching TV was leaving
them less time for work. Nevertheless, the MIS 2008 reported, “compared with
2003, the number of people who said TV viewing affected the time they have for work
is much lower” (Ministry of Information and Communications. 2008 p59).

In 2008, more people reported in the MIS that they were staying up late at night
watching television than they had in 2003. 32.6% of urban people said they stayed up
watching BBS TV, 33.7% stayed up watching Indian TV and 25.5% stayed up late at
night watching other foreign TV. More people reported staying up watching Indian
and other foreign channels than said that they did not.

The MIS 2008 found that more people felt that television was not interfering with
prayer than those that felt it was. Nevertheless, 22.3% of respondents said they did
believe it was interrupting prayer time and practice for BBS TV and slightly fewer for
international TV. In addition, there are numerous examples where were praying while
they were watching TV, which received some negative responses from fellow citizens.
One response from a meditation practitioner said: “They may seem to be counting but
the merit derived from the action is halved since their focus is not fully on the prayer
(Ministry of Information and Communications. 2008 p59)

The MIS 2008 was looking at change in people’s daily lives since 2003, whereas the
in-depth interviews of this study were looking at people’s perceptions of change from
the time prior to the introduction of television to 2006, after television had become
embedded into people’s daily lives. Nevertheless, there was strong consistency with
the responses to the MIS 2008 and the perceptions from interviewee’s in this study.
Significant numbers of people felt they had less time for work and other activities, they
spent significant amounts of time watching television and significant numbers of
people stated that this affected their prayer activities.

<table>
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<th>Concern for loss of aspects of Bhutanese culture</th>
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| The Media Impact Study found that there were significant cultural influences on the people of Bhutan from both television and radio. The changes included “being more open, informal and approachable” and “they are experimenting with new identities, hiding under anonymity, using nicknames” when talking on the radio. The MIS also states that people are “generally accept the emerging new culture as a part of change without thinking about it in-depth” (Ministry of Information and Communications. 2008 p ix). This is consistent with a number of participants from this study who stated that they realised Bhutan’s culture was changing, but that they were living through the changes and not noticing the changes as they occurred. In addition the MIS reported concerns from audience members that certain Indian and Western TV formats needed censoring and that social etiquette was being diluted by the cut and thrust of interviewing. Respect for elders was seen to be reducing. (Ministry of Information and Communications. 2008 p ix) These observations from the MIS are consistent with some of the concerns expressed by the in-depth interviewees of this study relating to how media is effecting Bhutanese culture.

The MIS 2008 stated “with the growth in entertainment media, there has been a decline in focus on local culture and festivals.” The report quoted a bureaucrat who said “Our media gives us more pictures and stories about the world outside than about our fast disappearing cultural practices” and it quoted a minister who said “Our culture is in a dilemma. We shouldn’t just copy everything from outside or we will lose our identity. Media have a role to play in promoting our culture,” (Ministry of Information and Communications. 2008 p 32). Younger people were also observing that the current changes, largely influence by media were jeopardising certain aspects of Bhutanese culture. The MIS cited an urban youth who said, “Bhutan is going like the west, just as India is also becoming westernised. We are losing our culture by not wearing ghos all the time. There’s a revolution because of media in Bhutan” (Ministry of Information and Communications. 2008 p 58).

These perceptions from local professionals were consistent with the views expressed by over 75% of the participants in this study who could see significant changes in their culture, which was largely accepted as good, but there was concern that significant important unique elements of Bhutanese culture could be lost through the impacts of
media, particularly television viewing.

There was a perception however, stated in the MIS 2008 that “media have helped to reinforce local culture especially in the film and music industry. In recent years, Bhutanese films have replaced Bollywood and Hollywood films in the cinemas and there are more Bhutanese films queuing to be screened in the eight cinemas in the country. However, there was also a view that many of these films were copying Bollywood style and not, therefore as strongly representative of Bhutanese culture as they would be if they were not copying that style. (Ministry of Information and Communications. 2008 p52 - 53)

Buddhism guides acceptance

This was not reported on by the MIS 2008.

Dress and appearance is influenced by TV

The MIS found that there was a significant number of people who felt they were influenced by media, especially television in terms of the way they dressed. The MIS stated, “of all the media, visual media have the most influence on people’s dressing” (Ministry of Information and Communications. 2008 p54) . By combining people saying whether they were influenced or influenced a little the MIS survey found 39.1% of respondents saying they were influenced by Bhutanese TV, 29.4% said they were influenced by Indian TV and 24.2% saying they were influenced by other foreign TV. (Ministry of Information and Communications. 2008 p50) However when measuring urban audiences only, this figure was much higher with the figure showing 56.2% felt their clothing and appearance was influenced by BBS TV, 45% by Indian TV and 36.8% for other foreign TV. Given that over 65% of the survey sample had no education or only education to year 6 and would be unlikely to speak a foreign language, and that they would not be likely to watch foreign TV, it is likely that the percentages for foreign TV influence would be higher if there were a sample of only educated Bhutanese people. As Bhutanese people improve their education levels, this influence may rise. Comments from respondents in the MIS related to people wanting to belong and wanting to copy the stars on TV. These comments were consistent with the perceptions expressed in the in-depth interviews in this study. An example of this was “many adults, especially those in rural areas pointed out the negative influences in dressing – ‘underpants showing and pants hanging’. Some were particularly embarrassed about women wearing clothes with an open chest almost showing their breasts” (Ministry of Information and Communications. 2008 p50).

One important observation from the MIS was that the concept of beauty had shifted, from that of the traditional notion of beauty being related to health and strength to a
new beauty being related to “the hour glass figure” (Ministry of Information and Communications. 2008 p vii).

<p>| The new consumerism in Bhutan | Ehlers and Yeshi (2006 p 35) reported that 73% of surveyed Bhutanese people felt that they were influenced by commercials on BBS TV, enough that they would actually buy a product, especially in people aged 15 to 49 years, with more women than men saying they were influenced. BBS was the only television station carrying Bhutanese advertisements so the influence of international channel advertising was not reported. This finding is consistent with the views expressed by participants who reported that they would buy things they saw on television and that their children also wanted items seen on television. |
| Influence of language impacting on culture | The MIS found that a substantial number of people believed media did impact on the way people speak and the language they use to communicate with one another. The highest level of influence was seen to come from BBS Radio with over a third saying that BBS Radio influenced their language, while BBS TV had 29.5%, Indian TV had 22.3% and other foreign channels 17.5%. However when looking at urban audiences radio lost significance compared to television with BBS TV having 43%, BBS Radio only 27.6%, while Indian TV had 33.2% and other international 25.5% saying they were influenced in the way they spoke by that medium. (Ministry of Information and Communications. 2008 p53-54) The finding that BBS TV in urban audiences has highest perceived language impact is not surprising given the number of people that cannot understand foreign languages and BBS Radio has far more reach in rural audiences, so its impact would be perceived to be higher. The MIS also found that people felt that TV and radio helped improve their Dzongkha, English and Hindi which is consistent with the perceptions from the in-depth interviews in this study. The MIS reported the growth of what they called Dzonglish, which is a mixture of Dzongkha and English, consistent with a number of participant’s observations and with my own observations in Bhutan that the languages were being mixed together. The MIS also reported that Dzonglish was now being used on Bhutanese radio which demonstrated growing acceptance of mixed languages. Concern was also expressed by some of MIS survey sample that the diversity of Bhutanese languages was not being spoken on Bhutanese radio or BBS TV and that this was a concern to them. This was consistent with perceptions of some of the in-depth interviewees who noted concern that younger people were not speaking their own language. |</p>
<table>
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<th>Changes in social activities</th>
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<td>The MIS did not report on changes in people’s activities apart from the changes to media consumption and the increased confidence and public discourse that was taking place as a result of media exposure. However, the MIS reported that one parent had stated, “Our children’s lifestyle is changing, and they are watching TV a lot of the time,” while another parent was quoted as saying, “My children want to look and feel like those people on TV” (Ministry of Information and Communications. 2008 p 64). Both these comments are consistent with the views of participants from this study who stated that many young people were mimicking the people and activities they watched on television which was leading to changes in the way they interacted, socialised and they types of activities they undertook, such as discos. The MIS 2008 did not report on how media consumption and time spent on media was replacing activities that had previously been undertaken prior to the introduction of television and the internet.</td>
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<td>What people talk about has changed</td>
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<td>The MIS 2008 did not report on whether people perceived that they talked about different subject matter or not as a result of media exposure. However they did report on whether people perceived media influenced their thinking. In rural areas, 65.6% of respondents reported radio influenced (or influenced a little) their thinking. However 39.2% of urban audiences identified radio as influencing their thinking. Bhutanese TV was seen to influence 23.4% of rural audiences but 64.2% of urban audiences while Indian TV was said to influence 14.6% of rural audiences and 48.2% of urban audiences while other foreign channels had 12.8% for rural audiences and 41.5% for urban audiences. (Ministry of Information and Communications. 2008 p51) Clearly, where television is available in urban communities it is identified by a significant number of people as having influence on the way they think. While Bhutanese TV was identified as the predominant media influencing thinking, Indian and other foreign channels were highly significant and if combined unduplicated, could account for as much or more influence on thinking than Bhutanese TV. While influence on thinking did not correlate exactly with the emergent theme of what people talk about from this study, there is likely to be a very strong correlation between what people think about and what they talk about, so it is reasonable to assume that the findings of this study, that many participants identified that what they talked about had changed, was consistent with the findings of the MIS 2008 that a high proportion of people in urban areas were influenced by TV, including a large proportion believing foreign channels influenced their thinking.</td>
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9 Discussion and conclusion

9.1 Knowledge and connectedness

Giddens (2003 p 9) states that globalisation has created a global cosmopolitan society. Participants in this study strongly expressed the view that they wanted to join the global society, or the rest of the world, and that television and media access was allowing them to participate in the world. Giddens outlined that members of a community could be “locationally distant from face to face interaction” where “space” is torn “away from place” (Giddens 1990 p 18). The feeling expressed by all Bhutanese participants that they felt connected to and part of the world, through the viewing of international television content, is an example of a community that has emerged from a pre-media environment with geographic boundaries, to a society where people relate with people in distant lands and who are no longer bounded by geography or place to engender a sense of community. Yet the participants were also proud of the distinctiveness of Bhutanese society. They identified themselves as having a unique culture that offered richness to the lives of Bhutanese people. Some identified that having a unique, distinctive culture was a point of difference and strength for Bhutan as it modernised and joined the global society.

Valuing their own culture within the borders of Bhutan, defined by distinctive languages, lifestyles, rituals, dress, food, religion and many other national social attributes was concurrent with the urgent desire and need to participate with other cultures, and the global society through television. This was not a desire to escape from their present space or place, on the contrary they valued where they were living, and in the time that they were living. The push and pull of culture as described by Lull (2005), allows for this concurrent pulling by individuals from the cultural messages they wish to take, and they can take these from their local geographic or national society, or they can take them from the global society through media participation. With reference to national society, Lull states “culture never functions solely as an unwanted, dominating, limiting force that is imposed on individual persons. To the contrary, most people depend on culture for great comfort, even for survival” (Lull 2005 p 47). In this context Bhutanese participants who expressed their very strong desire to access the world through television viewing were not expressing a desire to move away from the Bhutanese culture that they related to and valued, rather as individuals, they were pulling cultural experience from outside Bhutan. They valued the freedom to do this following the opening up of their previously closed borders, through television access in 1999.

Individuality emerged as a significant aspiration for many Bhutanese participants who expressed the desire to be able to watch content of their own choosing, sometimes on their own in their home, and often different members of a family would choose to watch different content. Moores (1996 P 17-18) cites Morley (1986) noting that “Morley’s male interviewees state a preference for sport,
factual programmes and ‘realistic’ fictions, as opposed to what they dismissively regard as the feminine genres of soap opera or romance.” It is interesting to note that Morley’s research outcomes are consistent with the findings in this study that women and men have different content preferences and that sport and factual content dominate men’s interest while soap operas and drama dominate women’s interests.

The increased importance of individuality was highlighted by Lull, who noted that the rising significance of mass media, information technologies and cultural industries in everyday life was concurrent with “increased individualism, autonomy, freedom and mobility” (Lull 2005 p 51). According to Curran, individual taste is driving people to choose content supplied by the global economy rather than nationally determined program schedules (Curran 1998 p 175). However, participants not only watched the content of their own choosing, whether BBS or international, but also acted individually according to their own response to the content they were watching. This led some participants to undertake actions that changed their dress, behaviour in the home, social activity and language and will be discussed later in this section. Participants also observed actions in response to television viewing from other people in their family or community. Lull states that while there are negative consequences of individualism, an individual person is “not just a naïve follower of traditions or trends but an active, reflexive, imaginative subject who is motivated to act in his or her own best interests that should not be understood to mean only selfish concerns” (Lull 2005 p 51). Bhutanese participants did observe some negative aspects in behaviour and action of people following the introduction of television. They described a rise in criminal activity, reduced respect for older people in the family and reduced respect for traditional Bhutanese dress and customs. However, many participants perceived that young people were more assertive rather than disrespectful, that people adopted western style clothing because it was more comfortable and practical and that they would wear traditional dress for work or formal occasions, that they were learning from the content they watched on television and that the choices and actions of individuals in the changing Bhutanese society were leading to, on balance, an improved society.

Curran (1998) argues that while there is concern that too much global content selection by individuals will lead to reductions in shared experience that binds a community together (from national or local content) he also argues that the impacts of globalisation of television may be overstated because many people choose to watch content from their own country. Participants in this study predominantly chose international content over local content, although as has been previously discussed this may only be the case for members of the Bhutanese society who have English or Hindi language skills as the MIS (2008) found there was a stronger preference for BBS TV than international content. Concurrent with the capacity for people to choose their own television programs and subsequent actions, there was also an increase in shared experience through the capacity of people to come together and talk about the programs they had watched.
They may have watched the programs separately, but when they came together at work or for social gatherings, they could talk about the shared experiences of the programs as described by a number of participants. This allowed for common interests and experiences outside the home and village; common experiences that had previously not been available to Bhutanese people prior to the introduction of television. It is worth noting that participants stated that they spoke collectively about shared program experiences from international content such as the Hindi soap operas, nature programs or sporting programs. Shared experiences from watching BBS content were expressed more in terms of local news and information and official announcements. Some participants said they did not watch very much BBS TV, because they already knew about the information that was being broadcast on the local television, while the international content allowed them to find out new information and have new experiences which they liked to share with family, friends and colleagues.

9.2 Importance of local media content

As stated by a number of participants and noted in the MIS 2008, Bhutanese culture can be supported and enhanced through the content on local media. The emergence of three new Bhutanese radio stations and a daily newspaper all enhance the capacity of Bhutanese media to be accessed and consumed by Bhutanese people. However, there was concern expressed by participants that the dominance of international content, especially with respect to entertainment and international information, was leading to cultural change and potential loss of important aspects of Bhutanese culture. These views are supported by the comments of Rinchen who said, ”if the country and the people in Bhutan are concerned by this changing scenario and if it is not taken care of at such a pace, Bhutan will not take long to join the rest of the world in a homogenous cultural society” (Rinchen 2007 p 208). The implication is that evident cultural change in Bhutan is occurring rapidly and that there is a requirement to ensure that the unique cultural identity of Bhutan is not homogenised with the rest of the world. It will not be sufficient to provide content in Bhutanese media that mimics foreign content or style because Bhutanese culture is diverse, with over 17 languages, many of which are not written and cultural practices from one valley to another, or one Dzongkhag to another, can vary considerably.

Page and Crawley (2001 p 20) note that, “satellite TV is no respecter of borders” and that the same programs can be watched in Karachi, Kathmandu and other cities across Asia. Much of this content is in Hindi or English and is one way – “from India outwards” (Page And Crawley 2001 p 24). In describing the important role of local community cable television in Tansen in Nepal, Wilmore (2001) noted that the Indian influence in Nepal has been more than just through language, it has also been in the form of imported media content as well as a very strong influence of media formats on Nepalese media as well as the strong influence of Hindi movies. Page and Crawley
(2001) and Wilmore (2001) emphasise that local content is very important in reflecting diverse local and cultural issues, including the need to broadcast in local languages.

As stated by Bodt who presented a paper at the Media and Public Culture Conference in Bhutan in 2007, “in a country such as Bhutan with a diversity of around 20 languages, there will always be people who do not understand the national language or the language spoken by other majority groups. In order to reach these groups, products (programs) should be made in local languages” (Bodt 2007 p 489). In this context, localism is not just about national content, but also about producing content that is relevant to and reflecting the values of the diverse communities within the country. Reflecting the cultural diversity of Bhutan is a major role for media in the country. Bhutanese media content, especially BBS TV is indeed watched by a significant number of Bhutanese people and in many instances, where significant proportions of the population do not speak foreign languages, BBS programs are the only understandable forms of content available. Nevertheless as the Bhutanese community improves literacy and education levels, higher percentages of the population will be able to understand and consume foreign media. As participants in this study stated, international content is preferred by many Bhutanese people over local content, because of quality, entertainment and information value. This was also found by Ehlers and Yeshi (2006 p 5). Nevertheless, the importance for local content that is interesting, relevant and understandable to local Bhutanese audiences was emphasised by Bodt, who had a focus on the importance of the media assisting Bhutanese people in promoting sustainable development within their country. He stated, “programmes and articles by local people with a more specific Bhutanese content will generate more interest, hold the attention, encourage people to take action, and will be expressed in an understandable language” (Bodt 2007 p 487). It is clear that while there are significant sectors of the Bhutanese population, particularly in rural areas who do not speak foreign languages, local content will remain their content of choice, but local content will need to compete with international content for audience interest in order to ensure the Bhutanese people continue to consume significant quantities of Bhutanese media content.

Values inherent in Buddhism and underpinning Bhutanese social objectives such as justice, peace, compassion, equality and generosity were outlined by McDonald (2007) as not being present in aspects of the Western culture and market and he argued this needed to be considered in comprehending the media impact in Bhutan. It could be argued that Bhutan has BBS TV that delivers the values of the Kingdom through its content. However, as expressed by participants in this study, when people have a choice to be able to access the content of over thirty international channels, they are likely to choose international content, to a significant extent, which may not reflect the values, aspirations, or activities undertaken within Bhutan. McDonald (2007) states this is a fundamental challenge for many traditional cultures around the world.
There is a paradoxical expectation from audiences for local radio news to also contain international and national news according to Crisell and Starkey (2006). This requires local radio stations to buy international news content from news agencies or other media outlets as well as providing sufficient local staff to be able to put composite news bulletins together. In relation to information content, in Australia at least, media consumers appear to want both international and national or local content in one converged format rather than choosing one form of station over another (McCluskey 2004). Audiences also want a blend of national and international content with a preference for local news and information to be a significant part of the bulletin or program (McCluskey 2003). The cost of providing local media, television especially is very high and where the ability to raise advertising revenue is low, such as in Tansen in Nepal, there has been a reliance on the support of development organisations (Wilmore 2001 p 374). In Bhutan with a total population under 700,000 people and average monthly income of just over $24 US (UNDP 2005), the capacity to raise revenue from television advertising is very low. Paterson (1988) argues that cultural relevance is lacking in global TV news and a single global view is pervasive. While it could be argued that user generated content and citizen journalism through the internet, is now countering this trend, the situation in Bhutan, where only about 6% of the population can access the internet, and more than 40% cannot read or write, is that the only real media available to most Bhutanese people at the present time is television and radio. Bhutan is unlikely to have access to the internet for a considerable time when assessing the access template devised by Wilson III (2004 pp 301-307), because it does not have either the infrastructure for physical access, or the means for financial access. In 2006 BBS TV was providing a valued and culturally relevant television service. Because its content was only local and because there was a perception that the quality was not as good as international channels, there was a preference from most participants to watch international television. As has been discussed, it is possible that people who can understand Hindi and English content may be more likely to watch international channels than the local BBS content.

Bhutanese television and radio has not evolved in the same way as most developed countries of the world where there has been a composite form of local, national and international content available on the one channel. National and regional broadcasters have provided composite entertainment, information and news content to their audiences. However, in Bhutan the choice between completely local or national content from the one station and completely international content with no local focus from the other 30+ stations provided a very different introduction to television for the audience. Bhutanese perspectives on international news are partly available through the coverage of major international stories in the BBS news bulletins, however, my observation and the perceptions of participants in 2006 was that the BBS news focussed on local issues within Bhutan and in order for people to gain international news and information, they watched the international channels where no Bhutanese perspectives on the stories were available.
The MIS (2008) states that there has been a significant increase in Bhutanese film both in the number of films produced per year and the quality of those films. In addition, BBS TV has started producing some Bhutanese drama. This is a significant improvement over what was available in 2006 when perceptions of some participants were that Bhutanese films were of poor quality and there was no Bhutanese drama to watch. Nevertheless, the vast majority of drama, entertainment and information content available to audiences in Bhutan is from the international television channels where the drama is in a foreign language, and its cultural context is not Bhutanese. This study found that in 2006, participants preferred to watch the entertainment and information content on the international channels, because of a lack of quality and quantity of locally produced content.

9.2.1 The push of globalisation - the importance of localism

Lull (2005 p 48) outlines that culture is defined more by “speech habits, folklore, frames of value, and a collective self image” than it is by geographic boundaries. In Bhutan, the elements of culture described by Lull do apply within the borders of Bhutan and participants in this study, in identifying themselves as Bhutanese, described the distinctive cultural characteristics that they believed were important to maintain. Lull also noted that individuals in a globalised world, through the diverse opportunities of media, can identify with an increasing array of cultural resources from anywhere in the globe. He describes this as the push and pull of culture where society can push cultural identity to people, and pull where individuals can select their cultural identity through individual action (Lull 2005 p 26). This study found that Bhutanese people welcomed the opportunity to pull cultural influences from the world, through access to international television as a major cultural resource, where they experienced the freedom to join the global community after the introduction of international television in 1999. As a consequence of the influence of international content, Bhutanese people perceived changes in social rules and changed their actions in many different ways, which in turn led to cultural changes, perceived by the participants in this study, as discussed in section 9.6.1, Broader social changes.

Lull (2005) also describes the push of culture where society, and the collective, can push cultural identity to people. Page and Crawley (2001) state that media content from India, in English and Hindi, is from India outwards, and that the content is largely the same throughout every country of Asia. Rinchen (2007) states that Bhutan may join the rest of the world in “a homogenous cultural society” because of the strong influence, predominantly from media, with globalised images and values. McDonald (2007) noted that the values imbedded in the globalised content of international media are predominantly not reflecting Bhutanese values, and that this represented a challenge to traditional cultures of the world, such as Bhutan. However, this study has found that there is a strong preference for at least some international content from people who can understand English and Hindi, and therefore they are accessing significant amounts of content that may not reflect the
values and cultural interests of Bhutanese people. Rather, the content is reflecting the agenda of news agencies and media corporations (Paterson 1998, Thussu 2006) where the contemporary, mass media created, visual representations of the world are provided, to the rest of the world (Paterson 1998 p 82). This study has demonstrated that Bhutanese people feel that they are connected with, and informed about the world through television access and feel that they have joined the global community. However, as identified by Paterson (1998), the view of the world they have been receiving through television is a shared reality, created by the social practices of journalists, and therefore, many Bhutanese people who have little or no other contact with foreigners, cannot travel, or have internet or other communication access, cannot test or challenge their conception of the mass media created reality of other countries. It is therefore likely that the globalised view of the world being received by many Bhutanese people, through multiple international television channels, is paradoxically unlikely to have a wide range of views representing the range of values from the diversity of developed and developing countries around the world. As outlined by Fröhlich (2008) diversity of media, along with freedom of speech and freedom of media is important in the development and maintenance of democracy.

Wilmore (2001) outlined the importance of local content to reflect diverse local and cultural issues. Local content needs to be blended with national and international news and programs (Crisell and Starkey 2006) in order to have local and global content that can be consumed, compared and contrasted by the audience and where global issues can be presented with local perspectives and local issues understood within a global framework of programs. In Bhutan, the audience has a choice between a channel providing almost 100% local content or over 30 channels providing 100% international content. This study has found that some people who can understand foreign languages, will choose to watch predominantly international channels. A local television station that provided a blend of Bhutanese and international programs would assist the audience to interpret global news, information and entertainment within the framework of local programs that reflected the values and interests of Bhutanese people. International content on such a channel could be translated to assist local audience members who cannot speak foreign languages understand and access the international content.

Bodt (2007) outlines the importance of the media reflecting the cultural values and cultural diversity of Bhutan. This study has also demonstrated that Bhutanese people value their own culture and see the importance of the preservation of the distinctive and unique cultural characteristics of Bhutan. This is also one of the four key principles of Gross National Happiness. However, as this study has demonstrated, some people watch significant amounts of international television and in doing so, they are spending less time in on-to-one communication, where they share information about their culture, past and present. This finding will be discussed further in
following sections. However, some participants expressed the desire to watch more local television, but feel the quality and diversity of content was not sufficient, at the time of this study in 2006 and so preferred to watch international content. Therefore the local content needs to be of high quality, reflecting the diverse interests of Bhutanese people, which include national and international news, information and entertainment programs.

9.2.2 Bhutanese value local and international content

This study has demonstrated that Bhutanese audiences have strong interests in news, drama, sport, entertainment and information from around the world as well as from their own country. All participants were using the media to access considerable amounts of content and they saw this as an important link in terms of education and connectedness with the global community. They felt enlightened, educated and entertained from television, and also from the internet for the low percentage of Bhutanese with access. This is consistent with a finding of Palmer, who notes that girls aged thirteen to sixteen were, in a general sense, using “television as a form of self-education” (Palmer 1986 p 63). Findings from this study indicate that this is also true in the adult population in Bhutan. Bhutanese people liked watching television for both information and entertainment and watched the news, talk programs, soap serials, dramas, movies, documentaries and sport. People listened to radio and watched BBS TV predominantly for local news and information about Bhutanese issues, but for information about the world, entertainment, drama, documentaries and sport they watched and liked international television much more.

BBS local content did cover some local cultural issues and some participants saw this as important, however, the preference was to watch international content that was not relating to Bhutanese culture or traditions. The perceptions of participants was that it was good to have BBS TV providing local news, local talk programs (current affairs in Bhutan) and special educative content specifically relating to farming as well as official or national messages. However, there was not a view that local BBS content would be watched significantly for other forms of cultural content such as drama, serials or documentaries or sport (except for national sporting festivals). Content that was often deemed to represent culture, such as drama, documentaries, sport and serials was preferred and watched mainly from international channels. An example of this was that Indian serials were very popular with women while international sport was very popular with men. This finding was consistent with results from the MIS (Ministry of Information and Communications 2008).

The MIS (Ministry of Information and Communications 2008) also showed a preference for good quality Bhutanese information and entertainment through film and BBS TV. Differences of opinion were expressed about the quality and importance of the local content on BBS TV and radio. Some
participants stated that because Bhutan was such a small country, most of the news and information on BBS TV and radio was already known to them. They also expressed their view that the entertainment value in BBS TV was not up to the standards of international channels. However, a number of participants stated that they thought the BBS was doing its best and that they felt that they should want to watch more BBS content because it was made for Bhutan by Bhutanese people and because it was supporting the efforts of the government to provide local television. One participant said that he wished BBS content were better, so that he would want to watch it, but he felt that the international channels were informing him more and entertaining him better. This demonstrates that some Bhutanese people are attracted to the foreign channels, despite their feelings of loyalty and commitment to their local television station, because of the quality and diversity of content on the international television channels in addition to the desire for Bhutanese people to be informed and engaged with the rest of the world.

However, participants unanimously stated that they felt that their unique culture and the richness of their heritage was something they valued highly. Most participants also stated the BBS was at least in part assisting Bhutan to retain its distinctive cultural identity and that BBS was educative and informative about current issues and cultural heritage. They valued the role of the BBS in providing local information about change and politics, as well as news and discussions with political, business and opinion leaders. Many specifically stated that they would tune in to official announcements from the government and would watch any addresses from His Majesty the King.

Bhutanese people value local content highly and would like it to improve in quality and quantity. However, they also value international content and would like to continue watching more. Some feel that they should prefer to watch more local content, but are drawn to watching international programs. Further research is required to determine whether Bhutanese audiences would prefer television channels that carried composite programming of national and international programming and whether they would prefer international programming that was, at least to some extent, contextualised with Bhutanese perspectives and interspersed with Bhutanese content.

### 9.3 Cultural change

Of the many changes in the world associated with globalisation, Giddens (2003 p 51) states “none is more important than those taking place in our personal lives - in sexuality, relationships, marriage and the family. There is a global revolution going on in how we think of ourselves and how we form ties and connections with others.” He comments we do not know what the associated “advantages and problems will turn out to be.” This accords with Lull (2000 p 229) who notes that, “globalisation influences are not all predictable and not all bad.” He argues that countries cannot afford to disconnect from or ignore the global scene. Perceptions of participants in Bhutan were that, as other forms of modernisation took place in technology, education and democracy, they
were experiencing significant change in the routines and activities of their daily lives, as well as the way that they related to, and communicated with members of their families, their friends, and other social contacts. The scheduling of TV programmes, choices in content and their desire to watch content that interested them individually rather than collectively, meant that they spent significantly less time talking with one another in the family and home environment and in many cases, less time sharing collective experiences. Some of the changes perceived were: they noticed that the topics of conversation had changed significantly, younger people were more confident in speaking with older people, young men and women courted each differently, younger people were less satisfied with accepting shared rooms, shared beds and shared family space than had been the case prior to the introduction of television. These perceptions of change from Bhutanese participants are consistent with Giddens’s (2003) statement that changes in personal lives are an important aspect of globalisation. The participants also confirm the assertion of Lull (2000) that globalisation influences are not all bad, because they have perceived so many benefits through the new connectedness that global television has offered. At the same time they were neither predictable nor considered all good. But participants preferred living in the modern time of connectedness, than they did prior to the introduction of television.

Morley notes that one of the consequences of the globalisation of media is the prevalence of English or hybridised English languages such as Hinglish or Singlish. He states that that the dispersal of English into many regional forms might be “the inevitable price it pays for global hegemony” (Morley 2005 p 30). It is interesting to note that in Bhutan one of the observed outcomes through my research and also noted in the Media Impact Study (Ministry of Information and Communications 2008) was the emergence of Dzonglish, a hybridisation of Dzongkha and English attributed to significant amounts of television viewing in the English Language. Dzonglish was observed more often than the hybridisation of Dzongkha and Hindi, however, my own observations and the perceptions of some of the participants was that Hindi is significantly influencing the language of the Bhutanese people through the viewing of large amounts of Hindi content on the international TV services. This is consistent with Wilmore (2001) in observing the influence of the Hindi language in Nepal where he notes that Hindigenisation has had a powerful influence for a very long time both in terms of language and in cultural influence. The increase in usage of blended languages, such as Dzonglish (English diluting Dzongkha) and Hingkha (Hindi diluting Dzongkha – my own word) which I had observed while in Bhutan, were stated by participants to be a consequence of people being exposed to English and Hindi programs on international television. Further investigation is needed to determine to what extent these blended languages are increasing in Bhutan and if international television is the main cause for the growth.
More than 50% of the participants perceived that young people were modelling their dress and appearance on characters from foreign television channels. This was also highlighted in the Media Impact Study where it was observed that, “a significant change is the concept of beauty with the traditional notion of beauty related to health and strength being replaced by the hour-glass figure. The visual media has had the most influence on the sense of dress and general appearance, with advertising influencing makeup” (Ministry of Information and Communications. 2008 p 54). The Study quoted one recent graduate who stated, “It’s all about looking good, looking like stars, being slim. It’s more like having a sense of belonging which is vital” (Ministry of Information and Communications. 2008 p 54). This evaluation from the MIS not only concurs with the perceptions of the participants of this study but also with Becker (2004) who found that Western Fijian adolescent women were significantly influenced by television after it was introduced into their community. Becker’s (2004 p 1) conclusion that “response to television appeared to be shaped by a desire for competitive social positioning during a period of rapid social transition,” is consistent with the findings of the MIS 2008 as well as with perceptions of participants that young women especially in Bhutan were being influenced by Indian fashions as well as by western images displayed on television programs and advertising. Miller (1992) outlined the possibility of global and foreign media offering an opportunity for audiences within specific cultures to use the content in a manner that builds and adds to their own cultural identity. This study found that the Bhutanese participants were redefining social rules that guided their actions relating to language, dress and appearance, behaviour with one another, and other forms of social interaction. In this way Bhutanese people were using television to build and add to their own cultural identity. However, as discussed later, participants also expressed concern that they were at risk of losing some aspects of their distinctive culture.

An interesting observation made in the MIS 2008 was that “observers say that it is now difficult to tell some Bhutanese youth apart from other Asians” (Ministry of Information and Communications 2008 p 54). This further reinforces the notion that young Bhutanese people are copying the appearance and characteristics of television personalities. Television advertising is also having significant impact on young Bhutanese people. In the Media and Public Culture Conference run by the Centre for Bhutanese Studies in 2007, Rinchen noted “a stereotypical media image of uniformly beautiful and obsessively thin females with Barbie doll proportions with harmful dieting habits has become common among women and girls in Bhutan. The world of advertising does not recognize the different beauty ideals that we celebrate within our own culture” (Rinchen 2007 pp 223-224). Rinchen argued that media content was having significant influence on the appearance and aspirations of young Bhutanese people and that there was a strong need to counter the stereotyping and Westernisation caused by uniform styles of media content. This view reinforced a finding of this study, where participants perceived that mimicking and copying the fashions and
appearance of television characters, was changing the image and actions of young Bhutanese people.

Ten of the participants in this study articulated a view that television was impacting on Buddhist practice, however a number of interviewees also stated that negativity about television or media and its impact was not part of the Buddhist way of thinking. However, as noted by Phuntsho (2007), mass media does present significant challenges for practicing Buddhists. He stated his reasons that, “mass media is seen generally as materialistic and intended to flare people’s desires and greed through endless advertisements, propaganda and other enticing programmes. It invigorates human vices such as craving, desire, and anger thus exacerbating the dissatisfactory nature of human existence” (Phuntsho 2007 p 29). Nevertheless, despite these challenges Phuntsho argues that Buddhism does indeed guide people not only to accept how media is changing society, but also to embrace media to bring about social improvements. He stated, “Buddhism is a progressive religion, not a static system. Although its core principles like non-violence, compassion, and wisdom remain eternal, its methodologies and modalities have constantly evolved. Buddhist teachers and institutions should learn to adapt to the new social surrounding and fully exploit the mass media and media technologies to further the Buddha’s teachings. The main question, therefore, is not what media will do to religion but what religion will do with media” (Phuntsho 2007 p 30).

However, this view was not entirely shared by McDonald (2007) who argued that certain aspects of commercial media were interfering with Buddhist practice and Bhutan’s objectives in line with Gross National Happiness. He stated, “any for-profit medium like television is inherently problematic for Buddhist aspirations insofar as it aims to export awareness from its immediate context. The total effect of hours of attention absorption particularly in television and the internet are not fully documented but certainly in the process of consumption vast swathes of attention are turned over to a dulling and disconnecting escapism” (McDonald 2007 p 198). His statement supports the view expressed by participants, that some people sit for hours in front of the television, absorbed by television and that this interferes with their capacity to undertake Buddhist practice, but he is also stating that the nature of the television content, particularly advertising, leads to non Buddhist aspirations. McDonald stated, “if media policy is not carefully crafted, the authority of Buddhist aspirations will be rapidly undermined as many individuals (and particularly the younger generation) abandon themselves to finding false purpose in the market’s immediate indulgences” (McDonald 2007 p 200).

One of the findings in this study was that consumerism was emerging in Bhutan with participants perceiving that they were working harder so that they could buy more goods, that their children were influenced by advertising and that merchants were being influenced by television advertising
in order to determine what to stock, to increase sales. This form of consumerism was not in line with Bhutanese Buddhism according to McDonald (2004) who stated, “in classical Mahayana Buddhism the most important hindrances are greed, ignorance and harmfulness and Bhutan’s cultural heritage revolves around practices designed to minimise the impacts of these dysfunctional tendencies. Volumes of Buddhists texts speak to the complex dangers of these three hindrances and attest to the need to keep them under control. Those poisoned by them, consumers in modern terms, are trapped in immaturity and unhappiness and spread these ailments among others. From a Buddhist perspective and thus from a GNH perspective, cultivating excessive consumerism is wholly inappropriate” (McDonald 2004 p 85). In Bhutan, consumerism is not only impacted by advertising in local media, but as noted by a number of participants, the content from India has a very strong impact on driving consumer desire, and while McDonald puts up a strong argument for the banning of advertising in Bhutanese electronic media, it would be very difficult for Bhutanese authorities to ban advertising which appeared on Indian or other international television channels.

The views expressed by participants and noted in the MIS 2008, that English was being interspersed with words from Dzongkha and Dzongkha with words from English, were discussed by Dorjee at the Media and Public Culture Conference where he stated his view that Dzongkha could be on the path to suicide. Because Bhutanese people speak English as a socially prestigious language, he said of Dzongkha, “it slowly demolishes itself by bringing more and more forms from the prestige language, until it destroys its own identity. A socially prestigious language gets used in more and more circumstances, so that previously bilingual speakers have little opportunity to practise the old language” (Dorjee 2007 p 132). He was concerned that English was beginning to dominate Dzongkha and that the national Bhutanese language was already showing signs of borrowing too many words from the more prestigious English. He noted that language is one of the fundamental aspects of cultural identity stating, “language is the basis of culture. If the language is lost, the culture is also in danger of being lost. And one’s culture is the basis of one’s identity: personal, social, national, thus there is a danger of one’s identity being lost” (Dorjee 2007 p 132). In order to feel empowered and connected, as identified by a number of participants in this study, many people feel that they need to speak English and Hindi. Those who can speak English or Hindi feel connected to the outside world and as a number of interviewees also stated, many Bhutanese people are also speaking to one another in English or “Dzonglish” as referred to in the MIS (2008). This is of major concern to Rinchen (2007) who believed Bhutanese languages were not being supported by the media as anticipated and that Bhutanese languages were losing priority within the society. Rinchen said, “whatever they do, whether it is to search for information, to communicate, or to chat with friends, relatives or loved ones far away, they need to do it in English. Therefore, without the knowledge of English, they feel handicapped. It was found that the English language was to be given priority, and Dzongkha was seen to be just a preferred language.
Due to this factor, many of the younger educated people lose their interest in the Dzongkha language” (Rinchen 2007 p 223). This supports the perceptions of participants and the finding that media, especially TV is impacting on language and that there is a real risk that a number of Bhutanese languages could be lost. Even the main language Dzongkha was at risk of being blended with English and Hindi.

Behavioural change is also seen as occurring as a result of media exposure according to Rinchen, who was concerned that significant cultural change was taking place in Bhutan as a result of media exposure, particularly TV. Rinchen stated, “the viewers develop and adopt behaviour by mimicking the flickering movements on the screens. These actions are influential in the deterioration of their philosophy to a newly induced behavioural change” (Rinchen 2007 p 220). His assessment that there has been behavioural change in Bhutan and that it is largely a result of mimicking television characters and content is consistent with the views of participants who noticed changes in activities of daily life and expressed concern that aspects of their culture were at risk of being lost. The participants in this study identified that it was international content that had most impact on changing Bhutanese activities and behaviours. This is supported by Rinchen who articulated his view that “Since popular forms of media in Bhutan are generally dominated by international programmes, ads, and events, the Bhutanese audience is learning more about other countries and foreign cultures than Bhutan. … Our society gets entrapped and inclined towards a culture which is non-Bhutanese, thereby eroding our own culture and tradition” (Rinchen 2007 p 221).

9.4 Family and social influences

In this study 12 of the 27 participants said that they ate in front of television and did not share stories any more as they had prior to television, while 22 participants identified that families spent less time together. Speaking at the Media and Public Culture Conference, McDonald reinforced the views of these participants and stated “the primary impact of commercial media is the absorption of attention it induces. In the case of television in particular, vast amounts of audience time are devoted to passive consumption wherever it spreads. Active talk and family interaction wither as television absorbs attention. Meal-time conversation vanishes, quiet time is obliterated and community contribution drops off precipitously … it acts as a powerful agent of disconnection” (McDonald 2007 p 196).

A number of emergent themes, including reduction in socialising, quality time being hard to find, families spending less time together, television wasting people’s time and reduced shared activities were also articulated at the Media and Public Culture Conference in 2007. Rinchen stated that “society’s emerging concern is that the media, especially TV and internet, are taking away the
attention of the people most of the time and that the responsibility for the family at home is most often forgotten. People go to sleep later at night and adjust their housework, even office work, to TV, eating into their leisure time is yet another development. Because of this newly evolving habit, it has been seen that the people usually have less time for work. This trend has given less time for people to participate in outdoor activities such as games and sports” (Rinchen 2007 p 222).

In addition, people often stated that they were guided by the television schedule, so that they could be home at a time that would allow them to watch their favourite programs or content they felt was very important. With the schedule driving their time of viewing, some participants noticed that changes had taken place in previously structured family activities, such as mealtimes, talking and storytelling, housework and homework.

9.5 Changes in interpersonal communication

Figure 3 on page 242, illustrates how television viewing time has replaced time previously utilised for family discussions and interpersonal communication within the home. Most participants in this study identified that they viewed television within a range of 1 to 5 or more hours a day. They said that they often sat alone watching television or that TV viewing had replaced time that they used to use discussing daily news and information around the table. They also perceived that they watched significant amounts of international television and when they did talk with one another and with their friends, they spent a lot of the time talking about the content from international television programs. As stated by McDonald (2007) the total effects of watching significant amounts of TV, which absorbs attention for hours at a time, are not fully documented. From this study one of the clear effects of attention absorption through television viewing is the consequent reduction in face-to-face communication, especially in the home environment.

Participants described the time before television viewing as spent in storytelling, where older members of the family would sometimes talk of history or tell stories relating to the cultural heritage or current happenings within Bhutan. They identified that this was no longer taking place to a very large extent and in some cases participants outlined that parents and grandchildren communicated significantly less than had been the case prior to television. While this was not universal, it was nevertheless very important because many of the older people in Bhutan are not literate and cannot write down the stories and knowledge they have to pass on to the younger generations. Many of these older members of the family speak a specific language from their district or Dzongkhag and some participants identified that younger people were not speaking to their relatives in their home languages. Households had many languages, in some cases the parents spoke different languages from each other and the children spoke in English and watched television in Hindi. While the language experience in the multilingual households was described as rich and
parents valued their children learning English and Dzongkha, there was also a loss of capacity in some households for children to listen to older members of the family and speak with them in their parent’s or grandparent’s own language.

Appadurai (1990) noted that for people whose only view of the world is through the mediascape, the lines of the realistic and fictional landscapes are blurred. In Bhutan, participants described how face-to-face communication had reduced, but they also described that when it did take place the topics of conversation had altered from the stories of their traditions, history and daily lives to matters relating to television content, often Hindi soap operas, sporting issues or international news accessed from television. Taking into account that people had less face-to-face or interpersonal communication, especially in the home and that the topics of conversation had shifted to discussing, at least some of the time, what was seen on television, there was a double impact on how local interpersonal communication was taking place between Bhutanese families and friends.

In the context of Appadurai’s assertion relating to realistic landscapes, there was less face-to-face communication taking place, relating to the realistic landscapes within Bhutan, after the introduction of television.

9.6 Social change in Bhutan

As outlined by Giddens (1982) in his theory of structuration, there is a duality between structure and agency as a recursive process where the actions of agents, or individuals, are reflexive and influence structure, just as structure influences the agents. As discussed previously, Lull (2005) made a similar kind of recursive argument where the ability for people to pull information from media and society is complimented by the push of social structures which influence individuals. The results from the study demonstrate that media has had significant influence on the actions of individuals in their daily lives in Bhutan. The way they communicate with each other, the time spent with each other, changes in dress, assertiveness, social activities and language were all described by participants and many of these changes were noted in the MIS (2008). These actions of individuals are also influencing the structures that exist within Bhutan. As an example, reduced attendance at local sporting events was evident as people preferred to stay home and watch the ‘higher quality’ sport on television. Consumer demand through watching foreign advertisements on television led directly to retailers stocking foreign goods for which there had been previously no demand. In the home or family, participants explained that they chose to watch television programs rather than sit around the table and eat communal meals and discuss matters together. Some participants noticed that younger members of the family wanted to spend time on their own, have their own space or room, or move out of home and live in nuclear families. Participants described how their daily lives had changed as a result of the actions that individual members of their family were taking. Some participants also described that they had observed these changes in other
families and that wider social activities, such as gatherings or children playing games in the streets had changed.

Some Bhutanese participants were also shown to be discerning in their choice of television content and questioning of the consequences of viewing. For example some participants felt entertainment programs wasted time while others found them enjoyable and informative. Some parents restricted their children from going shopping to buy what they saw on television. Many of the participants were able to describe in detail the social changes that were occurring around them, indicating that they were looking at the actions they and others were taking and judging the outcomes and impacts of these actions in a reflective way. An example is one father describing how his children were more ‘educated’ than he was, through their television viewing and that this led them to be more assertive and confident and he determined that while it made him feel somewhat uncomfortable, it was a good change that had taken place.

As discussed previously, television viewing also offered a collective experience for viewers across the country, through their capacity to share stories after watching the same or similar content on television or to relate the information from the programs they had seen. This collective experience, while it may have been based on viewing the content as an individual, led to changes in conversation topics and according to one participant, the nature of the workplace had changed as a result, because topics of conversation at work revolved predominantly around the content that people watched on television.

Participants also noticed that as they watched television they developed a desire to have some of the items they saw, such as the clothing worn or utensils used in the programs or consumer goods that were advertised. This not only led to a desire to purchase some of these goods, but meant that the participants also wanted to work harder so that they could earn more money in order to buy more goods. Some participants described their life as busier than before, busier because they had to work longer, they wanted to watch television and undertake other activities and so they felt that they had less time to do everything they wanted. These are all examples of transformation in rules and resources making up the structures of the social system in Bhutan with respect to Giddens’s theory of structuration. As outlined by Haralambos and Holborn (1995) the duality of structure described by Giddens suggests that structures make social action possible and simultaneously social action creates changes in structures. The actions of individuals impact on the rules and resources that make up structures in social systems. Haralambos and Holborn outline that rules could be described as understood patterns of behaviour that are turned into actions by a person when they make decisions. Resources come into being by the actions of humans, and have two forms, allocative and authoritative. Allocative resources exist tangibly through nature or human creation while authoritative resources are non-material and reside in social dominance and power.
Haralambos and Holborn (1995 p 904). Giddens (1984 p 29) represents structuration within a Duality Model that relates structure, systems and rules to human interaction and the actions of individuals. System rules are expressed in traditions and norms of society. Lull notes that families employ rules to regulate their experiences with television. He argues that these extend over a range of daily activities and “can be formal or informal, and can be applied directly or indirectly” (Lull 1990 p 68). He states that rules may involve the amount of television viewed at home, the time of viewing, program content, activity which accompanies viewing and the selection process. Gillard et al note that “in relation to rules and practices, the household provides both the material and the social contexts which influence telecommunications use” (Gillard et al 1998 p 149). Participants in Bhutan clearly described changes to the rules which governed their daily activities in the home where television viewing had become a resource and the rules had to change to accommodate television viewing. This included earlier meal times, families not eating together, replacement of storytelling with television viewing, eating while viewing, scheduling activities around television programs and spending time without the company of other family members in front of television.

Following the duality of structure model devised by Giddens, Figure 3 on page 242, offers a simple diagrammatic representation of how one element of family structure was changed in Bhutan. In this example the structure of the family eating together was altered by television viewing. That the family sat together, for meals prior to the introduction of televisions would be classified as a rule, while an authoritative resource would have been that the head of the family, or the parents, were able to rely on all members of the family coming together as expected at meal times. The family structure and resources were changed when television entered the household and individuals decided not to comply with the rule of eating together so that a new rule system had to be put in place. This new rule system then impacted on other structures within the household such as talking and storytelling. The rule, or agreed and understood pattern of behaviour, had been that family members shared stories and news of the day while gathered around the table in the evening. Two rules in this structure were that family members were gathered at the table and also had the time to share stories. However, when television was introduced, individuals chose not to follow those rules anymore and decided to instead watch television, which had become a new resource in the family home. Family members evaluated the new rule system and made adjustments according to their own wishes. One of the value judgements that participants made about watching television in the home in the evening, was that it made them happier. As a result of this evaluation they adopted the new patterns of rushed meals without talk or meals in front of the television to allow them to watch the programs. While this is a simplification of the duality of structure model, it illustrates an example of how individual actions have led to changes in daily life for people in Bhutan and the rules and structures created after the introduction of television. The model outlined in Figure 3, page 242, also illustrates one of the key findings of this study, that day to day talking, word of
mouth communication and storytelling and the passing down of history from one generation to the next, were all significantly reduced as television viewing took up the time previously spent on interpersonal communication in the home.

![Diagram showing the impact of television on family mealtime]

**Figure 3 Example of structure – agency – action duality where the structured family mealtime is impacted on and changed by actions of individuals**

As will be discussed in the next section, significant broader changes have taken place in Bhutanese social systems since the introduction of television in 1999. These changes include forms of communication and major aspects of Bhutanese culture.

### 9.6.1 Broader social changes

Changes in Bhutan since the introduction of television relate to the emergent themes discussed in previous chapters and are associated with the actions of Bhutanese people in response to modernisation within the Kingdom. One of the key elements of modernisation in Bhutan was the introduction of television and subsequent high levels of take up of television viewing, especially
within the urban population. TV viewing has had considerable influence on the people and their subsequent actions have led to significant change within the country. As discussed in the previous section, following the model of duality of structure from Giddens (1982, 1984), changes in actions from individuals lead to changes in structures within the social system and changes in structure lead to further changes in action in a mutually dependent and recursive process. In addition, under this model, the rules assist in determining people’s actions, their actions then impact on the resources which lead to changes in the structures of social systems.

As outlined in the example in Figure 3 on page 242, television content has influenced individuals to challenge the rules within their family and social structures and this has led to changes in the rules that help determine the actions that they take. These changes in rules and actions were expressed by participants through the themes that emerged from their perceptions of change. These themes are summarised in Table 7 on page 198. All of the participants observed significant change had taken place and all participants attributed most of the changes that they observed to the influence of television, especially international content. While other aspects of the modernisation of Bhutan also accounted for change, such as the lead up to introduction of democracy and higher levels of education in younger people, the influence of television was seen by participants to be the most identifiable and strongest driver of change. They described the changes that they perceived as beginning at the time of the introduction of television and that many of the changes were a result of copying or mimicking what they saw on television or changes in their daily routines associated with watching television and being available to watch scheduled programs. At the time of this study in 2006, radio, the internet and newspapers were not perceived to have anywhere near the same influence on people’s actions as television, because of the lack of diversity in radio and lack of consumption and affordability of the internet. In addition there were no daily newspapers and the literacy levels of many Bhutanese people restricted reading. Since the time of this study there has been a growth in radio with an additional three Bhutanese radio stations in addition to the introduction of a daily newspaper as previously discussed. The take up of the mobile phones has increased connectedness within the country enormously. However, the internet is still not widely affordable or consumed by more than 6% of the population (Ministry of Information and Communications 2008). In the context of Australia, the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA 2007) showed that despite the availability of many other forms of media, the major media accessed in the home was still television, and is only ten minutes less than the average daily television consumption for children measured in 1995. With this in mind, for Bhutan, where the internet is unlikely to be widely consumed in the near future, and where the majority of internationally produced content is available only on international television channels, global television is very likely to have significant impact on people for some time. However, as changes in media consumption take place, further research is required to determine whether other forms of
media are having a stronger influence over the actions of Bhutanese people and whether the significance of the impact of television is as strong as it was in 2006.

The most important of the changes in actions of Bhutanese people as a result of television availability has been watching television between 1 to 5 hours a day compared to watching no television at all prior to 1999. In addition, as stated, participants were watching a lot of international television so that they could feel informed, educated and connected with the rest of the world.

Significant changes in actions as a result of the influence from international television have included dress and appearance, use of language, social activities, family activities, how people spend their leisure time, the amount of time people spend at work in addition to many other changes summarised in Table 7, page 198. Following the duality of structure model, these changes to the actions that individuals were undertaking, led to changes in the rules that underpin the structures within the family and social systems. For example, Bhutanese people no longer feel compelled to wear the Goh and Kira when socialising, so the rules relating to dress and appearance have changed. People speaking to their parents articulate their arguments with more confidence and directness, so the rules relating to talking with elders have changed. People mix Hindi and English into their communication with one another in Dzongkha, so the rules underpinning language structure have changed. People stay longer at work, trying to earn more money to buy more consumer goods, implying the rules relating to expected working hours have changed as have the rules relating to what people expect to own and consume. Some people no longer go out on as many social gatherings or attend as many cultural or sporting events as they used to, so the rules relating to social engagement and social activities have changed. As discussed in the previous section, the rules relating to family meals and family discussions have changed, because time spent viewing television has led to less time spent on interpersonal, one-to-one and family communication. As each of these rules have changed, as a result of people being influenced by what they watched on international television, their subsequent actions resulted in different or new resources coming into being (Giddens 1984, Haralambos and Holborn 1995). Resources would include Authoritative Resources (Haralambos and Holborn 1995) such as: the confidence of young people to speak with authority to elders, the confidence and independence of individuals to wear western style clothing or make-up, or the new flexibility of vocabulary allowing them to engage with peers by mixing Dzongkha with other languages. The resulting new structures within the family and social systems led to clearly observed changes that were described by participants as evident in the emergent themes in this study and the recursive nature of these changes also explains why the participants felt that change was still taking place within Bhutan. That is to say, using the duality of structure model, television viewing was continuing to influence people in Bhutan.
associated with perceived changes in the rules governing their actions, and the new actions they undertook were continuing to bring into existence new resources that changed structures again, and so the process of change was continuing.

Participants identified that they, and their peers, felt more freedom to wear clothes that were comfortable and they felt more entertained, with more choices for entertainment than had been the case prior to television. This individual freedom and capacity to make their own choices of what to watch and what to wear and what to do, expressed by Bhutanese people, is consistent with the argument discussed earlier that the rising significance of mass media in everyday life was concurrent with “increased individualism, autonomy, freedom and mobility” (Lull 2005 p 51).

Many of the participants expressed the concept that television was adding to Gross National Happiness because, access to television was making them happier.

As described, there has been some increase in anti social behaviour and activities that participants identified as inconsistent with Buddhist and Bhutanese principles. As the underlying structures and social systems change it is likely that many Bhutanese people will feel uncomfortable that their rules are changing. Whether television and exposure to international media has resulted in increases in actual crime needs further investigation. What is clear is that some Bhutanese people believe that some of the changes have had a negative influence on Bhutanese society. Notwithstanding this, the views expressed by all participants was, that changes in Bhutan resulting from the introduction of television, have on balance been more positive than negative and that they prefer living in the time post the introduction of television.

9.7 Changes in daily life

This study was not intended to be a comprehensive investigation of the whole Bhutanese community’s usage of and responses to local and international media. Rather, this study considered whether, at least in the Bhutanese media market, there have been perceived changes in communication at the local community level brought about by changes in media content and consumption, and the cultural significance of such changes.

Information from the perspectives of participants has provided data relating to media usage and daily life that contribute to changes in local communication, and broader cultural change in Bhutan. Comparing the results of the qualitative analysis, with quantitative media studies in Bhutan allowed some of the emergent themes to be considered as having more general application across sections of the Bhutanese population. For example the MIS (Ministry of Information and Communication 2008) found that 20% of the survey group identified that TV viewing was reducing their time for social activities. While this was lower than the percentage of participants in the current study who identified this, the survey did show that the number of people identifying this issue had grown
substantially since 2003. Both the MIS (Ministry of Information and Communications 2008) and this study have found television viewing was reducing time for socialising and one-to-one communication for some people. This study found that attitudes and actions of people were changing in Bhutan, and that people were attributing this to media exposure. Likewise, some findings in the MIS also identified changes in attitudes and actions of people in Bhutan that were attributed to the influence of media. As shown in Table 8, page 216, a substantial number of MIS respondents indicated that media influenced their thinking and that in urban areas, the influence of television upon people’s thinking was significantly higher due to the higher percentage of people there with access to television. As an example of actions that had changed, the MIS found that many people believed media impacted on the way people speak and the language they use to communicate with one another.

However, not all the data was consistent with the MIS and other quantitative research. For example the MIS found that more people watched BBS for news than international channels, whereas I found in this study that while participants did watch BBS for news, they also watched an equal amount or more of news on the international channels. Explanations relating to the similarities and differences between the quantitative research and the emergent themes from this study are explained in Chapters 4-7. In addition, a summary of comparisons with the MIS and the emergent themes are provided in Table 8 on page 216.

The differences in relation to the findings in this study and the MIS conducted by the Ministry of Information and Communications (2008) can be attributed to two features. Firstly, that I used in-depth interviewing and was able to follow up on questions to further clarify a person’s responses. The meaning of a response could change if it was explored more fully. For example a participant responded to a question asking whether younger people showed less respect to their elders by saying “I think I haven’t seen such a change.” However, a follow on question asking whether lawlessness had increased, prompted him to say that “maybe they don’t believe their father only.” A further follow on question asking whether younger people were more questioning prompted him to articulate that younger people were challenging their elders and questioning them, but he didn’t see this as disrespect. In-depth interviewing was able to draw out nuances of a person’s perceptions and explanations of change. Other reasons for differences with the MIS study could be the larger proportion of participants in my study who were educated and could speak English or Hindi or both. This allowed them to watch and understand international television content. Of the MIS respondents, 65% had year 6 level education or lower, with 53% having no formal education at all (Ministry of Information and Communications 2008), which indicates that many of these participants would not have been able to speak English or Hindi as they had not learned these languages at school. Given the findings in this study, that participants preferred and watched more
international content, further research would be required to determine whether people who can understand the international content, including those with higher levels of education, are likely to watch a higher proportion of international television than applies across the general population, as was found in the MIS.

Analysis of the results from this study and comparisons of the findings with quantitative studies have demonstrated that there has been significant change to their daily lives, as perceived by people in Bhutan, since the introduction of television in 1999.

9.7.1 Influences on tradition and culture

This study has found that the watching of television had replaced dining and talking together so that the routines and actions they undertook in their daily lives had altered. As a result there was less communication on a person-to-person basis and traditional stories were not being told from older people to younger people to the extent that they were prior to television and the internet. In addition because much of the television consumption was international content, topics of conversation when they did take place had shifted to include storylines relating to dramas, information and entertainment programs that related to people and issues outside Bhutan. While this knowledge of and engagement with topics about the rest of the world was welcome, it was also further reducing the amount of time people spent talking about Bhutanese issues and traditions.

Bhutanese participants were of the opinion that there was significant change in family and community relationships since the introduction of television. There was concern that tradition and local history as well as some aspects of culture unique to Bhutan were at risk of not being passed down through subsequent generations, and therefore at risk of being lost. Viewing of television was the predominant cause for this concern as time spent on television viewing was restricting the capacity of local people to communicate and interact with one another and was influencing Bhutanese people to focus more and talk more about issues of the world when they did converse with one another. This is of particular importance because many of the elements of Bhutanese tradition and history are learned through word of mouth because a large proportion of the older population cannot read or write. The former family structure when people were sitting together, eating together and discussing together allowed the passing on of knowledge from one member of the family or one member of the community to another. These discussions could be about culture and society both past and present. In this context the oral histories and stories from older generations could quickly be lost if there is no opportunity to pass on their knowledge to younger generations.

Perceptions were strong that people in Bhutan had been significantly influenced by international cultural content and this has led to changes in dress, behaviour, outlook and language. Because
most local languages were not written languages and because there was a perception that people were being influenced to speak English and Hindi more often, concern was raised that local languages may change or even cease being spoken by younger Bhutanese people. In addition, there was concern that local languages would become diluted because of the observation that people were mixing English and Hindi into their everyday language.

As previously stated, this study has found that Bhutanese people generally prefer the changes that have taken place in their country as a result of modernisation and the introduction of television. While modernisation was taking many forms in Bhutan, including the roll out of mobile phones, the change to a democratically elected government, increased levels of education and a rapid growth in urban populations, most of the perceived changes were attributed to exposure to international television programs.

Many participants indicated that they did not like all the changes that they had perceived to have taken place. These included disrespect for elders and traditions, increased antisocial behaviour and breaking of the law, wasting time, being too busy and a lack of time spent with one another to talk, and share time with friends. However, all participants identified that they would prefer to live now than before 1999. Life was better after 1999 because they felt more connected to the world, more informed, more educated, more able to make their own decisions.

9.8 International content impacts on local communication

Bhutanese participants identified that they greatly valued their distinctive culture and that they did not wish to lose the unique qualities of what it means to be Bhutanese. They felt it was important to preserve history from the country and the various and diverse traditions from the cultural groups within the country, many of which had their own unique language. In addition one of the four pillars from the Bhutanese Government’s policy on Gross National Happiness relates to the preservation and promotion of culture.

Over 42% of Bhutanese people are not able to read or write, and this figure is higher in the older population and the rural population. Therefore many of the stories, histories and traditions of the diverse Bhutanese cultural groups have been handed down via word of mouth and storytelling methods, largely within the family home. For these traditional stories to be preserved, the elders need to be able to pass on their stories and cultural perspectives to the younger members of their families and social networks.

However, this study has found that there has been a significant decrease in the amount of time families spend sitting and talking together as a result of television viewing, and as a consequence people are no longer talking and storytelling as much as they had prior to the introduction of
television. As the rules within the family structure had changed, the amount of one-to-one and family group communication reduced coinciding with the growth of between 1 to 5 hours a day of television viewing. Participants explained that storytelling from the elder members of the family had reduced significantly and in some cases were almost non-existent.

It is significant that the storytelling and one-to-one communication had not just been replaced by television viewing, but that much of that viewing had been from international television channels where the content related to other cultures, and Bhutanese history and heritage, and matters of importance relating to Bhutan both past and present were not contained within the content. In addition the international content was often preferred over local content for drama, documentaries, information, sport and cultural programs. This meant that Bhutanese people were receiving information about contemporary cultural issues from the international channels which did not carry programs that were exploring the cultural issues of Bhutan.

Not only was the time for one-to-one communication and storytelling being reduced by television viewing, but when people did talk to one another, much of the conversation was relating to the content that people had been watching on television. This further reduced the time people would spend conversing about contemporary or traditional Bhutanese cultural issues, because when they did talk, much of their conversation related to what they had been watching on international television channels.

In this context, as a consequence of international television exposure, Bhutanese people were feeling more informed and connected to the rest of the world, but paradoxically less informed and connected with their own traditional and contemporary culture than they were prior to the introduction of television.

From the perspectives of participants and the findings of the MIS (Ministry of Information and Communications 2008) Bhutanese people would like to watch more programs relating to their own culture, history and in their own languages. However, participants have also stated this content must be of good quality and well presented, so that it competes with the international programs on foreign channels, which could lead to the Bhutanese audience preferring to watch local content. Such local content needs to reflect the issues of contemporary, as well as traditional Bhutan so that the stories of the past can be captured through rich local media content and so that the current issues relating to Bhutan’s rapidly changing society can be represented in interesting and compelling programs that attract wide audiences in the Kingdom. If significant numbers of Bhutanese people, who speak foreign languages, continue to prefer to watch international programs, as found in this study, they have the capacity to become less familiar with their own heritage and lose some of the distinctive and unique Bhutanese attributes that they have stated are
important to them. Capturing the histories and stories of elders in Bhutan, through recordings, programs and other narrative formats is very important to ensure these stories are able to be told, while those who hold the knowledge are still living. In addition, these stories need to be collected in the diverse languages of the people from the different Dzongkhags and villages within Bhutan. Collecting the stories and putting some of these stories into compelling television and radio programs as well as books and stories, will allow more opportunity for contemporary Bhutanese audience members to access programs and media content relating to their own diverse and unique Bhutanese cultural identity.

9.9 Global media changing local communication and culture

This study has found that, since the introduction of television in 1999, substantial cultural changes have taken place in Bhutan from the perspectives of Bhutanese people. While modernisation in Bhutan was resulting in many aspects of change in the Kingdom, the primary cause for change was found to be the influence of television. Television was able to influence Bhutanese individuals by offering different perspectives on the rules that governed the family and social structures. As previously described, using the duality of structure model, as these people’s actions changed, they developed new resources that led to new structures within the families and social systems, which in turn impacted on further actions of individuals in an ongoing and recursive manner. In this way change was continuous but also certain new structures were formed relating to the new rules that people had developed after watching television.

When television was introduced into Bhutan, many people in the Kingdom were craving the capacity to connect with the rest of the world and become part of the global community. Participants in this study, whether educated or uneducated, rural or urban, male or female, all expressed that they had previously felt isolated and enclosed and they had a strong desire to see what the rest of the world was like and connect to other cultures. As the process of modernisation was educating younger people in schools and opening up trade opportunities with the rest of the world, Bhutan had nevertheless remained isolated with only a few people being able to leave the country for education purposes, and the majority of the population having neither the finances nor opportunity to leave their own country. In addition, the restrictions on tourism still kept Bhutan largely free from foreigners travelling unrestricted throughout the country. Telephones, the internet, post and other forms of written or verbal communication to the outside world were unavailable or unusable to the non literate Bhutanese rural population. This meant that when television was introduced into Bhutan, it was the only mechanism for many people to have a window on the world, experience other cultures and be connected to the global community. For this reason people in Bhutan wanted television and when it became available to them, they wanted to watch a lot of television with a large proportion of international content. They also wanted to
watch television programs in languages that they could understand and watch programs about their own culture, traditions and stories that they respected and valued.

As discussed previously, in line with Giddens’s (1982, 1984) model of Duality of Structure, a change in resources can lead to a change in actions by individuals, which in turn can lead to a change in the social rules that govern further actions and use of resources. Because the Bhutanese people wanted television to give them the experience of the outside world, when television arrived, they responded with the actions of watching television instead of mealtime discussions and one-to-one communication that had previously occupied their time. That is to say their actions represented a choice of replacing one-to-one communication with television viewing. This led to new rules in the household and between friends that allowed television viewing to become acceptable and normal practice and that talking and storytelling had lost its place, at least in some households, as the expected form of behaviour. In this way television viewing was legitimised as an acceptable and normal form of behaviour even though it was replacing the one–to-one communication that had previously been an integral part of daily life. In addition, because one of the primary motivator’s for watching television was to access and connect with the rest of the world, substantial amounts of time were spent watching international television. While there was a substantial proportion of viewing of the local BBS television station, an equal or greater proportion of viewing of international television was found, which meant that local dialogue and storytelling had been replaced with significant amounts of television viewing of content that did not reflect Bhutanese culture or history and was not produced to reflect the interests of contemporary Bhutanese society.

As discussed in previous chapters, the content on the international channels, received in Bhutan, contains information from the large globalised news agencies and entertainment programs that are produced from the large production companies that predominantly reflect Indian or Anglo-American values and interests. These programs are broadcast from India to the region in Asia, but do not carry content that reflects the culture and values of the people in Bhutan. People in Bhutan like viewing this content but it is not constructed or selected with respect to their interests, perspectives and values. The programming on these channels is designed to captivate audiences and to be of strong interest at times of maximum audience availability. Sports programs largely for men, and soap operas largely for women, along with many other program genres are scheduled in the evening or at times when people will be at home and available to watch television to maximise the audience being exposed to the program and therefore to the advertisements that pay for the content. When television was introduced into Bhutan, this meant that high interest programs were scheduled at the time that was previously used for one-to-one communication around the dinner table or in evening household discussions. As a consequence, individuals in Bhutan were strongly
influenced to choose the action of watching television at the time that they had previously used to engage in one-to-one communication.

Not only had the rules changed replacing times spent on one-to-one communication with television viewing, but also the topics of conversation had changed, reflecting the information and cultural content that was being viewed on television. In the context of Duality of Structure, this was because television content, as a resource, had replaced local story telling and so the programs gave a new shared experience between individuals, who in turn chose the new actions of engaging in conversations about television content - the news, the drama, the story - as seen on television. This led to a new rule that topics of conversation about television programs were preferred, and as outlined by a number of participants, offered engagement in the shared experience of the television program. However, because the content on international television channels was not reflective of local Bhutanese culture and values, much of the new conversations were about what happened in Indian soap operas, or news of the world, or football in Europe, rather than issues and matters relating to Bhutan. In contrast, their local BBS media was giving them Bhutanese content, but not the international programs with which to contextualise their own cultural experiences. If there were a Bhutanese channel or channels that provided a composite mix of local programs, including content from Asia and the rest of the world, it could select the programs with the local audience in mind, relating to the values and interests of the people of Bhutan. Such content may need to be translated or dubbed into a national language to offer more opportunity for those who do not speak Hindi or English to access international content and to also offer international content in the languages of Bhutan. Individuals within the Kingdom could then choose between content in their own language, on a locally run composite channel, or programs from the variety of international channels designed for the Indian or global audiences. The shared experiences of accessing international and local television would also be available to those who did not speak Hindi or English.

Bhutan is unique, in that it is a small Kingdom with a total population under 700,000 people, in a process of modernisation as it joins the global economy, yet is attempting to maintain its unique culture with restrictions on travel and tourism. It is a nation with diverse languages and cultures, yet also the whole country can be seen as one local community. The low population and lack of wealth within the diverse communities of the Kingdom means that local media markets would not be economically viable. However, the similarities between the cultures, a common national language, and low population, allow the whole Kingdom to be considered as one local media market. Despite Bhutan’s unique situation, the finding that watching television takes up time, that would previously have been spent on other activities, may have more universal relevance and apply in relation to the taking up of new forms of media in any market. While not widely available in
Bhutan, social networking and other internet communication systems, user generated content sites, online media, mobile devices that allow access to music, entertainment and media anywhere, anytime, have all been developing over the past decade in the developed countries where internet access is freely available, and mobile devices such as multipurpose phones, Play Stations and MP3 players are affordable. As outlined by ACMA (2008), in Australia, the usage of other forms of media have not substantially declined while new forms of media have been taken up. It is possible that one of the reasons for this is that as new forms of media are introduced, individuals take actions that reduce the amount of one-to-one communication with family and friends while spending more time using the internet and mobile devices. Extrapolating from the finding in Bhutan that television consumption was replacing interpersonal communication in the family and local community, it is possible that despite the capacity for social networking and mobile devices to allow people to be more connected than ever before, there may be a paradoxical reduction in the amount of connection people have in face-to-face and one-to-one communication in families or within local communities. Further research is required to determine the extent to which this might be happening and if so, what social consequences may result.

In summarising, at the time of this study in 2006, television consumption was impacting on the culture of Bhutan in significant ways. Bhutanese people were receiving a globalised view of the world through international media providers that did not locally contextualise or frame the content being delivered from the international television channels. Participants outlined how they believed this international television content was the main influence, on Bhutanese people, that was leading to the obvious cultural changes they had observed since the introduction of television. In addition, people were spending less time talking to one another at home and when they did talk with one another, the topics of conversation often centred around the programs they had seen on television. Less time was spent passing on traditional knowledge and stories from community and family elders to younger people, and less time was spent talking about local issues of contemporary Bhutan. This represented a dynamic impact leading to significant change to the rules, resources and actions of Bhutanese people in their daily lives.

9.10 Recommendations

As a way of assisting the Bhutanese Government meet the objective of the third pillar of Gross National Happiness, relating to the preservation and promotion of culture, it is recommended that further investigation be undertaken to assess how much time is spent viewing and accessing foreign media in addition to how media consumption is replacing social activity and verbal forms of communication. In addition further investigation is needed to determine whether people will access more international media as their education levels rise, as was evident in the responses from participants in this study.
Recording oral histories, to capture stories and cultural knowledge from many of the non literate senior citizens of Bhutan, should be undertaken as a matter of urgency because messages are not being passed on within families as they were prior to the introduction of television and these stories and components of knowledge cannot be written down.

While BBS TV and Radio was valued and recognised as providing important cultural content, consideration should be given to local traditional and contemporary stories being further incorporated into television and radio programs and other forms of media, in an imaginative and engaging way to be available to Bhutanese audiences on a daily basis. This will allow diverse traditional and contemporary Bhutanese stories to be part of the daily media diet of Bhutanese people. Further research is required to determine whether Bhutanese audiences would prefer television channels that carried composite programming of national and international programming and whether they would prefer international programming that was, at least to some extent, contextualised with Bhutanese perspectives and interspersed with Bhutanese content.

As changes in media consumption take place, further research is required to determine whether other forms of media are having a stronger influence over the actions of Bhutanese people and whether the significance of the impact of television is as strong as it was in 2006. Whether television and exposure to international media has resulted in increases in actual crime and antisocial behaviour needs further investigation.

Documenting and recording the many languages of Bhutan should be undertaken as a matter of urgency because of the evidence that these languages are already undergoing dilution with Hindi and English as well as the evidence that some young Bhutanese people are speaking English in reference to their own languages.

Consideration should be given for local Bhutanese television and Radio to carry international content, (in addition to local Bhutanese information and entertainment), that is dubbed or presented to the Bhutanese audience in a context framed with, and interspersed with, other Bhutanese content. This could allow the audience to feel more connected to the world and receive quality international entertainment from their own television channel and reduce the desire to view high volumes of content from channels that provide exclusively international content.

Further research is needed to determine whether the findings of this study, relating to increased media consumption leading to decreased one-to-one communication, have broader social consequences in other communities, as increases in usage of multiple media platforms may not correspond to decreases in the traditional media platforms of radio and TV.
References


http://www.tbsjournal.com/Archives/Spring99/Articles/aycock/aycock.html


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Appendix – Base line questions for interviews

Below are baseline Interview Questions for the Research Project: ‘Global media, daily life and cultural change in Bhutan.’ These questions were used in addition to follow-on and supplementary questions, used in the in-depth interviews, that sought to clarify and explore responses from participants in more detail.

Please note that in addition to the following questions relevant supplementary questions will be asked.

How have people of different ages and social positioning constructed their daily lives using the media since their introduction in Bhutan in 1999?

- How have people changed, if they have, in terms of the way they communicate with each other?
- To what extent is there a difference between the way people under thirty communicate with each other now compared with the time prior to satellite services being introduced? The same for over 30? The same for over 40?
- In what way has there been a change in people coming together for discussions, meetings or gatherings?
- How has the way people talk to one another changed, in terms of time spent talking and subjects under discussion?

How much has networked media use replaced the use of local media?

- To what extent have you noticed change in what is important to people in terms of news, the things they talk about and the subjects they cover?
- To what extent are people spending more or less time accessing electronic media for 1. news, 2, entertainment? Is this local or from another country.

To what extent has the use of networked media replaced other social activities?
● How much have you noticed people changing in the way they receive information in terms of more from the media and less from word of mouth in the community?
● To what extent has there been a change in the amount of time people spend with one another, especially comparing younger people with older people?
● What is different now in the way people spend their spare time to the way they did before satellite services were introduced.

How do people of different ages and social positioning describe the changes in their social activity?

● To what extent has there been a change in how young people communicate with mature people?
● How are values passed on now and how were they passed on 10 years ago? Consider:
  -from young to old
  -from community leaders to countrypeople and women
  -from religious and cultural groups
● To what extent have you perceived a change in the language used by people, especially comparing younger and mature people. Please consider but not limit to:
  -accent
  -words used
  -speaking their native language
  -traditional styles of talking to people
  -use of English or other foreign languages

How do they describe broader cultural changes and what are the feelings about these changes?

● Have you noticed a change in the way people dress and appear and if so in what way has it changed?
● What groups in the community have changed in appearance more?
● Is the change in appearance positive or negative in your view
● In what way have you seen a change in values that people express and convey. Please consider but not limited to:
  -respect for fellow people and property
- respect for their local culture
- actions and behaviour in the community?

- To what extent has there been a change in religious values?

What further anxieties or benefits are anticipated in the future? Community Interaction

- In what way if any, has behaviour of younger people under 30 in the community changed since the introduction of satellite services?
- In what way if any, has behaviour of mature people over 30 in the community changed since the introduction of satellite services? Over 40?
- To what extent, if any, has there been an increase in anti social activity? Please give examples from your experience. Please do not mention any specifics of criminal activity.
- What improvements do you feel have resulted in the way people behave now compared to 10 years ago prior to access to networked international media?

Generally

- In your own words please describe what you believe to be the better aspects of your community and society now than compared to the time before global satellite services were introduced
- In your own words please describe what you believe are the negative aspects to your community and society now than compared to the time before global satellite services were introduced

Your Media Activities

- To what extent (how many hours a week) do you listen to radio or watch TV or spend time online on the internet (excluding work emails)
- To what extent do other members of your family or household listen to radio or watch TV or spend time online on the internet (excluding work emails)
- How much time does your whole family or household spend watching television or listening to the radio
- To what extent (how many hours a week) do you access television, radio or internet content that is not from Bhutan (that is that comes from another country)
- To what extent do other members of your family or household spend watching or accessing content that is not from Bhutan
- To what extent do you receive news and information programming that comes from another country.

Your Profile

I need to know the following information about you to assist me in evaluating the research:

- What is your profession, generally, not specifically, for example teacher, doctor, farmer, politician
- Gender
- What is your age
- Where you live not specifically but in a city, country village, farm?
- Have you ever been to another country or have relatives or friends in another country