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Business of Media Summit
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****CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY****

The Globalisation of Culture through Media

Good afternoon everyone.

In the globalised world we live in today, the media is often our window and access into global cultures, news and events.

I look forward to exploring this complex and constantly evolving subject with you today in this session.

Firstly, I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet – the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation and pay my respects to their Elders both past and present.

Historically, we've experienced cultures through trade partnerships and migration of people, where cultural differences were predominantly understood and perspectives were shaped by personal experiences. However, over the last half century we've seen an explosion of the globalisation of culture through media channels.

In 2016, we are living in a truly globalised age.

The rate of globalisation continues to increase at a rapid rate, where cultures, people, languages, news and goods are spread with immediacy and greater impact than ever before, aided by the growth of migration and our ever-changing global society.

The increasing pace of digitisation has enabled media to share cultural insights across the globe more freely than in our analogue world. These advances have resulted in a better informed and a more engaged society, where everyone has the ability to be a content creator, sharing their lives with the rest of the world in real time.

We are now experiencing world politics, acts of terror and unfolding world crises first hand, just as we are able to communicate with our loved ones in real time through FaceTime or Skype.

To put it simply, culture in 2016 has no borders – it has moved away from our personal experiences to be predominantly shared through a media lens and with absolute immediacy.

Media as a central driver of globalisation of culture

When we consider the media's role in this globalised world, I think we'd all agree that we are central drivers, responding, facilitating and leading the sharing of cultures and stories. Media platforms have and will continue to shape our perspectives, how we identify and interact with others and how we understand our world view and global cultures.

For more than four decades, SBS as a creator and aggregator of content, has been committed to connecting communities, giving them a voice and fostering understanding of the many cultures that make up our diverse nation to all Australians.

It was great to hear our Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, recently recognise the value of SBS on the world stage at the United Nations, when he said that we are the media organisation in Australia that is *"interpreting and celebrating our multicultural society and the values of mutual respect to the whole society."*

Today, across our five TV channels, our 70 different language radio programs and our digital platforms, we continue to drive cultural understanding through distinctive innovative content, exploring and celebrating diversity through a breadth of programs and genres like no other media organisation.

Through NITV, we are not only able to capture and preserve Indigenous culture for future generations but also share these important cultural stories with non-Indigenous Australians and also to global audiences.

With a unique purpose driving all that we do, we explore subjects that present barriers to social inclusion. We tell stories that spark national conversations. We go beyond the headlines to reflect varied perspectives through comprehensive reporting.

Against the backdrop of a more connected world and a national context in which Australians are increasingly engaged and impacted by global events, our services are more relevant and valued than ever before, with audiences and engagement growing and higher than any time in our history.

Increasingly, through international broadcaster and distribution relationships, audiences now have unprecedented access to information they might not otherwise. SBS's recently announced a content deal with VICE, a global youth media company, which further strengthens our position amongst younger audiences as a local destination for stories from across the globe - to help them better understand the world we live in.

New ways of storytelling

Through technological advancements in virtual reality and innovative 360° storytelling, media organisations have new opportunities to engage with audiences, immersing them in virtual worlds to share global cultures, promote better understanding and drive an emotional connection through shared experience.

Through SBS's virtual reality app, we transport audiences to the very heart of Australia's diverse communities – from traditional Indigenous ceremonies at the GARMA Festival to the colourful celebrations of Diwali, to first-hand experiences of being in the Sydney's Mardi Gras Parade.

If you haven't tried it, download our VR app!

Leading diversity from within our own walls

However, as an industry, if we are to exploit these technological advances and positively drive globalisation forward, we need to start within the walls of our own organisations. When I take a look, an honest look, I don't see an industry that truly reflects the diverse make-up of our nation. And that invariably has to have an impact on our media's understanding and output.

One of the good things that has come out of our sector this year is a proactive national discussion about the need for greater diversity, and what role the media can - and should - play in leading this.

A recent Screen Australia research project, focused on Australian drama, identified the need for Australia to catch up to its international counterparts in representing cultural diversity, disability and LGBTQI, on and off the screen.

The study found that 18% of main characters in the period of the study were from non-Anglo Celtic backgrounds, compared to 32% of the population. Only 4% of main characters had an identified disability compared to an estimated 18% of Australians, whilst 5% of main characters were identified as LGBTQI, yet this group is estimated to be up to 11% of the population. A notable and heartening exception to this trend was Indigenous representation, with 5% of main characters being Indigenous, compared to making up 3% of the population.

Whilst the research indicated some positive progress, we must question how effectively we can reflect or report on global cultures externally, if this isn't reflected internally within our organisations.

We must move past our consideration of 'cultures' in its simplest form of coloured faces on screen and embrace its full spectrum of diversity – from ethnicities, subcultures, sex and sexuality and disabilities.

Within SBS, diversity is not just a buzzword. We've reflected diversity in all its forms since our inception, from ethnicity, gender and sexuality, through to different perspectives and viewpoints, which all helps with our output.

We have actively implemented diversity measures across our staff engagement – from the employees who responded to our surveys, we have 42% from non-English speaking background and 48% born overseas. In addition, 51% of employees are female, with 46% of SBS people leaders being female. A further 4% are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, 1% of recruited staff have a permanent disability and 13% identify as LGBTQI. These diversity statistics are all well above national averages.

It's a good thing that the wider industry is putting diversity front and centre however it is going to take some time to see change, after all SBS has been doing this for more 40 years . I'm proud that SBS is able to lead the way and I'm heartened by the prominence that other media organisations are starting to place on this conversation.

The end goal for SBS is not one of simply reflection but at the core of everything we do, with the aim of increasing understanding of our differences, facilitating acceptance and the benefits of a diverse society.

Globalisation of culture isn't without its risks

However, this purpose is not without its challenges. Whilst the media has the power to embrace and share cultures, we must acknowledge that the proliferation of platforms has also led to increased divisiveness.

The challenges associated with multiculturalism are ever-present. With the globalisation of social prejudice, driven by social platforms and an increased spotlight on extremism, it is imperative that we as an industry help Australians to learn, understand and accept each other better.

Multiple media channels now offer opportunities for extremist groups to reach both mass audiences and remote communities. Podcasts of daily news bulletins appear online and social media has given immense power to the individual to find a mass audience - in many ways replacing the traditional role of media as the conduit. This itself leads to the dissemination of polarising views.

Sensational headlines and reporting do nothing to provide true context and do not serve to positively reflect culture, rather capitalising on the divide and often promoting the isolation of a minority community even further. We must acknowledge that sometimes, our coverage is in fact hindering the showcasing of culture and aiding disharmony through an increasingly divisive society.

With the advent of Brexit, Trump, and on our own shores, the resurgence of One Nation, there's a growing connection between economic disadvantage and racially motivated, resentment, fear and uncertainty that can only be countered by hope and connection.

Of course, barriers and segregation do exist for reasons such as lack of language ability, lack of education, and systemic and institutional discrimination. We know that fear, distrust and apprehension is a common, even natural reaction to what is new and different. The challenge lies in shifting that initial discomfort to a place of mutual understanding and respect, despite

differences. Creating more opportunities for communities to connect with one another through media is a good starting point.

Now more important than ever before, it is essential media organisations embrace the responsibility to break down misunderstandings and prejudices, and provide an objective presentation of the facts to allow audiences to make up their own minds. Across the world, we continue to be relied upon to provide educated, experienced reporting of world news.

Instead of focusing on what makes societies different, it's important to highlight the commonalities that bind them together. For every horror story, there are a hundred migrant success stories. You only have to look at Australia's rich and uniquely diverse cultural identity to see that multiculturalism has real benefits.

An additional important consideration is that through this rapid globalisation, unique cultures are at the risk of being lost or forgotten.

As media organisations, we must again acknowledge our influential role here and the need to be proactive and innovative in preserving local cultures wherever possible. What multicultural and multilingual media can do is to protect language, to record culture and ensure that it is available for future generations.

This is at the very heart of SBS Radio, and has been since 1975 with 2EA & 3EA. Whilst technology has changed and migration soared, this invaluable service has remained central to the lives of many migrants in Australia. Our 70+ radio language programs are not only accessed by first generation migrants. They are accessed by their children and grandchildren, by language learners, by those who want to ensure that these cultures and languages are not forgotten.

However the most important role these language programs play, is in providing Australian news and current affairs in-language for migrants, helping them to understand Australian values and culture to aid inclusion in our society.

Interestingly, we are also observing increased engagement with our radio content amongst international audiences.

An example is SBS's Sudanese program, produced Melbourne, aimed at Australia's Sudanese community. However, thanks to online streaming and podcasts, this program is now being accessed from Sudan because of its balanced news reporting of local and global conflict compared to their own local media which is Government controlled. This is a perfect example of the media's capabilities to positively influence the globalisation of cultures outside their own geographical location.

I would however note that everything I've highlighted isn't always relevant for all world cultures. China for example has over two million 'online police' who closely monitor media activity, ensuring that their communist culture remains unaffected through the control of their citizens' media access.

Since July, Turkey's media landscape has seen a number of media closures and decreasing numbers of news sources not controlled by Government, with more than one hundred journalists now behind bars.

Whilst these examples are illustrative of attempts of cultural preservation, we must question how this lack of balanced or global information impacts these individualised cultures and also evaluate the effect that this censorship has on the reporting of cultures and global events on these censored nations.

CONCLUSION

I'd like to conclude by saying that media organisations are the central lens in which society experiences cultures in 2016. It is important that we continue to provide platforms where these voices and perspectives can be heard and at SBS, we are proud to be a modern multiplatform network that shapes Australians' views about the way we interact with our fellow global citizens.

The challenges of globalisation and proliferation of media channels will only see continuous growth and it is for this reason that we, the media, need to accept that we have a leadership role to play.

Leaders in facilitating understanding of global cultures, leaders in diversity on and off our screens and leaders in maintaining the uniqueness of world cultures.

As an industry, only when we accept this responsibility, can we say that we are an essential part of contributing to and inspiring an inclusive and cohesive society that reflects, understands and celebrates our diverse world.

ENDS.