

Mass Media and Communication

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Abstract

Mass communication can be defined as the process of using mass media to send messages to large audiences for the purpose of informing, entertaining or persuading. In many respects the process of mass communication and other communication are same. Someone conceives a message, essentially an intrapersonal act. The message then is encoded into a common code such as language. Then it is transmitted. Another person receives the message, decodes it and internalizes it. In other respects, mass communication is distinctive. Crafting an effective message for thousands of people of diverse backgrounds and interest requires different skills than chatting with a friend across the table. Encoding the message is more complex because a device is always used, for example a camera or recorder. We shall first take up the print media because that happens to be the original type of mass media in India. We shall then give an account of radio, film and TV as media of mass communication in India, their spread, reach, people's access to these media and their impact on the society. New technologies made their entry during 1970s and 1980s. They are video, cable and satellite TV.

Keywords: mass communication, informing, messages, transmitted and encoding

1. Types of Mass Media

Mass media is a term used to denote a section of the media specifically envisioned and designed to reach a very large audience such as the population of a nation state. It was coined in the 1920s with the advent of nationwide radio networks, mass circulation newspapers and magazines, although mass media was present centuries before the term became common. Mass communication media makes it possible to deliver messages to millions of people at roughly the same time. The authors of these messages are usually organizations, and the audiences are composed of individuals.

Mass media can be used for various purposes.

For instance, it can help both for business and social concerns. This can include advertising, marketing, propaganda, public relations and political communication. It can also be used for enrichment, education and entertainment, through performances of acting, music and sports, as well as for public service announcements.

The concept of mass media is complicated in some internet media as now individuals have a means of potential exposure on a scale comparable to what was previously restricted to select group of mass media producers. These internet media can include television, personal web pages, podcasts and blogs. The

communication audience has been viewed by some commentators as forming a mass society with special characteristics, notably atomization or lack of social connections, which render it especially susceptible to the influence of modern mass-media techniques such as advertising and propaganda. The term “MSM” or “mainstream media” has been widely used in the blogosphere in discussion of the mass media and media bias.

1.1 Journalism

Journalism is a discipline of collecting, analysing, verifying and presenting information regarding current events, trends, issues and people. Those who practice journalism are known as journalists.

The development and widespread use of printed text in Europe in the 1500s produced a brand-new form of communication. For the first time, a single message could be duplicated with little error and distributed to thousands of people. First used to propagate religious texts and arguments, this “mass” approach to communication quickly caught on and was soon being used to distribute news, entertainment and government regulations.

News-oriented journalism is sometimes described as the “first rough draft of history” (attributed to Phil Graham), because journalists often record important events, producing news articles on short deadlines. While under pressure to be first with their stories, news media organizations usually edit and proofread their reports prior to publication, adhering to each organization’s standards of accuracy, quality and style. Many news organizations claim proud traditions of holding government officials and institutions accountable to the public, while media critics have raised questions about holding the press itself accountable.

1.2 Broadcasting and Telecasting

Broadcasting is the distribution of audio and/or video signals (programs) to a number of recipients (“listeners” or “viewers”) that belong to a large group. This group may be the public in general, or a relatively large audience within the public. Thus, an Internet channel may distribute text or music world-wide, while a public address system in (for example) a workplace may broadcast very limited ad hoc sound bites to a small population within its range.

Television and radio programs are distributed

through radio broadcasting over frequency bands that are highly regulated by the Communications Commission. Such a regulation includes determination of the width of the bands, range, licensing, types of receivers and transmitters used and acceptable content.

Cable programs are often broadcast simultaneously with radio and television programs but have a more limited audience. By coding signals and having decoding equipment in homes, cable also enables subscription-based channels and pay-per view services.

A broadcasting organization may broadcast several programs at the same time, through several channels (frequencies), for example BBC One and Two. On the other hand, two or more organizations may share a channel and each use it during a fixed part of the day. Digital radio and digital television may also transmit multiplexed programming, with several channels compressed into one ensemble.

When broadcasting is done via the Internet the term webcasting is often used. In 2004 a new phenomenon occurred when a number of technologies combined to produce podcasting. Podcasting is an asynchronous broadcast/narrowcast medium, with one of the main proponents being Adam Curry and his associates’ the Pod show.

1.3 Internet

The Internet (also known simply as “the Net” or “the Web”) can be briefly understood as “a network of networks”. Specifically, it is the worldwide, publicly accessible network of interconnected computer networks that transmit data by packet switching using the standard Internet Protocol (IP). It consists of millions of smaller domestic, academic, business and governmental networks, which together carry various information and services, such as electronic mail, online chat, file transfer and the interlinked Web pages and other documents of the World Wide Web.

Contrary to some common usage, the Internet and the World Wide Web are not synonymous. The Internet is a collection of interconnected computer networks, linked by copper wires, fibre-optic cables, wireless connections etc. The Web is a collection of interconnected documents, linked by hyperlinks and URLs. The World Wide Web is accessible via the Internet, along with many other services including e-mail, file sharing and others.

1.4 Publishing

Publishing is the industry concerned with the production of literature or information — the activity of making information available for public view. In some cases, authors may be their own publishers.

Traditionally, the term refers to the distribution of printed works such as books and newspapers. With the advent of digital information systems and the Internet, the scope of publishing has expanded to include websites, blogs and the like.

As a business, publishing includes the development, marketing, production and distribution of newspapers, magazines, books, literary works, musical works, software, and other works dealing with information.

Publication is also important as a legal concept; (1) as the process of giving formal notice to the world of a significant intention, for example, to marry or enter bankruptcy and (2) as the essential precondition of being able to claim defamation, that is, the alleged libel must have been published.

1.5 Mobile

Mobile phones were introduced in Japan in 1997 but became a mass media only in 1998 when the first downloadable ringing tones were introduced in Finland. Soon most forms of media content were introduced on mobile phones. The mobile media content includes over 8 billion dollars' worth of mobile music (ringing tones, ring back tones, true tones, MP3 files, karaoke, music videos, music streaming services, etc.); over 5 billion dollars' worth of mobile gaming and various news, entertainment and advertising services. In Japan mobile phone books are so popular that five of the ten best-selling printed books were originally released as mobile phone books.

Similar to the internet, mobile is also an interactive media, but has a far wider reach. Like email on the internet, the top application on mobile is also a personal messaging service, and SMS text messaging is used by over 2.4 billion people. Practically all internet services and applications exist or have similar cousins on mobile, from search to multiplayer games to virtual worlds to blogs. Mobile has several unique benefits which many mobile media pundits claim, make mobile a more powerful media than either TV or the internet, starting

with mobile being permanently carried and always connected. Mobile has the best audience accuracy and is the only mass media with a built-in payment channel available to every user without any credit cards or PayPal accounts or even an age limit. With the inclusion of various apps like WhatsApp or WeChat the mobile is perhaps the most popular medium of mass communication.

2. Impact and Dangers of Mass Media

While new media technology is sweeping across India, many questions about the precise impact of mass media remain unanswered. We know that the various mass media have an impact, but the answers to questions such as what impact they have, why they have impact and how all that happens, remain elusive. Behavioural scientists are examining the effects of mass media. We know that we can predict certain outcomes in certain situations. But the variables are numerous. Two social scientists, Bernard Berelson and Morris Janowitz, once summarized knowledge about the effect of mass media thus in *Readers in Public Opinion and Communication*.

The effects of communication are many and diverse. They may be short-range or long run. They may be manifest or latent. They may be strong or weak. They may derive from any number of aspects of the communication content. They may be considered as psychological or political or economic or sociological. They may operate upon opinions, values, information levels, skills, taste, or over behaviour.

The growth of mass communication has made it possible for us to get far more information today than any time before. Information is indispensable in a complex, advanced society. We are an information-hungry society; we need an ever-increasing number of facts in order to maintain and enhance our standard of living. We have often been told that information is power. The question is, what do we have to do to ensure that the information we receive from the mass media will serve our needs, not the purpose of someone else?

We shall now discuss the situation of mass media in India and describe the possible impact of each one of these media—print journalism, radio, film, TV, video, cable and satellite TV. India, towards the end of the 20th century, still largely remained an oral society. We spent more

time communicating interpersonally rather than through the channels of mass communication. The situation in the West was different. There, an average person daily spends at least six hours “consuming” mass media products, mainly TV, radio, film and newspapers.

However, the situation has changed drastically now. The developments on the mass media scene in India which we have described above are having an intense impact on the society. The behaviour, thinking, and expectations of people everywhere have been altered and will be moulded even more extensively as the full influence of the information flood is felt. It is claimed that this proliferation of information and the swiftness of its distribution would certainly improve the human condition. However, along with the positive values it fosters, the communication explosion has created areas of danger that must be recognized and controlled. Among them are these five major concerns:

2.1 Manipulation

Perversion of truth by electronic trickery is a major concern today. Clever users of electronic devices can alter the meaning of recorded visual and audio material, making it appear to be what it really isn't.

2.2 Privacy

There have been innumerable complaints about the invasion of privacy. The whole question of co-relating the right to privacy with public interest has become a big problem for policy planners and social scientists alike.

2.3 Security

Violation of security, both governmental and institutional is another major concern. Protection of secret government information, private financial transactions, and institutional records in computer systems has become a matter of concern.

2.4 Democratic Process

It is axiomatic that democracy functions best when voters are widely informed on all problems and issues. However, given the power to select the information they desire with the aid of new technologies, will citizens be exposing themselves to a sufficiently broad range of knowledge? By choosing to see and hear only what interests them most — for example, sports, stock market quotations, and entertainment — will they be able to vote intelligently? This

power of selectivity might actually serve, under some circumstances, as a limiting factor (rather than as a broadening one) in the education of the citizenry.

2.5 Isolation

While the communication revolution has the power to draw the global community closer together, simultaneously, it also isolates individuals and small groups. Instead of mingling with crowds at movie theatres, couples and families stay home to watch television and video on their TV screens. Both adults and children sit for hours, aware only of what appears on the small screen. Often, they seem visually drugged, almost bewitched. A growing number of workers do their jobs at home, linked to their offices by personal computer. This isolation from comrades, this loss of the group dynamics, has forced some intense media users to seek psychiatric help. The negative influence of such aloneness of a large number of people has still not become a big problem in our country, but we are definitely heading there. This can be seen across cities where groups of people are sitting together yet are busy with their laptops or mobile phones rather than interacting with each other.

Obviously, society has a long way to go in comprehending and controlling the communication explosion. A little awed by these feats of electronic wizardry and new marvels just coming into use, we the people of India, are still struggling to harness the media potentialities to improve the human condition. More than ever before, responsible citizens need to learn how the mass Communication system works and how to deal intelligently with the deluge of information it delivers.

3. Impact of Journalism

Newspapers in India have undergone revolutionary changes, both in form and content since the eighties. Today, there are hundreds of dailies and magazines crying for attention. Splashes of colour and slick typography based on computer technology are making them brighter and visually more appealing. To keep up with TV, contemporary journalism has increasingly become more pictorial. While still clinging to the traditional news coverage formula with its emphasis on politics, they have also started discussing social economic and environmental issues. This has resulted in a drastic jump in circulations and revenues.

Newspaper readers, though numerically small in India, largely constitute the intelligentsia. The influence of the press is decidedly far wider than reflected by mere circulation statistics. It has a “multiplier effect”; its message spreads far and wide, even into the villages.

The impact of the press can be judged only in the perspectives of current developments and pace of change in the country. Despite its predominantly urban and middle-class moorings, the press has done a reasonably good job in highlighting the issues of poverty, corruption and unemployment, and has given the ruling class a sense of guilt. The power of the press is also seen to be mainly responsible for the major political developments in India. The capacity of the Indian press to generate a healthy debate on public issues has been only partially realized. But with increasing literacy, it holds infinite possibilities in the future.

Barring a few instances of blatantly biased reporting, the Indian press has, by and large, shown a high degree of social responsibility. However, we must add that with increasing competition, the press is increasingly being used as the battleground for political and corporate warfare. This has inevitably led to an invasion of privacy, smearing of reputations and even practicing of deception.

4. Impact of Radio and Television

Radio programmes are received by over three crore receiving sets in India. Radio serves as an effective medium not only to inform and educate people, but also to provide healthy entertainment. AIR's home-service programmes are transmitted in 19 languages and 146 dialects and Vividh Bharati Programmes of 13 hours a day through 185 transmitters. There are external services broadcasts in 17 foreign languages and 8 Indian languages. The external service is designed to give India's viewpoint on important issues to listeners abroad, and project the cultural heritage of the country, its art, literature, music and socio-economic developments.

Television is one of the greatest inventions of man. It has an edge over other forms of mass media like radio and newspapers. It is multi-media system predominated by the visual medium. There is an urgent need for mass education, and it has been accepted that communication media are needed for accelerating social change, for creating awareness and for inculcating scientific temper

among the masses. TV has the power to instil desired attitudes (necessary for national development) among the masses. It has greater influence than any other medium on the perception, emotions and the outlook of the masses.

An experimental television service was introduced in India with the inauguration of Delhi Kendra, with a UNESCO grant, on September 15, 1959. Entertainment and information programmes were introduced from August 1965. A number of other television centres (Bombay, Srinagar, Jalandhar, Calcutta, Madras and Lucknow) came into existence, from 1972 onwards in quick succession.

TV can transport the viewers to the actual scene of action to see things as they happen. But many have also come to hold TV responsible for inciting violence corrupting the young and creating a make belief world of illusion to keep us away from the realities of life. But if TV can distract and distort, it can also instruct and inspire. As an instant medium, TV is ideal for news presentation. TV news gives the audience a sense of excitement and involvement that cannot be matched by any other medium.

5. Impact of Films

In India, with its cultural and linguistic diversities and the problems of illiteracy, films are the most powerful medium of mass communication. With its universal language, films can, to a considerable extent, cut across cultural and linguistic barriers.

Films carry not only information, but they can even create a yearning for change and modernization. By dexterously employing the mechanical tricks of photography and camera angles, by exploiting the ingenious use of close-ups, by building up of suspense and illusion, and by weaving human elements and story in appropriate sequences, films can create social awareness and even arouse strong emotions. Films can inform, inspire and express feelings and emotions most dramatically with lasting impact.

A film calls for creative collaboration between the filmmaker and other performing and visual artists. Films fired the imagination of people by the closing years of the nineteenth century. By the twenties, films came to be recognized as an art form, a distinct mode of creative expression. They also earned universal acclaim as a versatile means of communication. Films came to be

produced on all subjects of human interest and include feature films, documentaries and newsreels.

The Indian film industry remains a paradox in many ways; India has entered the 21st century with the largest number of illiterates in the world. Therefore, there is an urgent need to have proper communication among these illiterate people. Films in many ways meet this need. Because the only meaningful access to audio-visual entertainment for the poor people is films, which are extremely popular among the masses. And the Indian film industry continues to be the world's largest producer of films, releasing on an average 750 films every year in 16 languages.

Indian films followed the Hollywood model right from the start with heavy emphasis on entertainment. But individual filmmakers broke away from the mainstream, and made socially purposeful films, even in the thirties.

6. Impact of Internet

The Internet is the decisive technology of the Information Age, just as the electrical engine was the vector of technological transformation of the Industrial Age. This global network of computer networks, largely based nowadays on platforms of wireless communication, provides ubiquitous capacity of multimodal, interactive communication in chosen time, transcending space. The Internet is not really a new technology: its ancestor, the Arpanet, was first deployed in 1969. But it was in the 1990s when it was privatized and released from the control of the U.S. Department of Commerce that it diffused around the world.

The internet is so popular nowadays that almost everyone uses it. It is accessible by almost any person who tries to connect to one of its central, main networks. Moreover, it can be accessed by users of any age and condition. But what are the positive and negative aspects of the internet? The Internet has some great positive effects. For instance, Internet search engines are the best information retrieval systems available. They bring any kind of information for internet users, from local restaurants to international news. The Internet also provides some of the most effective means of communication among people, including online emailing and instant messaging.

Thanks to the internet, people can take action and avoid adverse circumstances. For instance,

hurricane, storms and accidents can be tracked through the internet. The internet has allowed the interchange of ideas and materials among scientists, university professors, and students, in addition to providing servers, resource centres and online tools for their research and scholarly activities. Moreover, millions of books, journals and other material are available through the internet because of the digitization of public domain material from libraries. This action enables people to learn all sorts of new things.

However, the internet can also have certain negative effects. For instance, illegal or inappropriate materials can be found on the internet. One can also illegally download music or other copyrighted material for free. This action has had a negative impact on the music industry and has led to several lawsuits. The addiction to online social networks can disturb a person's way of living and professional activity. Some criminals use the internet for spreading computer viruses or even intercepting credit card or bank details for wrong purposes.

7. Sum up

To conclude we can say that the bulk of the print, electronic, and film media does not consciously try to shape society, although a small minority of them vigorously and openly pleads causes dear to them. The media as a whole are concerned with reporting and interpreting society's conduct (information and education angles); by presenting material that pleases audiences and earns profit (entertainment angle); and with marketing goods and services through advertising to make a profit for themselves (commercial angle).

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