

COMMUNICATION

It is impossible not to communicate. Everybody communicates, everything communicates. Communication is not a process limited to human beings only. All creatures on the earth, from worms to humans, are communicating each other for their better existence. It is a universal phenomenon.

Communication is a process which includes transmission of information, ideas, emotions, skills, knowledge by using symbols, words, gestures, and visuals and so on. Thus, the act of communication is referred to as 'transmission'.

What is communication?

The aim of the communication process is to create commonness between communicator and receiver of the message. Through communication, both communicator and receiver enter into a mental agreement. Thus, they achieve their goal, which may be expression of an emotion or transmission of an idea.

Transaction, interchange, interaction, dialogue, discussion, sharing, contact are some of the concepts that come up in our minds when we refer to 'communication'.

According to Oxford English Dictionary, communication is 'the transfer or conveying of meaning' (Oxford Dictionary).

DEFINITIONS

1. Communication is the exchange of meanings between individuals through a common system of symbols. (I.A. Richards).
2. The transmission of information, ideas attitudes, or emotion from one person or group to another or others primarily through symbols. (Theodorson and Theodorson)
3. Communication is the transmission and interchange of facts, ideas, feeling or course of action. (Leland Brown)
4. Communication is a social interaction through messages (Grabner, 1967)
5. The interchange of thoughts or information to bring about mutual understanding and confidence or good human relation. (American society of Training Directors).
6. 'One mind affecting another' (Claude Shannon)
7. 'The mechanism through which human relations exist and develop' (Wilbur Schramm)

8. 'Transmission of stimuli' (Colin Cherry)

9. Communication is the sum of all the things one person does when he wants to create understanding in the mind of another. It is a bridge of meaning. It involves a systematic and continuous process of telling, listening and understanding. (Louis Allen)

10. Communication refers to the act by one or more persons, of sending and receiving messages distorted by noise, within a context, with some effect and with some opportunity for feedback (Joseph A.Devito)

The definitions given here indicate the following facts:

- A world without communication is unthinkable
- Communication is a complex process
- Communication is essential for human relationships and progress
- Human mind, body and physical conditions are vital components of communication
- A common symbol system is essential for communication

FUNCTIONS OF COMMUNICATION

Considering the essentiality of communication, scholars enumerated the following functions of it.

- a) Education: To transfer knowledge for the progress of the society (Example: class room communication)
- b) Information: To find and explain something new (Example: News media)
- c) Cultural promotion: To help foster social values and pass them from generation to generation (Example: Festivals, parties, celebrations)
- d) Social contact: To help make enjoyable companionship (Example: Friendship, clubs, organizations etc.)
- e) Integration: To create harmonious relationships among various social groups (Example: Political parties, conferences, meetings etc.)
- f) Stimulation: To create interest and develop positive thinking /behavior(Example: Advertisements)
- g) Counseling: To alleviate anxiety and lead to better ways (Example: guidance, consolation etc.)
- h) Expression of emotions (Example: crying, smiling etc)
- i) Entertainment: To help pass time and enjoy life (Example: drama, song etc.)
- j) Control function: To get someone to behave in an appropriate way (Example: management, censorship etc).

MASS COMMUNICATION

In semester, we will learn the various aspects of mass communication.

1. Components of mass communication	2. Channels of mass communication	3. The process of mass communication
4. Nature of mass communication	5. Functions and dysfunctions of mass communication	6. Types of mass media

1. COMPONENTS OF MASS COMMUNICATION

For better understanding of the nature of mass communication, we should analyze its two basic components:

The mass and **The communication** media.

THE MASS

The concept “mass” in mass communication is defined as **a large, heterogeneous, assorted, anonymous** audience.

‘LARGE’ means we can’t exactly count the number of the members of audience. It is relatively large but it doesn’t mean that the audience includes all people.

‘HETEROGENEOUS’ means the audience of mass media includes all types of people – the rich, the poor, farmers, bureaucrats, politicians and so on.

‘ASSORTED’ means the audience of mass media is not necessarily limited to a particular geographical sector. They may be scattered everywhere. For example, a newspaper may have a reader in every nook and corner of the world.

‘ANONYMOUS’ means we can’t specifically identify a reader of a newspaper of newspaper with his certain characteristics. Today he may be reader of a particular newspaper. Tomorrow, he may change his media habit. Anybody at any time may be a member of mass media audience.

2. CHANNELS OF MASS COMMUNICATION: Mass media can be classified into three major groups on the basis of their physical nature as followed:

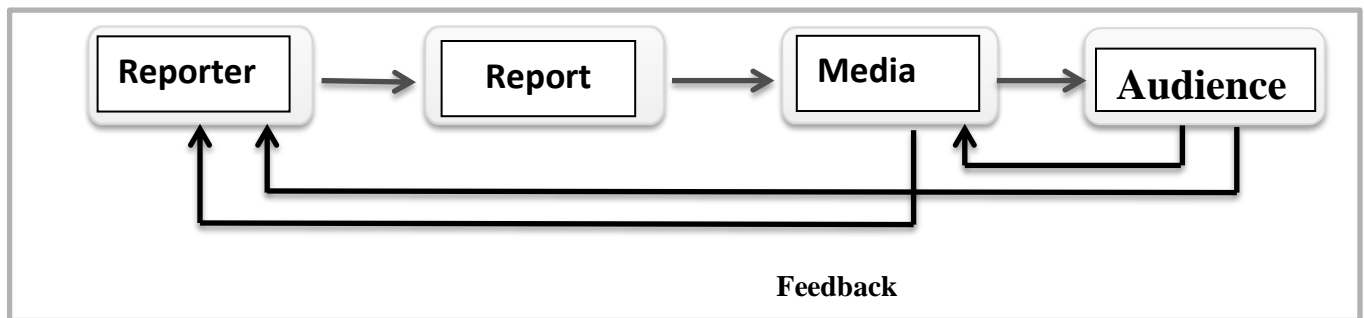
- * Print Media like newspaper, magazines and periodicals, books etc.
- *Electronic like radio, cinema, television, video and audio records
- *Digital Media like CD RoMs, DVDs and the Internet facilities



3. MASS COMMUNICATION PROCESS

Mass communication is a component system made up of senders (the authors, reporters, producers or agencies) who transmit messages (the book content, the news reports, texts, visuals, images, sounds or advertisements) through mass media channels (books, newspapers, films, magazines, radio, television or the Internet) to a large group of receivers (readers, viewers, citizens or consumers) after the filtering of gatekeepers (editors, producers or media managers) with some chance for feedback (letters to editors, phone calls to news reporters, web-site postings or as audience members of talk shows or television discussions). The effect of this process may formation of public opinion, acceptance of a particular cultural value, setting the agenda for the society and the like.

A simple linear model of mass communication situation can be represented with the diagram given below.



4. NATURE OF MASS COMMUNICATION

From the above model of mass communication, it is easy to identify the following features of mass communication.

1. Mass communication experience is public one. It means that anybody can be a part of this communication process at any time without much effort or permission.
2. It is a mediated communication act. Nature of the media involved in the process defines the mediation in mass communication. For example, television can transmit a news instantly as it is a fast medium, newspaper takes to bring the same news report to the public because of its limitations. This is how nature of the media defines the mediation process in mass communication.

3. Mass communication is filtered communication. This filtering processing is called gatekeeping. For example, a news report in a newspaper or on a television channel filtered or controlled at different level by reporter, sub editor, news editor, editor.
4. It is the most complicated form of communication as it involves complex technology like satellites digital networks, management structure, marketing chain etc.
5. Mass communication can alter the way the society thinks about events and attitudes.
6. Mass communication experience is transient. It means that once you used a message (for example, a news report or a film) you may not use it again. The message is meant to be used once and it is gone. Who will read yesterday's newspaper?
7. Mass communication is most often remains as one-way communication. As receivers, how many of us write letters to editor (sender)? A very few. But, in interpersonal communication, senders and receivers are in active conversation sending feedback to each other.
8. Unlike other communicators, mass communicators can't see their audience. *Karan Tapar or Pranoy Roy, the leading television personalities in India know that their programmes are watched by millions of Indians. But, they can't see how people respond or react while watching their presentations. That's why they can't change the style of presentation or mode of communication instantly as we do in interpersonal or group communication.*

5. MASS MEDIA

Mass media influence our daily life more than any other cultural institution. They are our main sources of news and entertainment. They define our purchase decision, voting behavior, academic achievement and so on. Because of this overall impact of mass media, politicians, businessmen and government agencies depend on media to influence people. During election time, for example, we see politicians spending millions dollars for political camping through mass media. Business firms across the world spend billions of dollars to market their products with the help of mass media advertisements. We are informed of the policies of our governments through newspapers and electronic media. Likewise, we people need mass media to express our needs, complaints and wishes to the authorities. In short, role of mass media in our society is omnipresent.

DEFINING MASS MEDIA

According to Wilbur Schramm ‘a mass medium is essentially a working group organized around some device for circulating the same message, at about same time, to a large number of people’. This indicates that there is a well-organized system behind each mass medium. For example, a newspaper is produced everyday with the collective efforts of a lot of people using various information sources ranging from local reporters to international news agencies. Same is the case of distribution of the newspaper also. Everybody from circulation manager to local newspaper boy is actively engaged in smooth circulation of each copy of a newspaper. Moreover, every county has its own policy, laws, and telecommunication systems to facilitate mass media. In this sense, the production of a mass medium is the result of a well-organized system.

And, the messages are publicized, to a large number of people ie. mass. They are called the audience. No media can continue, without a sufficient audience.

The definition again talks about devices of circulating messages. These devices are technological means through which messages are communicated to the audience. Devices include printed documents, television, radio, DVD, cassettes, the internet etc.

6. TYPES OF MASS COMMUNICATION

Mass media can be categorized according to physical form, technology involved, nature of the communication process etc. Below are the major categories of mass media.

PRINT MEDIA

Johannes Gutenberg’s invention of the moveable metallic type in the fifteenth century paved the way for proliferation of the print media. The printing press using moveable type introduced the method for mass production of texts. Before the invention of the printing press, books were expensive materials affordable only for the aristocrats and royal families. Printing reduced the cost of books and made them available to the common men also. Rapid duplication of multiple copies of handy texts led to the innovation of modern newspapers.

Print Media include

- Newspapers
- Magazines
- Books
- Other textual documents

ELECTRONIC MEDIA

The history of electronic mass media starts with the invention of radio by Marconi. The first radio station was set up in Pittsburg, New York and Chicago in the 1920s. Following the USA, European countries also started radio stations for broadcasting news and entertainment content. The colonial powers like Briton and France set radio stations in Asian and African countries in the early years of 20th century. The next step in electronic communication media history was the invention of cinema. Following cinema, television broadcasting was initiated in the US on experimental basis during 1920s. But, the dramatic impact of television as a mass medium began in 1950s. Parallel to these, recording industry was also boomed in the western countries. In short, the term electronic media mainly include:

- Radio
- Movies
- Television
- Audio and Video records

NEW MEDIA

Online and digital means of producing, transmitting and receiving messages are called new media. The term includes computer mediated communication technology. It implies the use of desktop and portable computers as well as wireless and handheld devices. Every company in the computer industry is involved with new media in some manner. The forms of communicating in the digital world include

- CD-RoMs
- DVDs
- Internet facilities like World Wide Web, bulleting boarding, email etc.

FUNCTIONS OF MASS MEDIA

As mentioned earlier, mass media have pervasive effects on our personal and social life. The role and scope of mass media in our society are in the following areas:

- Information
- Education
- Entertainment
- Persuasion

INFORMATION FUNCTION

Mass media carry a lot of information which are essential for our day to day life. We know exam results, weather forecasts, current affairs, traffic regulations, last dates, precautions, government policies etc. from mass media.

The core of media's information function is performed by the media content called news. The place or time dedicated for news in a mass media is called news hole. News is the most consumed item of any media. News can be defined as reports on things that people want or need to know. Information should be accurate, objective and complete. Biased or incomplete reports will keep the audience away from the media.

Advertising is also mass media's information function. We get much useful information from classified advertisements.

EDUCATION FUNCTION

Information is different from education. Education is systematically organized information with predefined objectives. The primary source of education in our society is schools or colleges. Media also perform the functions that educational institutions do. Media are life-long educators for the society. They give us comprehensive knowledge of selected topics. Non-news content or news-based content like editorials, articles, columns in newspapers provide us with complete idea of a subject. Health Magazines, IT magazines are also examples for education through media.

ENTERTAINMENT FUNCTION

All media have entertainment content. Newspapers publish cartoons, comics, puzzles, for amusing people. Lion share of magazine content such as short stories, novels, satires and cartoons are for entertainment. Movies are another big stock for entertainment. Audio-Visual media such as television and radio are also primarily concentrating on entertainment function through their programs based on sports, film, and fashion shows etc.

PERSUASION

Persuasion means influencing attitudes or opinions. Mass media have many ways to persuade people. Most people form their opinion from information they get from mass media. Media have direct and indirect methods for persuasion. For public opinion formation, mass media use editorials, news analysis and commentaries. In such cases, the purpose is clear and direct. The most obvious method of persuasion is advertising. Advertisements are direct methods to influence purchasing behavior of the public. Some media report events hiding their vested interests in news. Such biased, subjective reports are for persuading people to form favorable attitudes towards them or their interests. Opinionated news is an undirected method of persuasion. It's against the ethics of responsible journalism. News and opinion should be given separately.

In 1948, communication theorist Harold Lasswell was starting to think about the structure and function of communication in society. In fact, he wrote a paper titled exactly that: "The Structure of Function of Communication in Society."

Laswell's Functions of Communications

Surveillance of the environment

An important function of the media is to keep up a surveillance of all the happenings in the world and provide information to the human society. The media has the responsibility of providing news and cover a wide variety of issues that is of some service to the society. Media help maintain social order by providing instructions on what has to be done in times of crisis, thereby reducing confusion among the masses.

EXAMPLE: In times of natural disasters, war, health scares, etc., it is the role of the media to create awareness by providing information on what is happening and of ways in which the disaster can be faced.

Transmission of heritage

Mass media are the bridge between our past and present. They report day to day affairs which will become history of tomorrow. The best records of modern history are newspapers of yesteryears. We get our cultural tradition from history and we follow the best of them. In keeping our culture flowing, media play a vital role. It advises us which part of our culture is good and to be followed and which is bad and not to be followed.

Interpretation of information

This function relates to how the media's selection of certain news and its interpretation affects how society understands and responds to it. People's attitudes towards political issues, events, public policy, etc. are influenced to an extent by how the media frames and presents the issue in their discussions and presentations

Mass media provide us with information from every nook and corner of the world. They do not just report facts and figures of the events, rather they interpret events to make us aware of what happens, and why, where, when and how it happens. Media interpretation may be biased or not. But, it helps develop our views towards an event or object or personality. Every media report is an analysis and one version of the fact. There may be another versions and analysis.

EXAMPLE: The media's reporting on the war in Vietnam played a role in changing the mindsets of Americans who started opposing sending soldiers to fight a losing war.

Correlation

Correlation of parts of society was another of Lasswell's mass media functions. You might call this part "shaping opinions" or "influencing attitude." It's a huge part of the media presence we know today, but back to Lasswell. Lasswell said that the way mass communications outlets share news has an effect on how its audience perceives the event being reported. Many people believe that the role of the media had a profound impact on the way people in the United States perceived the Vietnam War.

In the 21st century, not only do we find people sharing their opinions in in newspapers columns or on television, but we can also talk back to them through message boards, comments on blog posts, or videos in the various social media platforms. Correlation has become a two-way street, one where we can influence the opinions of our friends and family.



Print Media

Books Newspapers Posters

Print media is the printed version of telling the news, primarily through newspapers and magazines. ... Through the years, print media evolved to include entertainment, educational topics and more, instead of only conveying news.

Print media is one of the oldest and basic forms of communication. It includes newspapers, weeklies, magazines, monthlies, banners & graphics, posters and other forms of printed material

The contribution of print media in providing information and transfer of knowledge is remarkable. Even after the advent of electronic media, the print media has not lost its charm or relevance.

Print media has the advantage of making a longer impact on the minds of the reader, with more in-depth reporting and analysis.

The primary print media are three: books, magazines and newspapers.

NEWSPAPERS

Newspapers are primary mass medium from which people receive news. The research results show that newspapers reach more people than any other medium do. And, by every measure, newspaper industry overpower all other media, be it in advertising revenue and in the size of audience.