

What Is Mass Media?

Think about this for a second: whenever you want to hear your favorite song, watch your favorite show, or see the latest current events, where do you go? You more than likely turn on your television, radio, or computer. The source that the majority of the general public uses to get their news and information from is considered mass media.

Mass media means technology that is intended to reach a mass audience. It is the primary means of communication used to reach the vast majority of the general public. The most common platforms for mass media are newspapers, magazines, radio, television, and the Internet. The general public typically relies on the mass media to provide information regarding political issues, social issues, entertainment, and news in pop culture.

Types of Mass media

The mass media fall into 3 categories based on the technology by which they are produced - print, electronic and photographic.

The primary print media are books, magazines and newspapers. Among their distinguishing features we can name: binding, regularity, content and timeless. Books usually have stitched or glued binding, magazines - stapled, newspapers are usually unbound, but they are joined together by a fold line. Print media are usually regularly published except books which have only a single issue. And as far as timeliness is concerned there should be admitted such fact that books generally are not timely, for magazines timeliness is not an issue, it's not very important for them, but for newspapers timeliness is significant. And the most important peculiarity of print media messages is that they are in tangible form. They can be picked up physically and laid down, stored for later reference, etc. Even though newspapers may be used to wrap up the leftovers from dinner for tomorrow's garbage, there also is a permanency about the print media.

The primary electronic media are television, radio, sound recordings and the web. They flash their messages electronically. Pioneer work on electronic media began in the late 1800s, but they are mostly a 20-th-century development. Unlike print messages, television and radio messages disappear as soon as they are transmitted. Messages can be stored on tape and other means but usually they reach listeners and viewers in a nonconcrete form. TV is especially distinctive because it engages several senses at once with sound, sight and movement. But a real wonder is the newest mass media - the World Wide Web. It combines text, audio and visuals - both still and moving - in a global electronic network.

The technology of movies is based on the chemistry of photography. But it should be said that movies may not be longer a chemical medium. As a lot of video production, including some

prime-time television, is shot on tape and stored digitally. Photography itself is also moving from chemistry to digital technology, and an end may be coming for darkrooms, hypo and fixer.

And in the end I'd like to say that it's great that there are various types of mass media as everyone has an opportunity to choose the most suitable and accessible way of achieving information about the world.

Functions of Mass Media

There are four major functions of mass media. The first is for surveillance. This is to provide information about issues, events and developments in society. The second is correlation. Media must interpret events and issues and ascribe meaning so that individuals understand their roles in society. A term that best fits with correlation is agenda setting, which means the media doesn't tell you what to think, but what to think about. Media tells you what is and isn't important and to what degree, but that will be covered in a later chapter. Next is cultural transmission. This is where the media aids the transference of dominant cultures and subcultures from one generation to the next or to immigrants. The last function of mass media is to simply entertain (Pavlik & McIntosh, 2004, p. 24-25). According to Pavlik & McIntosh, 2004, there is a standard, overarching model for mass communication that has been used since the invention of the first printing press. The model has four main points. The first is "communication flow is largely one-way, from sender or source to receiver or audience" (p. 22).

The second, "communication is from one or a few to many" (p. 22). Third, "communication is anonymous (sources generally do not know their audiences and audience do not know the sources, except at a general level)" (p. 22). Fourth, "audiences are largely seen as passive recipients of the messages distributed by the media, with little opportunity for feedback and practically no opportunity for immediate feedback or interaction with one another" (p. 22). So what does this all mean? This model refers to movies/films, books, newspapers, television, radio, or any other form of mass media. It states that mass communication isn't interactive, audiences and senders are unknown to one another and it can only flow one way. Digital media and convergence (terms that will be covered later in the chapter) of media changes all of that. Consumers aren't just passive.

They are actively participating and not just consuming media; an example of this is through blogs ("a Web site containing the writer's or group of writers' own experiences, observations, opinions, etc., and often having images and links to other Web sites") (Blog, 2013, p.1). What about email? It's possible for me to send a mass email to all of my contacts (a total of 739 people) stating that I am having a Christmas party and that I want everyone to attend. Well, that's sending a message to a large group of people in a relatively short amount of time (because I type really fast), but the sender (myself) and receivers (my contacts) are not unknown. Examples like this show that the way we use mass media is changing

Mass Media and Its Importance

“Media” is one of the most useful essence of human life. We speak of mass media, of media revolution and of living in a media society. We are overloaded with all these letters, sounds and films, pixels, headlines, jingles. When we use the term media in this context we speak of print and electronic media, the so called mass media. Media affect our modern life in nearly every way. With a turn of a magazine page or an easy flip of the TV channel there at our disposal is a huge array of potential identity replicas. In contemporary society, identity is continuously unstable; it must be selected, constructed and created with reference to inevitable surrounding media traditions.

There are a variety of mediums from which people can pick and access information from such as radio, TV, Internet, or even cell phones. Consequently, the media holds a very powerful capacity to set a social issue for mass audience to assume and talk about. Often, media do not intentionally set the agenda and resolve the pros and cons of that particular matter, so it repeatedly causes terrible consequences towards public as well as establishes ‘moral panics’, which can sometimes direct to mob violence. This writing will argue that identity is a social construction, managed primarily by the contemporary media and created in relation. An individual’s identity is formed by society in which media plays a predominant role. There is a daily interactive relationship between the subject and the object, that is, human agents and the conditions of their subsistence, respectively. Theories of the individual emphasize on differences between people and deem these differences as natural. Individuals are “constituted” as the possessors of positions throughout the effects of social relations. Alternatively, other theories of the topic concentrate on people’s general experiences in society through watching TV, surfing the internet or reading the newspaper. It is these general experiences that are the most significant way of distinguishing who we are. Thus, subject identity is a social construction, not an ordinary one.

When we connect with the media, we act and are acted upon, use and are used by the system. The following text deals with the importance of media to politics and society.

Main work of media is to inform the people. This relates to our form of government: In a democracy the “demos” should know what goes on in the world as it is the one, that decides. A modern democracy cannot work without the media which are an agent between public and state, the Latin word “medius” describes a status in the middle and that is exactly where we can find media: between two entities of communication. You could counter that nor the ancient Greeks for example needed the media in their democracy, and it was a really excellent type of democracy, when we look at its structure. Something like that is unimaginable for modern polity. Since we cannot organize a meeting between 50 million people to inform them orally, we need an instrument, the media.

That is the precondition for political participation of the people. Information as a main task of media sounds easy but in my opinion it is not that simple at all. Information is always a balancing act between objectivity and subjectivity. On the one hand media have to inform about all important happenings and keep the information as neutral as possible. On the other hand media should also be a platform for groups and organizations that are

not mainstream. It should control and criticize not only political parties but also society. Concerning this control function it is important to have a variety of media horizontal and vertical, both different types of media such as TV and newspapers and different providers of information. Due to the control function we call media the forth force in a contemporary democracy.

Media have also an economic side. The German TV system consists of public and private stations. In my opinion it is necessary to have both, for both have advantages and disadvantages. Private TV stations can decide freely what they want to present. As they live on advertisement fees and earn the more the higher their ratings are, a market arises. That has the inescapable consequence of a reign of market's rules: We are talking about the law of supply and demand. To reach good ratings private TV stations broadcast what people want, some problems can result from this point: There is the danger of delivering stereotypes or superficiality and indifference in general, TV becomes a dumping machine, as some people claim. "Infotainment" instead of information, "politainment" instead of policy. Besides there are public TV stations, and the main difference is that they are not really free, their program is created under a certain standard and the directors are from different groups such as political parties or labour unions.

But then they do not have to look on ratings and can really achieve media's aim of political education. We need both, public TV stations not to become too superficial, and private ones to be aware of a state TV monopoly which might exist in dictatorships for example, a historic example is the Third Reich, where the Nazis' most important propaganda machine was the "Rundfunk", controlled by propaganda minister Goebbels in person; a contemporary example could be the situation in Tibet, where both internal and external media have no permission to film and no access at all respectively. Not for nothing one of the basic principles of democracy is freedom of press.

Media have two further important tasks: entertainment and creating topics of conversation. It sounds sarcastic but this is a main reason why people for example watch TV: to be able to have conversations with lots of people, even if they have no other similar hobbies. Furthermore it raises your status if you are informed, to be subscriber. Sociologists warn against a so called knowledge gap. This means that a gap develops between people who are informed and take part in cultural and perhaps intellectual life and people who are not.

Perhaps you could compare this knowledge gap to the often recited poverty gap. Mass media have big influence on our all day life, whether we want it or not. They set trends and spread them, they influence our way of thinking in an enormous way and they have a long arm in political issues.

These characteristics are more positive than negative as long as some conditions are fulfilled: first a wide diversity of media, second no oligopolies/monopolies and of course freedom of press, third fulfillment of media's main tasks information, political education and control. "In former times politicians made policy and the media reported on it. Today media makes policy and the politicians put it into execution." In this manner mass media has many needs and importance too in people's daily life:

Mass media has become an integral part of our lives and can not be separated from our life.

Particularly for the urban people, the need for information is more important than ever. Our values and way of life in the society in this information era are strongly influenced by the mass media like newspapers, TV, radio, video, and the internet. Mass media's influence on people's lives is even greater and deeper than many kinds of state indoctrination or priest's sermons from the pulpit in the church. The full range of unfiltered media is now available to most of us by using a parabola and satellite transmission. We can buy many kinds of videos freely. Access to the internet is easy and inexpensive almost everywhere. We can find many kinds of information using the internet technology. It is worth remembering that there have been three important revolutions in recent history, i.e. agrarian revolution in farming, industry revolution in mass production and information revolution that provides global access.

We are now in the midst of the information revolution. Due to continuing developments in media technology, we are flooded by a huge volume of non-stop information. Most of this information comes to us without a filter or censor. The information can be positive and negative. It is important for all, and particularly teenagers, to be able to look critically at the information and the sources and make positive choices. Having a critical attitude means that we can distinguish between positive and negative information and make choices that will give us information that will benefit us and our society.

Media is the most powerful tool of communication. It helps promoting the right things on right time. It gives a real exposure to the mass audience about what is right or wrong. Even though media is linked with spreading fake news like a fire, but on the safe side, it helps a lot to inform us about the realities as well.

Advantages

1. It educates people. Through television and radio programs, people get to learn about health matters, environmental conservation, and much more.
2. People get the latest news in a very short time. Distance is not a barrier. People get news daily through the media and this keeps them updated on the happenings around the world.
3. People get to bring out their hidden talents. Through media showcase their talents such as comedy, acting and singing.
4. Children's knowledge increases. Children can learn from quiz programs, animal programs and so on.
5. Radio is convenient as people do get short news and with a mobile phone one can access it.
6. Great in promoting mass consumer products. This can in turn increase sales of the product.
7. Serves as a good source of entertainment. People get entertained through music and television programs.
8. Television allows electronic duplication of information. This reduces the production cost making mass education possible.
9. Media leads to diffusion of different cultures. Media showcases different cultural practices.
10. It helps people around the world to understand each other and embrace their differences.

Disadvantages

1. It leads to individualism. People spend too much time on the internet and watching television. As a result, socialization with friends, family and neighbors is affected.
2. Some media contents are not suitable for children. Limiting children's access to such content can be difficult.
3. Newspaper is geographically selective.
4. Increase in advertisements in television and radio is making them less attractive.
5. Internet as a form of media opens up possibilities of imposters, fraud and hacking.
6. Media can be addictive, e.g. some television programs and internet. This can lead to decrease in people's productivity.
7. Health problems. Prolonged watching of television can lead to eyesight problems and radio listening using earphones exposes one to possible hearing defects.
8. It glamorize drugs and alcohol. Some programs make the use of these things appear cool'.
9. It can lead to personal injury. Some people decide to follow the stunts that are showcased in the media. This can lead to injuries.
10. It can lead to ruin of reputation. It is possible for one to create an anonymous account. Such accounts can be used to for malicious reasons such as spreading rumors. This can lead to ruin of reputation of an individual or a company.

Reference

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