

Introduction to Mass Communication Theories (Subject)

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES IN MEDIA WORLD

- Mass communication is institutionalized and source specific. It functions through well-organized professionals and has an ever increasing interweaved. Mass media has a global availability and it has converted the whole world in to a global village. A qualified professional can take up a job of educating, entertaining, informing, persuading, interpreting, and guiding. Working in print media offers the opportunities to be a news reporter, news presenter, an editor, a feature writer, a photojournalist, etc. Electronic media offers great opportunities of being a news reporter, news editor, newsreader, anchorperson, programme host, interviewer, cameraman, producer, director, etc.
- Other titles of Mass Communication professionals are script writer, production assistant, technical director, floor manager, lighting director, scenic director, coordinator, creative director, advertiser, media planner, media consultant, public relation officer, counselor, front office executive, event manager and others.
- Mass communication is the term used to describe the academic study of various means by which individuals and entities relay information to large segments of the population all at once through mass media.

MASS COMMUNICATION

OBJECTIVES

- To understand the meaning of Mass Communication
- To discuss the elements involved in Mass Communication
- To study the importance of Mass Communication
- To study the features of different media of Mass Communication
- To know the need for Mass communication

INTRODUCTION

Mass Communication involves communication with the mass audiences and hence the name Mass Communication. When we are thinking, it is intra-personal communication, when there is face-to-face conversation between two people it is interpersonal communication, college lecture or speech would be an example of group communication, but there is another level of communication when we read newspapers, magazines, listen to Radio or watch TV. This would be called 'Mass communication' as the message is reached to the masses through different media.

MEANING OF MASS COMMUNICATION

Mass Communication is defined as 'any mechanical device that multiples messages and takes it to a large number of people simultaneously'. Face to face conversation is called interpersonal communication, a college lecture or a public speech will be examples of group communication, when we are involved in thinking process, it is intra-personal communication. In addition to all these types of communication we also indulge in yet another level of communication when we read newspapers, magazines or books, listen to radio or watch TV. As the message is communicated to a very large number of people or to a mass of people, it is called Mass communication.

Mass communication is unique and different from interpersonal communication as it is a special kind of communication in which the nature of the audience and the feedback is different from that of interpersonal communication.

Mass communication is the term used to describe the academic study of various means by which individuals and entities relay information to large segments of the population all at once through mass media.

Both mass communication and mass media are generally considered synonymous for the sake of convenience. The media through which messages are being transmitted include radio, TV, newspapers, magazines, films, records, tape recorders, video cassette recorders, internet, etc. and require large organizations and electronic devices to put across the message. Mass communication is a special kind of communication in which the nature of the audience and the feedback is different from that of interpersonal communication.

Mass communication can also be defined as ‘a process whereby mass produced messages are transmitted to large, anonymous and heterogeneous masses of receivers’. By ‘mass produced’ we mean putting the content or message of mass communication in a form suitable to be distributed to large masses of people. ‘Heterogeneous’ means that the individual members of the mass are from a wide variety of classes of the society. ‘Anonymous’ means the individuals in the mass do not know each other. The source or sender of message in mass communication does not know the individual members of the mass. Also the receivers in mass communication are physically separated from each other and share no physical proximity. Finally, the individual members forming a mass are not united. They have no social organization and no customs and traditions, no established sets of rules, no structure or status role and no established leadership.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1. Define ‘Mass Communication’?

Q2. Can you call a lecture delivered in your classroom to be communicated through mass communication? Give reason.

ELEMENTS OF MASS COMMUNICATION

We require a sender, a message, a channel and a receiver for communication to occur. Further there is feedback, which is the response or reaction of the receiver, which comes back to the sender through the same or some other channel. Another element, which plays an important role in communication, is noise or the disturbances. It is observed that the term mass communication must have at least five aspects:

- Large audience
- Fairly undifferentiated audience composition
- Some form of message reproduction
- Rapid distribution and delivery
- Low cost to the consumers

Source – Source or sender of the message may become same or different. Source mostly represents the institution or organization where the idea has been started. In case of source and the sender being different, the sender belongs to media institution or is a professional in media communication. Thus, a scientist or a technologist may use the mass communication media himself for propagating his idea. Or else, they can send the script of the message to the media for delivering the message by an announcer or a reporter.

Message- A message needs reproduction for making it communicable through the media. The message is processed and put to various forms like talk, discussion interview, documentary, play, etc. in case of radio and TV. In case of newspapers, the message is processed by means of article, feature, news story, etc.

Channel- The term channel and media are used interchangeably in mass communication. Modern mass media like radio, television; newspapers spread the message with enormous speed far and wide. The ability of mass communication to encompass vast boundaries of space is expressed by McLuhan's term 'global village'. The term expresses that the world is smaller than before due to advances in mass communication. More information is coming faster, at cheaper rates per unit, from farther away and from more sources through more

channels including multimedia channels with more varied subject matter. Channels of mass communication can be classified into two broad categories:

1. Print-newspapers, books, magazines, pamphlets, etc.
2. Electronic-radio, television, cinema.

There is also a third category which includes all traditional media like folk dance, drama, folk songs and so on. The mass media may also be categorized according to their ability to provide sensory inputs. Thus, visual media are newspapers, magazines, books, still photographs, paintings, etc. The audio medium is radio and audio-visual media are television, motion pictures, drama, etc. Audio-visual media are more efficient than either audio or visual.

Receiver –Mass communication means communication to the mass, so there remains mass of individuals at the receiver end of the communication. This mass of receivers, are often called as mass audience. Mass audience can be defined as ‘individuals united by a common focus of interest to be informed, educated or entertained engaging in identical behavior towards common ends listening, viewing or reading’. Yet the individuals involved are unknown to one other anonymous. The most outstanding characteristic of the mass communication is that it has a widespread audience separated from the source by a considerable distance. Mass communication has an enormous ability to multiply a message and make it available in many places. The greatest advantage of this mode of communication is the rapid spread of message to a sizeable audience remaining scattered far and wide and thus cost of exposure per individual is lowest.

Feedback- Mass communication will have indirect feedback. A source having communicated a message regarding family planning through radio, television or print either has to depend on indirect means like survey of audience reaction, letters and telephone calls from audience members, review of the programme by columnists to know the reaction of audience to the message. Direct feedback which is possible in interpersonal and to a limited extent in group communication, is almost absent in the mass communication.

Gate keeping-This is again a characteristic unique to mass communication. The enormous scope of mass communication demands some control over the selection and editing of the messages that are constantly transmitted to the mass audience. Both individuals and organizations do gate keeping. Whether done by individuals or organizations, gate keeping involves setting certain standards and limitations that serve as guidelines for both content development and delivery of a mass communication message.

Noise- Noise in mass communication is of two types-channel noise and semantic noise. Channel noise is any disturbance within transmission aspects of media. In print media, channel noise will be misspellings, scrambled words, omitted lines or misprinting. Any type of mechanical failure stops the message from reaching the audience in its original form. Semantic noise will include language barriers, difference in education level, socio-economic status, occupation, age, experience and interests between the source and the audience members. One way of solving the problem of semantic noise is to use simplicity and commonality.

Thank you very much