# UNIT-9: INTRODUCTION TO NEW MEDIA

## UNIT STRUCTURE


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## 9.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to:

- Define new media,
- Distinguish between new media and conventional media,
- Identify the characteristics of new media,
- Name the early vehicles of new media

## 9.2 INTRODUCTION

Last unit gave you an insight into the nature of the television as an audio-visual medium, the history and growth of television in India and a basic understanding of Doordarshan, the country's public broadcaster. We have also discussed the different types of TV programmes with special reference to news and current affairs programmes.

In this unit, you will get a basic understanding of new media. Here, we will introduce you to the concept of new media, the characteristics of new media and the most common vehicles of new media. New media and its ever-expanding technologies play a vital role in our day-to-day activities. The term must be vaguely familiar to you but as a Mass Communication and Journalism student you must understand 'new media' in its totality. This course on New Media fulfills this very end.

This unit will guide you in your basic understanding of new media and its varying components. So, let us now get into the first section which will define the concept of new media.

## 9.3 CONCEPT OF NEW MEDIA

Press, television, radio, cinema and the telephone are the conventional forms of media which we have become so accustomed to. But apart from these forms of communication there is another form of communication which has spread its wings in the recent past. This new form of communication can be termed as the 'new media'.

Do you not always wish that you could send information as quickly as possible? Do you not wish that whatever information you send reaches exactly the way you sent it? New media helps you in this. With the advent of new media, information sharing and spreading has become a much easier experience now.

You can send letters, photographs, music files and other data to any part of the world. And you can do so in minimal time and with exact accuracy. New media has brought the world closer and nothing seems to be out of your reach in the present times. But how that happens and what new media exactly is will be defined in the following sections. So, let us move on further to understand the concept better.

### 9.3.1 DEFINITION OF NEW MEDIA

By now you must have got a fair understanding of the concept of ‘new media’. But media scholars have defined this concept in their own unique ways. There is no one definition for it as different scholars have explained it in different words. In simple parlance, new media is a term meant to encompass digital or computerised networks to help us share and spread information. Digital media which is interactive, includes two-way communication and necessitates some form of computing can be referred to as the new media.

The Business Dictionary defines new media as an “electronic interactive media like the internet.” Another definition states that, “New media is a catch-all term for all forms of electronic communication that have appeared or will appear since the original mainly text-and-static picture forms of online communication.”

Therefore, new media is basically a generic term for the several forms of electronic communication that have been made possible since the inception and growth of computer technology.

## 9.3.2 DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CONVENTIONAL MEDIA AND NEW MEDIA

Now that the concept of new media has been discussed in detail in the previous two sections, we can now move on to understand the difference between new media and old media.

Till the 1980s the term ‘media’ referred primarily to print media, television, radio and cinema. But the last 25 years has seen a major development in computer technology which has given rise to what we now know as the ‘new media’.

It is called new media in relation to the ‘old’ forms of media like newspapers, magazines, direct mail advertising, television, radio etc. In their original incarnation, these old or conventional forms of media did not require computer technology but in the present scenario, they do. In fact, it won’t be wrong to say that many of these ‘new media’ emerged by merging the older medium with computer chips and a hard drive.

However, the vital points that distinguish new media from the media that preceded it are:

- Old media has geographical limitations. Newspapers and TV stations can only reach to a certain geographical area. New media, however, has a far wider reach than the conventional forms. If newspapers want to reach out to a wider readership, they need to take the help of new media. The growth of online newspapers is an example of this. The online versions of major newspapers are now accessible through the Internet.
- Old media communication is strictly one-way. The content provider sends information to the consumer, and the consumer pays money for it. There is no provision for the consumer to send across his views or information. But new media communication is inherently two-way. The consumer is active as new media offers an opportunity to interact and even intervene in the communication process. So, you can now become a part of the communication process rather than just being a plain recipient of information, as was the case with conventional media. Conventional media forms are now using new media technologies to receive audience feedback.
- The old media market has limited number of ‘players’. There is a natural limit to the number of newspapers or radio stations or television channels in any given area. New media, on the other hand, has unlimited number of ‘players’. The World Wide Web has several websites on one single topic. Every individual, can in fact, have his very own website. Even in terms of other new media technologies like mobile phones or DVDs or cameras, the number of products in the market is unlimited.
- Old media content providers have complete control over what the consumer hears or sees. Newspapers editors or TV channels can exercise their control over the content. In case of new media, however, the providers cannot control what the consumer wants to see or read or hear.
- The presentation is more important than the content in old media vehicles. Newspapers and television channels have to attract the viewers’ attention to the content through attractive presentation. In new media, however, the content is more important than the presentation. For instance, in case of the World Wide

Web, it is the content which draws the consumer to a particular website. The look or presentation is fairly unimportant while deciding which website to go to.

- Old media content is forced or 'pushed'. New media content is seeked or 'pulled' by the receiver. Newspapers, TV channels and radio stations find out different ways to attract consumers to pass on any information or message. They do so even if the consumer is not ready for it or hasn't asked for it. New media, however, provides the consumer the choice to ask for whatever information he or she requires. New media vehicles will not impose the information; rather, wait for the consumer to seek out the information on their own.
- In new media new concepts have emerged like blogs, wikipedias wherein targeted receivers of the messages and contents can themselves become both the receivers as well as contributors of contents. A sort of democratization process has been set in motion in this regard. But this is very limited in case of the conventional media.
- Web newspapers, internet editions of newspapers, magazines, video journals, magazines etc. have to advertise in a big way to make themselves visible to the intended target audiences which is not the case with the conventional print media like newspapers, magazines. However, as penetration of the computerized environment is increasing by leaps and bounds every passing moment the conventional media have been compelled to keep up with it. That is why all the foresighted conventional media organizations are increasingly making their contents available in their web versions – internet radio, internet TV, receiving TV / Radio signals, news updates on your mobile phones etc.

## LET US KNOW

1. Lev Manovich describes new media as new cultural forms which are native to computers or rely on computers for distribution.
2. Manovich calls it a cultural form because new media vehicles have now become a part of new age culture. We can no longer function without a mobile phone or a computer. The extensive use of digital technologies has given us a new way of leading our day-to-day lives. Our verbal and written

languages have changed dramatically with the advent of ‘SMS lingo’. The Internet has opened up the whole world before us. Web sites, human-computer interface, virtual worlds, multimedia, computer games, computer animation, special effects in cinema and net films and interactive computer installations have now become a part of our life and culture.

3. Bolter and Grusin define new media in terms of remediation: “We call the representation of one medium in another remediation and we will argue that remediation is the defining characteristic of the new digital media.”

   The basis of their definition lies in the fact that ‘new media’ is nothing but ‘old media’ served in a new way. Bolter and Grusin believe that the conventional forms (newspapers, magazines, radio) of media have been refashioned and remodeled with the help of computers to create, what we now know as, new media.

4. Rice defined new media as “communication technologies that enable or facilitate user-to-user interactivity and interactivity between user and information.”

   New media enables a two-way communication process much like interpersonal communication. You can receive messages and also reply or respond to those messages via new media. This establishes the user-to-user interactivity. Apart from this, new media also enables you to add to that bit of information that you wish to share with another user. With appropriate technologies, you can now make your own video or audio messages by adding images, music or text. So, new media also establishes interactivity between user and information.

## CHECK YOUR PROGRESS - A

1) Define ‘new media’.

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2) Match the following:

| | |
|---|---|
| a) Interactivity | a) old media |
| b) Newspapers | b) can be surfed through the internet |
| c) New media | c) new media as a new cultural form |
| d) Online newspapers | d) is digital media |
| e) Manovich describes | e) helps in attaining feed back |

## 9.4 CHARACTERSITICS OF NEW MEDIA

Some of the defining characteristics of new media are:

- New media's most vital feature is its digitality. It is often known as 'digital media' or 'digital new media', which simply means 'media that uses computers'.
- The second important characteristic of new media is its interactivity. It allows two-way communication between the sender and the receiver. You are no longer a passive recipient of information as you can now give your own input and comments via new media technologies.
- New media has the advantages of both interpersonal communication and mass media communication. It assists you in delivering individualised messages to infinite number of people at the same time. And every person involved in this communication process can reciprocate individually to the message.
- New media is space binding and time binding. You can attain information from any part of the world. Distance makes little difference in the time, cost or speed of getting information.
- New media content cannot be stored for too long. Your books can last a lifetime but information on floppy drives or CDs hardly last a few years.
- New media content is not forced on the audience unlike conventional media content which is 'pushed' by the media organization. New media content is 'pulled' by the consumer. It is only when you want some information that you take the help of the Internet or other computational technologies.

- Hypertextuality is another feature of new media. Hypertext provides a link between different documents. You can move from one piece of information to another because of the hypertext links between the pages that contain the information.

## 9.5 MOST COMMON VEHICLES OF NEW MEDIA

Let us now learn about the most common vehicles of new media.

- **Internet and the World Wide Web**

  Internet is a network of networks, linking computers to other computers; it's a global network of computers. Your computer can attain any information stored in another computer through the Internet. The Internet provides for various services like e-mail, file transferring, **Telnet**, **Gopher** and the World Wide Web. The World Wide Web is often thought to be synonymous to Internet but it is not. You will learn more about Internet and the World Wide Web in the next unit.

- **Computer games**

  Computer games are the games played on a personal computer rather than a gaming console or an arcade machine. The first computer game, Spacewar, was developed in 1961 by **MIT** students on a **PDP-1** computer used for statistical calculations. Initially the games were basically text adventures or interactive fiction where the players had to enter commands through the keyboard. Computers were earlier used only for research or educational purposes. But with the advent of computer games, computers became more attractive to consumers and their popularity gave way to an increasing use of computational technologies by common people.

- **DVDs and CD Roms:**

  The DVD or the Digital Video Disc functions as a video and data storage device. The purpose of a CD or a Compact Disc is also the same but their storage capacities are different. A DVD can store six times more data than a CD. DVDs and CDs are the most common forms of storing data files in today's world. Information sharing and spreading has become much easier and less cumbersome with the invention of CDs and DVDs.

- **Digital cameras:**

Digital cameras take still and video images through an electronic **image sensor**. The first true digital camera was the Fuji DS-IP, which recorded images as a computerized file in 1988 but it was two years later that the first commercially available digital camera was launched. It was the Dycam Model 1. Digicams are a common mode of new media technology because they help in taking, storing and transferring images and video without much fuss. There is no need for developing negatives and waiting for hours to see a particular image as was the case with the original analog cameras. Images can be transferred to a computer and passed on to other computers as well.

- **Mobile Phones**

  These, as we all know, are long-range electronic devices used for voice communication. Mobile or wireless phones only work over a particular network area with specialized base stations that help in the communication. Several scientists have toiled over the last century to create what we now call the mobile phone, but the first practical mobile phone is credited to a Motorola researcher, Martin Cooper. He made the first call on April 3, 1973, to a rival from the Bell Labs. The advancement of technology has made mobile phones the most common vehicle of new media. They help in verbal communication, sending text and picture messages, taking pictures, browsing the Internet, listening to music as well as playing games. They are the perfect combination of all forms of new media technologies.

## CHECK YOUR PROGRESS - B

1) Explain in brief the following terms:
   a) Hypertext

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   b) Digital media

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   c) Two-way communication

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d) Media push and consumer pull

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2) What are the advantages of New Media?

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3) What is the one major drawback of new media?

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## 9.6 LET US SUM UP

1. New Media is the new form of communication which uses computational technologies to share or spread information
2. It is called new media because it differs from conventional or old media forms like newspapers, radio etc.
3. The basic difference between old media and new media is that the latter offers interactivity. New Media allows the recipient to be active in the communication process, as he or she can revert back to the sender.
4. Another factor that distinguishes new media from old media is that new media is accessible and has a wider reach.
5. Conventional media forms now employ new media technologies to reach more audience.

6. New media has the positive aspects of both interpersonal communication and mass media communication. You can reach out to the masses with individualised messages. And through new media, every individual in that mass of people can get back to you with their feedback.
7. New media helps to attain information from every nook and corner of the world.
8. One major drawback of new media is that the data attained cannot be stored for too long. CDs, DVDs, hard drives etc have a short life span.
9. New media technologies provide you with information only when you ask for it. The consumer has to 'pull' information unlike other media in which the media organization has to 'push' their information to the audience.
10. The most common vehicles of new media are the Internet, CDs, DVDs, digital cameras and mobile phones.

## 9.7 FURTHER READINGS

- **New Media: A critical Introduction** – *Martin Lister, Jon Dovey, Seth Giddings, Iain Grant, Keran Kelly (Routledge).*
- **Digital Media, Building the Global Audience** – *TK Ganesh (Gnosis Publishers, New Delhi).*

## 9.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**A) 1)** The new form of communication which uses computers or digital technology to spread information can be termed as new media. It is termed new media in relation to old media like newspapers and radio etc. New media is interactive thereby allowing two-way communication, it is digital and it has a wider reach.

**2)** Match the following:

| | |
|---|---|
| a) Interactivity | e) helps in attaining feed back |
| b) Newspapers | a) old media |
| c) New media | d) is digital media |
| d) Online newspapers | b) can be surfed through the internet |
| e) Lev Manovich describes | c) new media as a new cultural form |

**B) 1) In brief**:

a) **Hypertext**: Hypertext is the link between different pages of data on a computer. It has been made famous by the World Wide Web. When large chunks of information cannot be placed in one page the information is segmented into different web pages and with the help of hypertext you can go from one page to the other by the click of a mouse.

b) **Digital media**: It refers to electronic media which works on digital codes. Digital refers to the binary numbers '0' and '1' and computers rely on these two binary numbers to interpret and represent data. New media technologies are essentially 'digital' because they rely on computational technologies.

c) **Two-way communication**: The communication process which involves both the sender and the receiver is called a two-way communication. The recipient is also active as he gives back his feedback to the sender. It is a to and fro mode of communication much like when you are talking to a friend. New media allows two-way communication and that is why it is also called interactive.

d) **Media push and consumer pull**: When any information is given to the consumer without his asking for it, it is called media 'push'. And when we, the consumers, seek information through media outlets, it is referred to as the consumer 'pull'. For instance, television commercials provide information about several products, which the consumer may not even be interested in. That's media push. But when the consumer is trying to find out about a particular product on the Internet, he is 'pulling' information. It is, therefore, called consumer 'pull'.

**2)** The new media technologies have several advantages. As new media supports interactivity, it gives you the benefits of interpersonal communication. At the same time, new media helps you reach out to the mass, it thereby employs the advantages of mass media communication. Moreover, new media helps speed up the communication process. It also assists in attaining information from any part of the world.

**3)** The major drawback of new media technologies is that the data created or accumulated via its various vehicles does not last long. Computer files, CDs, floppies, DVDs etc, get corrupted and important data is lost.

## 9.9 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

1) How can you differentiate new media from conventional media?
2) Interactivity is a major advantage of new media. Explain.
3) New media is a combination of mass media communication and interpersonal communication. Explain.
4) Explain the relevance of content and presentation in terms of both new and old media.
5) New media vehicles have given rise to a new media culture. Elucidate.