UNIT 2: INTRODUCTION TO MASS COMMUNICATION

UNIT STRUCTURE

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2.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to –

- know the Concept of Mass Communication
- know the different types of Mass Communication
- know the function of Mass Communication

2.2 INTRODUCTION

The existence of communication can be traced to the birth of human life, but it was not studied as a process till the 20th century. The history of communication stretches from prehistoric forms of art and writing through modern communication methods such as the internet. When World War I ended, the interest in studying communication began. The social-science study was fully recognized as a legitimate discipline after World War II. Technological advancement has tremendously enhanced the scope of mass communication and this is because of the advancement of world civilization. As the scope of economic activities is increasing day by day, the communication process too enhanced. Particularly after the industrial revolution, a rapid development happened in trade, commerce, and industrial sector. All these have put emphasij on mass communication, which is now

so prevalent that it touches social, commercial, national or international lives. The process that includes transmission of information, ideas, emotions, and skills, knowledge by using symbols, words, gestures, and visuals and so on is called Communication. Thus, the act of communication is also referred as 'transmission'. It is the most loosely used term in the contemporary period. This period is also known as communication age. The study of mass communication is concerned with the content of mass communication that affects the behaviour, attitude, opinion, emotion of the person receiving the information. In this unit, we will know about the concept of 'mass communication' in details.

2.3 CONCEPT OF MASS COMMUNICATION

Mass Communication is the study of how people exchange information through mass media to large segments of the population at the same time. It refers to the imparting and exchanging of information on a large scale to a wide range of people. Mass Communication is the process by which a person or group of people create a message and transmit it through some type of medium to a large, anonymous, heterogeneous audience. This implies the audiences of mass communication are mostly made up of different cultures, behaviour and belief systems.

According to Sydney Head (1976) the term Mass Communication must imply at least five things: Relatively large audience, fairly undifferentiated audience, some form of message reproduction, Rapid distribution and delivery, Low unit cost to the customers. Channels of communication include broadcast Television, Radio, Social media and print. Mass communication experience is a public one. It means that anybody can be a part of this communication process at any time without much effort or permission. Nature of the media involved in the process defines the mediation in mass communication. For example, television can transmit news instantly as it is a fast medium; newspaper takes more time 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. Mass

communication is filtered communication. This filtering processing is called Gatekeeping. For example, a news report in a newspaper or on a television is channel filtered or controlled at a different levels by a reporter, sub-editor, news editor. It is the most complicated form of communication as it involves complex technology like satellites digital networks, management structure, marketing chain etc. Mass communication can alter the way society thinks about events and attitudes. 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. Mass communication most often remains as one-way communication.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1. Define Mass Communication.

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Q2. Name three important elements of Mass Communication.

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Q3. What do you mean by gatekeeping?

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2.4 TYPES OF MASS COMMUNICATION

The following account highlights some common types of mass communication media.

- **Print Media:**

Johannes Gutenberg's invention of the moveable metallic type in the fifteenth century paved the way for a proliferation of the print media. The printing press using moveable types 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 people also. Rapid duplication of multiple copies of handy texts led to the innovation of modern newspapers.

The Print Media include a number of medium, which are highlighted below.

i. Newspapers: Newspapers are periodically published documents that carry current information about society. Newspapers are the primary mass medium from which people receive news. The first newspaper was Publick Occurrences published by Ben Harris in 1690. The first newspaper published in India was the Bengal Gazette by James Augustus Hicky in 1780. It is also called Hicky's Gazette. In any society, the traditional newspapers are part of their culture and social system. They talk about their newspapers affectionately because they give them information, education, entertainment, moreover ways for socialization and legitimization of new values. In a democratic society, the Press is the Fourth Estate. At primary level, the Press means newspapers. Newspapers can be categorized into various types based on their page size/format, content type, periodicity, time of publication, area of circulation and type of users.

ii. Magazines: Unlike newspapers, magazines are periodical publications carrying non-news items. Andrew Bradford's American Magazine and Benjamin Franklin's General Magazine are considered as the first magazines. Magazines are considered a mass medium that spread culture and nationalism. The magazine is originally a French word which means storehouse. In journalistic terms, the magazine is a collection of materials like stories, advertisements, poems, and other items that editors believe will interest audiences. Magazines are of different types. Five major categories are General Interest Magazines, Business Magazines, Consumer Magazines, Literary Reviews, Academic Reviews, News Magazines, and Comic Books.

iii. Books**:** Books are bound pages of written or printed messages of considerable length, mostly on one topic. Being meant for circulation,

they are produced using durable materials and in a portable form. The concept of books existed in China and in the Babylonian way back in 3000 B.C. While the Chinese used papyrus rolls made of bamboo strips, the Babylonians used clay tablets. In Rome, animal skins were used to prepare books. Introduction of paper production advanced the book production. Books are categorized according to their content type and target audience. Based on nature of the content books can be categorized generally as fiction and non-fiction. Fictions include stories, novels, poems etc. while non-fictions comprise of academic and reference books.

- **Electronic Media:**

The history of electronic mass media starts with the invention of the 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 Britain 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 an experimental basis during the 1920s. But, the dramatic impact of television as a mass medium began in the 1950s. Parallel to these, recording industry was also boomed in the western countries. In short, the term electronic media mainly include:

i. Radio: It is a technology of signalling and communicating using radio waves. It is used in modern technology, in radio communication, radar, navigation, remote control and remote sensing.

ii. Movies: Movies are a type of visual communication that uses moving pictures and sound to tell stories. These are also known as Films and are a part of the entertainment.

iii. Television: It is a telecommunication medium used for transmitting moving images in two or three dimensions and sound.

- **New Media:**

New media can be defined as interactive forms of communication that use the Internet, including podcasts, Blogs, social networks, text

messaging, virtual worlds and all other computer-aided communication formats available online. New media makes it possible for anyone to create, modify, and share content with others, using relatively simple tools that are often free or inexpensive. New media requires a computer or mobile device with Internet access.

New media tools can:

i. Connect people with information and services.

ii. Collaborate with other people—including those within their organization or community.

iii. Create new content, services, communities, and channels of communication that help people deliver information and services. Online and digital means of producing, transmitting and receiving messages are called new media. The term encompasses 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 the World Wide Web, bulleting boarding, email etc.

Based on the nature, mass communication is comprehended in the following three types:

- Micro and Macro- Mass Communication.
- Capitalistic and Socialistic Patterns of Mass Communication.
- Islamic Approach and Non-Islamic Approach of Mass Communication.

The following short description of each shall provide a better understanding about these types.

- **Micro and Macro Mass Communication:** When any individual interacts with his higher officials, subordinates or colleagues in terms of any message, or information, it is called micro mass communication. Such communication happens within the limited persons and the organization. Whereas, when communication is intended towards general people, it is called macro mass communication. Such communication happens to

consider the external and large people outside the organization. This is also called universal communication, e.g. advertisement of any product in radio or television.

- **Capitalistic and Socialistic Patterns of Mass Communication:** In a capitalistic society, the market pays a major role in the economy. People have the freedom to raise their voice and therefore there are free flows of news or information. There is no restriction towards the media agencies and therefore they can independently perform their functions or activities. But in a socialistic economy, mass communication is subject to various limitations or regulations imposed by the state. Information or news cannot freely move as state always has control over them and state sometimes censors much information for its interest. People have little and limited voice and therefore mass communication may not be an easy process.

- **Islamic Approach and Non-Islamic Approach of Mass Communication:** Goods which are prohibited in Islam cannot be advertised in the Muslim countries. For example, Wine is forbidden in Islam. So any kind of advertisements related to wine are prohibited and go against Islam. But in Non-Islamic countries, there is no such restriction and therefore wine is widely produced, advertised and consumed there. Study of mass communication has a lot of benefits to an organization.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q4. Name two important functions of New Media.

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Q5. What are the three types of Mass Communication based on its nature?

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Q6. Mention one function of Newspaper.

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2.5 FUNCTION OF MASS COMMUNICATION

The functions of mass communication have been discussed in detail in the account below.

1. Surveillance: Surveillance relates to the constant flow of public information or news about events occurring within the country and in the world. It is the most obvious of all functions of mass communication. It refers to the news and information role of media. They work as the sentinels or guards. Correspondents for wire services, TV networks and newspapers are located across the globe. These individuals gather information for us that we cannot get for ourselves. The surveillance function can be divided further into two types.

a. Warning or beware surveillance: It occurs when the media informs us about threats from weather changes, heavy rains, cyclone, war, etc.

b. Instrumental surveillance: It occurs when the information useful in everyday life is transmitted, such as stock market prices, new products, recipes and so on. A TV serial may perform a function of instrumental surveillance by portraying new hair or dress styles or women in changing roles.

Mass communication confers high public status upon certain people by reporting news about individuals and strengthens social control over the individual members of the society by bringing deviant behaviour into public view. Surveillance through mass communication can also prove dysfunctional for society. If news or information goes uncensored, sometimes it may prove harmful for the society. For example, news of commercial conflicts in some area may result in communal riots in many areas. Sometimes people are warned frequently about possibility of floods, heavy rains or cyclone. This may lead to panic by the people and increase their anxieties.

2. Interpretation: Interpretation function is closely related to the surveillance function. It prevents undesirable consequences of

communication. Nowadays, mass communicators have realized their responsibility to evaluate and interpret events for the reader. They select the important news and issues for the attention of the people and not only provide information about the events, but they also provide information on the ultimate meaning and significance of these events. This function of mass communication helps the individual to know the viewpoints of various people, which helps him/her to evaluate an issue. The dysfunction of the interpretation and prescription by mass media can be that people may not get the depth and true picture of the event or issue and may not contribute to the development of an individual's critical faculties.

3. Transmission of Values: The transmission of values is a subtle but important function of the mass media. It is also called the socialization function. Our society is portrayed in the mass media and by seeing, watching or reading these, people learn which are the important values. The media present role models which people try to imitate. Thus, they teach us about people, show us how they act and what is expected of them. On the other hand, the kinds of values and cultural information that are included in the mass media content are selected by media organizations that may select values and behaviours that encourage the status quo.

4. Linkage: The mass media can link together different elements of society that are not directly connected by an interpersonal channel. For example, newspapers generate opinion; develop a feeling for whatever happenings are reported. Advertising through mass media links together the needs of buyers with the products of sellers.

5. Entertainment: Entertainment is the most obvious function of all media functions. In the past entertainment functions were fulfilled by interpersonal communication. The importance of the entertainment function has grown as the people have got more leisure time. The consequences of this function have been that media entertainment is available to a large number of people at

relatively little cost. This helps people to make their recreational and leisure time more enjoyable.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q7. What are the two types of Surveillance?

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Q8. How mass media became a linkage between producers and sellers.

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2.6 LET US SUM UP

- Mass Communication is the process by which a person or group of people creates a message and transmits it through some type of medium to a large, anonymous, heterogeneous audience. This implies the audiences of mass communication are mostly made up of different culture, behaviour and belief system.
- There are different types of Mass Communication such as - Print Media, Electronic media, New Media, etc.
- Based on it's nature, mass communication is classified into - Micro and Macro Mass Communication, Capitalistic and Socialistic Patterns of Mass Communication, Islamic Approach and Non-Islamic Approach of Mass Communication.
- Mass communication performs various functions like, Surveillance, Interpretation, Transmission of values, linkage, entertainment, etc.



2.7 FURTHER READING

1. Aggarwal, Vir Bala V. S. Gupta. 2001. Handbook of Journalism and Mass Communication. Concept Publishing Company.

2. Dr Muhammadali. N. Introduction to Mass Communication. University of Calicut School of Distance Education

2.8 ANSWER TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: Mass Communication is the process by which a person or group of people creates a message and transmits it through some type of medium to a large, anonymous, heterogeneous audience.

Ans to Q No 2: The important elements of Mass Communication are Communicator, communication process and Feedback

Ans to Q No 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 a different level by a reporter, sub-editor, news editor.

Ans to Q No 4: The two important functions of Mass Media are:

i. Connect people with information and services.

ii. Create new content, services, communities, and channels of communication that help people deliver information and services.

Ans to Q No 5: Micro and Macro- Mass Communication, Capitalistic and Socialistic Patterns of Mass Communication, Islamic Approach and Non-Islamic Approach of Mass Communication.

Ans to Q No 6: Newspapers are primary mass medium from which people receive news. In any society, the traditional newspapers are part of their culture and social system. In a democratic society, the Press is the Fourth Estate.

Ans to Q No 7: The two types of surveillance are:

i. Warning or beware surveillance occurs when the media informs us about threats from weather changes, heavy rains, cyclone, war, etc.

ii. Instrumental surveillance occurs when the information useful in everyday life is transmitted, such as stock market prices, new products, recipes and so on.

Ans to Q No 8: The mass media can link together different elements of society that are not directly connected by an interpersonal channel. Advertising through mass media links together the needs of buyers with the products of sellers.



2.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

Short Questions (Answer each question within 150 words)

Q1. Define New Media. Give examples.

Q2. Mention the first newspaper in India.

Long Questions (Answer each question within 300-500 words)

1. Which is the socialization function of Mass media?
2. Discuss the role of Mass Communication in improving society.