Ch. 6 The Mass Media

What is mass media?

Mass media is a collective term for all the media technologies which helps in disseminating large chunks of information to a large group of audience at one time. The other term for this type of communication is mass communication. There are a number of stations or in other words, outlets through which these mass communication is processed. There are broadly five types of mass media: Broadcast media, Print Media, Internet media, Outdoor media and Public Media.

## What are the different forms of mass media?

The main forms of mass media are:

**1. Broadcast media:** This form of media includes radio and television. The television and radio programs are distributed via common frequency bands using various ends of ranges, bandwidths, the types of receivers and transmitters. It is one of the most widely used form of mass media as the mediums of broadcast media, radio and television, both are found in abundance in every part and has become an integral part of our lives. Television and radio has become a source of information as well as entertainment for the people. Hence, making it a strong source for mass communication and disseminating messages to a larger audience in a short span of time.

**2. Films:** Another form of mass media is filmography. It is also called motion picture format. Films are considered a universal language for mass communication as a film educates, entertains, enlightens, change opinions of audiences and also inspires them. Films can be of different types, like a feature movie, fiction movie, non-fiction or documentary movie, animation movie and abstract movies.

**3. Internet:** One of the most specialized thing that have boomed up in recent times is the usage of internet. Every other people is on the internet at the moment, doing various kind of things, like surfing the net, listening songs, doing social media, playing games, watching online videos, etc. Internet have become a persuasive as well as opinion generating podium for people. Internet carries millions and billions of data regarding information about almost anything existing or that existed in this planet. It is a vast web of unlimited information, that’s why it is called ‘World Wide Web’. Social media nowadays is big phenomena and is a great source of mass media. Social media acts as a catalyst to change in society’s mindsets. There are also various parts in Internet mass communication such as:

* **Blogs**
* **Articles**
* **RSS Feeds**
* **Podcasts**
* **Online Polls and Surveys**

**4. Print Media:** Print media is the oldest form of mass media. It consists of newspapers and magazines. Newspapers are a very effective form of mass communication as it reaches every part of the world, and doing it for more than a 100 years. Newspapers and magazines, both are one of the most trusted source of information and hence the messages directed in them influences the mass audiences very neatly and without any doubt or confusion. Newspapers are published daily, whereas magazines can be bi-weekly, weekly, monthly or bi-monthly.

**5. Outdoor media:** Outdoor media consists of signboards, billboards, placards, flyers, etc. Outdoor media has an advantage of their own. This type of media consists of short messages and interesting visuals compelling the readers and viewers to persuade on the first lookout. Long messages on a bill board or a signboard is only a waste, as the viewer has only about 5 to 7 seconds window to look and understand the message. Outdoor media is also very helpful in extremely poor towns and villages where access to any other media is not possible. Outdoor media acts as helping hand for them.

### **Functions of Mass Media**

We know that mass communication is a process of disseminating messages to a large number of audiences through some forms of technology at a time. And some forms of technology used to disseminate messages is the mass media.   
  
Mass media are the means of public communication reaching to the large, scattered, heterogeneous and anonymous audience at the same time. Mass media have been proved a boon to human society. Nothing has influenced the lives of modern men as the mass media have.

Mass media are the powerful means that do not only influence today’s world but also shape the globe of tomorrow. In this case, mass medium perform essential task in order to cast its effect to the audience and maintain the   
society. Many scholars have argued different functions of mass media. Even so, we can classify the functions of mass media into two categories: **general functions**and**specific functions.**

Under the general functions of mass media, following points are incorporated.

a.   **Information:** Dissemination of information is the major function of mass media. Since information is knowledge and knowledge is power, media offer authentic and timely facts and opinions about various event and situations to mass audience as informative items. Information provided by mass media can be opinionated, objective, subjective, primary and secondary. Informative functions of mass media also lets the audience knows about the happening around them and come to the truth.   Media disseminates information mostly through news broadcast on radio, TV, as well as columns of the newspaper or magazines. Moreover, advertisements are also mainly for information purpose.

b.   **Education:** Media provide education and information side by side. It provides education in different subjects to people of all levels. They try to educate people directly or indirectly using different forms of content. Distance education program, for example, is a direct approach. Dramas, documentaries, interviews, feature stories and many other programs are prepared to educate people indirectly. Especially in the developing country, mass media is used as effective tools for mass awareness. In context of Nepal, media have been successful in eradicating various traditional and evil superstitious practices from society through continuous advocacy.

c.    **Entertainment:** The other important function of mass media is the entertainment. It is also views as the most obvious function of media. Actually, entertainment is a kind of performance that provides pleasure to people. Mass media fulfill this function by providing amusement and assist in reducing tension to large degree. Newspaper and magazines, radio, television and online medium offer stories, films, serials, and comics to entertain their audience. Sports, news, film review, columns on art and fashion are other instances. It makes audience recreational and leisure time more enjoyable.

But these days, media have comprised information and education in the entertaining programs. The fusion of entertainment and information is called infotainment. Similarly, the inclusion of education in entertaining programs is regarded as edutainment.

d. **Persuasion:** It is another function of mass media. Persuasion involves making influence on others mind. Mass media influence audience in varieties of ways. Media content builds opinions and sets agendas in the public mind. It influences votes, changes attitudes and moderates behavior. Using editorials, articles, commentaries and among others, mass media persuades audience. However, all audiences are not well known about it. Many of them become influenced or motivated unknowingly towards it. Advertisement is the example which is designed to persuade.

Along with the above mentioned general functions, mass media performs some specific functions too. Hence, the specific functions of mass media are explained below:

1a.   **Surveillance:** Surveillance denotes observation. Here observation means to watch the society closely. The function of mass media is to observe the society closely and continuously and warn about threatening actions to the mass audience that are likely to happen in future in order to decrease the possible loss. Likewise, mass media also informs about the misconducts happening in the society to the concerned authority and discourage malpractices among mass audience in the society.

Warning or beware surveillance occurs when the media  inform us about threats from hurricanes, erupting volcanoes, depressed economic conditions, increasing inflation or military attack. These warning can be about immediate threats or chronic threats. Similarly, news of increasing deforestation, drug abuse, girls trafficking, crimes etc. are also disseminated which may harm the peace and security of the society. News about films are plying at the local theaters, stock market prices, new products, fashion ideas, recipes, and so on are examples of instrumental surveillance.

**2b.**     **Interpretation:**The mass media do not supply just facts and data but also explanations and interpretation of events and situations. Media offer various explanations correlating and interpreting information to make the reality clear. Unlike normal reporting, interpretation functions provide knowledge. News analysis, commentaries, editorials, and columns are some examples of interpretative contents. Basically, such types of interpretative contents are prepared by those journalists who have a vast knowledge of background information and strong analytical ability.

3c.    **Linkage:**The function of mass media is to join together different elements of society that are not directly connected. For instance: mass advertising attempts to link the needs of buyers with the products of sellers. Similarly, by broadcasting news of those suffered from the disease or natural disasters, media can help in collecting aids and provide the collected amount to the victims. In this way, media become bridge between different groups who may or may not have direct connection.

4d.   **Socialization:** Socialization is the transmission of culture.  Media are the reflectors of society. They socialize people, especially children and new-comers. Socialization is a process by which, people are made to behave in ways that are acceptable in their culture or society. Though this process, we learn how to become a member of our society or human society in greater sense. Whenever a person reads newspaper or watches television, individual knows how people react on matters and what types of norms and values they perceive on particular event, issue or situation.

Though the process of socialization media help to shape our behaviors, conducts, attitudes and beliefs. The process of socialization brings people close and ties them into single unity.