1. **Mass Communication**

Public communication becomes mass communication when it is transmitted to many people through print or electronic media. Print media such as newspapers and magazines continue to be an important channel for mass communication, although they have suffered much in the past decade due in part to the rise of electronic media. Television, websites, blogs, and social media are mass communication channels that you probably engage with regularly. Radio, podcasts, and books are other examples of mass media. The technology required to send mass communication messages distinguishes it from the other forms of communication. A certain amount of intentionality goes into transmitting a mass communication message since it usually requires one or more extra steps to convey the message.

Unlike interpersonal, group, and public communication, there is no immediate verbal and nonverbal feedback loop in mass communication. Of course you could write a letter to the editor of a newspaper or send an e-mail to a television or radio broadcaster in response to a story. The technology to mass-produce and distribute communication messages brings with it the power for one voice or a series of voices to reach and affect many people. This power makes mass communication different from the other levels of communication. While there is potential for unethical communication at all the other levels, the potential consequences of unethical mass communication are important to consider. Communication scholars who focus on mass communication and media often take a critical approach in order to examine how media shapes our culture and who is included and excluded in various mediated messages.

Mass communication occurs when messages are sent to large audiences using print or electronic media.

Means of communication is also called channel of communication. Mass communication can therefore also be defined as ‘who’, ‘says what’, ‘in which channel’, ‘to whom’, ‘with what effect’. Look at the following figure.

**‘Who’ :** refers to the communicator.

**Says ‘what’?:** Here ‘what’ means the message. What the communicator has written, spoken or shown is the message.

**‘In what channel’:** This refers to the medium or channel like the newspaper, radio, or television.

**‘To whom’ :** This refers to the person receiving the message or the receiver.

**“With what effect”:** This refers to the impact of a message on a channel or medium. Let us assume that you have been informed about an event in a newspaper, or on radio of a social message. If this has changed your attitude towards a social evil like dowry or if a film song on television has entertained you, it may be called “the effect”.

**Characteristics of Mass Communication**

* Message is formal.
* Structured message
* Well designed
* Pre-planed
* Message is homogeneous (same for all)
* Audience is heterogeneous (demographic physical qualities of audience which includes education, profession, age, height, job or gender).

**Types of Mass Communication**

1. **Electronic Media:** Medium requiring electricity for transformation, transmission and reception of messages is called electronic media. A medium which is in the form of audio, video or combination of both.
2. **Print Media:** means of mass communication in the form of printed publications such as books, newspapers and magazines. Newspapers are printed and published for providing information of public interest, advertisements and views. These publications are usually issued daily, weekly or at other regular intervals.
3. **Interactive Media:** interactive media is defined as digital access, retrieval and transmission is called interactive media in form of pictures, messages or e-mail. Development and widespread use of computers and information technology have resulted in the emergence of what is called ‘interactive media’. It includes computers, information technology, communication networks and digital media. This has led to another process in mass communication called ‘convergence’. Convergence means coming together of many forms of media and other formats like printed text, photographs, films, recorded music or radio, television etc. Though it is hard to separate old media from new media the World Wide Web or internet has changed the way in which we communicate. You will learn more about this later.
4. **Wireless Communication:** When we discussed the origin of mass communication two inventions was mentioned. The first was the efforts of Samuel Morse in sending messages using a code in 1835. Later on the international Morse Code was developed in 1851. Until, recently we had the electric telegraph of Morse to send messages across the continents. In course of time messages could be sent without using any wires or cables. The cell phone that we use today is a fine example of wireless communication.
5. **Photography:** You may be familiar with a camera and of course photographs. In photography, images are produced using light. Photography was developed in the 19th century by two people from France. Till a few years back we were taking black and white photographs. Later colour photographs could be taken using an emulsion. Newspapers, magazines and advertisements used photography.
6. **Films:** In the previous section, we discussed photography. The pictures or photographs taken using a camera may be called ‘still photographs’ because they are permanent and do not move. The logical development from still photography was what we call ‘motion pictures’ or ‘movies’. In this technology, a series of still photographs on films were projected in rapid succession onto a screen. The camera used for this was called a movie camera. The motion picture machines used to project the films into moving images and later talking pictures were developed by Thomas Alva Edison in the USA.
7. **Radio:** From mere curiosity and technical experiments radio became a truly powerful and popular medium of mass communication. After it was developed in the west we had radio by the 1920s and the first formal radio station was started in Bombay. You will learn about radio in detail in the module on ‘Radio’.
8. **Television:** One of the technological marvels of the 20th century was television invented in 1920 by Baird. In India, television started in 1959 on an experimental basis and the first television station was set up in Delhi. The beginnings were modest and slow but television was popular and became available in colour in 1982. Today Doordarshan has one of the largest television networks. From early 1990s satellite television also came to India and later Direct to Home (DTH) television. You will learn more about television in a later module.

**FUNCTIONS OF MASS COMMUNICATION**

News and discussions may inform you; radio and television programmes may educate you; films and television serials and programmes may entertain you.

* INFORM
* EDUCATE
* ENTERTAIN

These are the functions of media. Let us learn more about these functions of media. Those who write, direct or produce programmes are people who give us messages. Let us consider the example of a news bulletin on radio or television or a news item in a newspaper. They inform us of some event or happening.… “A new President is elected”, “The country has developed a new missile”, “India has beaten Pakistan in cricket”, “25 killed in a bomb blast”… All these inform us. These are properly designed or written messages given by people who are communicators. A doctor speaks on radio or television or writes in a newspaper about how to prevent a disease. Experts tell farmers on radio or television about a new crop, seed or agricultural practice. Thereby, the farmers are educated. All the commercial cinema, television serials and music programmes are entertaining. The channels are the means through which messages are sent. These may be newspapers, films, radio, television or the internet. Mass media have tremendous impact on their readers, listeners and viewers. That is the effect. People watch an advertisement on television and buy the product. They are motivated to buy the product to satisfy their needs.

**Features of Mass Communication**

**Channel**: A channel is required in mass communication for transmit a message to large number of people. It is not possible for single human being to communicate large number of people at same time.

**Organization**: In mass communication organization is required. Mass communication is an organized activity which required lot of human resources, lot of infrastructure and finance so organization is required to transform or transmit message at large level. Examples: Geo network, express media group.

**Audience are non-attractive**: As the receiver in mass communication are wildly dispersed audience. Do not have any contact with each other.

**One way flow of Communication:** in mass communication message is travels from message maker to message receiver that is why mass communication is called one way of communication.

**Sold access:** Mass communication is not free of cost. Receiver has to pay some way or the other to receive a message. Example: purchase a TV, pay the cable.

**Feedback:** in mass communication there is dilate and limited feedback because message is received thousands of people so it is not possible for every individual to give feedback. It is time taking and limited.

**Physical Distance:** There is a physical distance between sender and receiver. In mass communication sender is far away from the receiver for example BBC broadcast its program in London and people are receiving its messages across the world.

**Space and Time Bound:** Mass Communication is expansive mode of communication so it is space bound in print media and time bound in electronic media and time and space bound in interactive media.

**Large Number of Audience**: The foremost feature of mass communication is that it has large number of audience. No other communication gets as many receivers as it gets.

**Heterogeneous Audience**: Mass Communication is not only composed of a large number of audiences but also aims to heterogeneous audience. The heterogeneity here means that the audience may belong to different races, groups, section, cultures etc.

**Scattered Audience**: The audiences of mass Communication are not organized in a certain area rather they are highly scattered in different geographical areas. The receivers of message of mass communication may stay any place of the country and even any place of the world.

**Wide Area**: The area of Mass Communication is wider than any other communication systems. In case of mass communication system, the message is structured, formal and standardized and that’s why it has acceptance all over the world.

**Use of Common Message**: Another unique characteristic of mass communication is that it sends the same message simultaneously to a large number of audiences staying far away from each other. If the audiences have the proper access to the media used by the sender they can easily get message wherever they stay in the world.

**No Direct Feedback**: Mass Communication does not produce any direct feedback. The reaction of audience cannot be known quickly here.

**Outward Flow**: The flow of message in *mass communication* is outward, not inward. The basic objective of mass communication is also to send message to the people outside the organization who say far away.

**Use of Technology**: Mass Communication system uses modern technology in the process of production and dissemination of the message to be sent.

So, Mass Communication has some unique characteristics for which it is accepted by every large organization.