

# LESSON 1

## Mass Media. Definition

**Mass media** refers collectively to all media technologies that are intended to reach a large audience via mass communication.

**Broadcast media** (also known as **electronic media**) transmit their information electronically and comprise **television, film and radio, movies, CDs, DVDs** and some other devices like **cameras** and **video consoles**. Alternatively, **print media** use a physical object as a means of sending their information, such as a **newspaper, magazines, brochures, newsletters, books, leaflets** and **pamphlets**.

The term also refers to the organizations which control these technologies, such as **television stations** or **publishing companies**. **Internet media** is able to achieve mass media status in its own right, due to the many mass media services it provides, such as **email, websites, blogging, Internet** and **television**. For this reason, many **mass media outlets** have a presence on the web, by such things as having TV ads which link to a website, or having games in their sites **to entice gamers** to visit their website. In this way, they can utilize the easy accessibility that the Internet has, and the **outreach** that Internet affords, as information can easily **be broadcast** to many different regions of the world simultaneously and **cost-efficiently**.

**Outdoor media** is a form of mass media which comprises **billboards, signs, placards** placed inside and outside of commercial buildings and /objects like shops and buses, **flying billboards** (signs in tow of airplanes), **blimps**, and **skywriting**. **Public speaking** and **event organizing** can also be considered as forms of mass media.

In the late 20th Century, mass media could be classified into eight mass media industries: books, newspapers, magazines, recordings, radio, movies, television and the internet. With the explosion of digital communication technology in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, the question of what forms of media should be classified as "mass media" has become more prominent. For example, it is controversial whether to include **cell phones, video games** and **computer games** (such as **MMORPGs**) in the definition.

In the 2000s, a classification called the "seven mass media" became popular. In order of introduction, they are:

Print (books, pamphlets, newspapers, magazines, etc.) from the late 15th century;

Recordings (gramophone records, magnetic tapes, cassettes, cartridges, CDs, DVDs) from the late 19th century;

Cinema from about 1900;

Radio from about 1910;

Television from about 1950;

Internet from about 1990;

Mobile phones from about 2000.

Each mass media has its own **content types**, its own creative artists and technicians, and its own business models. For example, the Internet includes **web sites, blogs, podcasts**, and various other technologies built on top of the general distribution network. The sixth and seventh media, internet and mobile, are often called collectively as **digital media**; and the fourth and fifth, radio and TV, as **broadcast media**.

Some argue that video games have developed into a distinct mass form of media. While a telephone is a two way communication device, mass media refers to medium which can communicate a message to a large group, often simultaneously. However, modern cell phones are no longer a single use device. Most cell phones are equipped with internet access and capable of connecting to the web which itself a mass medium. A question arises of whether this makes cell phones a mass medium or simply a device used to access a mass medium (the internet).

There is currently a system where marketers and advertisers are able **to tap into satellites**, and broadcast commercials and advertisements directly to cell phones, **unsolicited by the phone's user**. This transmission of mass advertising to millions of people is a form of mass communication. Video games may also be evolving into a mass medium. Video games convey the same messages and ideologies to all their users. Users sometimes share the experience with each other by

playing online. Excluding the internet however, it is questionable whether players of video games are sharing a common experience when they play the game separately. It is possible to discuss in great detail the events of a video game with a friend you have never played with because the experience was identical to you both. The question is if this is then a form of mass communication.

MMORPGS such as Runescape provide a common gaming experience to millions of users throughout the globe. It is arguable that the users are receiving the same message, i.e., the game is mass communicating the same messages to the various players.

"Mass media" is sometimes used as a synonym for "**mainstream media**", which is distinguished from **alternative media** by the content and point of view. Alternative media are also "**mass media**" outlets in the sense of using technology capable of reaching many people, even if the audience is often smaller than the mainstream. In common usage, the term "mass" denotes not that a given number of individuals receives the products, but rather that the products are available in principle to a plurality of recipients.

Mass media is distinguished from local media by the notion that whilst the former aims to reach a very large market such as the entire population of a country, the latter broadcasts to a much smaller population and area, and generally focuses on regional news rather than global events.

A third type of media, **speciality media**, provides for specific demographics, such as **specialty channels** on TV (sports channels, porn channels, etc.). These definitions are not set in stone, and it is possible for a media outlet to be promoted in status from **a local media outlet** to **a global media outlet**. Some local media, which takes an interest in state or provincial news can **rise to prominence** due to their **investigative journalism**, and to the local region's preference of **updates in national politics** rather than regional news.

The Guardian, formerly known as the Manchester Guardian is an example of one such media outlet. Once a regional daily newspaper, The Guardian is currently a nationally respected paper. Lack of local or specific topical focus is a common criticism of mass media. A mass news media outlet is often forced **to cover national and international news** due to it having **to cater for and be relevant for a wide demographic**. As such, it has to skip over many interesting or important local stories because they simply do not interest the large majority of their viewers.

Whilst some refer to the mass media as "**opiate of the masses**", others argue that is a vital aspect of human societies. By understanding mass media, one is then able to analyse and find a deeper understanding of one's population and culture. This valuable and powerful ability is one reason why the field of media studies is popular. As WiseGeek says, "watching, reading, and interacting with a nation's mass media can provide clues into how people think, especially if a diverse assortment of mass media sources are **perused**". Since the 1950s, in the countries that have reached a high level of industrialization, the mass media of cinema, radio and TV have a key role in political power. Contemporary research demonstrates an increasing level of concentration of media ownership, with many media industries already highly concentrated and dominated by a very small number of firms.