

Radio as a medium of mass communication



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

LESSON 1 RADIO AS A MEDIUM OF MASS COMMUNICATION IN TODAY'S CONTEXT

1. Introduction

Communicators use several media to transmit a message (a thought, idea, opinion, and attitude) to the readers, listeners and or viewers. These media: film, print, broadcasting, are used differently by people for various purposes. Each mass medium has its own distinct nature and characteristics. For example, print medium (newspapers, magazines, etc.) provide detailed information which can be kept for a longer period; accessed whenever needed and used by many persons at a convenient time. Films can be watched and enjoyed at one single place (cinema hall) by many people in large or small groups, or at homes through television sets. Broadcasting on radio and television can bring voices and pictures to a large number of listeners and viewers from long distance.

Thus, we see every medium of mass communication works in its own unique way and carries the message far and wide. Each medium has its advantages and limitations in the areas of operation, influence and impact. For instance, print depends on the ability to read. For communicating a message to a child or an illiterate person, television, film or radio would be effective while the print medium will not be relevant. Every medium uses its strengths to provide information, education and entertainment to the public.

1. 2 Meaning and Definition

In order to appreciate the role of radio as a medium of mass communication, we need to understand what is the concept of communication, what are the various functions and types of communication.

The word ‘Communication’ is derived from the Latin word “communis”, which means, to make common or to share. There are numerous definitions of communication, and there is yet no agreement on any single definition. Some of the more functional definitions of communication describe it as “the transfer or conveying of meaning” (Oxford dictionary)”, transmission of stimuli” (Colin Cherry), “one mind affecting another” (Claude Shannon); “one system influences another” (Charles E. Osgood), “the mechanism through which human relations exist and develop,” or “sharing of experience on the basis of commonness” (Wilbur Schramm).

“ Thus, communication is, a process of sharing or exchange of ideas, information, knowledge, attitude or feeling among two or more persons through certain signs and symbols”.

1. 3 Functions of Communication

Communication is vital for human existence, and for the progress of humanity. No person, group or society can exist without interaction with others. Think for a moment what would happen to us if we did not talk with anyone at home; didn’t listen to lectures at School or college; didn’t speak to friends and co-workers; or didn’t play games or watch TV or films?

Essentially, the primary function of communication is to inform, instruct/educate, entertain influence and persuade people to make them

function smoothly and effectively. Besides, communication has a secondary function to perform as well: through debate and discussion it promotes cultural integration, it fosters consensus, creativity, and understanding among people, groups and societies enabling them to live in peace and harmony.

1. 4 Types of Communication

Human beings are engaged in a variety of communication acts. Although each type of Communication appears-to have distinctive features, they are all much alike in the senses that are enters into a meaningful relationship with one or more persons by means of signs and symbols. These are:

- Intrapersonal Communication
- Interpersonal Communication
- Group Communication
- Mass Communication.

1. 4. 1 Intrapersonal Communication refers to communication that leaks inside a person; and this happens all the time. It is like conversation to oneself, listening to oneself and linking with oneself. It is important in anticipating, abstracting and communicating our thoughts or ideas before we actually treat in open communication.

1. 4. 2 Interpersonal Communication is the world-wide form of communication that takes place between two people. In interpersonal communication, there is face-to-face interaction between two persons, that is, both are sending and receiving messages. This is an ideal and effective communication

situation because you can elucidate and highlight many points through your expressions, nods and voice can get instant feedback.

1. 4. 3 Group Communication is an addition of interpersonal communication where more than two individuals are involved in discussion of ideas.

Communication in a group helps many goals including collective decision making, self-expression, increasing one's effect, uplifting one's status, and relaxation. Group communication provides a chance for direct interface among the members of the group; it helps in bringing about changes in attitudes and opinions.

1. 4. 4 Mass Communication outside the realm of interpersonal communication exists another form of communication which involves communication with mass audiences and hence the nomenclature “ mass communication.” The channels through which this kind of communication takes place are referred to as mass media. Mass communication and mass media, are generally considered synonymous. Mass communication is unique and different from interpersonal communication as is evident from the following definition: Any mechanical device that multiplies messages and takes them to a large number of people simultaneously is called mass communication. The media through which messages are being transmitted include: radio, TV, newspapers, magazines, films, records, tape recorders, video cassette recorders, etc., and require large organizations and electronic devices to put across the messages.

5. Radio as a Mass Medium

Radio is the transmission of signals by modulation of electromagnetic waves with frequencies below those of visible light. In electronics, modulation is the process of varying one or more properties of high frequency periodic waveform, called the carrier signal, with respect to a modulating signal. This is done in a similar fashion as a musician may modulate the tone from a musical instrument by varying its volume, timing and pitch. The three key parameters of a periodic waveform are its amplitude (“ volume”), its phase (“ timing”) and its frequency (“ pitch”), all of which can be modified in accordance with a low frequency signal to obtain the modulated signal.

During the 1930s, radio was considered an intimate and credible medium. The public used it as a news source and expected it to provide factual information. Radio was the first truly mass medium of communication, reaching millions of people instantly and altering social attitudes, family relationships, and how people related to their environment.

Radio is an attractive medium among the various mass communication media because of its special characteristics. It continues to be as relevant and potent as it was in the early years despite the emergence of more glamorous media. It is a truism that in the first phase of broadcasting spanning three decades from the early twenties, radio reigned alone or was the dominant player. However, over a period of time, the media scene has changed drastically. Television with its inherent strength of audio-visual component has captured the imagination of the people. The advent of satellite television, the Internet and the convergence of technology have added further dimensions in media utilization patterns. However, despite the presence of a plethora of media, there is room and scope for each medium.

Experience has revealed that ‘ new technologies add things on but they don’t replace’. One medium is not displaced by another – each medium reinvents itself in the context of changes in the communication environment. In the changed media scenario, radio is reorienting itself with more innovative programmes and formats.