



27

COMPARISON OF TRADITIONAL MEDIA WITH ELECTRONIC MEDIA

In the earlier lesson, you have learnt about different kinds of traditional media. Have you ever thought about the difference between traditional media and electronic media like television? It is important to understand the advantages and disadvantages of the both the mediums. Only after this, one can use the appropriate medium for the required communication. This is because the same type of medium will not be suitable for every situation and context of communication.

Every medium, whether electronic or non electronic, has its own strengths and weaknesses. Before we use these mediums, it is necessary to know the various aspects of these mediums for more meaningful use. This will help us to design our messages in a more suitable manner. Sometimes the message may be good but while using a certain medium, it may not be effective or can lead to miscommunication.



OBJECTIVES

After studying this lesson, you will able to do the following:

- list the advantages and disadvantages of traditional media and electronic media;
- discuss the nature of traditional media and electronic media;
- explain the integrated role of traditional media and electronic media.

27.1 TRADITIONAL MEDIA AND ELECTRONIC MEDIA : THEIR ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

It is important to note that every medium has its own merits and demerits. They are useful in various situations. It is also not true that some forms of media will not work after some years. For example, when radio and television came to India, it

**Notes****Comparison of traditional media with electronic media**

was felt that news papers and traditional media will lose their existence in communication. But the truth is that they still exist and they are doing their job of communication.

Due to the familiar format, content and the usage of local language, traditional media has clarity in communication. The greatest advantage of the traditional media over the electronic media is their flexibility in accommodating new themes. For example, comments on current events useful to people are introduced into the traditional forms such as the 'tamasha' and 'jatra'.

Let us list the advantages and dis-advantages of both traditional media and electronic media.

Advantages of traditional media

- most useful in human communication.
- no need for special training or technology
- mostly embedded in one's own culture and tradition.
- very much a part of our lives.
- feed back is immediate and known.
- flexibility in changing the form and content for the existing context. For example, songs can be written for a social cause without changing the forms and style.
- cost effective.
- very easy to remember and can quickly attract the masses.
- most intimate with the masses in all the regions of the country.
- primary appeal is to the emotions rather than the intellect.
- commands an immense variety of forms and themes to suit the communication requirements of the masses.
- local and live, and able to establish direct rapport with the audience.
- easily available to their audience.
- flexible to accommodate new themes.
- enjoyed and approved by all the people from different age groups, and they are low-cost media as compared to the sophisticated electronic media.

Advantages of electronic media

- outreach is more and audiences are heterogeneous.
- messages can be communicated within no time.
- messages can be communicated to large number of people at a time.
- Variety of audio, video, text can be used in one single medium.
- great possibility of recording and archiving the content for future use.
- In the near future it might be possible to make this medium interactive.

- With the advent of live programming, distance is no longer a hindrance in communication.

Disadvantages of traditional media

- restricted to the place of performance.
- reach is limited.
- limited scope for archiving the performance.
- can cater only to a limited audience.

Disadvantages of electronic media

- less intimate
- feedback mechanisms are slow
- expensive medium
- special training required to make programmes
- limited access in rural areas



INTEXT QUESTIONS 27.1

1. State whether the following statements are true or false :
 - i) Traditional media is mostly electronic in nature.
 - ii) Mass media provides the facility of recording and archiving the content for future use.
 - iii) Traditional media requires basic infrastructure to receive it.
 - iv) Mass media can communicate to large number of people at a time.
 - v) Traditional mediums are local and live helping to establish direct rapport with the audience.

27.2 TRADITIONAL MEDIA AND ELECTRONIC MEDIA : NATURE

Traditional media was discovered several years ago in India as a means of development and educational communication. It has remained a significant tool in the process of motivating people in the desired direction. It is the most appropriate medium for bringing about changes in attitude as it is informal and unscripted in nature. This in turn helps the rural masses to accept social changes. For example, use of traditional media can help to create awareness about the need for cleanliness in your neighbourhood.

Traditional media can be the most effective in rural areas, tribal areas and among





Notes

Comparison of traditional media with electronic media

illiterates as they may not understand the language of modern communication. In fact, traditional media is nothing but the tool of communication having special characteristics to express socio-cultural, religious, moral and emotional needs of the people of society to which they belong.

Traditional media is also used for educational purposes and as a tool to reform society. It helps to convey educational messages through entertainment, colour, costume, music and dance. As these elements constitute an integral part of their culture, the audience will be able to identify easily with the experience provided by traditional media.

Let us consider an example of traditional media used in rural areas.

Traditional media plays an important role in sustaining agriculture. Let us find out how this is done .

Traditional media helps farmers to make efficient, productive and sustainable use of their land and other agricultural resources by providing information, training and education. Certain traditional media forms are identified to assist farmers to improve farming methods and techniques, to increase production, efficiency and income. This, it is hoped will ultimately improve their standard of living and lift the social and educational standards of rural life.

For this, the media should work in close cooperation with farmers. There are different forms of traditional media which can be used to train farmers. Different forms are suitable in different situations.

Now, let us learn about the different forms .

Demonstrations: Demonstrations are useful tools for the transfer of knowledge and encouraging farmers to try new ideas and technology which is suitable in their area. Traditional media forms such as story telling and plays could be used to make these demonstrations in the weekly market place where farmers are likely to gather.

Fair: Fairs help to create awareness about improved technology amongst a large number of people within a short period of time. It provides farmers with an exposure to new technology, techniques used by other farmers as well as government and non government agencies. It provides relevant literature and enables discussion in a lively and informal atmosphere.

Interaction with experts : Visits to other farms and research organizations which have been successful in this area provides farmers with an opportunity to interact directly with experts in this area. Their problems could be discussed and solved on the spot and the success of other farmers can be a motivating factor.

Puppetry: You have already learnt about the different forms of puppetry in your earlier lesson. Puppetry is a very popular form of traditional medium which is used to educate people. This form combines entertainment with education.



The above forms of traditional media could be employed as message carriers to the audience through face to face situations which makes rural communication meaningful and convincing.

Now let us discuss about the nature of electronic media.

The electronic media such as radio and television provides for the effective use of the 'sight' and 'hearing' senses.

While radio stimulates the imagination and is a portable and low cost medium, television has visual and sound capabilities. You have also studied that the audio visual character of television makes it a magic medium allowing us to watch the world from our homes.

You have also learnt in your earlier lessons that immediacy and timeliness are important characteristics of the electronic media. Hence there is no delay in their reception.

With an enormous dissemination capacity, the electronic media has a pivotal role to play in information transfer, education, culture, health, politics etc.

Access to media, a basic understanding of the spoken language and very little training is enough to use many of the services in electronic media.

With the advance in technology, it has become very easy and economical to cover vast geographical areas through the electronic media.

However, electronic media like television has changed the living habits, styles and values of people. Many researches show that viewing television can affect the behaviour of viewers, especially children.

Myths and dilemmas about traditional media:

There are certain myths and dilemmas about traditional media that are prevalent in the minds of the people.

Some of them are:

- Traditional media has no relevance in the present context.
- They are not effective for communication.

Although they cater to small audiences at a time, the impact is at a much deeper level. Unlike the electronic media, the folk media involves audience participation. These art forms preserve and disseminate the tradition and culture of our forefathers. Traditional media perform an important role in changing the society for the better. Some forms of mass media are not seen to have the required impact when it comes to developmental messages. In terms of motivating change and development, traditional media is very often seen to be more effective.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 27.2**

1. List any five advantages of traditional media
2. Mention any five disadvantages of electronic media

27.3 INTEGRATION OF TRADITIONAL MEDIA WITH ELECTRONIC MEDIA

India has inherited several rich, effective popular and powerful traditional media forms, which were developed over the ages. The development of electronic media may have transformed the globe into a village but the traditional media forms of certain regions have retained their importance.

Traditional media continue to play an important role in our society. Ingredients of traditional media are given special projection in the mass media and as such traditional media are being used in development communication. You may recall what you have studied about development communication in the first module.



Fig.27.1: Watching a puppet show on a film screen

Messages on issues like agricultural development, primary health care and nutrition, education, women and child rights are projected through the traditional media. A great majority in the rural areas enjoy performances of traditional artists as a relief from the burdens of everyday life. Many of them still do not have access to modern forms of entertainment.

Over the years they have been increasingly recognized as workable tools to impart development messages both through live performances and also in a form integrated with electronic mass media.

Electronic media like radio and television have extended the area of coverage of a traditional performance, while traditional media with their inspiring color and costume, dance and music have enriched the content of the electronic media channels.

Many scholars have suggested the integration of traditional media with electronic media for quicker transmission of information as it can motivate the rural audience. Traditional media should be an integral part of any communication programme for rural development. Wherever possible, these should be integrated with electronic media as the local people are familiar with these forms which may have been used earlier only to provide entertainment.

The prerequisites for the use of traditional media are an understanding of the rural audience and the use of these media to provide rural people with entertainment in order to attract their attention and to ensure their participation in developmental activities.

The utilisation of traditional media in communication programmes should be viewed not only from the perspectives of political and socio-economic development but also from that of cultural development. Traditional media needs to retain its social authenticity. Not all traditional media can be used for development communication purposes. Care must be taken to choose the most suitable form to communicate the relevant messages. Traditional media productions should be in tune with the needs of the society and related to the customs and beliefs of the local communities. For example, Tamasha, which is a form of drama in Maharashtra cannot be used effectively to spread social messages in rural Kerala.

Efforts should be made to preserve the originality of form; adaptation need not alter or destroy the form. Similarly, collaboration between the folk artists and the producers is absolutely essential for the successful use of folk media and electronic media together for development purposes.

However, under the impact of the more 'glamorous' and more 'powerful' electronic media, the traditional media and folk art forms are being influenced and even transformed. At the same time it is heartening to see how skillfully the electronic media exploits the traditional or folk forms to convey contemporary messages on radio and television, particularly in programmes for farmers.

It is this integrated approach which will strengthen the efficiency of both technology-based and folk media. A healthy combination of the modern and the traditional makes for a practical approach. But care must be taken to retain the originality of traditional media. It is however, unlikely that the electronic media will completely replace the traditional media just like television viewing has not affected newspaper reading.



**authenticity :
genuineness**



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efficacy :
effectiveness

27.4 WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT

→ Advantages of traditional media

- special training not required
- feedback is immediate and known
- cost effective
- local and live medium
- flexible to accommodate new themes

Advantages of electronic media

- mostly electronic in nature
- can be communicated within no time
- vast geographical coverage possible

Disadvantages of traditional media

- restricted to the place of performance
- can cater only to a limited audience
- limited scope for archiving

Disadvantages of electronic media

- less intimate
- feedback mechanisms are slow

Nature of traditional and electronic media

Traditional media

- an effective tool in rural and tribal areas and amongst illiterates
- conveys educational messages through entertainment, colour, costume, dance and music
- audience can easily identify with this tool of communication

Electronic media

- immediate and timely medium
- radio is a low cost portable medium
- audiovisual character of television makes it a magic medium for viewers
- extensive coverage possible through radio and television
- television has both positive and negative effects on viewers



→ Integrated role of traditional media and electronic media

- coverage of traditional performances through mass media channels
- transformation of traditional media forms by the introduction of film songs and dances



27.5 TERMINAL EXERCISES

1. Discuss the nature of traditional media and electronic media.
2. List the advantages and disadvantages of traditional media.
3. Observe television programmes for a period of one week. Make a list of traditional forms of media that you have seen on television during his period.



27.6 ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS

- 27.1 1. i) False
ii) True
iii) False
iv) True
v) True

- 27.2 1. i) most useful in human communication.
ii) no need for special training or technicalities required.
iii) mostly embedded in one's own culture and tradition.
iv) very much a part of our lives.
v) feed back is immediate and known.
vi) any other
2. i) less intimate
ii) feedback mechanisms are slow
iii) expensive medium
iv) special training required to make programmes
v) limited access in rural areas
vi) any other

Notes

