

*Mass Media and Cultural Studies*  
D. Deepika Devi

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**Abstract**

*In cultural studies, media culture refers to the current Western capitalist society that emerged and developed from the 20th century, under the influence of mass media. The term alludes to the overall impact and intellectual guidance exerted by the media, not only on public opinion but also on tastes and values. The alternative term mass culture conveys the idea that such culture emerges spontaneously from the masses themselves, like popular art did before the 20th century. The expression media culture, on the other hand, conveys the idea that such culture is the product of the mass media. Another alternative term for media culture is image culture.*

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## **Introduction**

### **Mass Media**

In cultural studies, media culture refers to the current Western capitalist society that emerged and developed from the 20th century, under the influence of mass media. The term alludes to the overall impact and intellectual guidance exerted by the media, not only on public opinion but also on tastes and values. The alternative term mass culture conveys the idea that such culture emerges spontaneously from the masses themselves, like popular art did before the 20th century. The expression media culture, on the other hand, conveys the idea that such culture is the product of the mass media. Another alternative term for media culture is image culture.

The philosophical understanding of mass media phenomenon requires an appeal to cultural studies of media which investigate the role of media factor in evolution of world civilizations and particular socio-cultural systems. The theoretical basis for studying the phenomenon of mass media which include all types of audio, print, visual, audio-visual as well as electronic means is the works of philosophers, culture experts, sociologists, such as W. Arshavsky, F. Cassidy, A. Gurevich, S. Huntington, V. Ivanov, M. Kagan, L. Kogan, H. Pomeranz, B. Russell, V. Rotenberg, etc.

### **Media Culture and its Impact**

Theoretical understanding of the phenomenon of media culture and its impact on the socio-cultural dynamics requires a recourse to the methodology of scientific knowledge. The authors used a comparative-historical method, which serves as a set of cognitive tools and procedures that allows to allocate general and particular in cultural studies concepts of media culture, to trace different historical stages of media culture fixing the changes found within, to identify the trends of media culture development. Cultural studies of media concentrate on everyday rituals with the help of which people interpret and structure their experience. The hypothesis of social constructionism is based on recognizing the activity of audience whose members do not just accept and store information, rather elaborate, transform and remember it to satisfy their needs shaped by the culture. Proponents of this theory believe that people spare efforts and reflection in virtue of stored social knowledge which helps them understand the intricate web of norms, values and mindset of the society which they live in. Among cultural studies which try to understand media effect on the audience, the concepts of G. Gerbner, H.A. Innis, McLuhan, A. Moles, N. Kirillova, E. Morin are worth mentioning.

The cultivation theory developed by G. Gerbner states that the media impose the stereotyped image of the world on a passive recipient. The theory argues that the media generally present exaggeration or fantasy of what actually exists. This image is being constructed on the addressee's negative perception of the world, based on the belief that good news is no news and the addressee's expectation that any message should be sensational to be successfully sold. G. Gerbner's theory focuses on people's distorted manner of perceiving the real world and viewing it through a television perspective caused by media manipulation effect appealing to recipient's feelings and emotions. H.A. Innis and McLuhan as representatives of Toronto School of communication devoted their works to cultural problems of mass communication. They were among the first who discovered that every means of communication has its own specific qualities and therefore unique opportunities to influence each person and society at large. In accordance with opinion of researchers, it is considered to be very dominant model of communication which is responsible for the historical image of society. H.A. Innis' approach to understanding the role of mass media in culture is based on recognizing them as a factor of the world civilization evolution. He believed that relative stability of cultures depends on the balance and proportion of their media. Any empire or society is generally concerned with duration over time and extension in space.

Consequently, he distinguishes time- and space-based media. Space-based media, for example, paper are light, portable and can be transported over large distances but have a relatively short lifespan. They are associated with secular and territorial societies, they facilitate the expansion of empire over space. Time-based media, for instance, stone and clay are durable and heavy. Since they are difficult to move, they do not encourage territorial rather temporal over time expansion of empire. The opinion of H.A. Innis that media affect our sensory organization and made a fundamental distinction between oral and written cultures. In his opinion the emergence of phonetic alphabet and printed word was a prerequisite for transforming a closed society into an open one which operates within specialized knowledge and actions. McLuhan identifies three stages in cultural progress.

**First stage** - the pre-literate societies is the longest period in human history. The primitive culture of this era at first was based on non-verbal texts i.e., rituals gradually replaced with spoken word held as the main mode of communication where the dominant sensory and social orientation was the ear. In the world of spoken words people used to believe in what they heard, so it was the society of myths, music and immersion.

**Second stage** - the era of alphabet and phonetic writing ended with printing culture – the era of didacticism, individualism and nationalism that spawned a typographic and industrial man. In scribal cultures the information of speech was translated into writing. This often led to an indirect form of communication. The act of sending a message and the act of answering it could be separated in time. This leads to the fact that a person can act without sensory perceiving and sometimes understanding the consequences of his actions.

**Third Stage** - the auditory sense, unlike the cool and neutral eye is hyperesthetic, delicate and all-inclusive. Oral cultures act and react at the same time. Phonetic culture endows men with the means of repressing their feelings and emotions when engaged in action. To act without reacting and involvement is the peculiar advantage of Western literate man.

Consequently, the phonetic alphabet is seen by McLuhan as an invention that turned to be the gap between a tribal and an individualized man. Due to the alphabet people managed to get out of the tribe and individuate them to the level of civilization. So, Western civilization man's uniqueness, rationality and logic are forming due to direct impact of writing as a cultural and historical phenomenon on man's world perception and understanding. It was the invention of typography that pushed the new visual stress of alphabet further than scribal culture ever did by creating the first uniformly repeatable commodity.

### **Factors of Culture Media**

In McLuhan's view means of communication based on electricity, instantly and uninterruptedly creating a total field of interacting events are considered to be an important factor in the process of strengthening the private property, democratization of society based on the election-law, liberal-democratic values. At the same time McLuhan said little or nothing concerning the purpose of using electronic media technologies. He describes several socio-cultural effects caused by typography. Politically, typography's efficiency and portability inspired new forms of social organization. The speed at which information moves is directly related to its societal configuration. As for economic life, McLuhan posits that the acceleration of communication through print unified regions by allowing an authority to extend its voice farther and with greater efficiency.

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### **New Media**

The new media are able to detribalise the mankind, instantly reversing individualism into collectivism, in order to level individuality transforming society into the masses and crowd. The electric age turns to be a reconfiguration of the tribal tradition distinguished by its simultaneous information flow. In this context L. Drotzyanko in the article "The Information Space and the Dialogue of Cultures in the Context of XXI c." fairly noted that changes occurring in technologies aimed at functioning information in society significantly affect the quantitative parameters of the space in which the circulation of information is held. The space is constantly expanding because

- the scope of communication through information and communication technologies is growing
- an increasing amount of information is being mastered
- the speed of obtaining new knowledge, even in on-line regime is accelerating.

The number of social networks based on the technologies access to which becomes real for most remote settlements in the world is increasing dramatically. It turns out that the media space under conditions of informatization penetrates into all social spaces and practices where information and communication technologies play a significant role. Almost all scholars studying features of modern historical stage in the development of mankind indicate the rapid expansion of information space in establishing computerization of society. The modern media space combines its several types - global, national, regional and others. This space is free and chaotic giving the individual a wide field of possibilities for self-determination. Electronic media allow one to form his media sphere (global or local) which would cover specific areas of interest in economy, social institutions and social consciousness, spiritual and material culture.