What were the milestones in the evolution of mass media?

Are media messages absolute facts?

Do media influence our attitudes and tastes?

What do media ads aim at – public good or profit making?

- Evolution of Media
- Understanding Media
- Critical Media Literacy
Overview

“From the clock radio that wakes us up in the morning until we fall asleep watching the late night talk show, we are exposed to hundreds—even thousands—of images and ideas not only from television but also from newspaper headlines, magazine covers, movies, websites, video games, billboards and sms/mms. Media no longer just shape our culture... they ARE our culture.”

To be a functioning adult in a mediated society, one needs to be able to distinguish between different media forms and know how to ask basic questions about everything we watch, read or hear. Familiarisation with different media helps students to develop skills in communication. It offers endless resources for tapping enormous knowledge from almost all corners of the world. Media can create awareness that an individual is part of a wider community.

In spite of all these, media also intervene in shaping one’s attitudes and tastes. The education media has to be approached carefully with critical insight. To achieve this, media education is essential. We have no idea as to what values are imbibed and what view of life is developed in learners. Media keep the readers/viewers at the receiving end with limited space for interaction. So it is crucial for the learner to develop tools to read, analyse and interpret the messages he/she receives from the media.

General Objectives

- To equip the learners with effective tools for understanding media
- To create an awareness among peers and local community for checking media abuse and misuse
- To help the learners understand how to use and manage the information received from media effectively
- To help the learners understand how to pose critical questions to examine the authenticity, accuracy and reliability of information passed through media
- To help the learners create and distribute their own media messages
- To make the learners advocate for a changed media system

Activity

All that Glitters...

Specific Objectives:

- To recognise what the media want us to believe or do
- To understand the techniques of persuasion used
- To recognise bias, spin, misinformation and lies
- To understand how media messages shape our culture and society
- To evaluate media messages based on our own experiences, skills, beliefs and values

Process:

You can show an image of a woman decked with a lot of jewels in a jewellery ad.
You may generate a discussion using the following questions:
- What does this picture communicate?
- Who created this message?
- What techniques are used to attract your attention and to convey the message?
- How might different people conceive the same message?
- What lifestyles, values and points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message?
- Why is this message sent for?

Activity

True or False...

Specific Objectives:
- To understand how media represents men and women in our culture and society
- To read, analyse and interpret media messages constructed using a creative language with its own rules
- To differentiate media language elements which include graphic, visual and audio texts
- To evaluate media messages and to be aware of the techniques used by different media

Process:
You may raise the question, ‘Are men smarter than women?’
Elicit various responses from the learners.
You may also ask the question, ‘How do ads represent men and women?’
You may screen selected ads which show men, women and families and ask the learners to identify patterns of representation of men and women in them.
Let the learners discuss the following questions in groups.

Consolidation

All media messages are ‘constructed.’
Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules.
The language include the graphic, visual and audio texts.
Different people conceive the same media message differently.
Media have embedded values and points of view.
Most media messages are organised to gain profit / power.
1. How are men portrayed in these ads?
2. What spaces do they occupy?
3. What are they doing?

Showing a few clippings, you may interact with the learners by asking the questions:
How are men portrayed in the ads? (successful/powerful/cheerful)
In groups, let the learners analyse the clippings and present their views on the remaining two questions.
What spaces do they occupy? (open places/free spaces)
What are they doing? (working/supervising)
Now, lead them to the following questions.
How are women portrayed in these ads? (beautiful/consumeristic/subservient/timid/obedient)

What spaces do women occupy? (closed/interior/restricted spaces)
What are they doing? (decorating/cleaning/cooking/caring)
You may ask the learners whether men and women are given the same status in advertisements?

Discussion questions
• What messages do these ads construct in your minds?
• Are these messages natural/true?
• Who created these messages?
• What kind of “text” are they?
• What graphics, visuals and audio texts are used to construct the message?
• Do women accept these messages? Why?

Consolidation

Media texts are created making use of graphics, visuals, audio texts, lighting, music, camera angles, sound, animation etc. The message of the text thus created makes us feel that it is natural. It also uses techniques like, ‘My hero is doing it’ and ‘All are looking good’. Use of catchy dialogues, music and computer generated special effects give the message a dream-like quality creating a profound impact on the viewers.
But it does not mean that one must keep away from all forms of media. One can enjoy movies, songs, watch TV programmes and commercials, listen to music and be exposed to the complexities of media ‘constructs’, provided one is aware of the hidden messages in them. A media literate will have the tools to recognise such messages as well.

What were the milestones in the evolution of mass media?

The invention of printing was a major milestone in the evolution of modern mass media. Later, the invention of radio and television paved the way for a revolution in electronic communication media. By 1980s television started gaining popularity as an audio-visual medium in India. Within two decades the information and communication technology was in full bloom and satellite communication popularised the internet. The recent upsurge of social networking via internet sites has positive effects, though it creates undesirable effects at times.
3 Activity

Tell or Sell...

Specific Objectives:
- To make the learners aware of different types of media messages
- To analyse, infer and generalise that most media messages are organised to gain profit or power
- To develop positive media messages through posters, notices and brochures

Process:
You may exhibit Poster 1 and ask them to read and analyse it.
Elicit responses based on the following questions:
- What is being sold through this poster?
- Who are the targeted viewers of this poster?
- What message is being conveyed to the viewers?

- Poster 1

Media Techniques for ‘constructing’ message

Looking good - Some ads concentrate on showing people who are healthy, fit, attractive and happy. They create the impression that if you use the product, you could look like them too.

Say it again - This type of advertisement uses the technique of repetition. You hear the slogan or product name several times during the commercial which helps to retain it in your mind.

Catchy music - Some ads will make use of catchy music, sound effects and other noises that lend more realistic effect on the viewers.

Everybody’s doing it - In this type of ad, you get the impression that everyone is using the product so you too should go for it.

Family fun - Some ads select family settings and show the family playing and eating together and having a great time, thereby bringing in an emotional touch to the commercial.

Dream world - In some ads you may see the product displayed in a fantasy world where everything is perfect and seems like a dream.

Techno savvy - For some product advertisements high-tech animation or visual effects are used to attract the attention of the viewers.

Silent type - Some ads use very little or no words. Instead, they rely on strong visual images to promote their products.

My Hero - Some ads use famous people, such as movie stars or athletes to promote a product.
Group discussion questions
- Who created and transmitted this message?
- Why are they doing so?
- Who is making profits or benefits from the message - the public/private individuals/institutions/private companies?
- Who wins? Who loses? Who decides?

You may exhibit Poster 2 and ask the learners to analyse it using the same set of questions. Sum up the discussion by eliciting the learners’ responses to the question:
- What is the importance of keeping our eyes and ears open to media messages?

Consolidation
Most of our media were established as money-making enterprises and they continue to operate in those lines. Newspapers and magazines give more prominence to ads and only the remaining space is devoted to news. Commercials are part and parcel of most of the TV programmes. What is really being sold through commercials in media is not just the product, but the viewers themselves to the advertisers!

Campaign through Posters

Collect posters, covers, visuals and commercials misleading the public. Analyse each one of them using the questions mentioned earlier. Develop alternate posters, notices or brochures to make your peers understand the real intentions of media messages.

Conduct an exhibition of the posters in your school and on the basis of the feedback from the viewers, improve them and develop a new set of posters for a public awareness campaign. Who is your audience, what messages do you wish to convey, what all graphics, visuals and other devices will you use? Think about captions, colours, fonts used, size of fonts etc. as well. How will you place all these elements in the poster you are going to make?

Are media messages absolute facts?

There was once a popular notion that whatever appeared in the print media was factual. Only the literate had access to it and what was convincing to them was convincing to the society as well. Later on, when the radio emerged as a more popular medium for both the literate and the illiterate, this monopoly of the print world got shaken. The radio was then the official mouth-piece of the government and had enjoyed an official status. With the emergence of TV, again as an official medium at the beginning, the ideas launched through it were accepted as absolute facts. The manipulation of messages for protecting vested interests was there ever since the introduction of visual media. But, with the emergence of commercial TV channels, FM and radio stations the messages of advertisements distorted or hid the facts and it broke all boundaries. Market and the media have now become complementary entities and the interests of the media are the interests of market these days.
4 Activity
Tell or Sell...

Specific Objectives:
• To enable the learners to analyse a piece of news/TV programme critically
• To sensitise the learners on how media propagate hidden values and set trends

Process:
You may show/distribute a piece of news like the one given here or screen a news programme on the TV which describes the arrival of a celebrity and ask the learners to read/watch it carefully.
You may initiate a discussion on the news item by asking the following questions:
• What is the headline of the news?
• Is there an element of exaggeration in the reporting?
• What purpose does the reference to the celebrity’s dressing serve?
• What feeling does the piece of news create in you?

News Analysis - Worksheet

Newspaper/ TV channel:
Headline:
Place:
1. What do you already know about the piece of news?
2. Comprehensiveness of Information
   a. Who? (can be country, person, may be more than one subject)
b. What?
c. Where?
d. When?
e. Why?
f. How?
g. Of all the questions, which one do you think is the most important? Why?

Aishwarya Rai creates mass hysteria in Kerala

Kochi: Aishwarya Rai Bachchan fans thronged in thousands to get a glimpse of their favourite star in Kochi where she was there for the inauguration of a jewellers store on August 19.
Thousands of fans had lined up the roads on either side leading up to the jewellers store in Kochi where Aishwarya Rai had come to inaugurate the store. A special stage was made anticipating such a huge crowd outside the store for her to address the fans before she went ahead with the formalities of the launch of the store.

Aishwarya came looking resplendent in an off white lehenga by Abu-Sandeep and spoke to the crowds. She then inaugurated the jewellery store alongside Malayalam superstar Dileep and addressed a select invitee list of guests and media where she spoke about her connection with Kerala which she referred to as ‘Gods Own Country’.

Now lead the learners to the News Analysis Worksheet given.
Let them try to fill in the work sheet individually.
Then you may ask the learners to sit in groups and discuss the questions in the worksheet and answer them after arriving at a consensus.
3. Magnitude of the event in story
   A. Is the piece of news international, national or local? Does it affect the place, the people in and around the area, or the world? Explain.
   B. What is its impact? Who are the people who were affected by it?

4. Culture and Citizenship
   How are the locale’s cultural values reflected in the piece of news?

5. Personal Reaction
   a. Is this news item important for you? Why?
   b. Whose point of view is reflected in the news? Are they factual details alone or the reporter’s own version?
   c. Does the piece of news appear like taking sides? Do you also support it? Why?
   d. What do you think is the right way of reporting an event?
   e. What changes do you suggest to this piece of news for improving its quality?

Consolidation
The title sets the tone of the news item. An element of exaggeration is there in the title. Many hidden messages are propagated through apparently simple piece of news like the one discussed here. Commercial interests play a crucial role in prioritizing pieces of news. Many burning issues are sidelined by media.

On analysing news reports
News items may be analysed by decoding the vocabulary and styles of arguments.
Let them discuss with fellow students why the reporter presented the piece of news in that perspective.
A particular news item may be compared with what others state on the same subject in other media.
Understand how readers from varying backgrounds may interpret and reflect on the particular news item.
Activity

Use or Abuse...

Specific Objectives:
- To encourage the learners to reflect on and examine their assumptions, attitudes and habits regarding the use of mobile phones
- To make the learners aware of safe use of mobile phones in their personal, social and academic contexts

Process:
You may show the following video taken from the Indian section of the Mobile Youth Project using the following link.
(http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tcPoVt-9UU)

Now, ask the learners: What message does the video convey?
Elicit responses from the learners.
You may then distribute a questionnaire to collect their opinions on the use of mobile phones and ask them to record their response to each statement. Learners may be asked to write ‘Agree’, ‘Disagree’, ‘Partially agree’, ‘Strongly disagree’ etc.

- Mobile phones gave me access to more friends and media.
- Mobile phones prompt the youth to commit crimes.
- Continuous use of mobile phones affects the memory, concentration and learning ability of the learner.
- Mobile phones hold enormous potential for development, especially in the areas of job opportunities, economy, education and health.
- As mobile phones are used by men and women, gender discrimination at home and in society is to some extent curtailed.
- The indiscriminate use of mobile phones has upset our traditional customs, morality and culture.
- Mobile phones gave me access to knowledge and entertainment and made me wiser.

- Mobile phones are scandalous, obscene and even dangerous.
- Mobile phones are the indicators of development and emergence of a new society.
- Use of mobile phones is to be controlled in public spaces by the users themselves.
- Mobile phones shall be used only in private spaces and at home.
- It is not advisable to provide mobile phones to teenagers.
- Mobile phones promote 'sexting' of messages rather than texting them.

You may initiate a discussion on each statement by asking why the learners think so. Encourage them to come out with their views.

Do media influence our attitudes and tastes?

Media holds the society in its magic spell, and influences its tastes in almost all walks of life including food habits, choice of dress and even cultural or moral aspects. To be immune to all types of influences is almost impossible. What is crucial is to develop a sound standpoint and to use one’s critical acumen to judge things and take wise decisions.
Consolidation

- Invention of mobile phones and related communication technologies are great achievements and plays an important part in all walks of life like education, social development, health, industry, culture etc.
- It is beneficial in many aspects, but it creates negative effects also.
- Unwise and improper use of mobile phones is a social menace.
- People are addicted to their use of cell phones.
- Adolescents are prone to the misuse of mobile phones.
- Many adolescents are victims of cyber-bullying by sending inappropriate messages and obscene images.

A Case

You may present a case and ask the learners:
How will you prevent yourself from this type of abuse?

In November 2004, two students of an elite public school in New Delhi filmed their private moments using a mobile phone camera. A few days later the boy sold the video clip for Rs. 50/- to a friend. When this became public, both students were expelled from the school. The video clip was then transformed into a hot-selling CD by the pornographic merchants, and a student of one of the IITs of India posted the video on a website in the internet.

You may elicit responses from the learners and develop a list of Dos and Don’ts for preventing the abuse of mobile phones. Let them share it in their groups and consolidate it.

What do media ads aim at – public good or profit making?

In a society in which economic interests are given importance, it is practically impossible for media to survive without finding sources for generating income. They have to rely greatly on ads which provide them the source of income. The power of money bestows unrestricted freedom to the advertisement makers and they try to tickle soft feelings among viewers. They aim at amassing money by all possible means.
How will I use my mobile phone?

- I will avoid the use of mobile phones in public places, school, hospitals, trains, buses etc.
- I will not use mobile phone for more than 2-3 minutes at a stretch.
- I will not allow others to take my photos using mobile without my permission.
- I will not reply to sms and mms from strangers.
- I will not send obscene text or images to anyone.
- I will not give my mobile number to strangers.
- I will keep the facility of bluetooth connectivity closed when I don’t need it.
- I will give my mobile for service only to authorized and trusted service centres.
- I will use my mobile phone for communication purposes only.

Assessment

Let’s speak

You may ask the learners to read the features of a media-literate person given below. Let them assess themselves by finding what they are able to think and do.

- I use media wisely and effectively.
- I can make critical evaluation of media messages.
- I can evaluate the credibility of the information from different sources.
- I can read different types of images- graphic/visual and audio.
- I am aware of diverse cultural universe and appreciate multiple perspectives.
- I can express myself clearly and creatively using different forms of media.
- I can identify media’s influence on beliefs, attitudes, values and behaviours of a person.

You may ask the learners to share their competencies on media literacy. 'Can you prepare your profile as a media literate?' Let them prepare their profile including images, symbols, illustrations and captions.

Social Interventions

Media Parliament

- You may elicit the learners’ reactions by conducting a Media Parliament at school and for the public. Inform them that there are varied opinions on the issue, 'Should media be controlled or given absolute freedom?'. Inform them that a 'Bill on the Rights of Media' be moved in the Media Parliament session based on the discussion.
- Conduct a debate in the class forming two groups and develop a Draft Bill to be moved in the Media Parliament.
- Select those learners who represent various groups such as print media, ad media, television media, film media, internet media, media schools/ institutions and public. You may collect questions to be discussed in the parliament and conduct Media Parliament at school.
- Conduct Media Parliament in SMC (School Management Committee) and in Grama Sabha. Include members from the local community as Media Parliament members.