



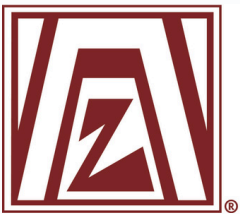
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MEDEA

DEVELOPING MEDIA LITERACY TO DEBUNK GENDER-RELATED MEDIA
MANIPULATION AND FAKE NEWS



PROJECT N. 2024-1-LV01-KA210-ADU-000243248



ZONTA
CLUB OF
JELGAVA



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SUMMARY

1. Module 1 - Understanding Meta-Level Critical Thinking
 2. Module 2 - Fact-Checking techniques and Information Verification
 3. Module 3 - Gender-Based Technology Driven Violence
 4. Module 4 - GBTDV - How to Prevent and Fight It
 5. Module 5 - Understanding media construction
 6. Module 6 - Media consumption and its impact on perception
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MODULE 5

Understanding media construction

Novi Sad School of
Journalism



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SUMMARY

1.INTRODUCTION TO MEDIA PRODUCTION	1
2.LET’S LOOK AT THE NEWS	2
3.TRAINING MODULE	3
4.CONCLUSIONS	4





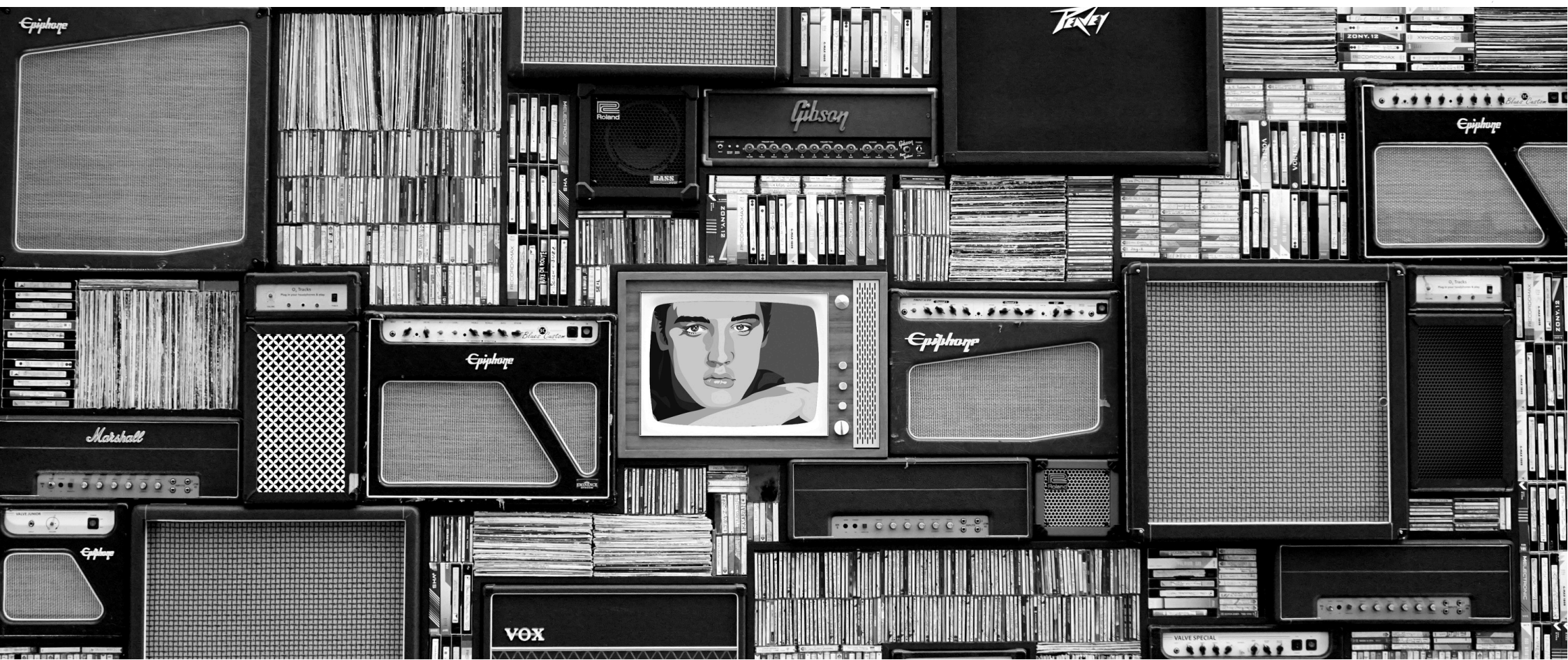
Understanding media construction

Throughout history, the media has played a central role in shaping societies, transmitting knowledge, and influencing public opinion. From the earliest forms of communication, such as oral storytelling and cave paintings, to the complex digital networks of today, media has continuously evolved, adapting to technological advancements and societal needs.

Each era has brought new ways of distributing information, transforming the way people engage with the world around them. In ancient civilizations, media existed primarily in the form of spoken word, inscriptions, and manuscripts, allowing rulers, religious leaders, and scholars to preserve and transmit cultural narratives, laws, and beliefs. With the invention of the printing press in the 15th century, written knowledge became widely accessible, revolutionizing the spread of ideas and contributing to major societal shifts such as the Reformation and the Enlightenment. Printed books, pamphlets, and newspapers allowed for the dissemination of information on an unprecedented scale, fostering literacy and public discourse.

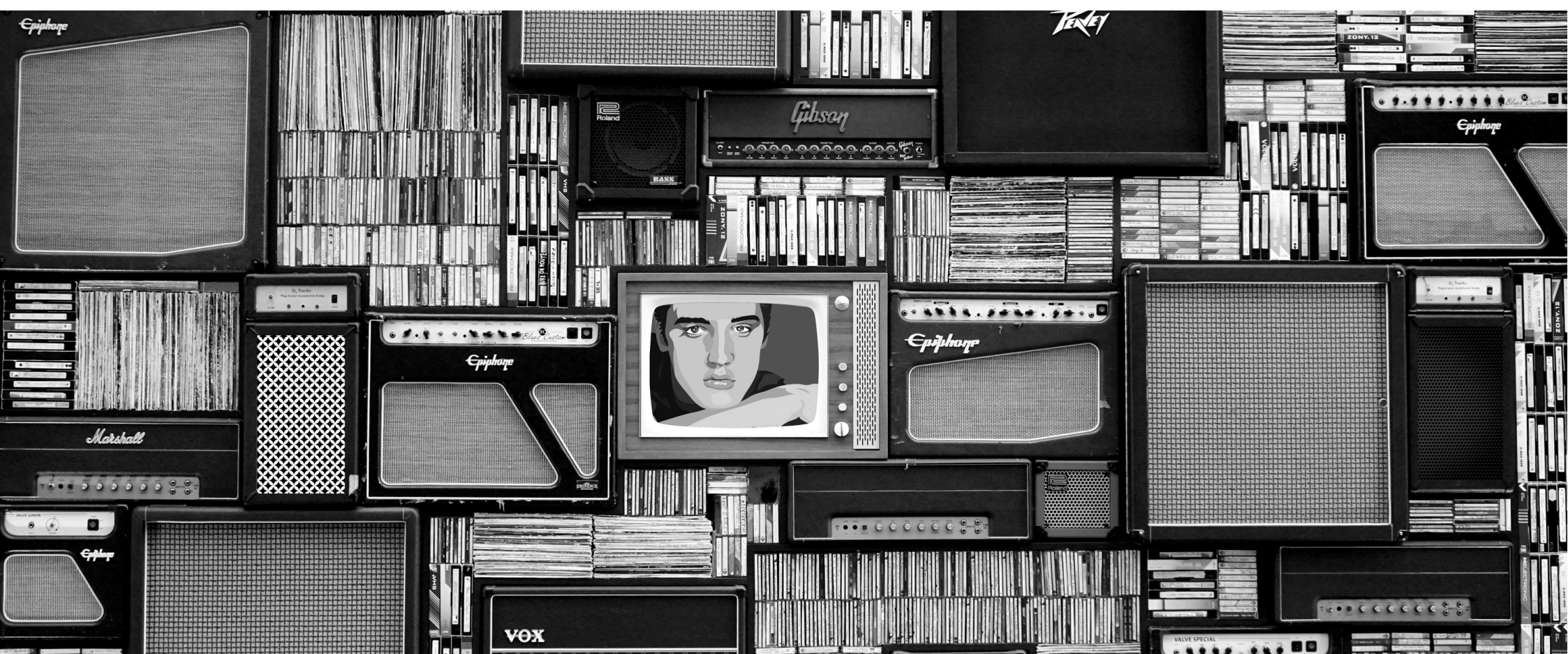
The 19th and early 20th centuries saw the emergence of mass media through newspapers, photography, and later, radio and film. These new technologies enabled faster, more immediate communication, reaching larger audiences and making news, entertainment, and political messages more accessible to the public. The introduction of television in the mid-20th century further transformed media consumption, creating a culture of visual storytelling that became the dominant mode of mass communication. Televised news, political speeches, and advertising began to shape public perception on a scale never before possible, reinforcing the power of media as a tool for both information and persuasion.

With the rise of the internet and digital communication in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, media entered a new phase of interactivity and personalization. The traditional, centralized model of information dissemination, where newspapers and broadcast networks controlled the flow of news, gave way to decentralized and participatory platforms. The advent of social media, streaming services, and algorithm-driven content distribution has profoundly changed how people consume and engage with media. Information is now instant, tailored to individual preferences, and available at all times, leading to new forms of media habits that emphasize speed, short-form content, and constant engagement.



This transformation has not only reshaped the way information is accessed but has also influenced critical thinking and the way people perceive reality. As media formats have shifted from long-form, in-depth engagement to rapid, visually driven, and highly interactive experiences, the depth of information processing has changed as well. The evolution of media continues to redefine public discourse, social dynamics, and even political structures, reinforcing its role as one of the most powerful forces in shaping human thought and behavior. Digitalization has expanded media channels to an extent where individuals are constantly bombarded by a vast number of messages, images, and sounds. This overwhelming influx of digital stimuli not only affects our physiology but also challenges our cognitive faculties, particularly critical thinking, reasoning, and attention. When faced with continuous streams of information, our brains tend to operate in a state of cognitive overload, making it harder to engage in deep analysis or reflective thought. The rapid pace and fragmented nature of digital content can lead to a more superficial processing of information, where snap judgments replace careful reasoning. Over time, this can diminish our ability to scrutinize details, question sources, and thoughtfully evaluate complex issues—skills essential for sound decision-making and informed citizenship. Understanding these cognitive impacts is crucial for developing effective media literacy strategies, enabling us to regain control over our attention and improve the quality of our critical engagement with media.

Media literacy refers to the ability to critically analyze, evaluate, create, and share media content with awareness and intention. It means knowing how to ask the right questions: Who created this message? Why? Who is the intended audience? What values are being promoted? What has been left out?



For instance, when we come across a post on social media claiming that "scientists have finally discovered a cure for aging", a media-literate person won't immediately believe or share the sensational headline. Instead, they will ask: Who are these scientists? What is the source of the information? Does the article provide evidence, or is it designed to provoke an emotional reaction? That moment of questioning is what separates an informed citizen from a passive consumer of media.

To help us better navigate the world of information, media literacy relies on several core ideas that form its theoretical foundation:

- Media messages are constructed—they are not reflections of reality, but interpretations of it.
- Each message uses specific forms and language to communicate meaning.
- People interpret media content differently, based on their background and perspective.
- Media have commercial and political purposes.
- All messages carry values and ideologies.

Media literacy equips us with the skills to critically evaluate and question the information we consume, enabling us to recognize and overcome our inherent biases. By learning how media messages are constructed, identifying the techniques used to shape opinions, and understanding the underlying intentions of content creators, we become more discerning consumers. This critical approach helps us detect subtle forms of bias—whether they manifest through stereotypical representations, selective framing, or emotionally charged narratives. As a result, media literacy empowers us to seek out diverse perspectives, challenge our preconceived notions, and engage in informed discussions. Ultimately, it fosters a more balanced view of the world, enabling us to make decisions based on a deeper understanding rather than reflexive, biased responses.

Understanding media construction

Introduction of the topic

In this session, we will explore the development of media and the role it plays in society. Through guided discussion, participants will also reflect on their own media habits. Understanding media itself is just as important as understanding how we consume it, especially in today’s complex information society. The transformation of media—along with the channels through which we receive messages and the evolving formats of communication—significantly influences the way we engage with information. These changes shape our critical thinking, attention span, and even our expectations of media. A crucial question arises: is our subjective feeling of being well-informed truly accurate, or is it merely an illusion?

Note for workshop trainer: Encourage participants to engage in an open discussion, emphasizing that there are no wrong answers. Everyone speaks from experience, and together, we will shape the conclusions of this session.

Mediatic materials

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Time needed

60 min

Materials needed

Flipchart, sticky notes, few markers for writing

Prepare materials on flip charts in advance, which participants will later fill in during the discussion. The introduction serves as a reminder and provides a broader framework for the topic. It will help you feel more confident in guiding the session.



Understanding media construction

Question

Throughout history, the media has played a central role in shaping societies, transmitting knowledge, and influencing public opinion. From the earliest forms of communication, such as oral storytelling and cave paintings, to the complex digital networks of today, media has continuously evolved, adapting to technological advancements and societal needs.

Let's take a look at the timeline and try to fill in how the media has evolved, how messages were transmitted in the past, and how it looks today.

Note for trainers: Present the timeline you previously drew on the flip chart to the participants. Start from the earliest times and ask the participants to place the different type of media or media events in the right time.

Time line idea: 35,000 BCE, 776 BCE, 1960, 1884, 1876, 1902, 1927, 1969, 1991, 1994, 1996, 2004, 2006, 2007, 2010, 2011

Answer

35,000 BCE – Earliest known cave paintings - First visual storytelling and symbolic communication.

776 BCE – First "recorded" Olympic Games - Knowledge preserved through oral tradition and storytelling.

1876 – Telephone patented by Alexander Graham Bell - Foundation for audio-based personal and mass communication.

1902 – First transatlantic radio signal (Marconi) - Global wireless communication begins.

1927 – First public radio broadcast & transatlantic TV test - Start of live audio and video media.

1960 – First televised U.S. presidential debate - Television begins shaping political perception.

1991 – World Wide Web goes public - Mass access to digital information begins.

1994 – First online banner ad appears - Start of digital advertising economy.

1996 – Google begins as a research project - Paves the way for modern search and information access.

2004 – Facebook is launched

2005 – YouTube is launched - Online video sharing transforms content creation and consumption.

2006 – Twitter is launched - Microblogging and real-time communication emerge.

2007 – First iPhone is released - Mobile media becomes central to daily life.

2010 – Instagram is launched - Rise of visual media, influencers, and mobile storytelling.

2011 – Arab Spring protests amplified by social media - Social platforms used to organize political movements.

2011 – Snapchat is launched

Introduces ephemeral content and new visual communication trends.



Understanding media construction

Answer

2015 – Periscope (live streaming app) launches - Boosts live video content and real-time audience engagement.

2016 – TikTok (launched internationally as Musical.ly)
Begins global rise of user-generated, short-form video entertainment.

2017 – Instagram launches Stories feature - Adopts Snapchat’s format, and stories become a new media norm.

2018 – Data privacy and algorithm manipulation enter public debate (Cambridge Analytica scandal) -Highlights the impact of algorithmic media and data use in influencing opinions.

2020 – Massive increase in media consumption due to COVID-19 pandemic
Social media, streaming, and video conferencing platforms (Zoom, TikTok, YouTube) see record growth.

2022 – BeReal app launches globally - Pushes back against curated content, encouraging unfiltered sharing.

2023 – Threads by Meta is released - A Twitter-like app introduced as an alternative for real-time discussions.

2024 – AI-generated content becomes widespread - Major platforms begin integrating generative AI tools (like ChatGPT) into search and communication.

Question

After the filling in of the timeline, ask the participants what is an impression now when we look at the timeline? What can we say about the transformation of media and its impact on human society?



Understanding media construction

We can observe that the development of media and communication channels often follows the patterns of industrial revolutions throughout history. However, unlike the industrial revolutions of the 18th and 19th centuries, we no longer have the impression that the cycle of technological development and evolution ever truly stops. The formats in which media messages are sent and received today are significantly different from the channels and messages we engaged with just ten years ago.

Answer

This can be seen as a two-way street—media continuously changes its format, while at the same time, our media habits and expectations evolve. In response, media adapts once again, shaping its formats to align with audience trends and engagement patterns, creating an ongoing cycle of transformation. As we could see the event which took place in 1960 (Presidential debate) and then look at the all events pointed out after the 2011 we could conclude the massive change and impact on humans almost every aspect of life is in a way pushed through the media evolution.

If we analyze the characteristics of media over time and divide them into traditional and digital media, we can observe both similarities and differences. Given their role in society, traditional and new media share three key similarities at their core:

1. **Information** – Both traditional and new media serve as sources of information. They provide access to news, entertainment, education, and other content.
2. **Publicity** – Both types of media are used for promoting products, services, political campaigns, and other forms of public communication.
3. **Social Influence** – Traditional and new media have a significant social impact. Both can shape public opinion, encourage discussions, and drive social change.

Question

What would be the differences?

Note for the trainer - let the participants discuss and talk about differences already prepared on flip charts or PPT slides with just bolded characteristics which you will find in the next “answer” session, and orally explain what each category is about after participants have finished with explanation of their understanding of each category.



Understanding media construction

What are the key differences?

1. **Format and Accessibility** – Traditional media includes printed newspapers, magazines, radio, and television, while new media refers to the internet, social media, blogs, podcasts, and other digital platforms. New media is often accessible across multiple devices, including computers, smartphones, and tablets.

Unlike traditional media, which often requires being in a specific location to consume content—such as watching television while sitting comfortably in a chair—new media can be accessed anywhere, whether at a picnic, in a restaurant, at a friend’s house, or even at work.

Traditional media also has space limitations. Newspapers and magazines are confined by the number of pages, while radio and television are restricted by time—there are only 24 hours in a day, limiting the amount of content that can be broadcast.

In contrast, new media has no such restrictions. The internet allows for the publication of unlimited content across various channels and in multiple formats.

2. **Interactivity**– New media is often more interactive than traditional media. Users can comment, share, and participate in content creation, whereas traditional media is typically a more passive form of communication. This shift has significantly changed our communication habits, allowing individuals to publicly express their opinions and feel like part of the public dialogue.

Answer

3. **Speed and real-time availability** – New media enables rapid information exchange in real time, while traditional media often experiences a delay in publishing information.

Traditional media is limited by space and time, with predefined and structured schedules to fit their format constraints. However, this doesn’t mean we won’t be informed in a timely manner—sometimes the delay is only a matter of minutes or hours.

New media, on the other hand, allows for almost instant responses to societal events. While this has advantages, it also presents risks, as the speed of reporting can sometimes result in insufficiently verified information.

The speed and accessibility of new media have also influenced the format of media content. Messages are often shorter and more concise, affecting our attention span and expectations. Today, we demand instant information, and, let’s be honest, we often dedicate only a few seconds or minutes to consuming it.

There are also “**Costs and accessibility**”, “**Censorship and control**”, “**Measurement and audience tracking**”, etc.

These are not the only differences, and as technology evolves, new advantages and challenges will continue to emerge. From these examples, we can see how new media formats influence our media habits and our perception of media messages.

While we cannot predict exactly what the world will look like in 20 or 30 years, one thing is certain—it will continue to change, and so will we.



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Understanding media construction

All the aforementioned characteristics and information about the transformation of the media represent one of the key reasons for the changes in our perception as media consumers. Let's conclude by discussing in what ways and how our consumption habits differ in relation to the transformations we have discussed.

Take a look at the table, and let's work together to fill in the fields about our habits.

Note for the trainer: Prepare the table in advance as a PowerPoint slide and show it to the participants

Question

Era	Primary media format	Media habits
Pre-20th century	Books, newspapers, oral storytelling	<i>Example: Deep reading, long attention spans etc</i>
20th century (early & mid)	Radio, cinema, printed magazines	
Late 20th century	Television (cable news, entertainment shows), VHS/CD/DVD	
Early 2000s	Websites, online news, blogging, YouTube	
2010s - present	Social media (Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, Instagram), streaming platforms	

Answer

Era	Primary media format	Media habits
Pre-20th century	Books, newspapers, oral storytelling	Deep reading, long attention spans, slow information processing
20th century (early & mid)	Radio, cinema, printed magazines	Passive consumption, scheduled engagement (e.g., radio shows, movie screenings)
Late 20th century	Television (cable news, entertainment shows), VHS/CD/DVD	Passive but habitual consumption, multitasking with other household activities
Early 2000s	Websites, online news, blogging, YouTube	On-demand consumption, increased interactivity, shorter attention spans
2010s - present	Social media (Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, Instagram), streaming platforms	Highly fragmented consumption, instant gratification, scrolling culture, preference for short, visually engaging content



Understanding media construction

Note for trainer – Allow participants, based on everything previously discussed, to list the characteristics of our media habits.

Answer

And conclude by saying: This table is "open" because changes will not stop, and with changes comes our perception. No matter how digitally literate we become and no matter how much more we know about how media functions than we did perhaps 10 years ago, new forms often emerge at such a pace that we struggle to keep up. As a result, we can often adopt someone's personal opinion as information. Over time, a trend has been observed where people increasingly read others' comments on social media posts and form their opinions based on that, rather than delving deeper into the media "text" itself and asking the fundamental questions of media literacy – Who is the author of this text? Does the text contain facts and sources? Is the media post objective, or is it subjectively persuading us of a particular viewpoint? Can I verify the claims made in the media text?



TO SUM IT UP

Understanding media construction

TOPIC OVERVIEW

The evolution of media from ancient oral traditions and cave paintings to today's complex digital networks has continuously reshaped the way societies communicate, think, and form opinions. With the digital age, the sheer volume and speed of media messages have led to cognitive overload, challenging our ability to critically analyze and reflect on the information we consume. This overwhelming influx often triggers superficial processing and snap judgments, making it essential to develop media literacy skills. Media literacy empowers individuals to question the construction of messages, understand the underlying intentions and biases, and engage in thoughtful, informed dialogue.

KEY POINT 1 – UNDERSTANDING MEDIA EVOLUTION

- Recognize the progression from oral traditions and printed texts to digital and social media.
- Understand how each media era transformed the dissemination and consumption of information.

KEY POINT 2 – COGNITIVE IMPACT OF DIGITAL OVERLOAD

- Understand the challenges to critical thinking, reasoning, and sustained attention in the digital age.
- Recognize the physiological and cognitive effects of rapid, fragmented media consumption

KEY POINT 3 – THE ROLE OF MEDIA LITERACY

- Understand why it is important to learn to critically analyze and evaluate media messages, questioning their sources, intentions, and underlying biases



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ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

NOTES

- Don't forget to allow participants to express different opinions and observations.
- Comment on the phenomenon of media influence on society from various perspectives.
- Base the discussion on participants' diverse experiences.
- Emphasize that every opinion and observation is important for the learning process.

BRAINSTORM

Try to reflect on how such rapid information exchange, driven by technological advancement, might influence the future development of society. Encourage participants not to focus solely on negative aspects, but also to consider the potential positive sides of the upcoming changes.

ADDITIONAL MULTIMEDIA

Books:

On the Evolution of Media
Understanding Media
Change, Carlos A. Scolari

Media Control, Naom Comski

Understanding media and how
they work, Renee Hobbs
[https://mediaeducationlab.com/sites/default/files/Hobbs%252520What%252520Society%252520Needs%252520PDF_0.pdf](https://mediaeducationlab.com/sites/default/files/Hobbs%202520What%252520Society%252520Needs%252520PDF_0.pdf)





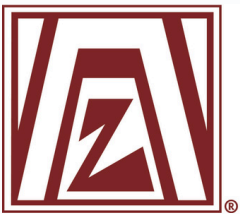
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