

# Mass and interpersonal communication

## ■ Mass communication

Mass communication has been defined as “the process **whereby** media organisations produce and transmit messages to large publics and the process by which those messages are **sought**, used, and consumed by audiences.” (S. Littlejohn, K. Foss, *Theories of Human Communication*)

Mass communication is therefore the public transfer of messages through media or technology-driven channels to a large number of recipients from large organisations. However, with the appearance of new media like YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, and text messaging, this definition does not **fit** anymore, since individual people now have the chance to send messages to large audiences, too, thus changing the meaning and implications of the term *mass communication*.

## ■ Interpersonal communication

Interpersonal communication is the transfer of a message from one person to another. In fact, it is a sort of exchange since the feedback is almost immediate. It is a two-way process, where one person sends the message and the other receives it and also sends a feedback even while listening (thanks to non-verbal communication). Depending on the receiver’s reaction, the sender knows how the message has been received; such feedback also allows the sender to correct, adapt or repeat the message in order to improve communication.

## ■ Mass vs interpersonal communication

Mass communication	Interpersonal communication
• Receiver and sender don’t usually know each other.	• Receiver and sender know each other.
• It involves a tech-based medium.	• It doesn’t require any media.
• The audience tends to be far-off and diverse.	• Receiver and sender have something in common.
• The message is most often profit-driven.	• The message is generally personal.
• Feedback is limited and not always expressed.	• Feedback is almost always present: <b>lack</b> of it <b>implies</b> a breakdown in the communication process.
• It continues even if part of the large audience fails to understand the message.	• It is constantly adapted to the feedback.
• One-way.	• Two-way.

**to fit:** *adattare*

**to imply:** *implicare*

**lack:** *mancanza*

**sought:** *ricercato*

**whereby:** *per cui*



1  Read the text and answer the questions.

### Old and New "New Media"

Most technology described as "new media" is digital. The term "new media" also includes the traditional media – such as press, photography, cinema, telephone, radio, TV – that have undergone a digital transformation. The "old" definition of new media identified them with the use of a computer for distribution and/or exhibition, rather than with production. Therefore, texts distributed on a computer, web sites and electronic tools were considered to be new media; texts distributed on paper were not.

However, we are now in the middle of a revolution concerning a new form of communication, where a computer is also used as a tool for the production of media and as a media storage device. Our culture has shifted to a computer-mediated form of production, distribution and communication of media, which can be manipulated, is networkable,

compressible, and interactive. The information revolution we are witnessing today has been compared to the invention of moveable print in the fifteenth century or to the transition from an agricultural to an industrial society in the nineteenth century.

New media are known for their ability to involve the audience thanks to interactivity. The other special characteristic of new media is the use of multimedia: combinations of text, audio, still images and animation. Two massive basic factors – Internet connectivity and computer processing – have radically transformed the media landscape and made this new form of "new media" possible. The new "new media" are dynamic, tailored and connected. More and more consumers are gaining access to the Internet and digital tools, and the way they search, receive, produce, store and share information has changed and is still changing.

1. How can you define the term "new media" using the old definition?
2. Can you name some of the traditional media?
3. What can a computer be used for?
4. How has our culture evolved?
5. What has this revolution in communication been compared to?
6. What do multimedia imply?
7. What has changed the new "new media"?

