# MASS MEDIA IN MODERN SOCETY: A SOCIOLOGICAL REFLECTION

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*Abstract*: This paper displays the problem of mass media. Mass media is absolutely important for our life. However, as much mass media plays an important role in our society, it causes some serious problems**.** Mass media has tremendous capability to build men, communities, nations, as much as the tremendous power to destroy the same all in due time. Mass media makes citizen recognize misjudgments by distorting the truth. Most serious problem mass media can affect extreme power to our society. Mass media has been developed more and more as society has grown, becoming one of social institution in our society.

Exaggerated contents of mass media affect bad sides to people especially teenagers and youths. Some people tend to believe mass media absolutely becomes a problem. Television, internet, and advertising, nowadays, the most important medium of mass media brings some problems in the society like, for promoting violence, homophobia, advertising manipulation etc., so these are issues in modern society which people have to solve. In this research paper discussing what is the impact of mass media on different spheres of human society.

**Key Words:  Mass media, Modernization, Democracy and Social change.**

## I. INTRODUCTION

Mass media refers to the institutions that provide such messages: newspapers, magazines, television, radio, film and multimedia Web sites. The term also is used for the specific institutions of mass media, such as radio networks and television stations, movie companies, music producers, and the Internet. Mass communication is characterized by the transmission of complex messages to large and diverse audiences, using sophisticated technology of communication. The number of people around the world who have access to a variety of media continues to grow exponentially. With smart phones and other different types of gadgets most of us are continually connected and have the media at our finger trips twenty four hours a day, seven days a week.

Mass media have two important sociological characteristics; first, very few people can communicate to a great number; and second, the audience has no effective way of answering back. Mass communication is by definition a one-way process. Media organizations are bureaucratic and corporate in nature. Media output is regulated by government everywhere but the restrictions vary from very light advisory regulation to the most comprehensive forms of censorship in totalitarian societies.

Since, the media is variably operated by a small group of people, they always have manipulating potential. If information is received at random, it must always be evaluated before it is transmitted. Mass media dominates the mental life of societies, and therefore are of interest to sociologists. In modern society, media plays a vital role behind a person's perspective on a social issue e.g., Adolf Hitler's successful use of radio for propaganda or political campaigns before elections.

Mass media brings a host of social problems like crime, pornography, spreading stereotypes, etc. Mass media have large scale, immediate or direct influences in producing various kinds of behavior. For example, there is a probability that if a child is prone to violence in some occasion, he may be more likely to engage in violent behavior after exposure to media having some content of violence.

Mass media have indirect effects as well. It can play a part in shaping a public's attitudes or beliefs about something. The media have vast information resources, by utilizing them; the media may have a number of indirect effects on audience. For example, the media could play a role in setting agendas, in initiating attitude formation about certain topics or events, and in the formation and development of significant public issues.

Although, there is a lot of evidence negative effects of mass media on the society but it cannot be denied that media is important for the society. Media is one of the most important links between government and citizens of a country. It conveys on behalf of its audience, problems which are faced by the citizens and desire to take some ameliorative action in order to solve those problems. Media converge social problems not only creates an awareness of these problems, but also a sense that something is being done about them. Thus, media often present a lot of information concerning the types of action taken in light of "public uneasiness".

Mass media has played a significant role in various political movements in the past as well, whether it has been for protecting the rights of the people or for freedom struggle. For example, mass media played a crucial role in highlighting racial discrimination in the South African apartheid regime by building public opinion against the South African government and forcing it to grant political freedom to the great nationalist leader, Nelson Mandela. Thus, leading to the end of the apartheid, it also played a very crucial role in the freedom struggle of India, as freedom fighter like "**Bal GangadharTilak**" started his own newspaper, which played a crucial role in the freedom struggle in India.

Mass media has the tremendous capability to build men, communities, nations, as much as the huge power to destroy the same all in due time. The mass media provide access to large amount of information for large audiences around the world. It has been blamed for various social problems in the society like, for promoting violence, homophobia, advertising manipulation, etc. But it has also affected the society in various positive ways.

## II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### The influence of Media Violence on Youth, 2003

In this article, Anderson, Craig and other authors observed the influence of mass media on youth. They concluded research on violent television and films, video games and music and their findings reveals unequivocal evidence that media violence increase the likelihood of aggressive and violent behavior in both immediate and long-term contexts. Short-term exposure increases the likelihood of physically and verbally aggressive behavior, aggressive thoughts and aggressive emotions. The surveys conducted reveal an extensive presence of violence in the media. Research also shows that, for many individuals, the negative effects of habitual childhood exposure to media violence extend well into adulthood even if media violence is no longer being consumed.

### On The use of the Mass Media for Important Things, 1979

1. In this article, the authors, Elihukatz, Hadassah has, and Michael Gurevitch, have studied the needs of mass media and interrelationship among those needs and also various functions of mass media. The authors found out that, greater the 'distance' from referent-social, physical or psychological the more important is the role of the media. They also found out that television is useful for killing time, but not as medium of escape, and also it is the least specialized of the media, persons who says that it is helpful for one set of needs tends to say that it is helpful for the other. The cinema and newspapers are most specialized in this sense; the one serves self-gratification.

### Mass Media Influence on Sexuality, 2002

According to the author, Jane D. Brown, the mass media are an increasingly accessible way for people to learn and about and see sexual behavior. The media may especially important for young people as they are developing their own sexual beliefs and patterns of behavior. Brown found out that mass media can affect awareness of, beliefs about, and possible actual sexual behavior. More research is needed to say more precisely with which audiences, under what circumstances, and with which content effects occur.

### Social networking among adolescent, 2011

Jayme, Waddington concluded that social networking among adolescents is not just a fad; it is part of their culture. While social networking can expose teens to danger, they are exposed to the same dangers in real life as well. A parent or teacher cannot expect a teen to abandon the internet and be able to thrive in modern society as computers, technology, the internet, and social networking is utilized in all aspects of modern life, even in the workplace. This is why social networking should not only be included as valuable tool to enhance the classroom but should also be utilized as an opportunity to teach students the skills that ensure safe and enriching use of social media.

*The Mass Media as a Force for peace and Development, 1979*

In this article, the author, Roperos, Godogredo M., has analyzed uses and effects of mass media. In this paper, the author has pointed out that contemporary society exhibits deep dependency on mass media and is dominated by media in all aspects of life. It is a well-known fact that media has an immense power to shape the attitudes of people in reconstruction of reality. Further the author suggested that mass media has an important role to play in peace making and formation of attitude towards sustainable development which is required on a large scale which can be accomplished through media.

## III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

*Individual Differences Theory:*

According to this theory there is a new trend in the formation of a person's character through the learning process. The big difference in mindset and motivation based on the experience of learning.Individual differences due to environmental differences resulting indifferent views in the face of things. Environment will influence the attitudes, values and beliefs that underlie their personalities want to respond to incoming information. Thus the influence of media on individuals will vary from one another.

*The class dominant theory:*

It argues that the media reflects and projects the view of minority elite, which controls it. Those people who own and control the corporations that produce media comprise these elite. Advocates of this view concern themselves particularly with massive corporate mergers of media organizations, which limit competition and put big business at the reins of media—especially news media. Their concern is that when ownership is restricted, a few people then have the ability to manipulate what people can see or hear. For example, owners can easily avoid or silence stories that expose unethical corporate behaviour or hold corporations responsible for their actions.

*Theory of Social Relations:*

According to this theory most of the people receiving the messages conveyed in the media many obtained through relationships or contacts with others rather than accept direct from the mass media. In this case, inter-personal relationships have a strong influence on the delivery of information by the media.

*Theory of Media and Modern society:*

John B. Thompson offers this theory to understand the influence of media on modern society and the complex interaction of people in the modern society. His main focus is in the critical exposition of the term mass communication where he questions about the applicability of the term to current media. In his critical analysis of the term, he claims that the media today are not produced for the masses; rather they are produced for markets. The term 'mass' is especially misleading. It creates the image of a vast audience comprising of many individuals. He also criticises use of the word 'mass' because it categorises audiences into undifferentiated individuals. Thompson then discusses how the term mass communication is often one-way. He contrasts this with face to face communication and the two-way process that takes place when people talk to each other. Thompson is of the belief that in the age of digital technology there are more suitable terms that can be used including "'mediated communication' or more simply, 'the media' which are less misleading.

Thompson, in *The Media and Modernity* offers five key characteristics to explain the term. Mass communication. Thompson's first characteristic is the technical and institutional means of production and diffusion, meaning that the "development of mass communication is inseparable from the development of the media industries". Secondly Thompson highlights what he labels comodification of symbolic forms. He identifies two forms of information- information having economic value and information having symbolic value. Thompson's third characteristic is that mass communication institutes a structured break between the production of symbolic forms and their reception, meaning that the content is not produced at the same place and time as when the audience receives it. Thompson further explains that due to this structured break media producers are deprived of the viewers' reactions which affects the feedback they are given. The fourth characteristic highlighted by Thompson is that mass communication extends the availability of symbolic forms in space and time. This examines the different contexts in which the message is produced and received. Thompson's fifth characteristic of mass communication involves the public.

*Theory of Cultural Norms***:**

This theory assumes that the message/ information conveyed by the mass media in certain ways can lead to different interpretations by the public in accordance with the culture. This implies that the media influence individual attitudes. There are several ways by the mass media in influencing cultural norms. First, the information conveyed to strengthen the cultural patterns prevailing and convinces people that culture is still valid and must be obeyed. Second, the mass media to create a new culture that can complement or improve the old culture that is not contradictory. Third, the mass media can change the cultural norms that already exist and are valid for a long time and the changing attitudes of society itself.

## IV. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The objectives behind this research paper are as follows:

1. To study how different forms of mass media affect different parts of a society
2. To study how mass media can be used for betterment of the modern society
3. To know how mass media can bring social change and social transformation

*Internet and Its Impacts:*

Today, internet is one of the most widely used forms of media. Almost a decade ago, it was used only by small population of the world, but now thousands of new users are gaining access to it and it is used for all sorts of purposes like research by the students, social networking, news, gaming, etc. But does the internet have a positive or negative influence on the society? Many people that internet is negatively influencing society by increasing pornography, fraud, and other negative elements. Some also say that because internet is not properly regulated it contributes to crime. However, despite these negative effects, the internet has opened up many new doors of opportunity for people, improving the way we live, work and play.

The internet is unique among media as it has made easy for people to assemble (at a distance) and communicate with many others at the same time in such settings as chat rooms or online discussion forums. The internet has a huge impact on changing the way people communicate with each other. The internet allows one-to-one, one-to-many, and many-to-many to communicate over the internet easily and inexpensively through the use of social networking sites and chartrooms such as Face book, Twitter, and Google+. Users are able to communicate with a variety of individuals across the globe. Internet has contributed to a shift from a group based to network-based society.

There are also many negative influence of internet. With each passing day cybercrimes like internet fraud, hacking, piracy are increasing and means are not adequate enough to save people from them. Internet does not encourage crime but it plays a big role in its development. Recent studies show that internet plays a major role in development of porn industry as its viewers are increasing day by day.

*Mass Media, Violence and Youth:*

Watching violence is a popular form of entertainment. A crowd of onlookers enjoys a street fight just. Wrestling is a popular spectator sport and similarly boxing. Local news channels also shows extensive coverage of violent crimes. Technological advances have dramatically increased the availability of violent entertainment, whether be it movies, news or video games. It not only affects youth but also children. The recent increase in the use of mobile phones, text messaging, e-mail, and chat rooms by youth have opened new venues for social interaction in which aggression can occur and youth can be victimized-new venues that break the old boundaries of family, neighbourhood, and community that might have protected them to some extent in the past. These electronic communications media have not really introduced new psychological threats to our children, but they have made it much harder to protect youth from the threats and have exposed many more of them to threats.

Generally, experiments have demonstrated that exposing people, especially children and youth, to violent behaviour on film and TV increases the likelihood that they will behave aggressively immediately afterwards. In the typical paradigm, randomly selected individuals are shown either a violent or non-violent short film or TV program or playa violent or non-violent video game and are then observed as they have the opportunity to aggress. For children, this generally means playing with other children in situations that might stimulate conflict, for adults, it generally means participating in a competitive activity in which winning seems to involve inflicting pain on another person.

One of the most common effects is the mimicry of social behaviour. People tend to mimic what they see, whether they are dialogues in a movie or actions. In recent years evidence has accumulated that human and primate young have an innate tendency to mimic whomever they observe (**Meltoff An, Moore Mk, 2000, pp. 167-81**). Observation of specific social behaviours around them increases the likelihood of children behaving exactly that way. Specifically, as children observe violent behaviour, they are prone to mimic it.

The article, "The Influence of Media on youth" (**Anderson, Craig, Leonard and Edward, 2003, pp.81-110),** studied an experiment on how children react after exposure to a violent movie. The experiment was conducted by Josephson in 1985. In that experiment he randomly assigned seven to nine year old boys to watch either a violent or non-violent film before they played a game of floor hockey in school. Observes who did not know what movie any boy had seen recorded the number of times each boy physically attacked another boy during the game. Physical attack was defined to include hitting, elbowing or shoving another player to the floor, as well as tripping, kneeing, pulling hair, and other assaultive behaviours that would be penalised in hockey (the only verbal act included in the measure was insulting another player with an abusive name). One added element in this study was that a specific cue that had appeared in the violent film (a walkie-talkie) was carried by the referees in some conditions. This particular cue presumably reminded the boys of the movie they had seen earlier. Josephson found that for aggressive boys ( those who scored above average on a measure of aggressiveness), the combination of seeing a violent film and seeing the movie associated cue stimulated significantly more assaultive behaviour than any other combination of film.

*Television News Violence:*

Now-a-days, it's nearly impossible to turn on the TV, open up a web browser, or scroll through facebook or twitter without being assaulted with notifications of a new-made disaster. According to some psychologists, exposure to negative and violent media may have serious and long lasting psychological effects. In a 2009 policy statement on media violence, the American Academy of Pediatrics said, "Extensive research indicates that media violence can contribute to aggressive behaviour, desensitization to violence, nightmares, and fear of being harmed"(**American Academy of Pediatrics, 2009,pp.1495-1503).** One of the examples for news violence can be terrorist organisation ISIS recruiting individuals mainly young, on the name of jihad.

*Music Videos and Music Lyrics:*

Music videos are also of concern because these videos are sometimes replete with violence, and music videos are widely watched by adolescent. In related work with young African American men J.D. Johnson, Jackson and Ghatto**(1995)** found that exposure to violent rap music videos increased endorsement of violent behaviour in response to a hypothetical conflict situation. Peterson and Pfost (**1989)** found exposing males to non-erotic violent music videos led to a significant increase in adversarial sexual beliefs and negative effect. Studies of music lyrics without video show less consistency, perhaps because of the methodological problems mentioned earlier. However, the better controlled experiments suggest that understandable violent lyrics can increase aggressive thinking and affect.

*Video Game:*

Violent video games have recently surpassed violent music videos and even violent TV as a matter of concern to parents. There are several reasons for this; first, children are spending an increasingly large amount of time playing video games. Second, a large portion of these games contain violence. Third, because the children playing these games are active participants rather than observers, they may be at increased risk of becoming aggressive themselves. The effect of violent video games can be seen in children imitating moves after playing games, " WWE Smack", "Mortal Kombat", "Call of Duty", etc. Sometimes, children get so attached to these games that they start imitating the moves of these games with their friends or sibling.

*Advertisements and its Influence on Society:*

An advertisement is one of the topical strategies of many brands for the promotion of their product. The purpose of mass advertisements is to gain attention for the product, ensuring prolonged association with consumers, or for the purpose of recall of their product in customer's mind. Today, most of the advertisements come with 'celebrity endorsements' which act as a credible means of spending money. This could be for the reason of their social standing. People want to wear the 'right' clothes, drink 'right' beverages and use the 'right' fragrances and but 'right' durables. Studying the attitude of consumers, it can be stated that if a consumer observes

messages for two different firm's products, one product's message containing a better advertisement and the other not, believes the better advertisement's product will definitely have more features and so be of higher value.

There are also various blames that advertising is causing negative social impact on lives. Even if advertising has a vast good impacts on society, it also bad influence on society. Advertising aims to present a product in the best light possible but the problem arises when the dramatization crosses the line into falsely representing a product. Advertising even invades movies through product placement. It's not an accident when a movie hero holds up a can of Coke instead of Pepsi. Advertising influences how people feel about themselves- often in a negative way. Based on the images they see in advertising, women often feel they should be thin and beautiful and hold down full-time jobs while also being full-time mothers. Advertising communicates that men should be handsome, tall, athletic, caring husbands, thoughtful fathers and virile at all times. These images are often unrealistic and unattainable.

### Advertisement and Children:

Children are fascinated by the media especially television. All over the world children have this natural affection for television? It not only entertains them but also is the most powerful teacher. Children attraction towards advertisement can be because advertisements show a story within a short period of time and also may be because of catch taglines. Influence of advertisement can be seen in children if you ask them the name of a particular and chances are that they will answer it correctly because of an advertisement. Advertisement influences a child decision, for example, a child, whenever he goes to McDonalds and asks for 'Happy Meal' and nothing else because he knows from the advertisement that he will get a tow in it. Advertising to children is a sensitive and emotionally charged issue because children are easily influenced and like to experiment with new things whether it is a product or the way product is advertised.

Advertisements do have great impact on children whether it is decision of purchasing toys, dresses or imitating their favourite characters. Boys in the South India imitated Rajnikant, the popular actor of films in the South, who had a particular style of flipping a cigarette to his lips. They unconsciously started trying to flip the cigarette in the same manner and many took to smoking through this playful, imitative initiation

Some products are so costly that it becomes almost impossible for a common middle class man to purchase. The main reason behind its cost can be the huge amount of money spends by the company spent on advertising. This shows that advertisement have a huge influence on society. Because of advertising, some car brands like Ford, Mercedez Benz, Audi, BMW, etc. And mobile brands like Apple, Samsung etc have become a status symbol. Advertisements have such an influence on society that nowadays people recognize a product by its brand instead of its real value and one of the best examples of this contention can be Cold Drinks a people now ask for Pepsi or Coca Cola instead of asking for cold drink or for that matter 'Fevicol' which is gum.

### Mass media and Social Change:

Any social movement arises out of a perception of shared injustice by its and consequently calls for a normative revision to eliminate the sourced and the conditions viewed as unjust. The development of mass communication may have facilitated the growth of social movements in various ways. The mass media has been one of the factors in creating and sanitizing individuals to undiscovered social issues. One of the most important characteristics of mass media is that it gets involved with the public affairs of man. It not only serves the parties in power, but also serves all the revolutions of the spirit. Without the media or press, it is a matter of grave doubt whether there could ever have been French or American Revolution. The printed media have always played an important role in independence of India, as news papers were distributed by freedom fighters to inform citizens, what East India Company has been up to.

Mass media has mediated in movement formation in more ways than one. Not only has it been instrumental in awakening new consciousness, it has helped formulate discontent as well as change, it has also rapidly spread news of movements and consequently has acted as an instrument of contagion.
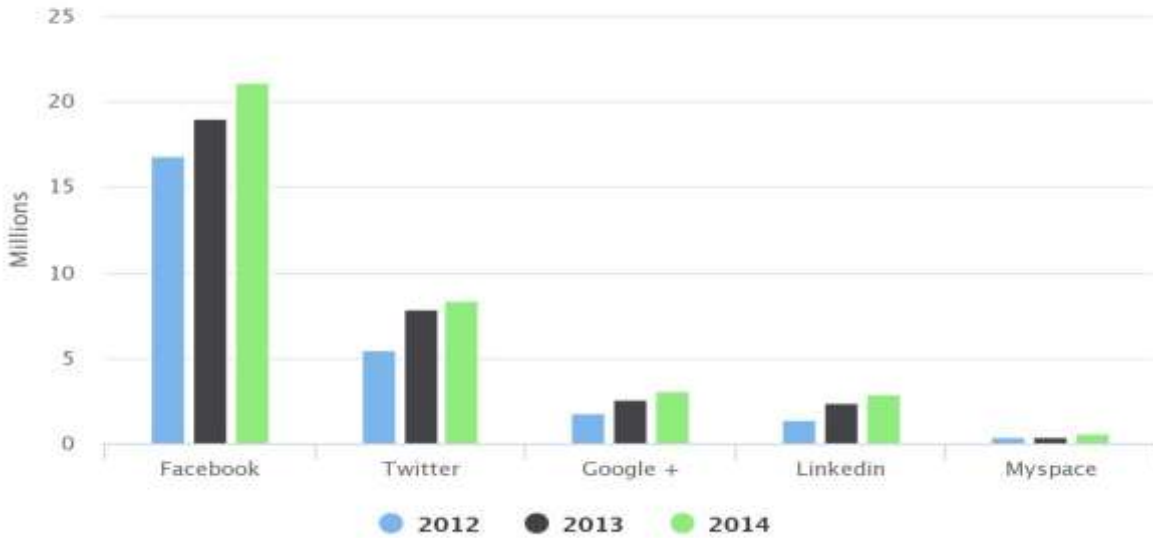
The media influence for or against the development of a movement could be related to two things namely (1) the ability to label effectively and (2) the manipulation by the leaders of movement to create the necessary impression amongst the audience. Media is at a distinct advantage at labelling simply because of its ability to disseminate information directly and rapidly on such a vast scale (**Das, Mitra, 1981, pp.127-143**). Today, media plays the most decisive role in social movements because it is a platform which reach large amount of public in a very short period of time. Media plays a decisive role in bringing legislation or amending it. One of the

examples is the American Guy Rights Movement, Which gained popularity and support from all over the world because mass media or movement for bringing a new legislation for the safety of women in India which took place after Nirbhaya Rape case.
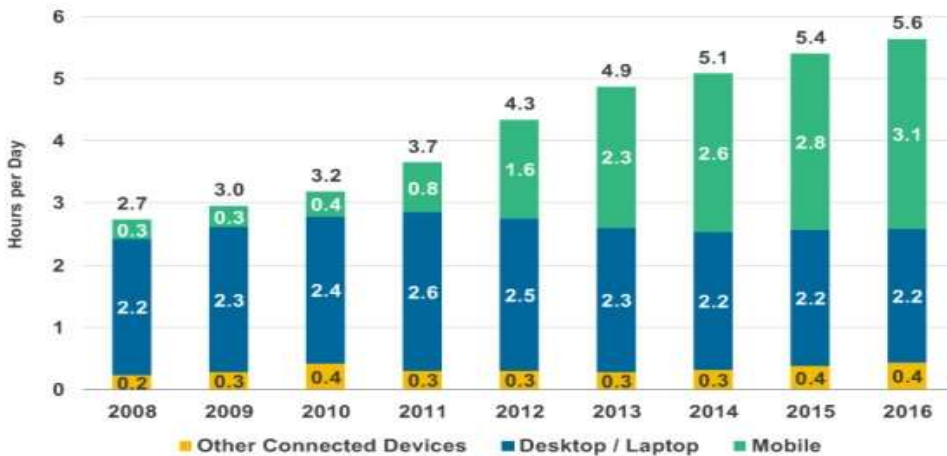
### V.  DATA ANALYSIS



**Source: Telegraph.co.uk, 2014**

Above Bar diagram shows various websites accessed in U.K through mobile phone from 2012 to 2014. Inference can be drawn from the above graph that people usually like using social networking sits through their mobile phones. Use of face book is increasing every year in comparison with other websites.
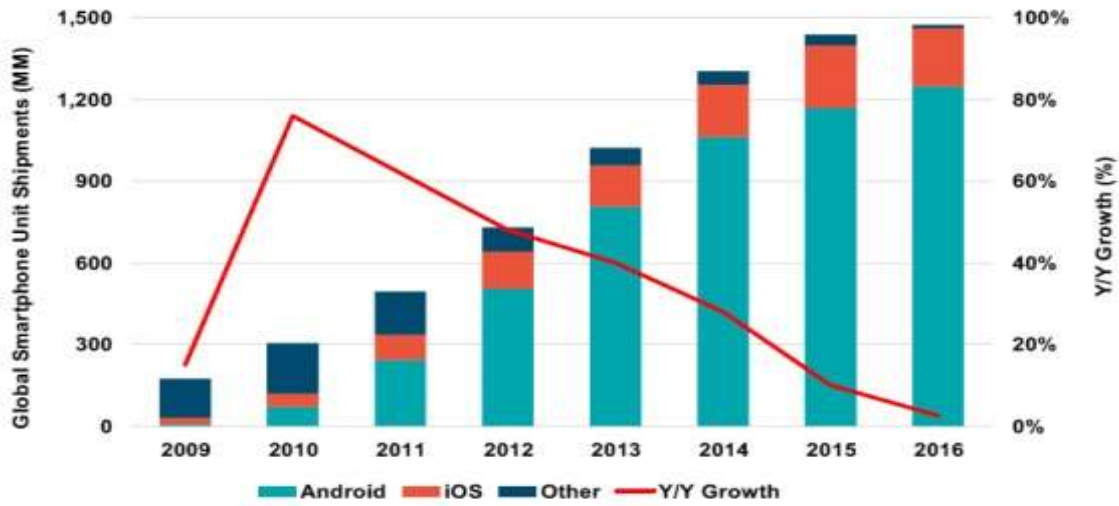


**Source: KP Internet Report, 2017**

The above graph shows the internet usage from different platforms, i.e laptop, mobile and other. From the above graph, increase in internet usage (in hours) can be seen year by year.

 Inference can be drawn from the above graph that internet users are increasing year by year and importance of internet is increasing in our society with every year.

**Source: KP Internet Report, 2017**

Above graph shows that from 2009 to 2016 internet users have rapidly increased by 10%. At global level people are becoming internet friendly.
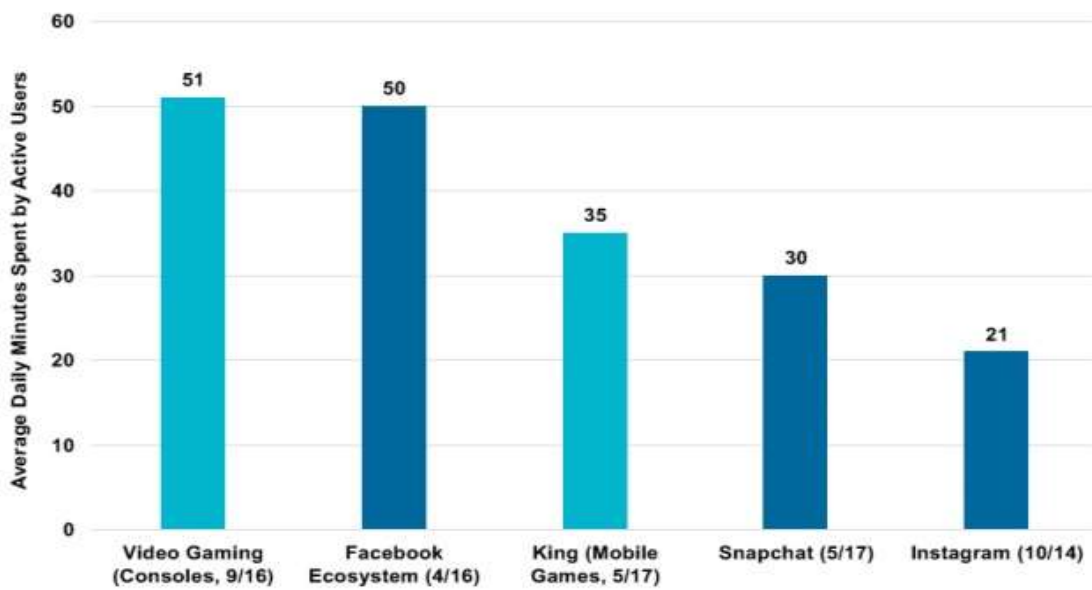
**Smartphone Unit Shipments by Operating System (MM), Global, 2009 – 2016**



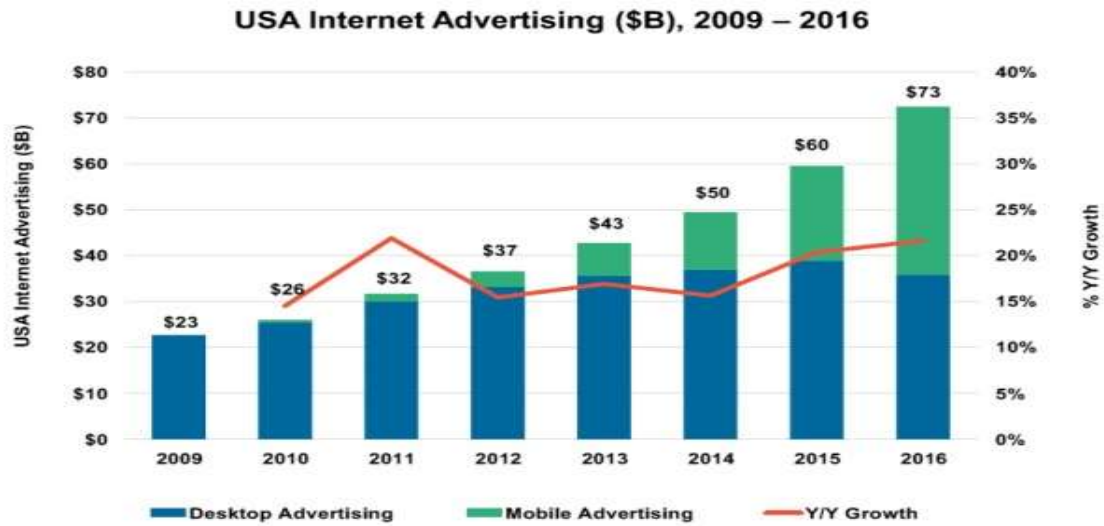**Source: Morgan Stanly Research, 5/2017**

The above Bar-Diagram shows that people like to use smart phone that to android operating system. The picture clearly mentioned that modern men are prone to smart phone use**.**



**Daily Minutes Spent per User Across Select Digital Media Platforms**

**Source: KP Internet Report, 2017**
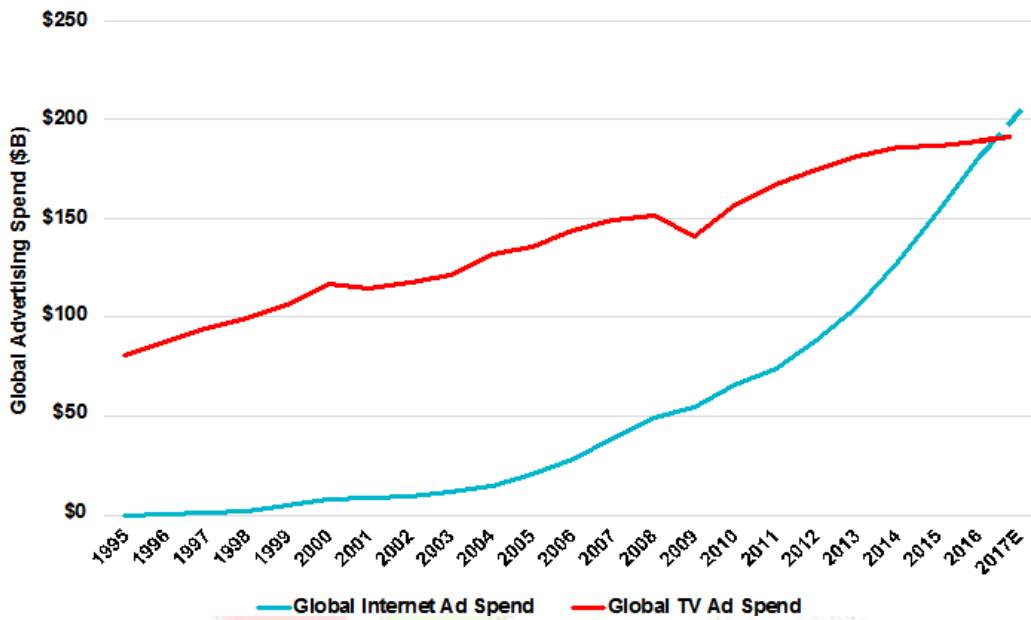
**Source: KP Internet Report, 2017**The above Bar-diagram shows that majority of users spend most of their times in playing video game and using face book in their smart phones in compare to other digital media platform.

**USA Internet Advertising ($B), 2009 – 2016**

**Source: IAB/PWC Internet Advertising Report, 2016**

It is evident from the above graph that from 2010 to 2016 mobile advisements have outweighed the advertisement of desktop.
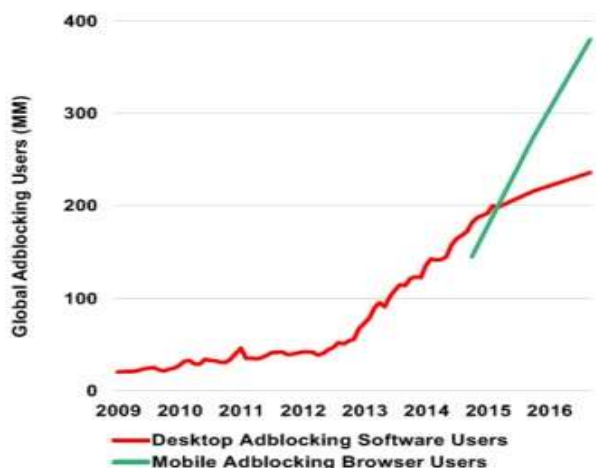


**Internet vs. TV Ad Spend ($B), Global, 1995-2017E**

**Source: Zenith Advertising Expenditure Forecast, 3/2017**

Even global advertisements have dominated over TV advertisements due to the development
of technology and technological education.

**Adblocking _Users_ on Web (Mobile + Desktop), Global, 4/09 – 12/16**

**Adblocking _Penetration_ (Mobile + Desktop), Selected Countries, 12/16**

| Country | Desktop | Mobile |
|---------|---------|--------|
| China | 1% | 13% |
| India | 1% | 28% |
| USA | 18% | 1% |
| Brazil | 6% | 1% |
| Japan | 3% | -- |
| Russia | 6% | 3% |
| Germany | 28% | 1% |
| Indonesia | 8% | 58% |
| UK | 16% | 1% |
| France | 11% | 1% |
| Canada | 24% | -- |

**Source: Page fair 2015, 2017 Reports**

The number of mobile ad blocking browser user are more than desktop ad blocking user. The above table shows that in developing countries viz., China, India and Indonesia the mobile ad blocking browser user are more than any other developed country.

## VI. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

In this research, the author found out that mass media have both positive and negative influence on society. The Researcher is summarizing the findings below.

- Use of Internet is increasing day by day and with the use of internet use of social networking sites is also increasing.
- Violence in mass media has a great impact on youth. Children usually mimic dialogues and scenes from a violent movie which have harmful impact on their behaviour.
- News violence in video games as well as music videos has harmful effect in children mainly because they are easily accessible.
- Advertisement has such influence on society that people identify things not by the value they hold but by the brand value.
- Companies spend a large amount of money in advertising in order to influence the demand of consumer.
- Today, success of any revolution depends on the use of mass media. It influences the society as well government.

## VII. CONCLUSION

Media is becoming increasingly important in the life of adults as well as of children. We acquire a great deal of information from the different forms of media. It covers a plethora of information that is accessible to all the different corners of the world. Thus, today no one can be indifferent to the question of mass media and its effect. We need to handle the mass media wisely because depending upon the way the mass media is used, they can be tools not only for personal enrichment, but also national and international advancement and cohesion. People should try to accept right information through mass media. Therefore, they need to improve critical thoughts for filtering correct knowledge.

Critical thinking might be helpful to accept which information is needed to us. Critical thinking is "mental processes of distinguish, analysis and evaluation. Critical thinking is a form of judgement, specifically meaningful and reflective judgement. Using critical thinking one makes a decision or solves the problem of judging what to believe or what to do, but does so in a reflective way"(critical thinking, 2008). People have the right to criticize and punish media which is to destroy our emotion and ethics. People have to improve power of judgement. If people have ability to control information in this information-oriented society, they may have precedence over other people who do not have.

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