**Factors that influence the forms and media of communication**

1. **Geographical factors**- distance is the most important of these and affects the ease of communication, the cost and time taken for the message to be received. Others factors such as physical relief and sparse settlements socially affect postal and telephone communication. Mountain ranges, rivers and sparse settlements also affect the availability of cell phone signals and internet access and speeds. In a widely scattered region such as the Caribbean where countries are separated by large distances, oceans and seas, undersea cables have to be laid or satellites used. Climate also influences communication as storms can destroy telephone lines and even cell phone masts.
2. **Time and cost**- messengers and couriers are usually fast and reliable but expensive. Postal services are usually slow and cheap but may not be reliable so can be used if there is no urgency involved. Internet communication is fast and cheap once you have set up the computer and have internet access, but the set up costs tend to be quite large. Cellphones are both relatively cheap and very fast, and nowadays smartphones provide internet access too.
3. **Socio-cultural factors**- the most important socio-cultural factor is language. People do not tend to listen to radio or watch TV if they do not understand the language being used. Socio-economic status is important in individual choices. The media someone has access to is partly determined by disposable income and tell others about their status. Beliefs and religions play a part. For eg some groups such as the Mennonites in Belize disapprove of new technologies for religious reasons.
4. **Availability of technology and ease of use**- many choices about how to communicate depend on what means of communication are available. This situation is constantly as technological advances reduce the cost of equipment and its use. Cell phone systems are now to install and cell phones are available everywhere pocket size, easy and cheap to use. Radios are used where there is no cell phone coverage, for eg at sea or in the air. The development of computer communication has conquered all barriers; distance, mountains, seas and even language. Messages can be sent at all hours for instant reception around the world.

**Barriers and breakdown in communication**

There are many barriers to effective communication. These may consist of a physical problem such as deafness or a breakdown in electronic equipment, technical difficulty such as poor expression and equipment failure.

1. Personal barriers

* Differences in age or gender may form a barrier to communication due to lack of understanding or refusal to listen to the other person’s point of view.
* Personality can hinder communication
* People with extreme beliefs, economics or religion
* If relationships are strained people are more likely to mishear or misinterpret what is being said.

1. Language barriers- Language differences can be an important barrier to communication. If people do not understand each other’s languages, translation is needed. Translation is often not exact and nuances such as tone may be misused. Poor speaking and listening can affect communication. Some people speak too quickly or even lack of eye contact may lessen that speaker’s ability to transmit the message orally to the receiver.
2. Wordiness and use of jargon- the language used for a message whether spoken or written, can affect the way in which it is received. Too many long words or jargons can present a barrier to effective communication, especially when the receiver does not understand the jargon used.
3. Poor timing- communication that is late in arriving may not have the desired effect.
4. Information overload- it is important only to give the amount of information that is needed. Too much information may overwhelm the receiver of the message and cause him to her to miss the important part of the message.
5. Technical barriers and breakdown- older land line telephone communications broke down frequently because of technical failures caused by storm damage or lack of maintenance. Theft of lines caused complete breakdown. Computer systems are certainly not reliable. Systems go down completely, individual computers and other devices can be faulty and files can be corrupted.

**Mass media**

The mass media may be defined as those institutions which disseminate information and ideas to large- scale audiences, through newspapers, radio, televisions, books, magazines, advertising billboards etc. Many of these use the most up-to-date technology in their production. Media is usually divided into print media and electronic media. The mass media have become an integral part of our daily lives. Here are some of the different ways that influence our society.

* They serve as sources of education, entertainment, information and ideas for the large numbers of people who use them
* They provide a means of social control by maintaining accepted values and attitudes
* They influence their audience’s behaviour and attitudes.
* They provide us with much indirect experience of events and processes happening beyond our own social experience.
* They act as watchdogs for society, highlighting violations of accepted social and moral values and as guardian of the public interest against corruption and the abuse of power by those in authority. This is known as freedom of expression.

**Regional integration through the mass media**

Newspapers, radio and television distribute entertainment, information and news throughout the region. They use a common language and help people understand that language. They pass on developments in music, song, film and other arts. They build interest in a common literature, loyalty to sporting groups, regional as well as local. News items and other programmes produced locally in one territory are shown in other parts of the region. This gives individuals more understanding of other parts of the region and a feeling of belonging together. Programmes are also jointly made encouraging sharing of skills and technologies and integration of businesses with the merger of regional media houses. The free movement of and interaction between professionals encourages a regional consciousness.

**The challenges of the global mass media**

* Caribbean regional media present a Caribbean world to readers and viewers. They are immersed in Caribbean culture and identity and promote it in all their programmes articles etc. Caribbean voices and language are heard. Caribbean music styles are used in programme themes, advertisements. However global media presents an Americanized or western world or culture. If people use these global masss media they do not see themselves and their own world. They may overtime lose their cultural identity.
* Newspapers and television networks run stories of their own and those taken from other national and international sources. They usually set out one particular brand of opinion and can influence their readership to follow and act upon them. They can build up some reputations and destroy others.
* Access to cable tv and to the internet gives Caribbean people access to a shared ‘western world culture’ with entertainment, news and other shows originally made in the USA, Europe, The Caribbean and elsewhere. This gives people a common culture although it may not necessarily be a Caribbean culture.
* Global media gives access to information and opinions from many different parts of the world but may also have negative effects on shared Caribbean values. Overtime mass media can change people’s value so that they accept lower moral standards than would normally be acceptable in their home communities.
* Products advertised in the global media may be international in their origins rather than locally produced. People may therefore be more aware and prefer to buy imported goods instead of local substitutes which may be as good or better in quality.

By integrating within the region and working together, Caribbean countries and peoples have a better chance of withstanding the onslaught of global ‘western culture’ than they do individually. Regional mass media have a larger market and wider human and other resources than national ones. They can provide a uniquely Caribbean cultural experience, both for people within the region and for those outside. The only danger is that smaller nations may find it more difficult to find opportunities.

**Ownership and control of Caribbean media**

Media ownership in the region can be divided into the following categories:

1. Government owned and controlled media- in all territories; radio is owned and controlled by the government. Newspapers, radios and TV stations which are government owned or by members of the government may have negative effects. The political party in government may interfere with editorial policy and the media may not cover opposition views or policies. Elections can be influenced in their favour, on the other hand they can contribute in positive ways. They can encourage positive attitudes to patriotism and a belief in democracy. They can also promote Caribbean and even national culture and provide opportunities for local expression.
2. Privately owned media- this applies to newspapers, radio, cable tv and in some places private broadcast and cable licenses. Mass media may be owned by private individuals or companies locally or regionally. These often present a wide range of views and may criticize governments buy they may sometimes present the particular political views of their owners. They may provide local programming or programmes bought in cheaply from overseas. They are usually concerned to make a profit and so are more likely to concentrate on entertainment and advertising revenues.
3. Foreign ownership- foreign and international media organizations are difficult to control or regulate in individual countries and their standards of reporting vary greatly. They may also have political views for eg. Some US televisions companies are right wing. They present non-Caribbean news, views, culture and values.
4. Joint ownership- sometimes media companies are jointly owned by governments and private companies. This is called public-private partnership. This situation can provide checks and balances on both parties. Governments can ensure that sufficient local programmes are made and transmitted. They can regulate standards. Private involvement can focus on what people want to watch read and prevent bias, ensuring a wide range of views are heard.

**Mass media and the law**

What is a copyright?

A copyright is an exclusive right conferred by law for a specified period of time. This right allows the person holding it and only that person:

* To reproduce or give permission to reproduce an original literary or artistic work expressed in any tangible medium, such as printing, handwriting etc
* To prepare other works that are based on the original work
* To give public performance or display of the original work

In most countries copyright is protected, which means that certain uses of an original work are lawful only if the copyright owner has authorized them. This copyright protection only covers an author or artist’s particular expression of the idea.

**Communications technology and regional integration**

One of the early problems in integrating the newly independent commonwealth countries of the Caribbean was the poor quality of communications. Postal services were slow; telephone systems were not universal and often broke down. In recent years all that has changed. Improved transport and communications technology has made communications between individuals, businesses, government and other organizations much quicker, easier and cheaper.

* Transport links are better so people from each territory can meet more easily. Letters, documents and packages can be transported quickly from place to place by air.
* Telephone contact is instant. Calls can be made by land line or phone, the quality is good and people can be reached wherever they are even on the move.
* Computers, including laptops, smartphones, ipads provide electronic mail, telephone calls, video conferencing, across the internet and access to the World Wide Web with its vast amounts of information
* 24 hour newsrooms, TV, radio internet access gives us news from other countries as it happens.

**Transmission and transformation of cultural heritage**

Culture in the past has been handed down from generation to generation families of social groups. Change was slow until mass movement of people and mass media made access to cultures other than your own readily available. Local and regional mass media, such as radio and TV stations showcase Caribbean artist and their work, giving opportunities for cultural expression. International media such as cable and the internet provide experiences of foreign cultures especially western or American culture, but do not show Caribbean culture.

**Institutions**

Institutions are important in transmitting and preserving our cultural heritage in many ways.

* Schools and education authorities provide subject teaching in arts along with art and music festivals
* Universities such as UWI and the University of Guyana run art course and programmes for art teachers and provide high level academic study of our culture
* Museums, libraries and national institutes showcase important works and provide historical perspective and academic study
* National cultural organisations provide expertise, organize events and may have websites newsletters etc
* Regional organsations such as CARICOM assist in developing region-wide initiatives.