EPS Cycle

Throughout this semester we will refer to a concept known as the Media Progression Cycle. This cycle describes how the mass media gets adopted into our culture and how we as consumers are part of the process. The three stages of the cycle are: Elite, Popular & Specialized (EPS Cycle). Another way to view this cycle is to visualize a beginning, middle and end of a product, person, or group.

The Elite phase is often referred to as “high culture” and often includes attributes such as fine arts, literature and classical music. Although Elite culture exists today, the average person can bring this culture into their own home via movies, television, newspapers, magazines and other forms of mass communications. It does not necessarily refer to money, or wealth, but refers to availability, ability to distribute, the culture at the time and people of position.

The Popular phase is often defined as the culture of everyone. It includes attributes, habits, actions, what we eat, means of travel, entertainment, sports and religion. It is total access, and availability, and the ability to mass distribute. Most of today’s popular culture is mass-produced and disseminated through the mass media. Popular music, cheap paperback novels, soap operas, videocassette movies and DVD’s, and myriad of advertised products from designer jeans to disposable razors make up our everyday environment. Stephen King novels, Levi jeans, and McDonalds golden arches are instantly recognized symbols or icons or contemporary pop culture. To be in the popular phase does not mean that everyone likes it.

In the Specialization phase, the media are consumed by highly fragmented segments of the population, each with its own interest and cultural activities. In other words, mass communications finds a niche in society and process a communication source that fits. Visualize a product as it must compete with other similar products to stay popular. It is important to specialize in order to stay popular.

While media in the United States are entering the specialization phase, in many underdeveloped nations the media are still in the elite stage.