It could be argued that the global media landscape has undergone a revolution in recent years. The way the media operates and the channels it broadcasts through have transformed rapidly.

Today, newspapers are as much (if not more) focused on their websites than their print operations. Video footage and sound files are as likely to appear on the previously traditional newspaper website, such as Telegraph.co.uk or Sun Online, as they are on the traditional broadcaster websites of the BBC or CNN.

Increasingly, the media is using citizen journalism to source its news and supply materials for broadcast or distribution. Indeed the role of the media – ever since the 7/7 terrorist attacks on London, where the news was actually broken by the public and first photographs and video shots were supplied by the public’s mobile telephones – has changed. Today the media sees the public as often breaking the news (through channels such as Twitter and YouTube) and sees its own role as putting the news into context.

With the media developing in these different ways, it is essential for PR professionals to have a clear understanding of the media landscape and to know how to harness and manage the platforms of news distribution.
1 UK media landscape

The media landscape in the UK is one of the largest and most complex in the world. According to MediaUK.com, the media website for media contacts, the British media industry consists of 815 radio stations, 521 television channels, 1,594 newspapers and 1,969 magazines (October 2012).

According to Ofcom (Office of Communications), the regulatory body for the British media, over half a million people are employed in the UK by media companies.

Regulation and political developments

The British media industry, which is one of the oldest media industries in the world, has traditionally been independent and self-regulating, enjoying a freedom that is much envied in other countries around the globe where media is often government-controlled. In contrast to the uncensored UK media, countries such as China, Cuba, Iran, etc. censor publications and broadcasts, and even restrict access to the internet.

As a result the media has often acted as a ‘regulating’ force on the UK national and local government, politicians, those in powerful positions in the corporate world, and opinion leaders and opinion formers such as celebrities.

Ofcom is a governmental body that regulates broadcasters (as well as fixed-line telecoms, mobiles and postal services). In addition, the BBC is subject to the BBC Charter and a board of independent governors. The activities of newspapers have been monitored by the Press Complaints Commission (PCC), a self-regulatory body funded by the newspapers themselves, but the Leveson Inquiry into phone hacking means that there will be some changes in the way the press is regulated.

Case study: The Leveson Inquiry and Report

In 2007, News of the World reporters were convicted of the illegal interception of phone messages also called phone hacking. At the time the paper claimed that this was an isolated incident. However, in 2011 it was reported that News of the World reporters had tapped into the voicemail of murdered teenager Milly Dowler and others.

In July 2011, following a public outcry, the Prime Minister announced an inquiry to investigate the role of the press and police in the phone-hacking scandal. Lord Justice Leveson was appointed as chairman of the inquiry and a series of public hearings were held throughout 2011 and 2012 to collect evidence.

The inquiry published the Leveson Report in November 2012 which makes recommendations on the future of press regulation. At the time of writing, the impact and outcomes of the report are not yet clear, however the result will almost certainly mean a change in the culture and tone of media regulation in the UK.
Unit 5: Understanding the media landscape

5.1: Understanding the media landscape components

Take it further
The Leveson Report will affect the way that the UK media is regulated in the future. Visit the following websites to find information about UK press regulation:

- [http://www.pcc.org.uk/index.html](http://www.pcc.org.uk/index.html)
- [www.levesoninquiry.org.uk](www.levesoninquiry.org.uk)

Public interest

The freedom of the press in the UK allows reporters to break public interest stories. There is no precise definition for what constitutes the public interest, although it is generally assumed to relate to matters of national security, consumer information, etc.

However, what interests the public may not necessarily be in the public interest. For example, publications such as Heat, The Sun and the Daily Mirror dedicate a large amount of their reporting space to celebrity stories. The information for these may be provided by the celebrity themselves, or reported using investigative journalism.

While paparazzi photos and stories about a celebrity’s personal life may gain the interest of the general public, they cannot generally be described as in the public interest. Newspaper editors need to walk a fine line between identifying stories that will sell papers and maintaining ethical standards in what they publish.

Expansion to online

There was a time when radio, television and newspapers were very separate branches of the media machine. Each medium had separate demands and specifications of the PR professional. For example, on a media trip or familiarisation visit to a hotel or factory, writers from the print media could not be placed in the same group as broadcast journalists due to the differing requirements of the different groups.

For broadcast programmes – particularly television – a PR professional would need to supply pictures, images and interviewees. This was not always the requirement of the print media.

However, with the dawn of the digital age, the development of the internet and the spread of social media, the world for the media and the PR professional has changed significantly in a short time. The political impetus behind making broadband available for the majority of the country, and making 3G and 4G networks available to power faster mobile internet access, has changed the way people consume media.

Working practices have changed within the media. This in turn has forced changes in the strategies and tactics that a PR professional uses when engaging with the media.

Activity
In September 2012, The Sun published naked photos of Prince Harry that had been posted online. Do you think that this was in the public interest, or was it something that interested the public?

Key term
Familiarisation visit – a coordinated visit for journalists or members of the media to generate interest and coverage. Familiarisation visits are also undertaken for stakeholders such as MP’s constituency members and for opinion formers and opinion leaders.
Today, a journalist undertaking an interview with the chief executive of a blue-chip corporation may not just make notes on a notepad, but produce a digital audio recorder or camera and request a ‘few words for the website’. Journalists are no longer confined to being just a ‘print journalist’ or a ‘broadcaster’; they have the opportunity and the technology to capture the story through print, sound and visual means.

There is one more change to the media landscape that has significantly impacted the media and PR profession – the emergence of the citizen journalist. This will be discussed later in the unit.

The media landscape today is vastly different from that of just a few years ago. The media platforms and how they interact and the positions they occupy in news distribution have also changed.

These days, it is the social media platforms and websites of media owners that break the news, while the broadcast and print platforms analyse this news.

2 Key components of the 21st century media landscape

The media landscape of today can be divided into five broad categories:

1. print (see below)
2. radio – national, regional, local and community
3. television – national and regional
4. internet websites – news portals
5. citizen journalism – blogs, social media, etc.

Each of these categories can then be divided into subgroups – so, for example, print can be divided as follows:

- national newspapers
- regional newspapers
- local newspapers
- consumer magazines (monthly and weekly)
- business-to-business newspapers and magazines
- closed circulation publications
- periodicals.

Each of these subcategories has a distinct readership profile, specific circulation and reach figures, and editorial agenda. Each also has a specific production timetable with pages being ‘put to bed’ (finalised) at different times of the day or week.

The developing importance of the internet

However, the most significant aspect of the media landscape today is that no media platform, regardless of its title, operates in isolation. The Telegraph, formerly known as The Telegraph Media Group and prior to that as The Daily Telegraph, is a case in point.
The print edition of *The Daily Telegraph* or *The Sunday Telegraph* is only one part of a sophisticated media outlet. Telegraph.co.uk, the website of *The Telegraph*, now sits at the centre of a massive media machine being updated constantly across the course of a 24-hour period. Telegraph TV, which operates on the Telegraph.co.uk website, enables what used to be just a newspaper to run film footage of news events while audio files, distributed as podcasts, can be downloaded from the website, giving a radio broadcast feel to its news distribution. In addition, separate specialist pages and even microsites, such as Telegraph Travel, can supply readers (or more accurately content consumers) with in-depth news, articles and information on specific subjects.

As of September 2012, Telegraph.co.uk ranked as one of the UK’s largest producers of podcast content. The BBC, a traditional broadcaster, was at the same time (according to the ratings websites Hitwise, Alexa.com and Netratings) one of the top five most-visited websites in the UK and is considered by many to be the definitive news website for Great Britain.

There are similar stories across the entire media landscape. Local and regional newspapers are using their websites to engage with readers and turn a weekly production schedule into an hourly one. This is necessary to keep up with the increasingly mobile and reactive audience’s demand for up-to-the-minute news coverage.

Radio stations are using podcasts to meet the demand for time shifting (where the audience consume content at a time of their choosing, rather than the time the content is first shown). The BBC’s iPlayer and Sky News playing film footage on their website are other examples of media outlets using their respective websites as the pivotal platform of content distribution.

The internet has become an increasingly important part of the traditional media’s business. This point is demonstrated by the circulation figures of a popular daily newspaper compared to the number of unique visitors to its own website. The Audit Bureau of Circulation’s figure for *The Guardian* newspaper is approximately 581,000 per issue (July 2012), whereas for the same period guardian.co.uk received a daily average of approximately 2,600,000 unique browsers.

Publishing online has a number of advantages for the media, but also a number of disadvantages, as Table 5.1.1 shows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Publishing online is much quicker and allows for regular and ongoing updates to a story.</td>
<td>• It turns the publisher into a 24-hour broadcaster, increasing the demand for fresh content.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• It can save the publisher the expense of printing and distribution.</td>
<td>• Publishers need to find new ways of making money – advertising online is often charged per-click rather than based on circulation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• It increasingly matches the way media consumers want to engage with content – it is accessible from almost any location, can be easily shared and can combine different media elements (e.g. video and audio).</td>
<td>• Journalists now need to source a range of different content types – audio and video – which means they need additional skills.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The use of the English language is widespread throughout the world because of its importance to business, so online circulation allows for a much larger potential audience.

Key terms

**Microsite** – generally between one and seven web pages that function as a discrete entity from the larger website that surrounds it. Microsites usually focus on a specific topic, such as travel, money or work.

**Time shifting** – distribution method that means the audience can consume a broadcast more flexibly. For example, the BBC iPlayer allows viewers in the UK to watch programmes up to a week after they were originally broadcast.
Social media

In addition to a general online presence, the use of social media, such as Facebook and Twitter (Facebook pages for audience interaction and Twitter for alerting and enticing an audience to the media's website) shows how the media landscape has become a connected and intricate web of different platforms distributing news content for media owners.

Remember also that social media – particularly the comments section of the media owner’s website, the Facebook page and (to a lesser extent) blogging platforms such as Twitter – are able to offer true engagement and two-way communications between the media and its audience.

Table 5.1.2 shows the advantages and disadvantages for publishers using social media.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• It allows publishers and journalists to connect directly with their readers, making it an additional source of quotes, photos and video, and feedback on stories.</td>
<td>• Social media platforms can be short-lived, so time invested in building the publisher’s or journalist’s presence on the platform may be undone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• It is an additional source of traffic directing readers to the media organisation’s website.</td>
<td>• For journalists sourcing photos and videos online, social media sharing can make it more difficult to identify copyright ownership. There have been several recent instances where national publications have used copyrighted materials without the owner’s consent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• It provides an easy way for media consumers to share content, potentially helping the publisher reach more readers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is clear that in the current media landscape, every media owner sees the digital arena, and particularly their own website, as the heart and soul of their operation with social media, audio files, video files and text all running from and to their website.

3 Different types of media making up the media landscape

The media owner’s website

As we have highlighted, at the heart of every media outlet lies its website. While initially the advent of the digital age appeared to mark the end for newspaper publishers, it has in fact proved to be the opposite. Newspapers such as The Guardian and The Independent, which were struggling financially for much of the 1980s and 1990s, have seen online and digital editions as an opportunity to improve their profitability.

Today every newspaper (national, regional or even local) and every magazine (weekly, monthly or quarterly) has a website. This website is seen as crucial. The aim of the website is not just to improve a publication’s bottom line (in so far as it drives down costs for the publisher), it is also a commercial tool that is vital in providing the timely content that today’s consumer requires. As other sources
of news such as Twitter become increasingly popular, mainstream media outlets need to react increasingly quickly in order to remain competitive.

With attention spans in decline, and our desire to consume content in visual, audio and text terms, the website has opened up many avenues of opportunity for the media owner. Add to that our desire to know news in ‘real time’ as opposed to even an hour’s time lag, and our desire to be part of the news-gathering process (through citizen journalism and the uploading of pictures, video footage and comments to news sites), and it is clear that the website of the media owner is the key to survival and success.

Some publishers – notably News International and the Financial Times Group – have introduced pay walls, where certain elements of content are only displayed through a subscription service paid for by the reader. At the time of writing, it is unclear how successful this strategy has proved to be.

Generally the media outlets run advertisements on their websites in order to make the site commercially viable. This may supplement any income the publisher receives from pay wall subscriptions.

For PR professionals, it is key to remember that:

• the media website is constantly updated (on a rolling 24-hour basis)
• it is three-dimensional in running sound, movement and text
• it is plugged into the social media platforms and acts as the pivotal piece of the media outlet’s network.

Therefore news releases should contain a sound file or video footage and not be over 350 words in length, due to the attention span of online readers.

**Print media**

Newspapers in the UK can trace their history back over 300 years. Traditionally, different publications within the UK media have been specifically targeted at different audiences and their content, tone of voice and focus are designed to engage and reflect that of their target audience.

For example, The Guardian states that its readers are ‘affluent, young urban consumers with a keen sense of adventure when it comes to trying new products and experiences’ ([www.guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk)). It claims its audience has varied interests, prefers to make up their own mind and is interested in developments, both national and international. This is reflected in the content of the publication, and its tone of voice and sense of balance.

However, with the advent of the digital age, 24-hour rolling news television and radio stations, social media and citizen journalism, newspaper circulation figures have been in a steady and unceasing decline.

To combat this decline, newspapers have changed the structure of their content. Today the serious newspapers (broadsheets) generally tend to analyse news rather than break it. The popular mid-market tabloids (the ‘red tops’) often provide ‘info-tainment’, publishing a mix of popular culture, gossip and celebrity.
An essential difference between UK newspapers and those found in other parts of the world is their heavy use of images and their political bias (in some cases). In the UK, despite the phone-hacking scandals raised in 2011, the newspapers maintain an independence of government and were, until early 2012, self-regulated through the Press Complaints Commission.

## National newspapers

There are more than 10 national newspapers in the UK. Table 5.1.3 shows average circulations for a number of national newspapers for September 2012 and September 2011.

### Table 5.1.3: Circulation of UK national newspapers – Audit Bureau of Circulations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of national daily</th>
<th>Average circulation September 2012 (27.08.12 to 30.09.12)</th>
<th>Average circulation September 2011 (29.08.11 to 02.10.11)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daily Mirror</td>
<td>1,072,687</td>
<td>1,143,778</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily Record</td>
<td>272,799</td>
<td>298,010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily Star</td>
<td>586,743</td>
<td>681,268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Sun</td>
<td>2,445,361</td>
<td>2,725,323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily Express</td>
<td>543,912</td>
<td>617,640</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily Mail</td>
<td>1,884,815</td>
<td>2,008,817</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Daily Telegraph</td>
<td>560,398</td>
<td>607,186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Times</td>
<td>287,895</td>
<td>344,583</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Guardian</td>
<td>204,937</td>
<td>232,566</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>282,995</td>
<td>184,402</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Independent</td>
<td>81,245</td>
<td>176,983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Scotsman</td>
<td>34,028</td>
<td>39,428</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Times</td>
<td>406,711</td>
<td>429,554</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racing Post</td>
<td>45,424</td>
<td>50,122</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Many national newspapers have a Sunday version of the paper – *The Times*/*The Sunday Times* or a Sunday equivalent from the same camp – the *Guardian* publishes *The Observer* on Sundays. There are some, such as the *Sunday People*, which do not have a daily version but are from the same publishing house as a daily newspaper. Sunday papers may often enjoy greater popularity than daily papers.

However, the Sunday newspapers of most nationals are run completely separately with a separate staff and different editor. The construction of some Sunday newspapers tends to have separate sections such as Travel, Business, Personal finance and a colour magazine reflecting the greater time the reader has to read the publication compared to its daily version. However, the trend recently has been to increase the size of the Saturday edition, especially the quality dailies. Table 5.1.4 shows average Sunday circulations for September 2012 and September 2011.
## Table 5.1.4: Circulation rates of UK Sunday national newspapers – Audit Bureau of Circulations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of national Sunday title</th>
<th>Average circulation September 2012 (27.08.12 to 30.09.12)</th>
<th>Average circulation September 2011 (29.08.11 to 02.10.11)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daily Star Sunday</td>
<td>407,239</td>
<td>703,319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Sun (Sunday)</td>
<td>2,082,755</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday Mail</td>
<td>310,135</td>
<td>400,106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday Mirror</td>
<td>1,087,940</td>
<td>1,845,683</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The People</td>
<td>455,973</td>
<td>839,182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday Express</td>
<td>493,586</td>
<td>680,119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday Post</td>
<td>269,182</td>
<td>324,554</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Mail on Sunday</td>
<td>1,758,720</td>
<td>1,979,701</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent on Sunday</td>
<td>120,340</td>
<td>154,328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Observer</td>
<td>238,282</td>
<td>273,015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland on Sunday</td>
<td>40,763</td>
<td>49,112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Sunday Telegraph</td>
<td>446,526</td>
<td>481,648</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Sunday Times</td>
<td>904,548</td>
<td>984,223</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

National newspapers, both daily and Sunday editions, are commercial operations funded by advertising – classified and display. A cover price is also charged in most cases.

### Regional and local newspapers

Regional newspapers tend to be daily newspapers focused on a region of the country – for example:
- the *Daily Record* (Scotland)
- the *South Wales Echo* (Wales)
- the *Lancashire Telegraph* (Lancashire)
- the *Yorkshire Post* (Yorkshire).

They can also be focused on a major metropolis such as:
- the *London Evening Standard* (London)
- the *Birmingham Mail* (Birmingham)
- the *Liverpool Echo* (Liverpool).

According to the Newspaper Society, it is estimated that there are 1,100 regional and local newspapers in the UK with 1,600 associated websites. Over 33 million people read a local or regional newspaper every week and regional and local media in the UK employs over 10,000 journalists (Newspaper Society, 2012).

The larger regional newspapers, such as the *Manchester Evening News* with a daily circulation of 90,000, have an influential position in local society but even smaller, weekly publications, such as the *Stamford Mercury* with a circulation of 16,000 weekly, will have a prominent role in PR campaigns as regional and local newspapers have a high impact rate on readers who are often more interested in local events and people than the international news agenda.
From a PR professional’s point of view, regional and local papers are hugely important, as it can (if the story is localised) be easier to place a news release in these and the subsequent coverage can be greater and have a more substantial impact on readers.

Many regional and local newspapers have what is known in the industry as split runs, where the outer pages of the paper may differ in certain parts of the region but the inner pages remain the same. This gives the paper an even more localised feel while supporting the advertisers’ quest to reach as wide a population as possible. The inner pages tend to be feature-led as opposed to local content.

A paper typical of this style is the Express and Star, which, while based in Wolverhampton, and published Monday to Saturday, has nine different editions covering the Black Country, Birmingham and the wider West Midlands area from Tamworth to Kidderminster.

### Business-to-business publications

The business-to-business (B2B) media, sometimes known as the trade media, is a large part of the British media landscape. Most industries in the UK have one or more trade newspapers, magazines or newsletters.

Publishing houses such as Centaur, Haymarket, UBM (United Business Media) and Emap, for example, produce multiple business-to-business publications such as Marketing Week, PR Week, Travel Trade Gazette, Campaign, Accountancy Age, The Lawyer, The Publican, Motor Trader, The Lancet and Caterer.

Within their industries these publications can be extremely influential and tend to contain news and features supported by advertisements from suppliers to that sector. While most have a subscription list for readership, many distribute free copies to significant companies within that sector. They also tend to run or support sector-focused conferences, exhibitions and seminars, using their editors and senior staff as moderators and panelists. Interestingly, mainstream media will call on editors and reporters of trade publications to give insight and opinion when a trade story reaches national exposure. For example, when the Costa Concordia sank, travel trade journalists appeared on Sky, BBC and CNN.

Again, as within other parts of the media landscape, the digital world has forced many changes. Many publications now offer a digital version of the magazine from their website and tend to engage with readership through Twitter updates on a daily basis.

Increasingly, many of these publications are moving towards a web-based product. Centaur’s New Media Age and Design publications, for example, ceased being printed magazines in 2011 and are now purely web-based.

In PR terms, trade and B2B publications are a vital part of the PR campaign mix. Many organisations depend on distributors to get their product to market; others need to inform dealers or providers of services.

### Consumer magazines

The consumer and lifestyle magazines sector is a vast, complex and vitally important part of the media landscape.
Unit 5: Understanding the media landscape

It is led by major publishing houses such as Conde Nast, IPC and NatMags. Titles are published weekly, monthly and quarterly and range from Vogue, Cosmopolitan and Style Magazine to Men’s Health, Loaded, TV Choice, TV Times, Family Circle, Hello! and OK!.

From a PR practitioner’s viewpoint, these publications can be important as many have powerful features on fashion, travel, personal finance, etc. Readership surveys, reader offers and competitions as well as strategically placed news and feature stories can be vital in communicating with the target audience.

An added (but often missed) value of these type of publications is their opportunity to see (OTS) rating, which can often be very high. OTS is where a publication is seen by many more readers than its circulation, mainly due to it being placed in areas where over a period of time many read it. For example, Hello! and OK! are often left in hairdressing salons and doctors’ surgeries for many months after publication; these therefore have particularly high OTS figures, which can be vitally important within a PR campaign.

Radio

After newspapers, radio has perhaps the oldest history, most comprehensive structure and widest reach of any media platform on the UK landscape. Radio is still one of the most popular media, with stations being played in UK homes, cars and workplaces 24 hours a day.

Radio has a similar structure to newspapers: national, regional, local and community. According to Ofcom there are 27 national radio stations in the UK and 342 radio stations classified as local. The proportion of UK households with access to a DAB Digital Radio is currently 42.6 per cent (Ofcom, 2012).

Similar to every other media sector, radio has been affected by the evolution of the digital and internet age. Nearly every radio station has a web presence, with its website providing live listening via DAB to the station. Many, particularly the national stations and larger regional stations, provide a ‘playback’ service where listeners can listen to shows in their own time as opposed to real time.

This time shifting has impacted PR activity in radio deeply by making content less time-sensitive. Listener offers, competitions, engagements (e.g. invitations to take part) and seasonal stories distributed by PR professionals can be affected if based on dates that have passed when the content is listened to. The majority of radio stations, regardless of size, provide downloadable podcast services. These can be compilations of specific shows or of the highlights of the station’s output over 24 hours or seven days.

Podcasting has also impacted PR activities. For example, having a story or feature included in a downloadable podcast can considerably boost the retention of that story’s key messages. It can increase the reach of the story, although the PR professional needs to be conscious about time shifting, for the reasons mentioned above.
Radio in the UK tends to be broken down into two distinct areas – BBC (non-commercial stations) and local (commercial) radio stations. Within this breakdown there are stations with different formats from music (covering various genres, from middle-of-the-road to hiphop and R&B), to news and current affairs.

The BBC has 40 local or regional radio stations in the UK. It also has four national stations and a number of dedicated digital channels. The most prominent stations are the national networks operated by the BBC.

- BBC Radio 1 is an analogue and digital station that broadcasts mainly popular and contemporary music, with regular live music sessions.
- BBC Radio 2 plays a mixture of old and new music, and features interviews and documentaries. It is the most listened-to station in the UK.
- BBC Radio 3 plays purely classical music.
- BBC Radio 4 is a speech station, with regular programmes covering a broad spectrum, from current affairs and news to comedy and radio drama. From a PR perspective it is hugely important as it broadcasts the daily radio flagship news programme Today.
- BBC Radio 5 Live broadcasts live news and sports commentary with phone-in debates and studio guests, and is also a vital channel of communication for the PR professional.
- BBC World Service is the world’s largest international broadcaster, broadcasting in 27 different languages to 188 million people across the globe. Its content is mainly news and speech.

The introduction of digital technology led to the launch of several exclusively digital BBC stations:

- BBC 1Xtra
- BBC Radio 4 Extra
- BBC 6 Music
- BBC Radio 5 Live Sports Extra
- BBC Asian Network.

The BBC’s 40 local radio services mainly broadcast a mix of local news and music aimed at an older audience. They can be hugely influential and will, again, form a major channel of communication to the target audience for the PR professional.

You should note that there is, in addition to the BBC national and local radio networks, a commercial national and local structure. National commercial radio stations include Talksport, Classic FM and Absolute Radio. Also, through the digital platforms, stations such as Kiss 100, Kerrang Radio and Xfm have all rolled out local versions of their station.

5 Television

In the UK there are in excess of 500 free and subscription television channels over a variety of distribution media for consumers as well as on-demand content. There are five main channel owners (BSkyB, BBC, ITV, Channel 4 and Channel 5) who are responsible for most viewing.
The BBC (which is the world’s oldest and biggest broadcaster) is the UK’s public service broadcaster and is funded primarily by a television licence. However, it also receives income from sales of its programming in overseas markets. Crucially, it does not carry advertising and is bound by the BBC Charter, which in turn impacts PR due to the content that the television (and radio and websites, etc.) can and cannot carry, namely the blatant use of product names, and what BBC journalists can and cannot say in relation to a company, product or brand.

Within the structure of the national channels, there are regional programmes, which cover local and regional news and features. These programmes generally (but not exclusively) follow the national news. There are BBC regions for this purpose – from BBC Scotland and BBC Wales to BBC London and BBC South West. Each local region maintains a news team.

From a PR perspective these local and regional programmes can be vital in communicating a story of relevance to the target audience.

**Independent television**

Independent television – popularly known as ITV – is a network of 15 regional commercial television franchises, originally founded in 1955 to provide competition to the BBC. Twelve of these franchises are owned by ITV plc. ITV1 operates all the English, Welsh, Southern Scotland and Channel Islands franchises. ITV plc branded the channel as ITV1 in 2001. The ITV regions maintain a news and local programme structure, again usually (but not exclusively) following national news.

Within this structure, national and international news is provided by ITN (Independent National News), which also supplies Channel 4 with its news.

Channel 4 and Channel 5 are also national commercial television stations.

**Independent television production companies**

Increasingly, over the past decade, the major television channels (BBC and commercial) have moved away from making their own programmes. Instead they have commissioned them from independent television production companies such as Tiger Aspect and Endemol. Often the PR professional will find themselves having to liaise with or pitch in to members of independent production units rather than the broadcaster themselves.

**6 Global media organisations**

Disney, CBS Corporation, Bertelsmann and News Corp are just some of the global organisations that influence a lot of the media we consume. They each own many subsidiary companies that produce, broadcast and publish news, television, film, music and many other forms of information and entertainment. Their area of distribution spreads across many countries.
News Corporation (News Corp) is one example of a multinational, diversified mass-media corporation and is the second largest media group in the world after Disney. News Corp owns Fox News, *The Wall Street Journal* and 20th Century Fox. In the UK, through its subsidiary News International, it owns (among others) *The Sun, The Sun on Sunday, The Times* and *The Sunday Times*. It also owns 39.1 per cent of BSkyB.

British Sky Broadcasting operates a host of satellite and subscription services with Sky News, its 24-hour rolling television news site (with support through presences on Twitter, Facebook and its own website) presenting one of the main channels for national and international news in the UK.

### 7 Citizen journalism

Perhaps the single biggest impact on the media landscape in the past decade has been the emergence of the citizen journalist.

Blogging (in particular micro blog sites such as Twitter), social networks (such as Facebook), mobile telephones, tablets (such as the iPad®) and digital cameras have all enabled different ways for news to break. Today it is just as likely that a story is broken, confirmed or reported on by citizen journalists as by the traditional media. Indeed, the mainstream news outlets such as the BBC, Sky and CNN will often appeal for eyewitness reports from citizen journalists at the scene of the unfolding news event or use footage produced by citizen journalists.

This has helped the media in many ways.

1. With a strain on budgets, media outlets do not always have enough journalists and film crews/radio cars to cover events.
2. With the demand for ever-increasing ‘live time’ coverage, citizen journalists are often at the scene first.
3. The desire of citizens to be part of the news gathering and reporting cycle means that there is a constant source of material and content – a particular requirement for the rolling news stations.

However, you should remember that citizen journalists tend not to be professionally qualified. Therefore, they can often be subjective and emotional. They do not seek secondary sources and, because they have no news editor, will often file a story before it is fully checked or cross-referenced.

For PR professionals, citizen journalists provide a number of new challenges and opportunities. Essentially, they fall into two categories.

- The first is difficult to account for. Often the result of chance, they are in the ‘right place at the right time’ and break news on their Facebook/Twitter stream using photography and hashtags. Their story, comments or pictures are then retweeted or collected by news stations (often called ‘panning’ by the media).
- The second group are ardent bloggers or tweeters who become interested in or focused on a particular topic in which they become ‘experts’ or collect followers or friends. There are, today, many companies, brands and organisations that have digital and social media strategies designed to harness this type of citizen journalist and, through them, promote their message. This is known as ‘advocacy’.

**Key term**

Hashtag – a device used on Twitter to help navigate conversations. A hashtag (#) followed by a word (e.g. #prapprenticeship) becomes instantly searchable and is found more easily by people tweeting about the same topic.
8 Social media

One final area of the media landscape that will, and does, impact the role of the PR professional and which may often be a fundamental part of a PR campaign is social media.

Interactions on social networking sites, such as Facebook or Twitter, often carry more impact for consumers than advertising, as they carry the weight of word of mouth. This can be extended through professional networking sites, such as LinkedIn, where testimonials can be gathered for individuals and businesses.

Social media bookmarking sites such as Digg, Reddit, Pinterest and Newsvine allow individuals to spread news virally, reignite stories, start campaigns and create real momentum for features and stories.

User content sites such as YouTube, Metacafe and Dailymotion allow video footage of news stories to be uploaded instantly, from the scene of a story or event.

This has changed PR campaign management and news management; many organisations are able to upload their versions of events before a story gets out of control. Other organisations choose to combat poor publicity by uploading their video responses to disgruntled customer videos.

PR practitioners are also increasingly using location-based websites such as Foursquare, Facebook Places, Gowalla and Brightkite for engaging with audiences and for those audiences to review products or services. Foursquare, for example, through their Mayor facility (where the individual most ‘checked-in’ becomes Mayor of that venue) offer rewards and kudos – Starbucks, for example, offers the Mayor a free coffee. Each Foursquare participant is also invited by the site to leave a tip for fellow users on any venue checked into – this is proving to be a powerful endorsement (or the reverse) and will increasingly require PR attention.

The social media environment evolves quickly, with new social platforms popping up and others fading out on a regular basis. It is important for PR professionals to experiment with different social media and to keep up with rapid developments. For example, in 2007 Reuters set up an agency within Second Life® (a virtual world that was creating a lot of buzz at the time). The experiment was abandoned after a year and a half, but generated a lot of media exposure for Reuters.
5.1: Understanding the media landscape components

Portfolio activity

1. Compare the different types of media platform available to you, including their ability to reach the maximum targeted audience for your messages.
2. Assess how development of media websites, digital and social media has affected the way that PR messages are disseminated.
3. Analyse how different media components (e.g. websites, print, broadcast and social media) interact to disseminate PR messages.

Further reading