

Uses and Gratifications Theory

Uses and gratification theory of communication explains how people use media to fulfill their needs. Gratification of needs is the most important role of media for humans. People get knowledge, interaction, relaxation, awareness, escape and entertainment through media which they use for interpersonal communication as well. The theory was introduced by Blumler and Katz in 1974 in the article “the Uses of Mass Communications: Current Perspectives on Gratifications Research” and focuses its attention on media users’ roles

History of uses and gratifications theory

First studies happened on this theory in the 1940s. It was the time when researchers studied some radio listeners. The exact idea of the history of uses and gratifications theory below:

Stage one

In 1944, Herta Hertzog studied the people who had an interest in the soap opera. This way he found that people get three types of gratification from soap operas. Those three types of gratification are as follows:

- Emotional
- Wishful thinking
- And learning

In 1954, Wilbur Schramm came up with an amazing formula that developed this theory further. This theory helps you to learn how much gratification you can expect from a person to get out from a certain media. It also makes you aware of how much efforts you have to make to get it.

In 1970, Abraham Maslow also added Uses and gratification in his hierarchy of needs. He pointed that USG is an extension of needs.

Stage two

In 1969, a study happened on the UK election. Jay Blumler and Denis McQuail conducted it. Through this research, they tried to find out the why people watch certain political shows on TV.

In 1972, Jay Blumler, Joseph Brown and Denis Mcquail said that there are four uses of media:

- Diversion
- Personal relationships
- Personal identity
- And Surveillance

These three researchers formed a team with three more colleagues in 1973-74. Their focus was on to find out how people view mass media.

Stage three

It is the stage where researchers are studying the uses and gratification theory in the modern times. This theory helps you to learn about your connection with the technology today. Research on the mobile phone has shown that you get many gratifications from the phone. These are as follows:

- Affection or social ability
- Entertainment
- And mobility, etc.

Uses and gratification theory researchers are also exploring the animated news and entertainment. Their motive is to learn the role media technologies play to attract the attention of the people.

Types

1. Cognitive – Refers to acquiring information to aid the thinking and understanding process. People use media such as documentaries and how-to videos to increase their skills or knowledge in a certain area.

2. Affective – Relates to emotions or feelings. People use media to arouse certain emotions within themselves, such as happiness, fear or pleasure.

3. Personal Integrative – Refers to promoting one's own image, reputation or status. People with this need use media, like Facebook and YouTube, to increase their credibility or social standing or to affirm their sense of self.

4. Social Integrative – Refers to interacting with family and friends. People use media to connect with others.

5. Tension Release – Relates to diversion and stress relief. People use media as catharsis or to escape from reality.

Objectives

To show the relation of mass communication and how it is used to gratify needs

To find out primary intentions of media use by people

To know the positive and negative aspects of media use on the media users



Features

- Audience is taken as important and goal oriented.
- The source of media is chosen by audience as per their own needs.
- This theory gives alternative choices on media for the audience.
- Media is taken as a means to an end.
- Uses and functions of media are different from a person to another and from one situation to other.
- Mobile phones, internet, social networking sites, etc. are new form of communication tool used for uses and gratification.

Criticisms

- The theory does not show media as important.
- The theory does not believe in the power of media and how media can influence human needs and gratification unconsciously.

- The model is audience centered and shows audience as an active participant.
- Audience might not always be active.

Agenda setting theory

Agenda-setting theory describes the "ability [of the news media] to influence the importance placed on the topics of the public agenda".^[1] With agenda setting being a social science theory, it also attempt to make predictions. That is, if a news item is covered frequently and prominently, the audience will regard the issue as more important.

Agenda-setting theory was formally developed by Max McCombs and Donald Shaw in a study on the 1968 American presidential election.

➤ **History and Orientation**

- Agenda setting describes a very powerful influence of the media – the ability to tell us what issues are important. As far back as 1922, the newspaper columnist Walter Lippman was concerned that the media had the power to present images to the public. McCombs and Shaw investigated presidential campaigns in 1968, 1972 and 1976. In the research done in 1968 they focused on two elements: awareness and information. Investigating the agenda-setting function of the mass media, they attempted to assess the relationship between what voters in one community said were important issues and the actual content of the media messages used during the campaign. McCombs and Shaw concluded that the mass media exerted a significant influence on what voters considered to be the major issues of the campaign.

➤ **Core Assumptions and Statements**

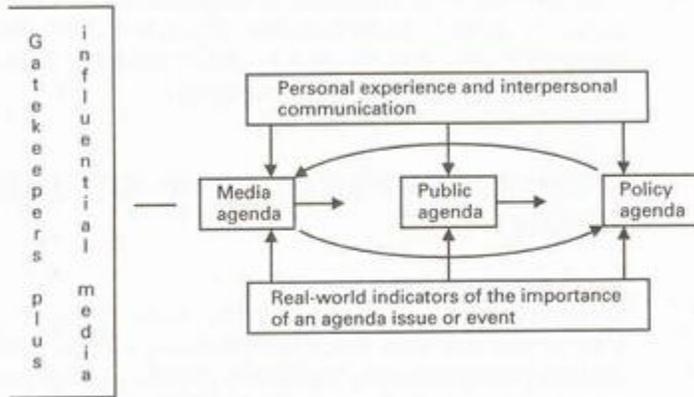
Core: Agenda-setting is the creation of public awareness and concern of salient issues by the news media. Two basis assumptions underlie most research on agenda-setting.

1. the press and the media do not reflect reality; they filter and shape it;.
2. media concentration on a few issues and subjects leads the public to perceive those issues as more important than other issues.

One of the most critical aspects in the concept of an agenda-setting role of mass communication is the time frame for this phenomenon. In addition, different media have different agenda-setting potential. Agenda-setting theory seems quite appropriate to help us understand the pervasive role of the media (for example on political communication systems).

Statement: Bernard Cohen (1963) stated: "The press may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about."

CONCEPTUAL MODEL



Three types of agenda-setting.

Rogers and Dearing identify three types of agenda setting:

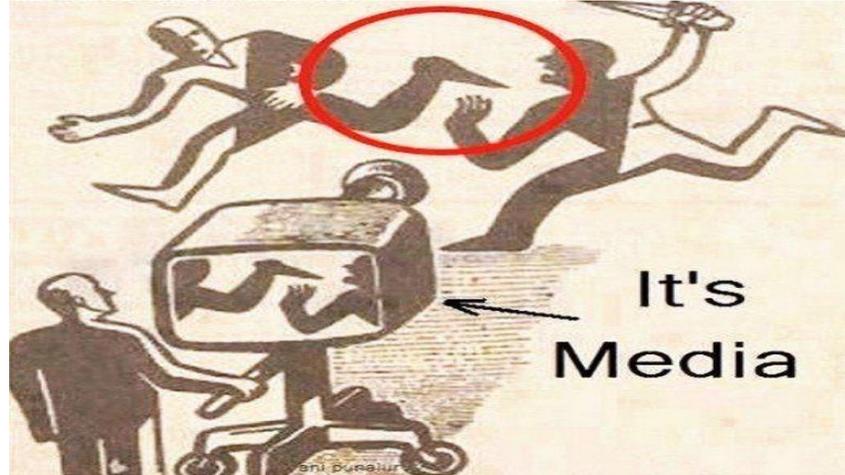
The research on the effect of agenda setting compares the salience of issues in news content with the public perceptions of the most important issue, and then analyses the extent of influence by guidance of the media. There are three models assumed by Max McCombs: the awareness model, the priorities model and the salience model. Most investigations are centered on these three models. In the research, the dependent variables are media agenda, audience agenda and policy agenda as listed in the following part.

1. public agenda setting, in which the public's agenda is the dependent variable (the traditional hypothesis)
2. media agenda setting, in which the media's agenda is treated as the dependent variable ("agenda building")
3. policy agenda setting, in which elite policy makers' agendas are treated as the dependent variable ("political agenda setting")

Accessibility

Agenda setting occurs through a cognitive process known as "accessibility". Accessibility implies that the more frequently and prominently the news media cover an issue, the more instances of that issue become accessible in audience's memories. When respondents are asked what the most important problem facing the country is, they answer with the most accessible news issue in memory, which is typically the issue the news media focused on the most. The agenda-setting effect is not the result of receiving one or a few messages but is due to the aggregate impact of a very large number of messages, each of which has a different content but all of which deal with the same general issue. Mass-media coverage in general and agenda-setting in particular also has a powerful impact on what individuals think that other people are thinking, and hence they tend to allocate more importance to issues that have been extensively covered by mass media. This is also called schemata theory. In psychology and cognitive science, a schema (plural schemata or schemas) describes a pattern of thought or

behavior that organizes categories of information and the relationships among them.



Levels of Agenda Setting

- Deciding what common subjects are important by using objects and issues
- Deciding parts of subject which are important and how people should think about i

Parts of Agenda Setting Theory

Parts of agenda setting according to Rogers and Dearing in their book Agenda Setting Research are:

- Importance of issues
- Impact over public thinking or public agenda
- Effects on policy agenda

Criticisms of Agenda Setting Theory

- Agenda setting of any media or news article is difficult to measure.
- Surveys and studies are very subjective and not very accurate. There are too many variables to consider.
- People have many options to read the same stories from different angles due to new media nowadays. So people have various choices on what to see or hear.
- Nowadays, media uses two way communication unlike when this theory was developed.
- Agenda setting has many benefits as media influences public and public influences policy.
- People might not look at the details and miss some important points resulting in misunderstanding.
- Media effect does not work for people who have fixed mindset.
- Media is not able to create information but is able to change the priority of the information to the public mindset.

References

<https://www.businessstopia.net> › Mass communication

[https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agenda-](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agenda-setting_theory)

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