UNIT 6: THEORIES OF MASS COMMUNICATION

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6.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to –

- Know the broad theoretical background of mass communication
- Know about the normative group of theories
- Know about the sociological group of theories.

6.2 INTRODUCTION

Mass communication is the process of sending data to enormous fragments of the populace. Mass communication contrasts from several other types of correspondence, for example, relational correspondence or hierarchical correspondence, since it focuses on specific assets transmitting data to various recipients. The study of mass communication is mainly concerned about how the substance of mass communication convinces or

generally influences the conduct, the demeanour, opinion, or feeling of the individuals getting the data.

Ordinarily, transmission of messages to numerous people one after another is called mass communication. Be that as it may, in a total sense, mass communication can be characterized as the procedure through which some data is flowed broadly among individuals close by and furthermore all through far broadening zones, for example, whole nations or the globe.

Through mass communication, data can be transmitted rapidly to numerous individuals who by and large remain far away from the wellsprings of data. Mass communication is being done through numerous mediums, for example, radio, TV, social networking, billboards, newspapers, magazines, film, and the Internet.

To understand the concept of mass communication, we need to learn some theories of mass communication. A mass communication theory includes a lot of explanations that portray in a proper way the connections between ideas, quantifiable by factors alluding to attributes or conditions of substances associated with the mass communication process (people, groups, institutions, units of content, and so on). Theories portray how procedures work in specific situations. In this unit, we shall emphasise on the normative and sociological group of theories.

6.3 NORMATIVE GROUP OF THEORIES

Normative theories were first proposed by Fred Siebert, Theodore Peterson and Wilbur Schramm in their book called “Four Theories of the Press”. From the outset “Normative Theory” was articulated in USA during the stature of ‘cold war’ with communism and soviet. Frequently it is called as western theories of mass media.

A Normative theory depicts a perfect path for a media framework to be controlled and worked by the government, authority, pioneer and public. These theories are essentially not the same as other communication theories because of the fact that normative theories of press do not give any scientific explanations or prediction. The “four theories of the press” were originated

from numerous sources as opposed to a solitary source. Some of the time media specialists, social critics and academics additionally included to build up these normative theories.

Normative theories are progressively engaged in the connection among Press and the Government than press and the audience. These theories are more concerned about the responsibility for media and who controls the press or media in the nation.

6.3.1 Concept of Normative Theories of the Press

Media became competitive and yellow journalism developed in the nineteenth century. Media utilized sensationalism to pull in individuals' attention. Along these lines, normative theories of press were developed to comprehend the utilization and duties of media for overall population through the relationship of media and governments. These theories were made to clean media practices and guide the press. Precision and objectivity was taken to be the significant improvement factors. These theories tell media how they ought to carry on despite the fact that their ways of thinking are extraordinary. Normative theory of press depicts what job media takes in which sorts of government. It demonstrates the perfect way to be taken by media, structures and activities that media can embrace.

6.3.2 Types of Normative Theories of the Press

Authoritarian Theory

Authoritarian theory of press highlights the control of media with government, elites or authorities. Media is not permitted to reprimand the influential individuals or the government. There is restriction by government on reactions and different things contrarily depicted about them.

So also, permitting of media, disciplines and substance endorsement are different methods used to check full opportunity of press. Media is taken as a way to serve the enthusiasm of authorities and state. The explanation offered about why it is done is "to accomplish social order".

The theory ignores needs of individuals and just sets up agendas and propaganda. There is restricted opportunity. The press in Bhutan can be taken as an example of authoritarian theory in practice.

Libertarian or Free Press Theory

Libertarian theory came as a contrary stand to that of the authoritarian theory. Press was given more opportunity and individuals included were taken to be intellectually matured. They were accepted to have the ability to discover truth from false. Public engagement was likewise begun. Individuals were given a great deal of press opportunity and there was practically zero government command over press. "Laissez-faire" approach was utilized.

There were a few limitations set up for criticism, false publicizing and false news, yet generally, media was considered as a distinctive body as opposed to a being an agent of the government. Media could reprimand government and fill in as guardians or watchdogs for the general public. It disregarded privacy and worked for capitalism. A case of it was U.S. embracing it after the declaration of independence.

Social Responsibility Theory

In social responsibility theory, press is offered opportunity to publish anything, with the caution that it must be mindful in its activities. The fundamental job of press is to help preserve and develop democracy. Rules and guidelines cause the press to carry on in a responsible way. Government can act in a controlling manner in the event of some data to be improper use of data, which may be detrimental for democracy and social order.

Audience is additionally taken to be responsible in their comprehension of things appeared in media. Government cannot intrude media according to its will. Media is taken to be a representative of common people. It ignores enterprises utilizing press for commercialization and benefit. It is found in most European

nations and different nations under European impact far and wide these days.

Communist Theory

Communist theory is otherwise called the Soviet Theory as it originated from the then Soviet Union after Russian Revolution of 1917. The principle job of media in communist theory is to advance communism and accomplish communist goals. The fundamental delegates of communist power control the media. Data is controlled and is utilized to build up relationship building abilities and satisfy their fundamental needs.

The target populace is the working class people. It is more liberal than authoritarian theory on data content in press. Media is self administrative and there is no restriction. A case of this theory is the means by which press works in China.

6.3.3 Additions to Normative Theories of the Press

McQuail is another theorist who added two more theories to the four normative theories. One is Democratic-Participant Media Theory and the other is Developmental Media (Development Communication) Theory. The first one talks about cooperation of audience in media. The second talks about media as an apparatus for advancement in local level.

Normative theories depend on various kinds of government frameworks. Along these lines, which one is great cannot be estimated by it. Media is significant for states to endure and can be utilized in any capacity the government needs it to.

There are different theories that have developed after the normative theories to better their viewpoints. Some of them are: Western idea (counting both Libertarianism and Social Responsibility), Development Concept Theory, Revolutionary Concept Theory, Transitional Media Approach, and so forth.

6.4 SOCIOLOGICAL GROUP OF THEORIES

The sociological way to deal with mass communication theory depends on the assumption that there exists a distinct relationship between mass communication and social change (societal values, public beliefs and opinions and so on.) Some of the pertinent theories that are discussed here attempt to give answers to questions like these: Do mass media develop regular convictions about the world or set a motivation for individuals? How do individuals use media and why? Do media have power over audiences?, etc.

6.4.1 Cultivation Theory

The Cultivation Theory, developed by George Gerbner (1967), depends on the assumption that mass media have subtle effects on audiences who, unconsciously, ingest the predominant images, symbols, and messages of media. He calls it “cultivation of prevailing picture design”. As per this theory, a long, industrious introduction to Television is fit for developing regular convictions about the world. Gerbner and his associates are of the view that the messages of TV do not depict reality in society; rehashed presentation to such contortions prompts advancement of specific convictions about the world; and these convictions get fortified once they are developed. For instance, continued review of stylish areas, enormous houses, garments, toys, chocolates, fast foods, electric and electronic gadgets may persuade that they can anticipate such things in life yet such messages are not advantageous for the poor and oppressed. Gerbner additionally emphatically recommends that the ground-breaking impact of mass media go about as decays of society.

6.4.2 Agenda-Setting Theory

The name of this theory was coined by Maxwell McCombs and Donald L.Shaw (1972) in the setting of political race crusade

where government officials look to persuade the voters about the party's most significant issues. The Agenda-Setting theory keeps up that the media are progressively effective in outlining for individuals "what is to consider" than in letting them know "what to think". This theory depends on an entire arrangement of studies indicating a correspondence between the order for significance given in the media to 'issues' and the order for essentiality appended to similar issues by people in general and the government officials. Over some stretch of time, as indicated by this theory, the very needs agreed by media to issues become the public needs also.

Be that as it may, the critics (McQuail, 1983) contend that the proof is lacking to show a causal association between the different issues 'agendas' of the media and public. They proposed the requirement for a study that joined analysis of party programs, proof of sentiment change after some time in a given area of people in general: a substance investigation indicating media thoughtfulness regarding various issues in the significant period: and a few sign of pertinent media use by the public concerned. Without such proof, the hypothesis of agenda setting stays unproved.

6.4.3 The Uses and Gratification Theory

The Uses and Gratification Theory emerged out of the studies which moved their focus from what the media do to the individuals, to what individuals do with the media. The question posed is: How individuals utilize the mass communications and why? The "uses" approach accept that audiences are dynamic and readily uncover themselves to media; and that the most powerful of mass communications substance cannot impact a person who has "no use" for it in the environment where he lives. The uses of mass communications are subject to the recognition, selectivity, and recently held convictions, qualities, and interests of the individuals.

The expression "gratification" alludes to the prizes and fulfilment experienced by crowds after the utilization of media; it

clarifies inspirations driving media use and propensities for media use. Davison (1959) has demonstrated that many research findings bode well if interchanges are deciphered as a connection among human beings and their environment. He proposes that communication effects can be clarified as far as the job they play in empowering individuals to realize more good relations among themselves and the world around them.

Three particular groups of uses and gratifications studies can be recognized. The first of these groups conducts investigation into the scope of fulfilment obtained from mass communications material. The second group takes a look at the social and ecological conditions that are answerable for individuals going to the media in any case. The third looks at the requirements that the audience members are endeavouring to fulfil.

6.4.4 Dependency Theory

Melvin De Fleur and Sandra Ball-Rokeach have proposed an integrated dependency theory of mass communication in which they perceive different psychological and social factors that keep the media from practicing subjective authority over their crowds. De Fleur and Ball-Rokeach portray it like this: “Mass media not only lack arbitrary influence powers, yet their own absence of opportunity to take part in arbitrary communication behaviour. Both the media and their audiences are indispensable portion of their society. The encompassing socio-cultural setting gives controls and requirements on the idea of media messages as well as on the idea of their consequences for audiences”. Truth be told, communication in the entirety of its structures has a significant job in holding society together. The need to have a place in the society, to understand the society and to stay aware of society’s progression has expanded our dependency on media furthermore. In that sense, media is said to enjoy certain powers.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1. What is authoritarian theory?

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Q2. What is dependency theory?

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Q3. What is libertarian or free press theory?

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6.5 LET US SUM UP

- The study of mass communication is mainly concerned about how the substance of mass communication convinces or generally influences the conduct, the demeanour, opinion, or feeling of the individuals getting the data.
- Through mass communication, data can be transmitted rapidly to numerous individuals who by and large remain far away from the wellsprings of data.
- Mass communication is being done through numerous mediums, for example, radio, TV, social networking, billboards, newspapers, magazines, film, and the Internet.
- A mass communication theory is a lot of explanations that portrays in a proper way a lot of connections between ideas, quantifiable by factors alluding to attributes or conditions of substances associated with the mass communication process (people, groups, institutions, units of content, and so on).
- Normative theories were first proposed by Fred Siebert, Theodore Peterson and Wilbur Schramm in their book called “Four Theories of the Press”.

- A Normative theory depicts a perfect path for a media framework to be controlled and worked by the government, authority, pioneer and public.
- Authoritarian theory of press is the control of media with government, elites or authorities.
- Libertarian theory came as a contrary stand to authoritarian theory. Press was given more opportunity and individuals included were taken to be conscientious and intellectual. They were accepted to have the ability to discover truth from false.
- In social responsibility theory, press is offered opportunity to publish anything, with the caution that it must be mindful in its activities. The fundamental job of press is to help preserve and develop democracy.
- Communist theory is otherwise called the Soviet Theory as it originated from the then Soviet Union after Russian Revolution of 1917. The principle job of media in communist theory is to advance communism and accomplish communist goals. The fundamental delegates of communist power control the media.
- McQuail is another theorist who added two more theories to the four normative theories. One is Democratic-Participant Media Theory and the other is Developmental Media (Development Communication) Theory.
- The sociological way to deal with mass communication theory depends on the assumption that there exists a distinct relationship between mass communication and social change (societal values, public beliefs and opinions and so on.)
- Cultivation theory, developed by George Gerbner (1967), depends on the assumption that mass media have subtle effects on audiences who, unconsciously, ingest the predominant images, symbols, and messages of media.
- The term agenda-setting theory was coined by Maxwell McCombs and Donald L.Shaw (1972) in the setting of political race crusade where government officials look to persuade the voters about the party's most significant issues.

- The Uses and Gratifications Theory emerged out of the studies which moved their focus from what the media do to the individuals, to what individuals do with the media.
- Melvin De Fleur and Sandra Ball-Rokeach have proposed an integrated dependency theory of mass communication in which they perceive different psychological and social factors that keep the media from practicing subjective authority over their crowds.



6.6 FURTHER READING

1. Denis McQuail, 1987 (Second Edition): *Mass Communication Theories: An Introduction*, Sage Publications. London.
2. John Fiske, 1982, *Introduction to Communication Studies*; Methuen, London and New York.

6.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS



Ans to Q No 1: Authoritarian theory of press is the control of media with government, elites or authorities. Media is not permitted to reprimand the influential individuals or the government. There is restriction by government on reactions and different things contrarily depicted about them. So also, permitting of media, disciplines and substance endorsement are different methods used to check full opportunity of press. Media is taken as a way to serve the enthusiasm of authorities and state. The explanation offered about why it is done is “to accomplish social order”. The theory ignores needs of individuals and just sets up agendas and propaganda. There is restricted opportunity. The press in Bhutan can be taken as an example of authoritarian theory in practice.

Ans to Q No 2: Melvin De Fleur and Sandra Ball-Rokeach have proposed an integrated dependency theory of mass communication in which they perceive different psychological and social factors that keep the media from practicing subjective authority over their crowds. De

Fleur and Ball-Rokeach portray it like this: “Mass media not only lack arbitrary influence powers, yet their own absence of opportunity to take part in arbitrary communication behaviour. Both the media and their audiences are indispensable portion of their society. The encompassing socio-cultural setting gives controls and requirements on the idea of media messages as well as on the idea of their consequences for audiences”.

Ans to Q No 3: Libertarian theory is seen as a contrast to authoritarian theory. Press was given more opportunity and individuals included were taken to be conscientious and intellectual. They were accepted to have the ability to discover truth from false. Public engagement was likewise begun. Individuals were given a great deal of press opportunity and there was practically zero government command over press. “Laissez-faire” approach was utilized.



6.8 MODEL QUESTIONS

Short Questions (Answer each question within 150 words)

Q1. What is the Social responsibility theory?

Q2. What is normative group of theories?

Long Questions (Answer each question within 300-500 words)

Q1. Discuss the types of normative group of theories.

Q2. Explain the sociological group of theories.