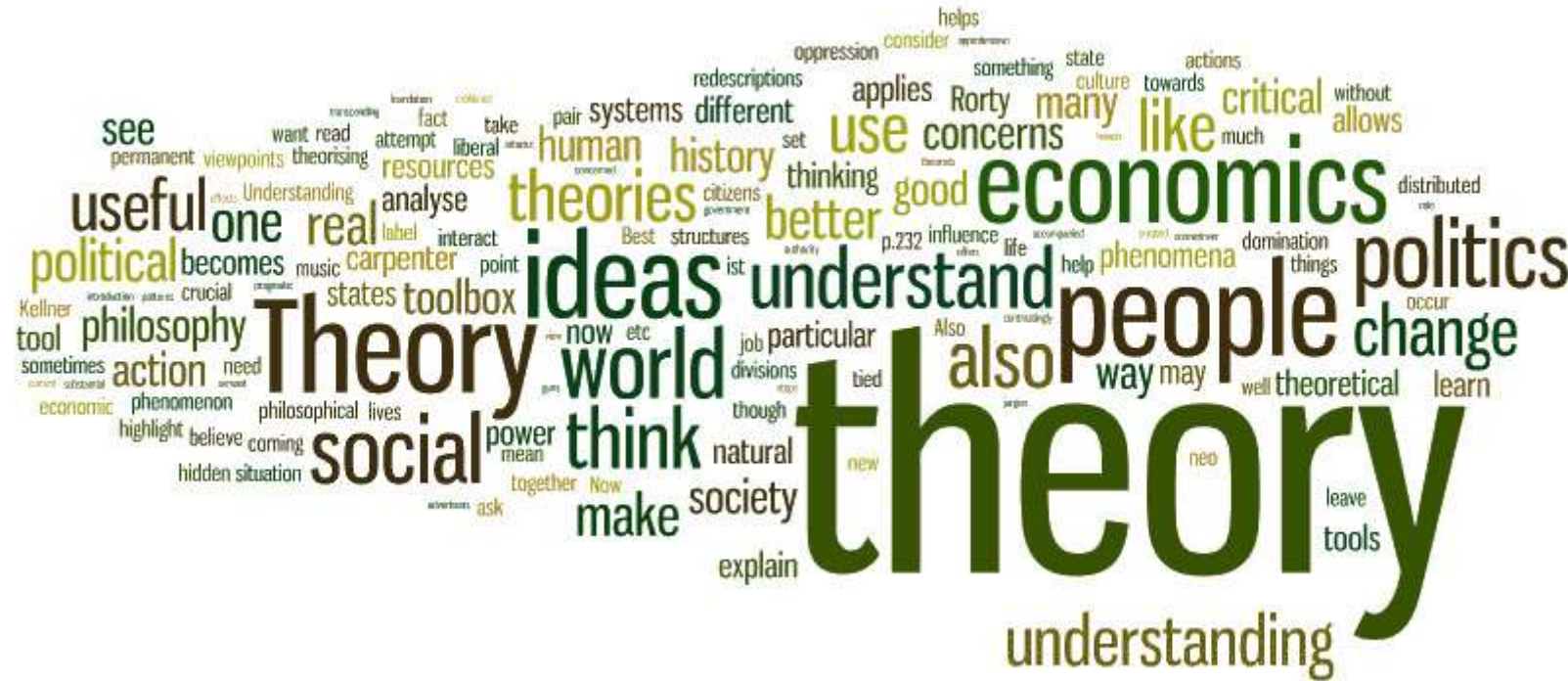


GS 434 MASS MEDIA & SOCIETY



UNIT - 02: Theories of Mass Media

UNIT OBJECTIVES

Theories of Mass Media

1. Agenda Setting Theory
2. Priming Theory
3. Uses and Gratifications Theory
4. Media System Dependency Theory
5. Medium Theory

THEORIES OF MASS MEDIA

- ❑ Theories of mass media deal with the roles, technology, influence, processes, and economies of mass media as well as the relationship between mass media and the audience.
- ❑ Some of the theories of mass media are:
 1. Agenda-setting Theory
 2. Priming Theory
 3. Uses and Gratifications Theory
 4. Media System Dependency Theory
 5. Medium Theory

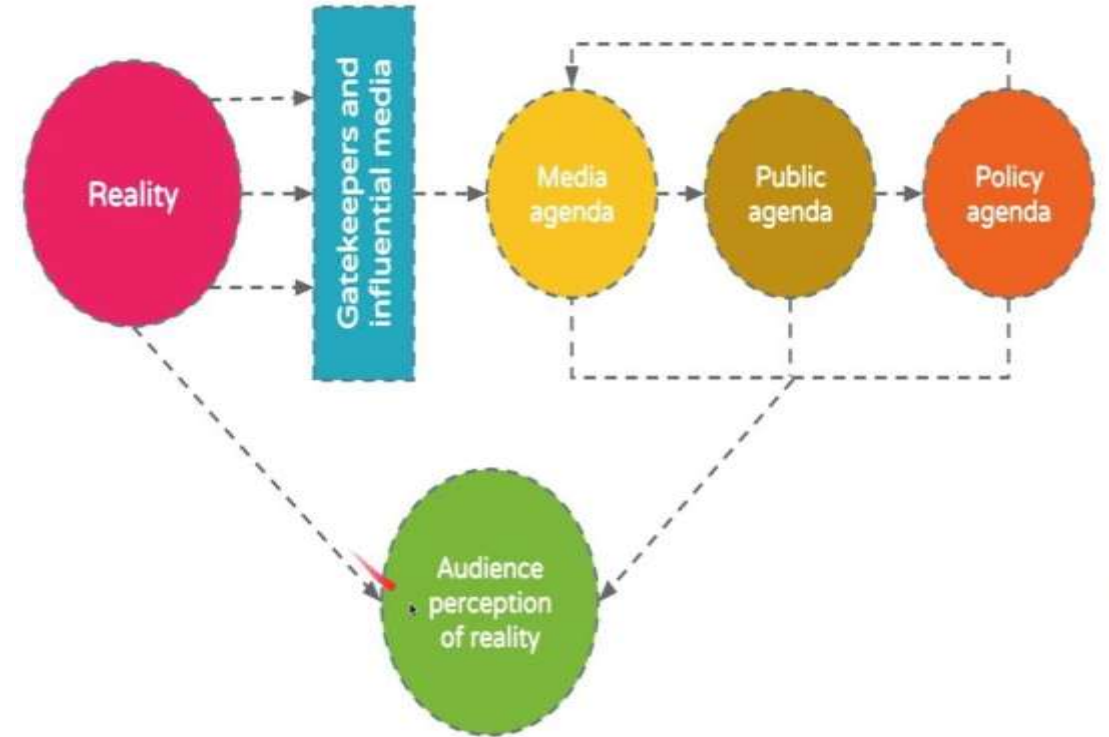


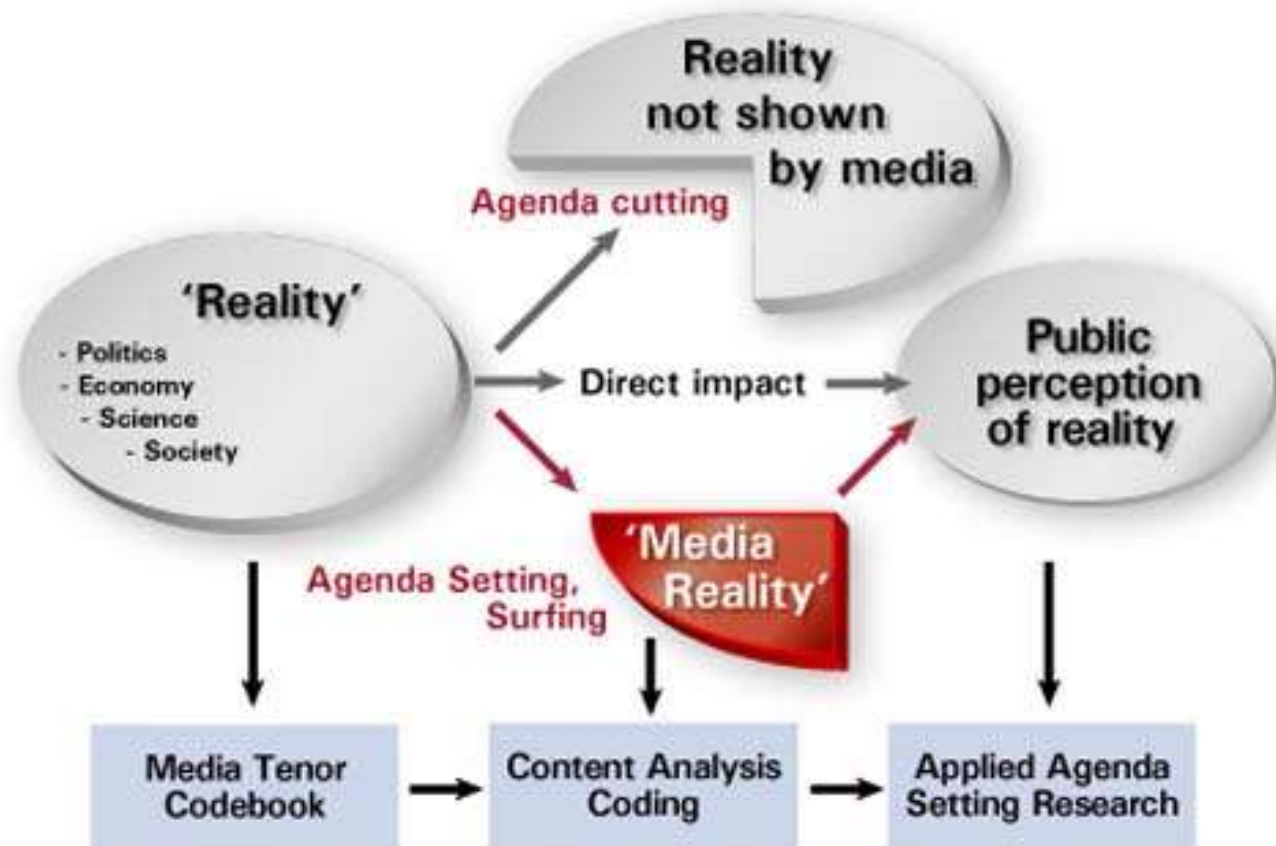
1. Agenda-Setting Theory

- ❑ Agenda Setting Theory was developed by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in 1972.
- ❑ It was already studied in 1922 by Walter Lippman, an American newspaper columnist, 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 USA. They demonstrated a strong connection between the people's thought on what was the most important election issue and what the local news media reported was the most important issue. By comparing the importance placed on some issues in news content with the public's perceptions, they determined that media influence their audience by instilling what they *should think about*, instead of what they *actually think*. That is, if a news item is covered frequently and prominently, the audience will regard the issue as more important.

□ According to Agenda Setting Theory:

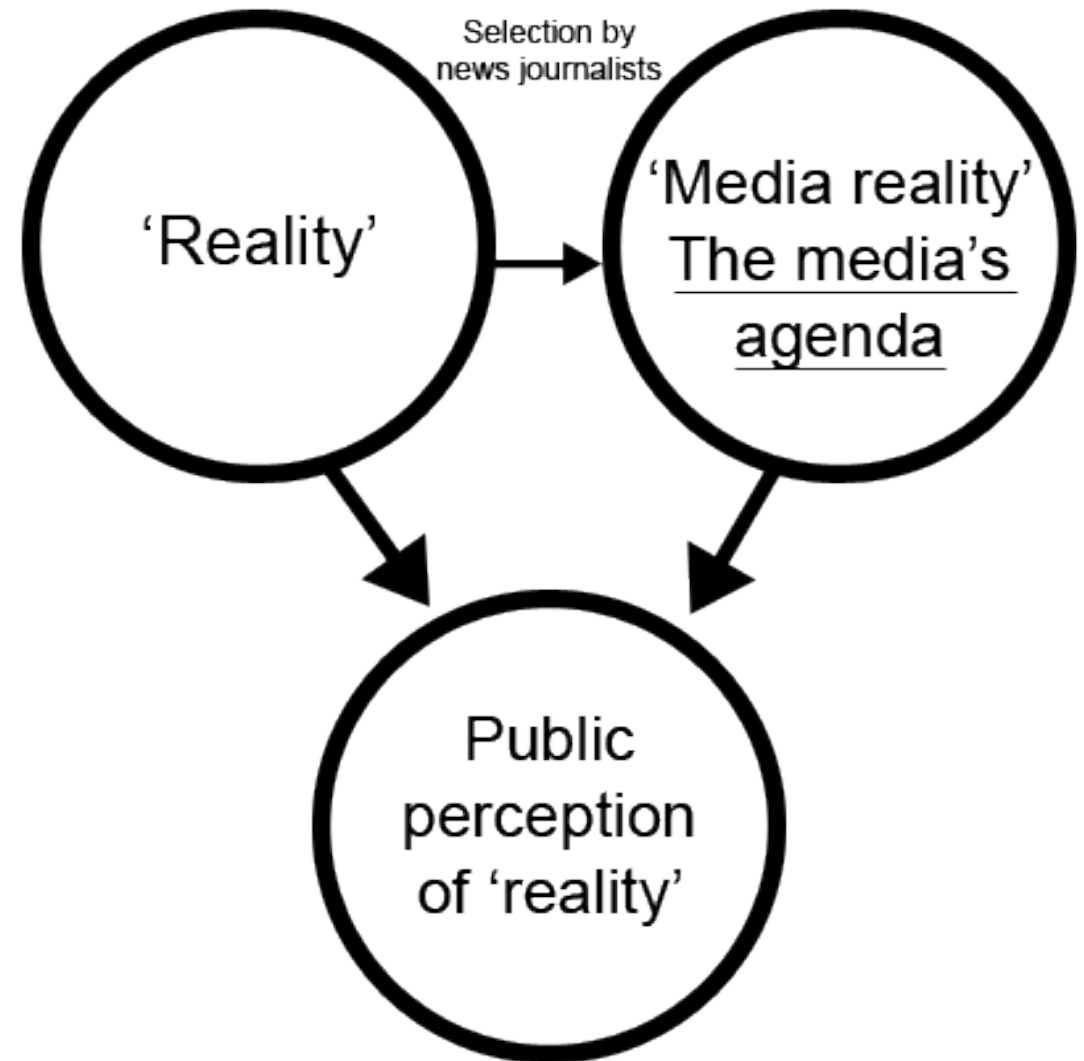
- The communications media, through their ability to identify and publicize issues, play a central role in shaping the problems that attract attention from governments and international organizations, and direct public opinion towards specific issues.
- The media can shape public opinion by determining what issues are given the most attention.
- There are three types of agendas: media agenda, public agenda (that is important in public's view) and policy agenda (that government and other policy-makers pay attention to). With the passage of time media agenda becomes the public agenda. The media agenda may be influenced by the policy agenda but has the potential to even shape the policy agenda in the long run through public opinion.

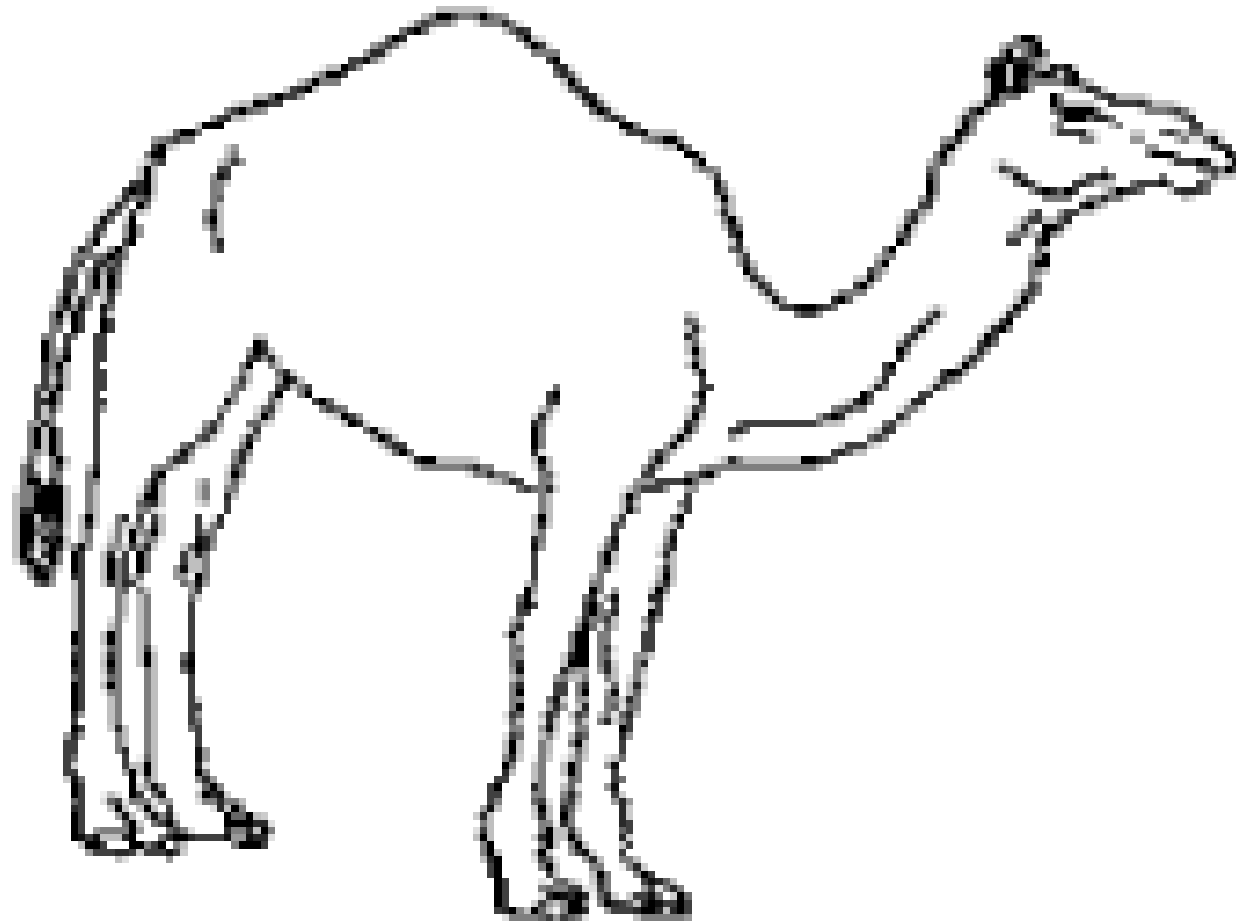




- There are two aspects of agenda:
 - i. **Agenda-Setting:** Whatever the media chooses to talk about is the information that people receive.
 - ii. **Agenda-Cutting:** If the media chooses not to talk about it, then people are generally uninformed about the issue.

- Most individuals access the news media as their only source of information on most issues. Therefore, news stories and topics impact public opinion in the way these are presented to the audience. Since these media establish the agenda, they may affect how important some things are seen to be.
- Media's focus on a few issues and subjects leads the public to perceive those issues as more important than other issues. Therefore, the press and the media do not reflect reality; instead, they filter and shape it.



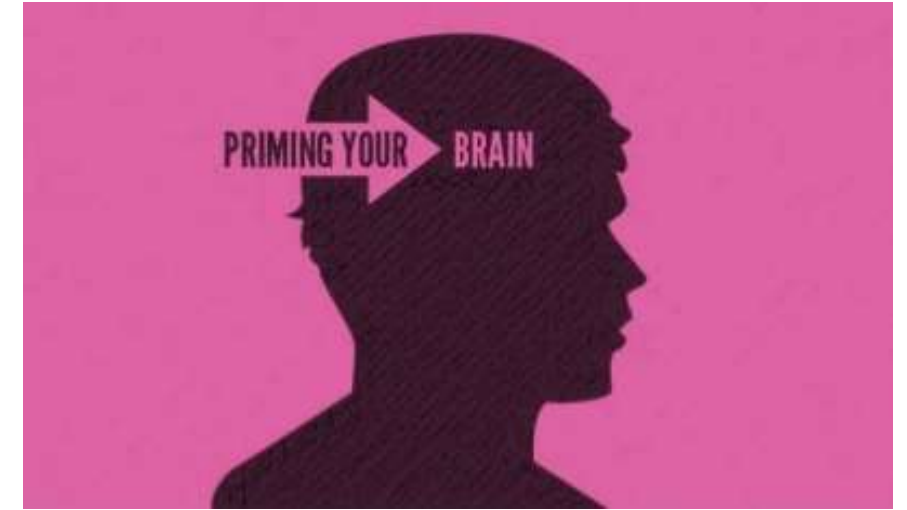


2. Priming Theory

- ❑ Priming Theory was developed by several media researchers inspired from cognitive psychology during the 1970s and 1980s.
- ❑ Grounded in cognitive psychology, the theory of media priming is derived from the associative network model of human memory, in which a past event or memory impacts on understanding/judging the subsequent events (i.e. there is a relationship between effect and the visual judgment).

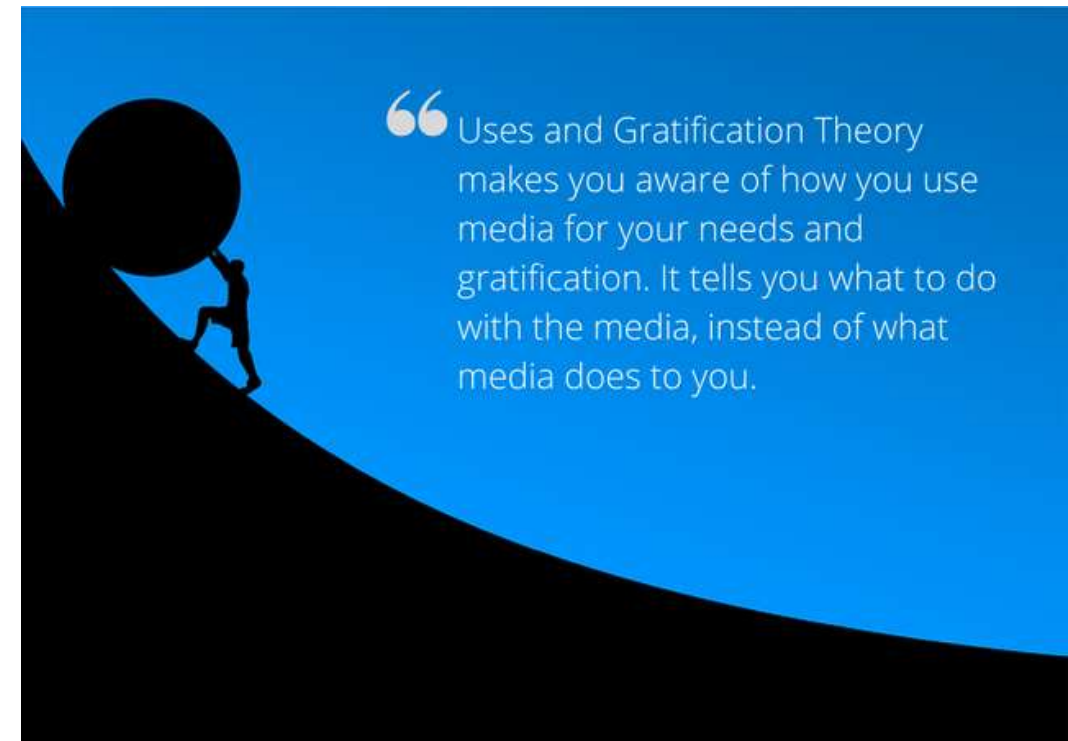


- ❑ According to Priming Theory:
 - Priming refers to enhancing the effects of the media by offering the audience a prior context that will be used to interpret subsequent communication.
 - Media images stimulate related thoughts in the minds of their audience. For example, mass media prime the audience about what a news program looks like, what a credible person looks like, etc. Therefore, mass media serve to provide the audience with standards and frames of reference, which enable the media to prepare and direct public to the issues on which they should judge others (such as leaders and celebrities).
 - Political media priming is "the process in which the media attend to some issues and not others and thereby alter the standards by which people evaluate election candidates".



3. Uses And Gratifications Theory

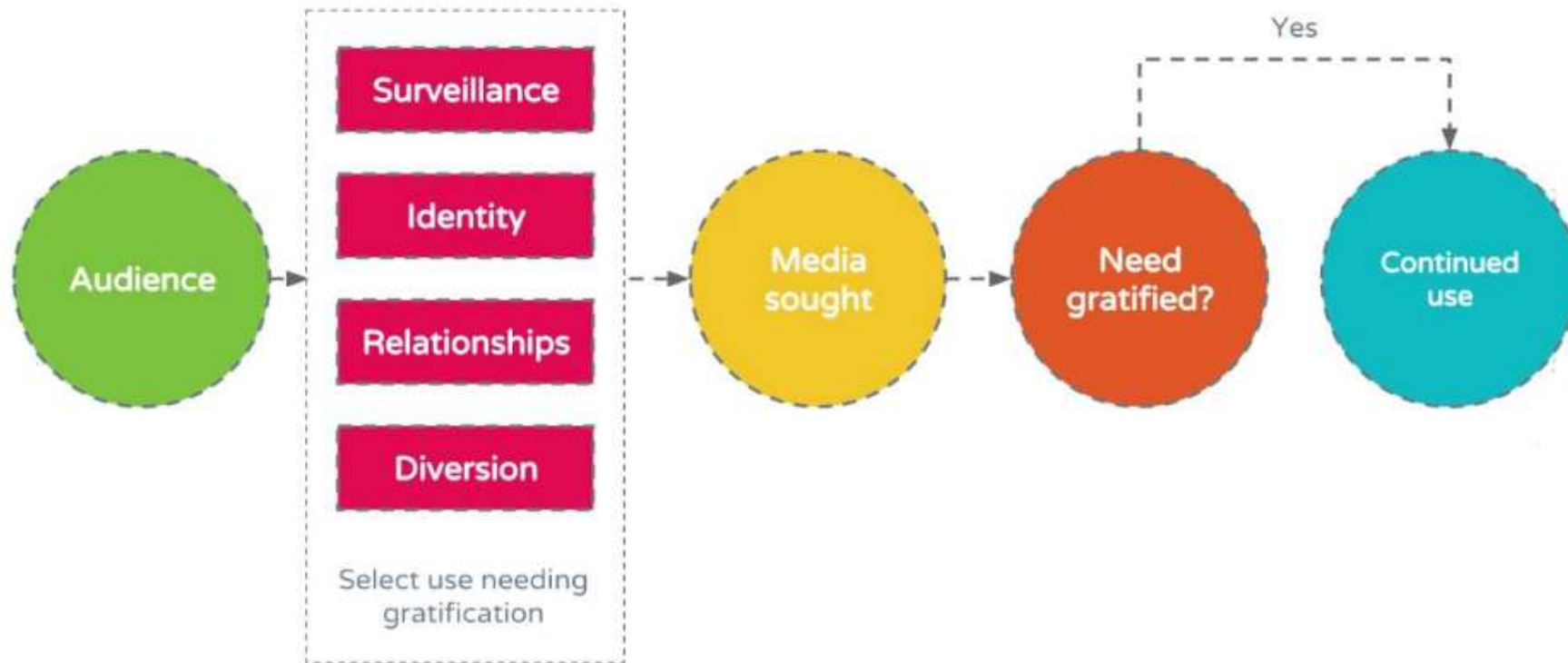
- ❑ Use and Gratifications Theory was developed by J. Blumler and Elihu Katz in 1974.
- ❑ As a reaction to traditional mass communication research which emphasizes the sender and the message, this theory emphasized on the active audience and user instead.
- ❑ Blumler and Katz suggested that media users seek out a medium source that best fulfills their needs as they have alternate choices to satisfy their need. They also discovered that media served the functions of surveillance, correlation, entertainment and cultural transmission for both society and individuals.
- ❑ The theory focuses on audience's immediate needs as drivers for media use.



“Uses and Gratification Theory makes you aware of how you use media for your needs and gratification. It tells you what to do with the media, instead of what media does to you.”

❑ According to Use and Gratifications Theory:

- A medium will be used more when the existing motives to use the medium leads to more satisfaction.
- The theory focuses on audience's **immediate needs as drivers** for media use.



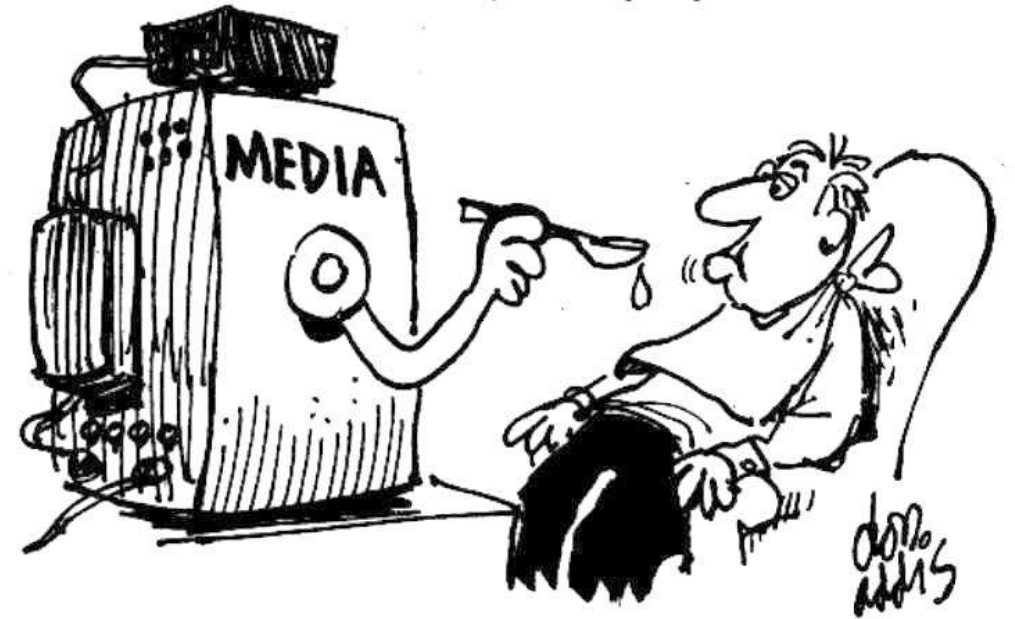
4. Media System Dependency Theory

- ❑ Media System Dependency Theory was developed by Sandra Ball-Rokeach and Melvin DeFleur in 1976.
- It combines perspectives from psychology with social categories theory.
 - Social categories theory of mass communication argues that individuals within broad subgroups (such as age, social or educational classes) react similarly to the mass media.
- Its primary focus is on explaining the reasons behind the limitations of media effects.
- It deals with the content of media messages and their effects on audiences.
- It focuses on audiences' long term goals for their use of media as the source of their dependency.



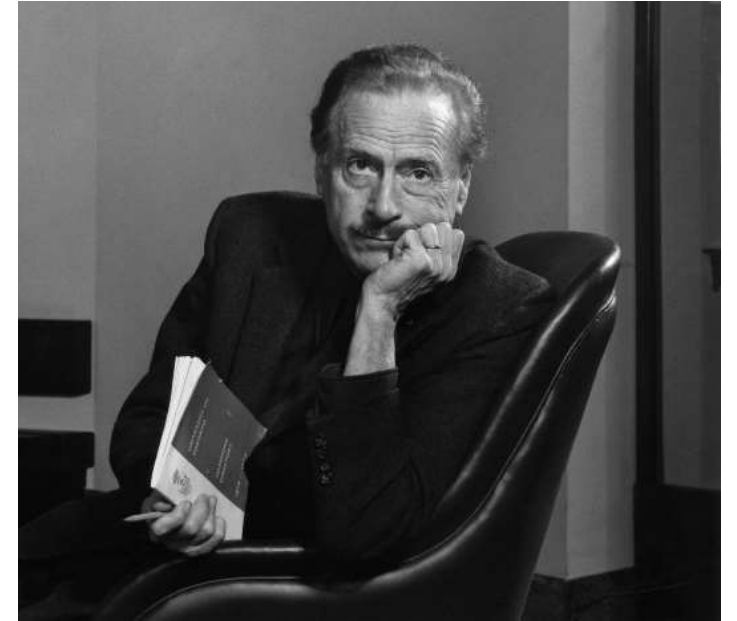
❑ According to Media System Dependency Theory:

- People depend on media information to meet certain needs and achieve certain goals.
- The more a person depends on media to meet his/her needs, the more important media will be in his/her life, and therefore the more effects media will have on him/her. However, people do not depend on all media equally.
- Two factors influence the degree of media dependence:
 1. More dependency on those media which meet a number of people's needs than on media that provide just a few.
 2. Social stability and the media are interlinked. For example, during the times of crisis or disaster, people's reliance on the media for information will increase. However, during more stable times people's dependency on media may go down.



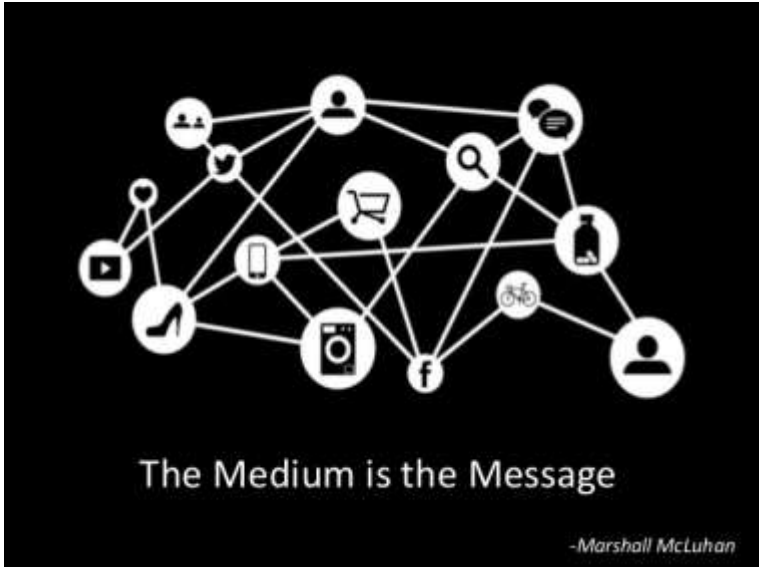
5. Medium Theory

- ❑ Medium Theory was developed by Marshall McLuhan (a Canadian professor) in 1964.
- ❑ He stressed how media differ, not only in terms of their content, but also in regard to how they stimulate and alter thoughts and senses. He distinguished media by the cognitive processes required for each of them (e.g. book are linked to reading + watching, and radio is linked to listening).
- ❑ He popularized the idea that channels are a dominant force that must be understood to know how the media influence society and culture.



❑ According to Medium Theory:

- The medium is the message.
- The medium affects perception.
- Medium theory focuses on the medium characteristics itself rather than on what it conveys or how information is received.
- In medium theory, a medium is not simply a newspaper, the Internet, a digital camera and so forth. Rather, it is the symbolic environment of any communicative act. Media, apart from whatever content is transmitted, impact individuals and society.
- McLuhan's idea is that people adapt to their environment through a certain balance or ratio of the senses, and the primary medium of the age/era brings out a particular sense ratio, thereby affecting perception.



Thanks

Any Questions?