

Book Review

Ezekiel S. Asemah, Angela N. Nwammuo, Adline O.A. Nkwam-Uwaoma,
Theories and Models of Communication, Jos University Press, Jos. 2017
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The importance of communication theories cannot be over-emphasized. Theories provide an abstract understanding of the communication process. Communication theories show the relationship between the various variables that are at work in the communication process. Communication theory attempts to document types of communication and to optimize communication for the benefit of all. Hence, communication theories help us to understand how individuals construct meanings and how these meanings are affected by different factors.

Furthermore, communication theories enable us to understand the relationships that exist between government and the mass media, and also how media and culture affect each other.

The fact that communication theories is a compulsory course for students of Mass Communication at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels in the universities also underscores the important role of this subject in the study and practice of mass communication. Unfortunately, however, there is dearth of standard textbooks in mass communication theories. The book ‘Theories And Models of Communication’ by Asemah, Nwammuo and Nkwam-Uwaoma is a valuable contribution to the field of communication.

The 413 page book is organized into twenty chapters made up of a comprehensive compilation of communication theories and models with detailed discourse on the tenets, origin, applicability, strengths and weaknesses of each theory and model.

Chapter one examined the meaning and functions of communication and highlighted the distinction between mass communication and other forms of communication. In chapter two, the authors discussed the concept of theory. They explained the meaning, goals and functions of a theory, and pointed out the relationship between research and a theory. Various types of theories were also identified and explained in this chapter.

Chapter three provides an overview of communication theory. With focus on the framework for studying communication theories, the importance of communication theories and the seven traditions of communication theories were fully discussed. Chapter four dwells on the normative theories of the press, namely: the authoritarian media theory, Libertarian media theory, social responsibility media theory and soviet communist media theory as well as the development media theory and democratic

participant media theory. According to the authors, the above theories are called normative theories because they talk about the relationship that should exist between the government and the media in any given society. The theories describe, explain and set standards (rules) of language or behavior which media practitioners should follow. In chapter five, the authors delved into limited effects media theories. They indentified the following as limited effects media theories: uses and gratification theory, Agenda setting theory, framing theory, media dependency theory, spiral of silence theory and knowledge gap theory. The author explained that, According to the limited media effects theories, media messages do not have direct effects on the audience. People perceive media messages differently because they have different psychological dispositions, past experiences, cultural expectations, etc.

Cultural theories were discussed in chapter six, and according to the authors, the theories include action assembly theory, semiotics theory, cultivation theory and diffusion of innovation theory. According to the authors, the cultural theories imply that the audiences actively process the information that they receive, they reshape such information and store only what serves their cultural needs.

Chapter seven talks about television violence theories which include catharsis theory, aggressive cue theory and observational learning theory.

The theories examined effects of violent programmes on the audience. The authors argue that violence can be seen on television in different ways which include beating, shooting, vulgar abuse, quarrelling, wrestling and fighting. Chapter eight x-rayed persuasion and attitude change theories. Among the theories discussed in this chapter are Yale's persuasion theory, cognitive dissonance theory and social judgement/involvement theory. Others are theory of planned behavior and reasoned action, source credibility theory and elaboration likelihood theory.

Chapter nine focused on socialization theories which include symbolic interaction theory and media equation theory. The chapter described socialization as the process of learning the values, expectations and norms of a society so as to become a better member of such a society, pointing out that mass communication messages can go a long way in socializing the audience members. In chapter ten, the authors discussed what they called working/operational theories. Under this heading they examined such theories as Gate keeping theory, status conferral theory and medium theory. As usual, the tenets, applicability, strengths and weaknesses of each theory were sufficiently discussed.

In chapter eleven, communication step flow theories were highlighted. They include one-step flow theory, two-step flow theory and multi-step glow theory. According to the authors, communication flow theories describe how communicated messages from the media move in stages before finally reaching the audience. Chapter twelve focused on interpersonal communication theories. The chapter says that interpersonal communication includes message sending and message reception between two or more individuals. The following theories were discussed under interpersonal communication theories: Expectancy violation theory, interactional view theory, relational dialectics theory, interpersonal deception theory and social information

processing theory. Others under this category are uncertainty reduction theory, social exchange theory, coordinated management of meaning theory, social penetration theory, and communication privacy management theory. The interpersonal communication theories discussed in this chapter also include attribution theory and communication accommodation theory.

Chapter thirteen is a discourse on theories of group communication. According to the authors, group communication takes place when a group of people come together to exchange ideas so as to achieve certain objectives that have been set. They identified some theories that guide or relate to group communication. The group communication theories discussed here include symbolic convergence theory, public rhetoric theory, functional group communication theory, group think theory and decision emergence theory.

Chapter fourteen beamed a search light on a category of theories called feminist and cross cultural communication theories. Theories examined under this heading include genderlect style theory, muted group theory, face negotiation theory, anxiety/uncertainty management theory and constructivism theory.

Computer mediated communication theories take the centre stage in chapter fifteen. Discussed under this category are the social presence theory and media richness theory. The chapter explained that computer mediated communication theories attempt to explain how communication takes place through computer mediated communication.

Organizational communication theories constitute the subject matter of chapter sixteen. This chapter explored and examined such theories as adaptive structuration theory and system theory of organizational development. Chapter seventeen talks about General Information theories. Under this heading, the authors examined the following: play theory of mass communication, media imperialism theory, reflective – projective theory, technological determinism theory, modernization theory, critical theory of society, and cultural study theory. Chapter eighteen explored and examined the theories of organizational management. These include stakeholder theory and fiduciary capitalism theory of corporate social responsibility.

Chapter nineteen takes a look at the theories of motivation. Theories of motivation seek to explain the psychological concepts or variables, factors or motives that influence people to do a particular thing or move towards a particular goal. Theories discussed under this category include Herzberg's two factor theory, Expectancy motivation theory, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory, theories X and Y and Taylor's motivational theory.

Chapter twenty, which is the last chapter, centres on communication models. The chapter describes communication model as a symbolic representation designed to help us equalize the relationships among various elements of a structure, system or process for the purpose of discussion and analysis. Among the communication models discussed here are Lasswell's model, Braddock's Model, Shannon and Weaver's mathematical Model and Osgood's Model. Others are Schramm's Model, Berlo's

Model, Hub's model, Defleur's Model and Dance's Helical Model. Both the importance and the disadvantages of models were highlighted.

The book is a compendium of communication theories written in simple and easy to understand language. However, there is an omission which is a major flaw in the work. The table of content did not indicate the pages for each chapter or topic, making it difficult to locate a particular chapter or topic in the book. As the title of this review implies, the book under review is simply a bold attempt by the authors to critically analyze and evaluate diverse theories and models of communication.

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