

## The Relativity Of The Power Of Mass Media In Mind Shifts

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### Abstract

*Differences in the accuracy of forecasting and the influence of the mass media encourage the desire to explore from the perspective of a shift in thinking. Judging from Albert Einstein's theory of relativity, regarding inertial and non-inertial frames of reference bruises, the shifting force of the behavioristic mass media has placed it in the inertial frame of reference of a constant modifier, so it has a deterministic force. Cognitive thinking places media in a non-inertial frame of reference, not constant, but as subjective and fictitious forces. Humanistic emphasizes interaction by bringing together subjective interpretative thoughts and is more circular. Shifts in thinking and changes in communication technology change assumptions about changing the power of the mass media to become blurred. This shift encourages the placement of the right frame of reference for understanding mass media and new media. Communication theory cannot only be seen in terms of communication but must be holistic and comprehensive.*

**Keywords:** *Relativity, Shifts, Thought, Subjective, Interpretive*

### Introduction

The debate about whether the mass media has the power to change the world seems to be a constant topic of conversation. The more intensive the discussion about the power of the mass media, the more interesting. Starting from institutions to the messages that are carried, including talking about online media, it continues to be debated. Mass media as an entity and mass media as a subsystem and the existence of mass media in social, political and economic systems is a study that continues to be discussed since the Acta diurna era until now.

Talking about the existence of mass media in social, political and economic systems will always place the mass media in a sine non qua non-condition for the various changes that have occurred. When the mass media is placed as an exogenous element of change, the media is considered a strong dominant factor. However, when placed as an intervening element, the mass media is believed to be a reinforcing force. Likewise, when the audience is considered a determinant of the existence of mass media, the media does not have the power to influence. On the other hand, online media, which continues to metamorphose into mass media and personal media with a worldwide network, is felt as media that has great power in changing people's views.

The inconsistency of research results on media effects raises several questions, How is the actual power of the mass media in making changes to its audience? How to use research findings and existing mass communication theories to analyze and predict future events?

## **Research Method**

This research uses the literature review method as a systematic, explicit and reproducible approach to identifying, evaluating and synthesizing research works and ideas that have been produced by researchers and practitioners.

Method of searching for articles in research journal databases and searching via the internet. The database searches used were the Scopus, Wos databases and the Sinta Accredited National Index 2014 to 2023. For article searches, the keywords used are also included in data collection, namely Medi and Relative Power.

This Literature Review was synthesized using a narrative method with group similar extracted data according to the results measured to answer the objectives of the research journal in accordance with the criteria The inclusions are then collected and a journal summary including the name is created researcher, year of publication of journal, country of research, research title, method and summary of results or findings. A summary of the research journal is included in in the table are sorted alphabetically and by year of publication of the journal and in accordance with format mentioned above. To further clarify the abstract and full text analysis Journals are read and scrutinized. A journal summary is then carried out analysis of the content contained in the research objectives and results/findings study.

## **Result And Discussion**

### **Media Relativity**

Analysis of effects always shows differences in strength. This fact is reminiscent of Einstein's theory of relativity. Albert Einstein, a German physicist, 1905 when introduced the theory of relativity. With the law of gravity-defying Newton's theory of motion, the core premise of the theory states that two observers moving relative to each other will get different times and intervals for the same event. These theoretical assumptions show that space and time are subjective. Observations of moving objects will produce different measurements depending on the space and time as constants set (Aziz, 2022).

The postulates developed in Einstein's special and general theories of relativity have changed the paradigm of observing an event. Relativity has always been a reference to believing in the truth of the observations made. The next implication triggers humans to continue to look for valid laws or arguments as a guide to predict future possibilities (Widiastuti et al., 2021).

Likewise, observations of the motion of the mass media will not change when the observer moves relatively in an inert frame of reference with the force of the mass media. On the other hand, observations of the power of the mass media will produce different results when the observer places different space and time intervals. However, changes in the movement of mass media power are more often understood by mass media observers as an inertial frame of reference so that rapid changes are not felt, especially by external media forces (Kustiawan et al., 2022).

In various waves of scientific thought shifts, communication studies have also been placed in different time and space intervals. So that in various waves of scientific revolutions and traditions of communication studies, there is no single theory and definite conception of the impact of mass communication. On the other hand, there are many theories, each of which has a different effect on mass communication.

Various impacts that are massive and specific, deterministic to special and personal impacts, are very dependent on the construction of the observer subject in the study of mass communication. There is no certainty about the impact of the mass media on various research facts, so it cannot be postulated as a guideline. However, various cross-traditional studies show that the existence of communication is always a factor that is always present in every study event (Saragih, 2019).

The existence of the mass communication media is a coordinate system that uniformly follows the rotation of the social system, so if the elements of the social system move uniformly by undergoing the motion of translators, then the mass media does not move as a great force. However, if the mass media is placed in other coordinates, it will experience a relative change depending on the placement of the mass media in space and time. Because of this, the various

socio-political systems that surround the circulation of the mass media always place the mass media as a constant in measuring social and political changes in society. The importance of the mass media as a fixed variable can be understood from the birth of the mass media until now. Various socio-political axioms even postulate that the mass media is the main cause of change (Sumardani et al., 2020).

### **The Mass Media in Behavioristic Thought**

The power of the mass media in the behavioristic tradition has questioned the very existence of the media as the evidence from mass media research findings changes. Since mass media studies have been carried out academically, there have been various shifts in findings about the power of the mass media (Sartika, 2020). Long before the "father of communication", Walter Lippman, communication studies have been carried out from various perspectives with different results, but a linear line can still be drawn.

The behaviourists who developed the concepts of proximity, reinforcement, and punishment have provided models to explain why humans act the way they do. The Behavioristic approach places the mass media as an external stimulus and performs a social learning function to shape behaviour (Sameroff, 2009). The assumption of this approach results in the notion that media content is a force capable of influencing to penetrate the centre of change in audience behaviour.

Several studies on the power of the mass media and voter behaviour show how powerful the mass media is. A study by Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Guadel in 1984 on the influence of the mass media on voter behaviour in presidential elections demonstrates this power. Likewise, if one looks at other studies, such as those conducted by Baldy in 1956, related to political rhetoric, Edelman in 1964 and 1977. Meanwhile, the power of the mass media in influencing public opinion can be noted in the research of HL. Berelson and Lazarsfeld, although some of these studies show the influence of the mass media gradually over time, it always show a linear direction about the power of the mass media in influencing its audiences.

Another behaviourist thought developed by Thorndike and Watson has given rise to the idea of the Agenda Setting hypothesis written by: "In several ways, newspapers are the main movement in determining regional agendas. Newspapers have a big hand in determining what most people will discuss, what most people think about facts, and what most people perceive as a way of dealing with problems" (Godfrey, 2006). Likewise, Kurt Lang and emphasized the influence of the powerful media.

Another noteworthy study showing the power of the media in influencing audiences is a longitudinal study by Becker, who saw that mass media largely constructed public opinion. These studies see that audiences are considered passive and external stimulus is the dominant factor in changing audience behaviour.

Let's say Harold D. Lasswell, in his doctoral dissertation "Propaganda Techniques in World War (1927)", believes that the mass media has a tremendous influence. Lasswell's theoretical thinking continues to be strengthened in subsequent studies. Even the belief in these theoretical assumptions has influenced and has become a research model to date, which has come to be known as the Lasswellian model.

Agenda-setting theory, a theory first put forward by McComb and Donald L Shaw in 1972. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, entitled *The Agenda Setting Function of Mass Media*, also shows its linearity. McComb argues, "If the media puts pressure on an event, then the media will influence the audience to consider that event important." The theory based on the results of a study on the 1968 United States Presidential election concluded that the more important a topic is in the mass media, the more important that topic is for the public.

The fact of research on various theoretical assumptions like this has given birth to various accusations in the media for pathological social events that occur in society. Many people find that public opinion always blames the mass media as the main factor when violence, rape or other incidents occur in society.

Behaviourism thinks that human behaviour is formed due to external factors in the process of learning, habits, and social penetration (Devanda et al., 2022). Thus, this understanding deliberately places humans as *Homo Mechanicus*. This position places the communicator as an authoritarian force in dictating his will to the communicant. The assumption of research results about the great power of the media is felt when the mass media is placed in a position outside the space and time interval in a different interest reference than the observer.

When the concept of *Homo Mechanicus* was finally confronted with the critical ability of humans to respond to the stimuli they encountered, the validity of classical behaviourism began to be doubted. Cognitive psychology, which developed the concept of *Homo sapiens*, views humans as active seekers of knowledge and acts in this world based on that knowledge. In this view, people are seen as "problem solvers" rather than objects of conditioning and manipulation. This thinking also influences the theoretical assumptions of communication in seeing the reality of communication so that mass media audiences who see it will actively seek knowledge to build a picture of the world in their heads and then create this world-building.

## **Media in Cognitive Thinking**

The assumption that humans are creatures that react passively to the environment was heavily invaded in the early 1970s. Humans are seen as creatures who always want to know their environment, and humans continue to think of dominating their environment. Thought about the logic that thoughts cause many influences on a person, that changes out there will be understood through one's mind, and that thinking is a fact that greatly determines human behaviour.

Rationalism adherents have given birth to cognitive consistency theory, which states that individuals will always try to optimize the meaning in their perceptions, feelings, cognitions and experiences in receiving each stimulus. They are Fritz Heider, Leon Festinger and Abelson. This theoretical thinking has placed humans always active in the search for cognitive consistency, and this conception is reinforced by The Person as Information Processor that humans will consciously solve problems. Humans are seen as products of rational information processing strategies, which direct the coding, storage, and retrieval of information.

The notion of cognitive consistency has given rise to several concepts related to media exposure. West and Turner see that consonance in cognitive conceptions is related to selective exposure as a method of reducing dissonance. Selective attention is a method of reducing dissonance by paying attention to information, Selective Interpretation by interpreting ambiguous information, and Selective by remembering information that is consistent with current beliefs and actions. Strengthening selective cognitive abilities, communicants can no longer be said to be objects that only see stimuli deterministically. The communicant is an active organism that is selective for all stimuli that hit him.

Several studies involving cognition in perceiving information from the process of mass communication show the complexity of psychological influences that will distinguish individual audience receptions. Craig and Muller (2007) and studies in Röhner and Schütz (2024) show different perceptions for each audience of different races. Similarly, the study of prejudice points to the cognitive complexities involved in constructing public perceptions of the same information.

The communicant's active and selective cognitive response to stimuli from media exposure contributed most to the emergence of the theory of the limited effect of the mass media (limited effect). This condition was strengthened by two limited-effect approaches. First, the perspective of Individual differences, which sees the power of the media, is limited by personal factors. The second model is the social category which sees the influence of the media as limited by the association of audience members and group affiliation. The relative influence of one's

exposure to the media is understood systematically and comprehensively in understanding the effect of mass communication on communicants. Systematically, the power of the media is very dependent on the communicant's need for the information presented by the media.

The assumption is that the communicant, in response to the information presented by the media, depends on these needs. According to psycho-cognitive thinking, the process of selectivity always begins with antecedent variables in the form of audience motives. The thoughts of Jay in the theory of Uses and Gratification, as well as in Katz, Blumler and Katz (1974), reinforce the existence of this antecedent. The assertion made by regarding the uses and gratification theory looks more at the activity of the communicant elements in exercising selectivity towards the content of political communication messages presented by the media. It was found that the concept of mass media is only a reinforcement of the will that has been owned by the audience before. Thus, the media will only be chosen by the audience if the information and mass media are in accordance with the needs of the audience.

Such a model can also be found in the limited influence model put forward by about what was conveyed by Joseph Klapper in *The Effect of Mass Communication* (1960). People are considered to have reasonable resistance to mass communication messages where rejection is caused by several factors, including supporting the opinions received from other people and various kinds of psychological filters that occur when people receive messages.

Research conducted by Hovland shows that films are effective in conveying messages but not effective in changing attitudes. Cooper and Jahoda's research on the cartoon "Mr Biggott" shows that selective perception will affect the effectiveness of the message. Another study from Lazarsfeld shows the same thing. The research assumptions about the power of the media have a limited effect, felt when the mass media is placed in a position in space and time intervals with the same inertia reference as the observer. The movement of the influence of the mass media is not realized because the observer is directly involved in the movement of media power through changes in the observer's cognitive changes. The mass media seems to have stopped moving because the mass media is inherent in relative motion in line with the cognitive movement of the observer.

Socio-psychological thinking about human responses shows that humans are not fully rational in responding to simulations. Existence prejudice which is later called Tversky (1974) Cognitive heuristics involved in the decision. The theory put forward by Elizabeth in concerning "Public Opinion and Spiral of Silence" Research explains the existence of mass media as a medium for the formation of public opinion by politicians. The result of this thesis research is that the audience basically knows which opinions are right and which are wrong.

People tend to pick up on dominant opinions about candidates, and they tend to voice their preferences when others think the same. So here, the mass media only drags the audience into a circle of silence.

In this study, Neuman argues for convergent communication, that what the mass media brings when there is overlapping opinion will create confirmation that makes the audience the epigon. In this study, it is also seen that there is a bet between the formation of public opinion and the theory of alienation which then shows that the subject's opinion is uprooted because the mass media gives rise to conditions of subject alienation.

This fact marks the 3rd scientific revolution, which began with the assumption that humans are Homo Ludens so that human existence is no longer as an object but as an agent. The understanding of communication science has undergone a fundamental revolution. And humans are not organisms that always rely on their every behaviour with their cognitive strength. Many factors outside of cognitive abilities determine human behaviour. Even humans, as social organisms, sometimes behave not based on cognitive rationality.

### **Mass Media in Humanistic Thought**

Doubt about rationality gave rise to humanistic thinking that emphasizes the existence of humans as themselves to become a new current. This thinking was heavily influenced by psychoanalysts developed by neo-Freudians, such as Jung, Adler, and Ferenczi. Likewise, the influence of phenomenology and existentialism often colours humanistic thought. As a pillar of humanism, Carl Rogers is heavily influenced by a phenomenological view that views humans as living beings in a "world of life", which is perceived and interpreted subjectively.

According to phenomenological thinking places the subject's real experience as the main data of reality so that the truth of reality depends on the dialogue between humans as interpreters and the objects they interpret (Fortner & Fackler, 2011).

In line with the thoughts developed by thinkers starting from human existence as a determining agent of reality. Sartre argues that human existence is not "entre" but "an entre", which means that humans do not only exist but must always develop their existence. Their existence must be continuously formed. Friedrich Nietzsche as a character of existentialism who helped develop the milestones of existentialism in understanding "I", which means living life without knowing oneself and experience is a deception.

It in the model of interpersonal communication, has been oriented towards the relationship between source and receiver in a two-way process, where the communicator and communicate change roles. This process continues and develops the symbols resulting from the



interpretation to be exchanged so as to create shared meaning. The interactional model was later redeveloped in transactional model, which saw that people construct the same meaning. They are influenced by their past experiences (Littlejohn & Foss, 2008).

In the context of mass communication, this humanistic assumption has restored the power of the mass media in influencing its environment. Convergence thinks that communication is not a linear process but a circular one that cannot be separated from the context in which events occur. The reality of the study has influenced the belief in the power of the media in influencing the environment. McLuhan's ecological media theory (1964) assumes that humans cannot be separated from the media environment. The media improve perception and organize experience so as to influence the creation of symbolic meanings. This assumption has replaced the media as a formidable force, which was previously seen as a means of reinforcement (Wasburn & Meyrowitz, 1988).

Research conducted by George Gerbner et al. at the Annenberg School of Communication at the University of Pennsylvania showed a significant effect with prevalence and resonance. High openness to viewers essentially monopolizes and includes other sources of information, ideas and awareness, which is then called cultivation. Likewise, the emergence of the spiral of silence theory from (Noelle-Neumann, 1974).

Especially when Marshall McLuhan said, "the media is the message", seeing that "the impact of media technology does not occur at the level of opinions and concepts, but changes the ratio of senses or perceptual patterns steadily and without resistance." Combined, raises another reality: electronic technology has caused the blurring of roles that were once real. So that the media, especially Audio Visual, has undergone a metamorphosis that was formerly known as a window of factual reality turned into a window of hyperreality constructed from its creators' creative imagination.

Several studies measuring media effects show moderate effects, shifting to assumptions of strong effects. The factual reality of media power has been widely released through several studies after the 1980s, such as the emergence of dependency theory by on the role of television in the social learning process, as well as several studies. The media frame after 1998 has given indications of significant changes in audiences.

## **Conclusion**

Understanding mass media theorizing along shifts in thinking through classical behavioristic, cognitive, to humanistic thinking shows that the power of the mass media is never constant towards changing audiences. Likewise, changes in communication technology have

also obscured the power of communication media in influencing audiences. The invention of the printing press, audio and audio-visual to network technology in every phase of technological development shows the ever-changing phenomenon of the effects of these communication media. However, in every scientific and technological revolution, there is a variable that is relatively stable in dealing with these changes, namely the subject of the observer.

The subject variables involved in the process of mass media movement will greatly determine the strength and weaknesses of the influence of the communication media. When the observer subject is in time, and the interval is set differently or outside the observed variable, namely the inertia frame of reference, the motion of the variable will be felt as a constant change. The mass media as an exogenous variable that is observed will be the dominant and deterministic variable. Vice versa, when the observer is in a non-inertia frame of reference, where the observer moves at the same time and interval as the variable being observed, the motion of the variable will be relative to the fictitious force of the observer to the motion of the mass media. as an exogenous variable. In such a position, the power of the mass media as a force will not be felt in its determination.

Changes in communication technology also contribute to the relativity of the power of the mass media as an exogenous variable. Changes in communication technology throughout history have always been followed by symptoms of culture shock in the audience. The early invention of radio media was radio drama at 20.00. "Columbia Broadcasting System and affiliated radio stations feature Orson Welles and the Mercury Theater in the radio play 'War of the Worlds' by HG Wells." causing panic to erupt in New Jersey. The presence of audiovisuals creates confusion in the audience's perception of soap opera characters on television. Especially when the advent of the internet, people stutter about the information that is milling around them. Audiences find it increasingly difficult to distinguish factual reality, imaginary reality, and symbolic reality. The occurrence of culture shock due to changes in communication technology resulted in changes in the power of communication media to influence changes in audiences.

The relativity of the power of communication media caused by a shift in knowledge in viewing social reality and changes in communication technology forces observers to understand the reality of communication. Observers are no longer able to see the reality of communication partially but must be more holistic and interactional with non-communicative forces. Likewise, the changes that occur in the audience must be seen from a subjective and structural perspective in an interactional way. Therefore, communication science must be more careful in using theory to predict future communication's reality. The development of communication science theorization must be more comprehensive in determining the dimensions of observation.

## Conflict Of Interest

The Author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

## Fundings

None.

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