

Medium Theory

Authored by
mohammad looti

November 19, 2022

RECOMMENDED CITATION

mohammad looti (2022). *Medium Theory*. PSYCHOLOGICAL SCALES. Retrieved from <https://scales.arabpsychology.com/?p=38481>

Medium theory is the name assigned to a variety of approaches used to examine how the means of expression of human communication impact the meaning(s) of human communication(s).

Joshua Meyrowitz originated the term in his 1985 book, *No Sense of Place*. Other scholars with work relevant to "medium theory" include Marshall McLuhan (1963, 1966, 1988) and Neil Postman (1985). Currently, medium theory occupies a marginal position within U.S. communication and media studies (Croteau & Hoynes, 2003:305). The majority of U.S. communication and media studies place their emphasis on the content of communication (e.g., sex and violence) not the medium of communications. In Canada and elsewhere, the theory continues to inform studies that assess large-scale social changes that follow the adoption of a new medium. German Media Theory operates along similar lines and draws some influence from McLuhan, though it occupies a more central location in German academia.

Joshua Meyrowitz (1985) uses the term 'medium theory' to refer to the body of literature that focuses on the technological aspects of media beyond their content. It aims to look beyond the content to the medium which reveals the key to its social impact (Croteau & Hoynes, 2003:305).

McLuhan's Message

Marshall McLuhan is the most widely read literary theorist and is best known for his claim "the medium is the message". McLuhan believed that we should observe not only the media itself but 'the ways in which each new medium disrupts tradition and reshapes social life' (Croteau & Hoynes 2003,307). McLuhan believed that the social impact of the media was that they became 'an extension of our senses, and alter our social world' (Croteau & Hoynes, 2003:307). In his book *The Gutenberg Galaxy* (1962) he argued that when new media technologies were introduced into society, the balance of our senses were reworked, highlighting some at the expense of others. For example, print intensified the visual and separated it from our other senses; in particular sound. "McLuhan even argued that print media helped create a sensory environment that produced Western capitalist societies - an environment that was bureaucratic and organized around mass production, an ideology of individualism, and a commitment to the nation-state as the fundamental social unit."