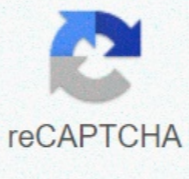




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Multi step flow theory of communication

mwengenmeir Towards the end of the Second World War, sociologist Paul Lazarsfeld added to the media effects research frame the social aspect of human agency. Rejecting the direct influence of the hypodermic needle or magic bullet theory, he introduced an intermediary between the sender of a message and the audience. This intermediary, dubbed an "opinion leader", was usually a person of influence with greater access to information. They would be seen as an authority able to filter, interpret and explain media messages. It is the credibility of the weatherman that persuades the individual to bring along an umbrella, rather than the factual data from the meteorological department themselves. And it would be the community or religious leader expounding on the messages released by politicians that actually hold sway over the masses. The two-step flow of information paved the way for research into multi-step models. Paletz,D.; Owen, D.,Cook, T. 21 century American Government and Politics, Chapter 7, adapted from Katz, E., Lazarsfeld, P. Personal influence (New York: The Free Press, 1995) Another great example to explain the influence of opinion leaders is the world of fashion. Magazines play an important role in showing the trends of the coming season by passing on information from big fashion brands to a wider audience. The reader's knowledge of next seasons fashions and trends is filtered by the magazines. While this describes a classic two-step flow of communication new technologies have changed the role of the media. Again in the example of fashion, the magazines provide the audience with a chance to describe their likes and needs through participation in the discussion. Information is flowing in many directions through different media channels and filtering through new opinion leaders, such as fashion bloggers. Clicking through the Australian fashion blog breakfastwithaudrey and its links to other influential bloggers demonstrates how connected they are. Such referencing of each other builds a strong network of opinion leaders for the reader audience to follow. Magazines and blogs: opinion leaders in today's fashion industry CC-BY-SA Interlinking might also occur between different brands, magazines and other bloggers which makes the process more complex and the flow of information more challenging to follow, especially to understand in terms of influence and power. A single user can be influenced by different sources or opinion leaders when following the trends of the season. The shaping of the user's opinion follows a more complex pattern and flow. Discussion Pick a point of interest (other than fashion) and create a flow chart of the various sources, pathways and intermediaries that provide or filter information to any interested party. Identify any direct, two-flow and multi-flow conduits of knowledge as well as any other interesting features. This article is an orphan, as no other articles link to it. Please introduce links to this page from related articles; try the Find link tool for suggestions. (October 2013) The multi-step flow theory assumes ideas flow from mass media to opinion leaders before being disseminated to a wider population. This theory was first introduced by sociologist Paul Lazarsfeld et al. in 1944 and elaborated by Elihu Katz and Lazarsfeld in 1955.[1] The multi-step flow theory offers a larger range of interaction between opinion leaders, information sources and audiences than the two-step model, which argues that information flows from mass media directly to influencers who then directly share it with their audience. This theory accounts more for the social nature of sharing information than the one-step or two-step flow theories.[2] The two-step theory was popular when it was first introduced, but when it became difficult to actually measure opinion leaders' influence on the public's behavior and their opinions, the multi-step theory was developed. The multi-step theory argues that opinion leaders are influenced by multiple sources.[3] The multi-step flow theory also states opinion leaders are affected more by "elite media" than run-of-the-mill, mass media. This is evident by political opinion leaders receiving their information from unconventional sources such as The Huffington Post, instead of Fox News or MSNBC. According to the multi-step flow theory, opinion leaders intervene between the "media's direct message and the audience's reaction to that message." Opinion leaders tend to have the great effect on those they are most similar to—based on personality, interests, demographics, or socio-economic factors. These leaders tend to influence others to change their attitudes and behaviors more quickly than conventional media because the audience is able to better identify or relate to an opinion leader than an article in a newspaper or a news program. This was confirmed in Lazarsfeld's 1940 study, The People's Choice, where Lazarsfeld studied Americans' opinions during presidential elections. He found that the mass media did not change people's behaviors much. However, personal attempts did achieve behavioral change.[4] Lasarsfeld did work on another study with Katz published in 1955. This study, "Personal Influence," proved that opinion leaders look to mass media in their general area of interest, and then share them with their communities.[5] This media influence theory shows that information dissemination is a social occurrence, which may explain why certain media campaigns do not alter audiences' attitudes. An important factor of the multi-step flow theory is how the social influence is modified. Information is affected by the social norms of each new community group that it enters. It is also shaped by conflicting views surrounding it. Examples in Society Businesses and politicians have harnessed the power of opinion leaders. An example of this phenomenon is how individuals and companies have turned to Twitter influencers and bloggers to increase hype around specific topics. During the 2008 Presidential Elections, Sean Combs became an opinion leader for voting with his "Vote or Die" campaign. Former Vice President, Al Gore also utilized the multi-step flow theory to gain support for his nonprofit, The Climate Project. Gore recruited individuals who were educated on environmental issues and had the ability to be influential in their community and amongst their friends and family.[6] He then trained his opinion leaders on the information he wanted them to disseminate. This ultimately enabled them to educate many Americans about The Climate Project and Gore's overall ideas about climate change. Criticisms One criticism of the multi-step, as well as the two-step and one-step models is that they assume traditional mass media is the only source of information when that isn't always true. [7] References ^ Straubhaar, Joseph; LaRose, Robert; Davenport, Lucinda (2013). Media Now: Understanding Media, Culture and Technology (8th ed.). Boston, Massachusetts: Cengage Learning. pp. 415-416. ISBN 978-1133311362. ^ Stansberry, Kathleen (2012). "One-step, two-step, or multi-step flow: The role of influencers in information processing and dissemination in online, interest-based publics". ProQuest Dissertations Publishing. ^ Foss, Karen; Stephen W., Littlejohn (September 17, 2009). Encyclopedia of Communication Theory. SAGE Publications, Inc. ^ Pooley, Jefferson (2006). "Fifteen Pages That Shook the Field: Personal Influence, Edward Shils, and the Remembered History of Mass Communication Research". Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science. 608: 233-250. doi:10.1177/0002716206292325. ^ ^ Stansberry, Kathleen (2012). "One-step, two-step, or multi-step flow: The role of influencers in information processing and dissemination in online, interest-based publics". ProQuest Dissertations Publishing. Retrieved from " Page 2 The two-step flow theory in communications is an idea introduced by Paul Lazarsfeld and his colleagues Bernard Berelson and Hazel Gaudet that focused on the flow of communication. The theory states that information from the media moves to the public in two distinctive ways. First, mass media flows to opinion leaders and then opinion leaders pass the information on to the public. Lazarsfeld and his colleagues completed the study in 1944 and the results were recorded in The People's Choice (Choi, 2014). The study was done during the 1944 presidential election. Today, the theory is just as prevalent as it was when it was formed in the 1940s. It can still be studied how we consume mass media and if opinion leaders have an influence on the way the public gains access to the media or how they formulate their own thoughts. The various channels of social media has had an impact on the two-step flow theory and has impacted the way the theory flows. Public relations campaigns still implement the theory while taking in the changes of the theory due to social media, and can be used to help increase a client's brand awareness. To effectively understand the two-step flow theory, it is important to understand the changes in the way media is consumed since Lazarsfeld began his research. The original hypothesis of the study was, "Ideas often flow from radio and print to the opinion leaders and from them to the less active sections of the population," (Bostian, 1970). The focus of the study was to determine people's decision making process. In the original study, mass media had less of an effect than it originally had been hypothesized (Bostian, 1970). The major source of influence appeared to be other people. These "opinion leaders" were those who tried to convince others to support their ideas and opinions. These influencers or opinion leaders were similar to the people they influenced, the major difference was the leaders exposure to mass media (Bostian, 1970). Thus, the two-step fold theory was formulated. The initial research did not actually measure a two-step flow. The two-step flow idea was a hypothesis drawn from the idea that opinion leaders did persuade individuals, and opinion leaders did have higher exposure to mass media information regarding the election (Bastian, 1970). This research measured general media exposure, and was criticized for being too simple. A major topic that was later studied was the opinion leader and the role of interpersonal relationships in communication situations (Bastian, 1970). Elihu Katz studied the theory at the Bureau of Applied Social Research at Columbia University. Katz became involved with Lazarsfeld to further develop the theory. In 1957, the theory was updated and the function of "interpersonal relations as communication networks and as sources of social pressure or support," (Bastian, 1970). With later studies conducted, the two-step flow became a multi-step flow. Information flows from mass media through several relays of opinion leaders who communicate with one another and with followers (Bastian 1970). Scholars found that, "opinion leaders were distributed in all occupational groups and at every socioeconomic level." (Choi, 2014). This is an incredibly important factor and realization in the adaptations to the two-step theory. The research showed that opinion leaders were experts in one specific field, not several. An expert in fashion or sports is not going to be an opinion leader in politics or a similar matter. In other words, opinion leaders tend to "personify certain values, to have more familiarity with certain issues, and to be positioned at the center of certain social networks," (Choi, 2014). The biggest change to the two-step flow theory is the introduction of social media into society. The initial information is still being distributed by opinion leaders. However, now that information is passed on by those people to other members of the public. This is easily done through Facebook and other social media platforms. For example, Facebook users can share information by sharing articles through external links (Choi, 2014). Social media gives a larger portion of the population the opportunity to become opinion leaders. This impacts the theory because everyone has a different social media following. People have all different amounts of followers and different kinds of interactions on social media. One person could share an article on Facebook that reaches 150 people and another could share that same article and it could reach over 1,000. No one individual uses social media in the same way. An issue that has come about because of the addition of social media is the amount of misinformation that can be spread, especially during an emergency situation. When an emergency crisis occurs, basically anyone who addresses it on a social media platform (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) becomes an opinion leader. However, not everything posted on social media turns out to be true, especially in these types of situations when not all the facts are known. According to an article written by Natalie Pang and Joshua Ng, "The dissemination of misinformation can mislead, create panic, and make it even harder to manage a public emergency," (Pang and Ng, 2016). In public relations, it is crucial to understand the two-step flow theory, especially when implementing the four step process. Understanding the target audience is extremely important for public relations professionals. Otherwise, they will have a hard time getting the audience to change their view or complete the action they are trying to get them to do. An example of a public relations campaign that used the two-step flow theory was Wendy's #NuggsforCarter campaign. The campaign was completed by Ketchum and won the PRSA 2018 Silver Anvil Award. In April 2017, Carter Wilkerson tweeted Wendy's asking how many retweets he would need to win free nuggets for a year. Wendy's responded back with the response of 18 million, and took the opportunity to take advantage of the effectiveness of user-generated content on social media. The twitter interaction produced huge results, including multiple Ellen appearances, more than 2.5 billion earned media impressions, and a 376 percent increase in online conversations mentioning Wendy's (Ketchum, 2018). In this example, Carter Wilkerson is the "opinion leader" and used his twitter platform as a way to communicate with the general population (other twitter users). Then when his followers retweeted his tweet, their followers were then also exposed to the tweet. This campaign was successful and effectively used the two-step flow theory including social media. Another campaign using the two-step flow theory was the Diva in a Hostel campaign by Hostelworld. The campaign created by Lucky Generals, created a video featuring Mariah Carey. The premise of the video was that if a hostel is good enough for a diva like Mariah Carey, it is good enough for an everyday tourist. Mariah Carey then promoted the video on her personal social media accounts, where the post generated more than 127,000 likes and comments. In this campaign, Mariah Carey is the opinion leader who is using her position and and own social media handles as a way to communicate the message to the general public. This campaign also featured a contest where users could enter to win a luxury hostel, flights, and 1,000 euros by "tagging a diva" in the comments, ("Tag a Diva", 2018). This exposed the video to even more people than just those who follow Mariah Carey. This demonstrates the more modern two-step flow theory with the incorporation of social media. The two-step flow theory was revolutionary for its time and is still relevant in public relations today. Understanding the audience and being able to reach them through the message is an extremely important part of being successful in public relations. While the theory has been adapted because of the introduction of social media, it can still be used in public relations campaigns and can be used to help create a strategic outreach method. Wendy's #NuggsForCarter campaign and Hostelworld's Diva in a Hostel campaign both successfully used the two-step flow theory in their campaigns. They both used opinion leaders on social media to spread the message of their campaigns. The two-step flow theory can be used throughout all different kinds of public relations and easily adaptable to include social media. what is two step flow theory of communication. 2 step flow theory of mass communication. what is two step flow theory

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