**Media dependency theory**

Sandra Ball-Rokeach and Melvin DeFleur proposed the “Dependency theory” in 1976. Media Dependency theory is one of the theories, first of its kind which regards audience as an active part in communication process. The dependency theory is expanded from the theory of [Uses and Gratification](https://www.communicationtheory.org/uses-and-gratification-theory/).

According to this theory, there is an internal link between media, audience and large social system. The audience learning from the real life is limited, so they can use media to get more information to fulfil their needs. An extensive use of media generates dependent relation in audience. Also Media can able to create dependence relationship with target audiences to achieve their goals by using its media power.

**The degree of dependence is directly proportional to**:

* **Individual**: The media have ability to satisfy the audience needs. An individual will become more dependent on media, if the medium satisfy his/her needs. Otherwise the media dependence will become less
* **Social Stability**: The audience reconsider their beliefs, practice and behaviours when strong social change, conflicts, riot or election which will force to re-evaluate and make new decisions. During this period media dependency is dramatically increased, because there is a strong need for information, support and advice
* **Active audience**: In this communication process, the active audience chooses the media dependence on their individual needs and other factors such as economic conditions, society and culture. If alternative source fulfil the audience needs, then it will reciprocally decrease the media dependence

**Process of Creating Dependence**:

* Media attracts individuals by offering the content which is able to fulfil the audience needs for understanding, entertainment and information
* There is much difference in the level of strength in Dependence relationship. Cognitive motivations encourage the individuals to maintain the level of attention and Affective motivation serves the individuals to enhance the level of satisfaction
* Both Cognitive and Affective motivation are intensifying the audience to higher level of involvement to enable the information process

**Example**:

In 2011, Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami hit Eastern Japan very badly. Due to this natural disaster the whole communication were blocked and others could not know the exact effects of tsunami in Eastern Japan. During this period, Peoples information needs were dramatically increased and they were all more depend on media than any other.

**Critics of Media Dependency Theory**:

* It describes the media role during social changes and crisis
* Theory is more flexible and descriptive
* Power of media dependency is not clearly described
* It’s difficult to prove scientifically or experimentally