



USES AND GRATIFICATIONS THEORY

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DEFINITION

- **Uses and Gratifications Theory** is a popular approach to understanding mass communication. The theory places more focus on the consumer, or audience, instead of the actual message itself by asking “what people do with media” rather than “what media does to people” (Katz, 1959) . It assumes that members of the audience are not passive but take an active role in interpreting and integrating media into their own lives. The theory also holds that audiences are responsible for choosing media to meet their needs. The approach suggests that people use the media to fulfil specific gratifications. This theory would then imply that the media compete against other information sources for viewers' gratification. (Katz, E., Blumler, J. G., & Gurevitch, M. 1974)



BASIC MODEL

It is suggested that the uses and gratifications theory has to fulfil one the following when we choose a form of media:

- Identify- being able to recognise the product or person in front of you, role models that reflect similar values to yours, aspiration to be someone else.
 - Educate - being able to acquire information, knowledge and understanding
 - Entertain – What you are consuming should give you enjoyment and also some form of 'escapism' enabling us to forget our worries temporarily.
 - Social Interaction – the ability for media products to produce a topic of conversation between other people, sparks debates (etc who is left on the x-factor)
- Uses and gratification theory can be seen in cases such as personal music selection. We select music not only to fit a particular mood but also in attempts to show empowerment or other socially conscience motives. There are many different types of music and we choose from them to fulfil a particular need.



APPLIED TO THE INTERNET

Over the past 10 years the internet has played a large part in the way the uses and gratifications theory is perceived

- Internet allows us to identify more products and people, due to search engines like Google we can search for anything, enables the audience to come closer to their role models. Music has benefited because of websites like YouTube enabling us to watch any music video we choose
- Wikipedia and other factual websites enables us to learn whenever we like, it may be argued that the internet has developed our education massively in the last 10 years.
- YouTube, iTunes, 4od etc are just a few of the numerous websites that give us an opportunity to be entertained whenever we please
- Facebook, blogs and other social websites enable us to socialise while online
- Internet enables us to have freedom and escape all our worries at a click of a button. Having access to websites that can give us happiness and a release from the daily grind.



CRITICISM

- Many people have criticized this theory as they believe the public has no control over the media and what it produces. It can also be said to be too kind to the media, as they are being 'let off the hook' and do not need to take responsibility for what they produce.
- The theory takes out the possibility that the media can have an unconscious influence over our lives and how we view the world. The idea that we simply use the media to satisfy a given need does not seem to fully recognize the power of the media in today's society. (I.e daytime TV is aimed for housewives)
- 'Media consumers have a free will to decide how they will use the media and how it will effect them.' This may be argued as media can be manipulative such as the news in its use of hegemony.
- However this theory may be more relevant in modern society as the internet and satellite TV such as Sky enables us to have much more freedom and control over what we consume in relation to the pre-internet and analogue TV.

