Full Length Research Paper

Information technology and media convergence: An entrepreneurial approach towards media matrix management

Datis Khajeheian1*, Hamidreza Esmaeilkhoo2 and Sara Yousefikhah3

1Department of Media Management, Faculty of Management, University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran.
2Department of Entrepreneurship, Faculty of Entrepreneurship, University of Tehran, Iran.
3Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran.

Accepted 28 October, 2011

This paper investigates the media as one of the factors that influences the attitudes and behaviors that constitute the consumption pattern of people. Articulating the major new trends in society resulting from technological advancements and some social changes, the paper presented the media as one of the agencies of change along with the family, friends, workgroups, school, religious institutions, and so on. The study focused on audience segmentation and explained that elderly people spend more time with the mass and traditional media like television, radio, and newspapers, while youths have more interests in new media. Based on this, a media matrix was suggested which included all the aforementioned media. Then the researchers considered the effects of these media and their approaches and introduced three major approaches: bullet, reinforcement, and agenda-setting function. Media bullet can create new consumption patterns or change old habits, while the reinforcement approach acts to maintain and strengthen the modified consumption pattern. Based on this fact, a two-phase framework was proposed. On one side of the framework is creation or preservation of consumption pattern, and on the other side is the new or traditional media. For each case, the usage of a medium was explained.

Key words: Information technology, traditional mass media, media matrix management, entrepreneurial approach.

INTRODUCTION

The generation we live in is characterized by consumption maturity. In this modern age, among the middle class, almost all households have the basic necessities of life (Nitto and Shiozaki, 2001). Most of the households today have passenger cars, household appliances, furniture, clothes, and most other consumer goods. This suggests that commercial product ownership has also reached a mature stage. The ownership ratios of commodities that make our lives more convenient or fit in with the changing new lifestyles have increased in recent years. Consumers are expected to continue to purchase products that satisfy them.

However, taking a deeper look, one may observe that we are faced with the phenomenon of diversity in media consumption (Khajeheian et al., 2009). In recent years, despite the potential crisis we face in very different areas, ranging from the area of natural resources like water and oil to the area of time and energy, unmanaged consumption has become a lifestyle and a normal fad all around the world. However, if we are wise enough to predict the consequences of the life of consumerism, we will think of and plan the ways of modifying this fault. This problem was the reason why in a country like Iran, the year 2009, which was named “The Year of Consumption Pattern Modification”, demanded scientific efforts toward the issue of consumerism. Of course, this phenomenon, like any other social one, needs to be studied in a comprehensive manner, and all its dimensions established.

*Corresponding author. E-mail: datiskh@ut.ac.ir. Tel: +98912 1908648. Fax: +9821 44252936.
Table 1. Three main approaches to media effect (Hindle and Klyver, 2007).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approach</th>
<th>Bullet theory</th>
<th>Reinforcement theory</th>
<th>Agenda-setting function theory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effect type</td>
<td>Change</td>
<td>Reinforcement</td>
<td>Shaping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>1920</td>
<td>1950</td>
<td>1970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main assumptions</td>
<td>The audience is passive. The audience is active.</td>
<td>The media has little power to alter or challenge beliefs, values, and ideas already held by its audience. Other social institutions like the family, peer group, schools, social class, and occupation have far more significant influence than the mass media.</td>
<td>The media has significant power to setup the agenda or terms of reference for any social, political, or economic decision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypothesis</td>
<td>The media can directly influence the behavior and thinking of its audience.</td>
<td>The media is only capable of reinforcing existing beliefs, values, and ideas.</td>
<td>The media cannot tell its audience 'what to think' but 'what to think about'.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The aim of this paper is to examine the exact dimension of the drivers of modification in people’s attitudes and behavior. From a narrower perspective, the study focuses on the role of media effect and media policy in consumption pattern.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The term “media effect” is rooted in Lasswell’s chain of communication model which is still one of the most famous attempts at theorizing media effect. According to this theory, any act of communication consists of five stages: WHO sends the message; WHAT has been said; WHICH channel has been used for sending message; WHO received the message; and WHAT effect the message has on the receiver.

"Under ideal conditions, any message that is communicated by a sender will reach its intended receiver(s) along an unbroken chain free from interference or misinterpretation. Lasswell described an effective relay of communication as one of total conductance between the sender and the receiver. However, we do not live in an ideal world because messages that are sent via mass media are particularly prone to being altered or misunderstood along their chains of communication, meaning modified conductance or no conductance between the sender and the receiver" (Laughey, 2007).

Approaches to media effect

Although there are many media theories, broadly, we can recognize three major approaches to the effect of media on different audience. Of course, many media theories have been propounded, and many of them can be helpful for our purpose. However, as this paper aimed at merely presenting a framework, the focus was only on the approaches and not the theories. The three approaches to media effect are summarized in Table 1 with regard to their history, main assumptions, hypotheses, main authors, and so forth.

Effect 1: Change

The first approach which is commonly called "the bullet theory" or "hypodermic needle theory" argues that the media is an institution that is very powerful and that is not only capable of shaping values and attitudes but also capable of changing them as it wants. In a precise phrase, the bullet theory states that messages delivered through the mass media persuade all people powerfully and directly (as if they were hit by a bullet or injected by a needle) without the people having any control over the manner in which they are affected (Turow, 2009). The main assumption of this approach is that the media can directly influence the behavior and thinking of an audience.

Effect 2: Reinforcement

In the reinforcement approach, the media is regarded as having little power to alter or change the beliefs, values, and ideas already held by an audience. The media, ordinarily, acts in ways that reinforce opinions, ideas, and values which the members of an audience already hold (Hindle and Klyver, 2007). In fact, this approach stresses on the existence of socializing agencies which have more
significant influence on audience opinions, behavior, and attitudes. The family, friends, peer group, religion, school, occupational group, and many other social networks with which a person relates in his/her lifetime have great influence on the individual (Alam and Khalifa, 2009). Based on this influence, a person chooses the media channel which is in favor of his/her opinions and beliefs. He/she selects a TV or radio channel or reads a newspaper and magazine which agrees with his/her opinions and affirms his/her points of view. Therefore, in this case, the media is a reinforcement agency, not a change agency.

**Effect 3: Shaping**

This approach is considered to be intermediate between “change” and “reinforcement”, and it argues that the media does not have the exaggerative power of the bullet theory; its influence, however, should not be underestimated like that of the reinforcement theory. Based on this point of view, the media can help to shape people's opinions, values, and attitudes by means of offering information and interpretation.

Cultivation theory is the concentration of the long-term effect of the media. The assumption here is that mass media effect is so strong that the audience gradually brings the messages into their lives. Cultivation theory involves three types of analysis:

1) **Institutional process analysis**, which is concerned with “all the major powers, roles, and relationships that have a systematic and generalized influence on how messages will be selected, formulated, and transmitted” (Gerber, 1973: 559 in Laughey, 2007: 20). The production and distribution of a televised sporting event can be analyzed in respect of how decisions are made and how power is exercised.

2) **Message system analysis**, which is basically an extensive content analysis of media productions such as children's television programs.

3) **Cultivation analysis** (Laughey, 2007: 20 to 21), which involves longitudinal surveys of people's opinions on certain subjects, with the key variable being the levels of media reception (for example television viewing). Variations in the conception of social reality (the outside world) held by heavy and light viewers are measured to obtain the "cultivation differential" (Laughey, 2007).

Gottfredson (1981) and Young et al. (1997) argued that parents or the family in its entirety have a high level of influence on the development of a person's attitude and behavior. However, the family is not the only factor because there are some other influences. The school is another source of learning about careers (Jonkoping University Business school, 2007). The society is also an influencing factor. However, among scholars, there are some disagreements about the degree of its influence.

Some underestimate it, while others stress on it. Watson and McMahon (2005) believed that the influence of society has mainly been inferred rather than researched. In students with relatively higher educational aspirations, it seems that work roles have more influence than family roles (Meinster and Rose, 2001).

**Conceptual framework**

Having mentioned the three effects of the media on its audience, it is necessary to present a conceptual framework of how these three can contribute to the modification and optimization of consumption pattern in society.

From Figure 2, it could be seen that each of these effects can be used to influence the consumption pattern of media audience. According to the change effect of the bullet approach, the benchmarks of an audience are used as role models. This is simple and straightforward as the media has a direct effect; every negative and positive role model influences the attitudes and behaviors of the audience. So by offering a particular pattern of consumption via mass communication media, consumption pattern changes (Napoli, 2003). Of course, this approach has many criticisms, in terms of the intensity of effect, but if considered more carefully, in some cases, the media still has direct effects on a specific audience. Also, in many remote geographic areas or among some specific age and psychological groups, a medium such as television plays a dominant role in the lives of people. Thus, the bullet approach is not pervasive; but in many cases, it still works.

The reinforcement approach creates some difficulties. It argues that the media has no direct effect because other networks like the family and friends play more important roles. According to this approach, the media re-affirms and strengthens a person's previous idea and attitudes (Laughey, 2007). For our framework, we can refer to the concept this approach presents as a maintaining force, not a change driver. This means that this approach is utilized for preserving suitable consumption patterns and encouraging good habits.

Shaping effect stresses on the offering of information on practices, benefits, and interests with respect to the suitable consumption pattern. In this case, the media informs the audience about the correct patterns and how this can be optimized in favor of their environmental and economic interests as well as for their convenience.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

For the purpose of this study, qualitative approach was selected. As a result of the fact that this is a theoretical study, the study was planned according to the framework shown in Figure 1. Firstly, advocates of the drivers of attitude and behavior in people argued that like social trends, there is access to new media and new communication technologies, as well as lifestyles, depicting media.
RESULTS

New social trends and their effect on media consumption

First, there is the need to give a credible definition of the concept “pattern of consumption”. The Oxford Dictionary defined pattern of consumption as “the combination of qualities, quantities, acts, and tendencies characterizing a community or human group’s use of resources for survival, comfort, and enjoyment”. At the core of this definition is the “use of resources”, which in a broader perspective shapes the pattern of consumption in a society. The study of this concept requires that attention be given to the many different dimensions that need to be mentioned from a suitable point of view. One of them is introducing the factors that influence the attitudes and behaviors of people. This can leads us to recognize the practical mechanism for benchmarking and practicing a pattern of consumption.

In recent decades, with technological advancements, new social trends have emerged. Media consumption is one of these trends, and it deserves attention because of its effect on our argument in this study. Media consumption is a determinant index which has effect on our media policy on consumption pattern.

Among the many different trends, Nitto and Shiozaki (2001) regarded the following trends as some of the...
recent changes in social circumstances which can be
singed out as having the greatest impact on social
attitudes:

1) Aging in society and the decrease in birth rate;
2) Access to the Internet and virtual networks;
3) The emergence of an information-intensive society;
4) Increasing internationalization in the standard of living;
and
5) The growing concentration of city dwellers and urban-
centric lifestyles.

The following is an exposition on the effect of each of the
trends on media consumption:

1) Aging phenomenon in recent times has become an
issue of interest. However, the important factor for us is
that the elderly pay more attention to the mass media
rather than new media. As the elderly pass their time on
the mass media like television, radio, and newspaper,
their media consumption pattern is shaped by these
media. So this social trend highlights the role of the mass
media in the patterns of consumption of aged people,
which, as we mentioned earlier has effect on other social
groups, especially their family.
2) The number of Internet users is rapidly increasing,
especially in urban areas. The highest rate of Internet
usage has been recorded among young people, such
that the time spent on Internet usage has increased more
than the time spent on watching television and reading
newspaper (Vollmer and Precourt, 2008; p 65). This
access to the Internet is not identical with the access to
the conventional mass media; however, the fact that the
Internet can be adapted for personal use presented
another view for media policy makers about its effect on
consumption pattern.
3) According to the preceding notion, the access to new
media can serve as a useful tool for reducing
unnecessary consumption in society by offering needed
information about intentions. The emergence of new
technologies, on its own, causes an optimization in
consumption but makes new consumption patterns
necessary.
4) One of the greatest impacts of information on society
is what is called globalization. Now we are faced with
global fads and international lifestyles which first
appeared in Hollywood and American film industry, and
now via social networks, spread among different people.
These lifestyles which are based on consumption and
fashion create new markets, but on the other hand,
advertise new consumption patterns which are profuse.
The media is not the only cause of this trend; other
drivers like increase in overseas travel are other diffusers
of such global lifestyles. As Nitto and Shizuzaki (2001)
argued, it is almost certain that such overseas experience
will affect lifestyles, consumption patterns, and basic
values, spurring attempts by an increasing number of
people to replicate overseas culture, concepts, and
consumption patterns.
5) The concentration of population in core cities is
continuous and is leading to rapid urbanization in local
communities. At the same time, residents in smaller
communities are now finding it possible to enjoy an easy
and comfortable lifestyle, thanks to a variety of services
provided by convenience stores and similar commercial
facilities. In summary, local residents can now enjoy most
of the benefits of urban lifestyle while living at some
distance from large cities. This phenomenon is expected
to continue in the future, bringing urban lifestyle and
consumption patterns to many people in rural areas.

Media matrix management for new society

The social trends presented so far showed the complexity
of formulating a media policy for the modification of
consumption in today’s fast changing society. Today,
media managers are not only faced with the problem of
managing the mass media but also that of managing a
media matrix which has very different and even
contradictory characteristics. Thus, we are now faced
with a new concept named media matrix management. In
this study, it was suggested that media policy makers use
a particular kind of the media for a particular group based
on the effect of the given media and the role it plays in
shaping and modifying consumption pattern (Khajeheian,
2011). For simplicity, we only selected the mass media
and the Internet as the major media that influence
consumption pattern, neglecting other media like mobile
telecommunication, video games, etc. Hence the media
policy included a plan for, at least, a two-phase program
which firstly, aimed at creating the optimal consumption
pattern and modifying old habits, and secondly,
strengthening and preserving this new and favored
consumption pattern. The first phase was managed
according to the bullet approach and partly by the
agenda-setting function, while the second phase was
theorized using the reinforcement approach and also
partly by the agenda-setting function approach.

Another dimension of this media policy is the
management of the differences between the mass media
and the new media. As mentioned before, the new media
is more popular among young people, while the mass
media usage is more common among middle-aged and
elderly people. Nevertheless, it is important to note that
the effect of each kind of media on one group of people
rubs off on the groups. For example, using internet
services like e-banking or e-governance is common
among the elderly, while watching the television is also a
normal behavior of young people. Figure 3 has illustrated
the approach.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The consumption pattern of any person is inspired by a
collection of effects taken from different sources. The family, friends, religious institutions, workgroups, social networks, and the media are the main sources of the factors that shape consumption attitude and behavior. In this paper, the researchers focused on the role of the media in shaping the pattern of consumption of its audience.

They found out that due to different media consumption, there is need for a matrix of the media which is used to influence the attitude and behavior of its audience. The elderly predominantly use forms of the mass media like television, radio, and newspaper, while youths tend to use the new media such as the Internet and network media a lot (Hashim et al., 2010). In addition, the researchers also found out that there is the need to take note of the short or long-term effects of the different kinds of media.

Based on the three major approaches of media effect, each medium can be used for a specific group in a particular case. Some should be used for creating the pattern in the target group, while others should be used for preserving the created pattern.

The researchers suggested that more research be carried out to find out other factors that affect the consumption attitudes and behaviors of people in society, apart from the media. These other factors notwithstanding, the influence of the media on consumption pattern is a very broad field on its own. So mixing the findings from Sociology and Psychology with the findings from the media can help us to explore more dimensions of the role of media effect in shaping consumption patterns. Also, a more detailed exploration of the effect of the new media on attitudes and behavior is suggested.

REFERENCES


