

Mediated Communication

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, you will be able to...

1. Explain social media and discuss how social media differ from mass media.
2. Define the terms *innovation*, *critical mass*, *rate of adoption*, and *reciprocal interdependence*.
3. Describe the innovation decision process.
4. Articulate which qualities of an innovation will make it more likely to be adopted.
5. Differentiate the characteristics associated with the five categories of adopters.
6. Identify the properties of networks.
7. Explain the properties of network links.
8. Articulate the characteristics of network roles.
9. Explain how social network analysis explains the production and reproduction of memes.
10. Describe the characteristics associated with media richness.
11. Apply the concept of ambiguity to match a communication message to the appropriate communication channel.
12. Identify the gratifications sought by using particular media forms.
13. Summarize major theoretical approaches to mediated communication.
14. Compare and contrast major theoretical approaches to mediated communication.

Is your LinkedIn profile up to date? How often do you tweet? Do you know what time it is if you don't have your smartphone? Are you more likely to watch TV shows and movies on a television set or on a tablet? There are a bewildering array of communication technologies available to us, with new platforms being launched nearly every month and old platforms

slowly becoming obsolete (AOL anyone?). With so many communication channels available to us, being a competent communicator requires selecting the appropriate method to share a particular message. This chapter focuses on **mediated communication** channels—how mediated channels become popular as well as how and why we use them.

WHAT IS SOCIAL MEDIA?

When we use the term **media**, we typically are referring to large organizations responsible for producing the content we see on television and in the movies; the recordings we listen to on the radio and on our MP3 players; and the books and periodicals we read in print, on a Kindle, or on the web. By contrast, the term *social media* refers to “digital technologies that allow people to connect, interact, produce and share content” (Lewis, 2010, p. 2). These media forms vary in nature and purpose and include blogs, microblogging sites like Twitter, wikis, social networking websites like Facebook and LinkedIn, podcasting, video and photo sharing sites such as YouTube and Instagram, and discussion forums. Social media are considered distinct from traditional media because social media are based on user-generated content (versus “institutional content”) and because the costs of creating and disseminating the content are either free or relatively inexpensive.

The original focus of social media was on its ability to assist individuals with achieving their personal goals (Vorvoreanu, 2009). However, more and more frequently people are pushing for the use of social media to achieve professional, rather than personal, goals. This is particularly evident in the realm of public relations; PR scholars such as Avery, Lariscy, and Sweetser (2010) claim “virtually no organization can afford to neglect its social media presence” (pp. 198–199). In part this is because social media allow for one group or individual to easily persuade other groups or individuals (Blossom, 2009). Yet there is little evidence social media are different from any other channel available to communicators.

A critical understanding of the role of social media in our lives requires us to understand the nature of mediated forms of communication. The first theory we discuss, diffusion of innovations, seeks to explain how and why particular new communication technologies develop and grow. Next, we explain social network theory, which helps to understand the web of connections we develop through social media. Third, we describe media richness theory, which focuses on the choices a communicator must make about the proper channel for disseminating particular messages. Finally, we discuss uses and gratifications theory, which centers on the choices audience members make in order to fulfill their needs.

DIFFUSION OF INNOVATIONS

Why do we all remember VHS tapes for our VCRs, but we have little memory of Betamax? Other than public displays of affection, what else does PDA stand for, and why don't we use them anymore (answer: personal digital assistant)? Is Facebook dead now that your grandmother has a page? Rogers' (2003) diffusion of innovations theory provides a framework for understanding why some inventions become popular and others never really catch on.

An **innovation** is an idea, practice, or object perceived as new. Although we often think of innovations in terms of technology, Rogers was careful to make sure innovations are understood in the broadest sense possible. His own academic background was in agriculture, and his earliest research focused on farmers' use of a new weed spray. Since the development of his model in the early 1960s, diffusion of innovations has been used to understand everything from the spread of particular medical technologies to the adoption of educational practices. Moreover, Rogers was clear in his belief that what is considered innovative varies by place and community. For example, video chatting through Skype or some other service might not be new to you, but for some groups of people and in some parts of the world, seeing someone live while you talk with him or her might seem very futuristic indeed.

Innovation Decision Process

Rogers (2003) identified six stages through which a person, group, or organization progresses in deciding whether to adopt an innovation. The first stage is known as the knowledge stage; here, the potential adopter becomes aware of the innovation and its potential uses. Second, the persuasion stage occurs when the potential adopter goes beyond mere awareness of the innovation and actively seeks information about it. She might do an Internet search, with careful attention to product reviews, or she might talk to people in her social network to assess their perspective of the innovation. The third stage is the decision stage, during which the potential adopter weighs the benefits and costs of the innovation and chooses either to adopt the innovation or to reject it.

Of course, if the innovation is rejected the process ends here, but if the innovation is adopted the process continues with the fourth stage. The implementation stage occurs when the adopter puts the innovation into use. Not surprisingly, this stage might include a lot of uncertainty and frustration. The adopter has to figure out how the innovation works in general, which specific features are useful and which are less than useful for his or her specific needs, and how to incorporate the innovation into an everyday routine. One important part of implementation is called reinvention, wherein the adopter “repurposes” the innovation. For example, voice mail was developed so callers could leave a message if the phone was not answered. However, many people call themselves and leave a message to create an audio reminder for themselves.

The fifth stage is the confirmation stage. During this stage the adopter reconsiders his or her adoption of the technology. Is it worth it? Does it do what the person had hoped it would do? If the answer is yes, the person has finally entered the adoption stage. If not, the person discontinues his or her use of the innovation. Discontinuance can take two forms. **Replacement discontinuance** occurs when an innovation is replaced with either a new version or an older version. For example, many people feel Microsoft Windows 8 is too big of a departure from the typical operating system they feel comfortable with, so they are using an older operating system, even on new machines. The second type of discontinuance is **disenchantment rejection**, or abandonment, which is when the adopter simply stops using the innovation. For example, after the iPhone was introduced, many people abandoned their PalmPilots and other PDAs.

Why Some Innovations and Not Others?

Of course, not every innovation succeeds. Rogers (2003) was concerned not only with the process of adopting an innovation but also with the essential question of why some innovations are adopted and others are not. He identified five qualities that influence the rate and likelihood of an innovation being adopted. The first is **relative advantage**. Simply put, the innovation has to be better at achieving the goals for performance than other, competing technologies. There are a number of ways an innovation might be considered “better.” It might be faster, cheaper, easier to use, more effective, or just be “cooler” than other options. For example, for years Apple products were perceived as having an “it” factor that made them cooler than other brands. That image has started to fade recently (see Chen, 2013).

The second factor that influences the adoption of an innovation is **compatibility**. The extent to which an innovation is consistent with a potential adopter’s values, lifestyle, or experience makes it a more attractive option. Consider, for example, a new mother who is philosophically opposed to genetically modified food. If she finds out a new product is made from grain grown using genetically engineered seeds, she is not going to purchase that product. On a more basic level, you are not going to purchase software that is only compatible with a Macintosh if you already own a PC.

Third, potential adopters consider **complexity**, which refers to the level of difficulty in understanding or using the innovation. For example, if the learning curve for a new technology is perceived as too steep, that technology will not be used, regardless of the benefits it might provide. On the other hand, an individual doesn’t have to actually understand how television broadcasts work if the television set itself is easy to use . . . if you can plug it in, turn it on, and figure out how to change channels without reading a lengthy technical manual, the innovation is likely to be adopted.

Trialability is the next factor that influences the rate and likelihood of adoption. The extent to which potential adopters can “try” the innovation before making a decision can expedite the decision-making process. Whether test-driving a new car or a computer, trying on a new style of clothing, getting a sample pack of a potential new prescription, or sitting in on a graduate class before applying to the school, people are much more likely to adopt an innovation if they have had the opportunity to try it out before being required to purchase it.

The last factor is **observability**. People are much more likely to adopt an innovation if they actually see the innovation in public or if the results of the innovation are visible. If everyone else seems to be using a new technology it becomes much more appealing to those who are not (“Seriously, Mom, I am the only person at school without one.”). Similarly, if the innovation’s impact is obvious (“Wow! You look great! What new fitness routine are you using?”), people will be more inclined to adopt it.

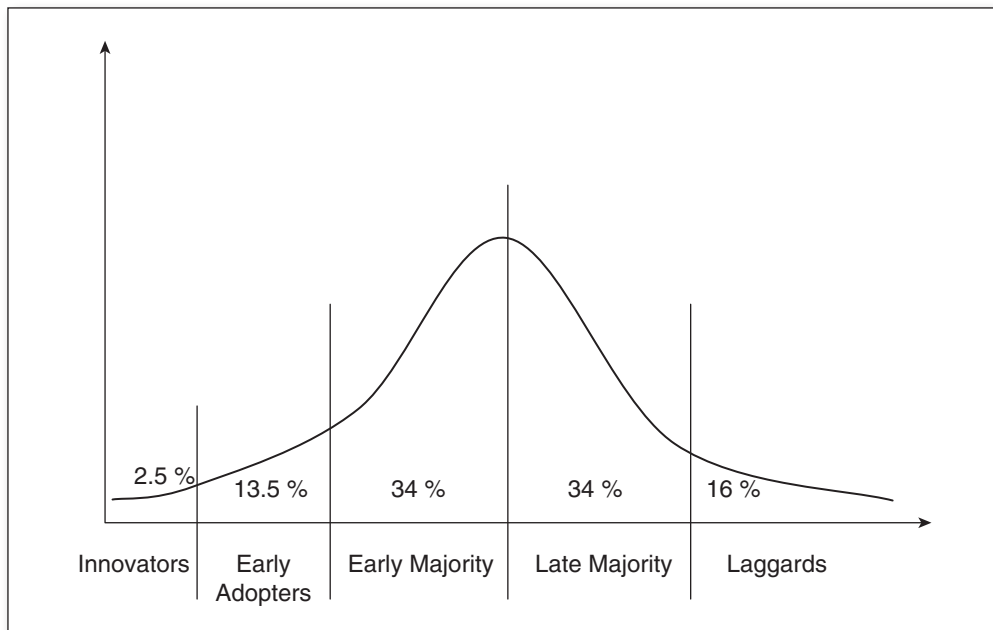
Time and Diffusion

You have probably heard the old question “If a tree falls in the woods and no one hears it, does it make a sound?” A similar question can be asked regarding the diffusion of innovations. That is, if an innovation is available and no one adopts it, can it have an impact? The answer is no. Even if an innovation exhibits the five qualities just described, ultimately people determine the success or failure of its adoption. The third major contribution diffusion of innovations makes to our understanding of how communication media develop

and grow is through a focus on critical mass. **Critical mass** refers to the notion that if a sufficient number of people adopt the innovation, additional adoption of the innovation becomes self-sustaining, assuring future growth (Markus, 1987).

At issue is the **rate of adoption**, or the relative speed with which an individual (or group or organization) adopts the innovation. Rogers (2003) classified people into five categories, from those most likely to embrace the innovation rapidly to those who may never adopt the innovation. Figure 10.1 displays categories of people in the innovation adoption process. Innovators are the first group of any social system to adopt an innovation. They tend to be younger, high in social class, and categorized as risk takers socially connected with other innovators, even if they live in different regions of the world. The next group of people are early adopters. Unlike innovators, early adopters tend to be connected with others more locally. However, they tend to be opinion leaders who have a greater influence on other members of the social system. As such, they play a central role in the diffusion of innovations, since their opinions are respected and they assist others with their uncertainty about the innovation. The early majority is the next group of individuals. Although they do not serve as role models or opinion leaders, they carefully deliberate over the adoption of the innovation, and it is their decision to adopt that allows the diffusion of the innovation to reach a critical mass. The fourth group is called the late majority. These individuals tend only to adopt an innovation because of peer pressure; they tend to be skeptical of innovations and unwilling to take risks. Finally, the laggards rarely, if ever, adopt the innovation. Typically older and more traditional in beliefs, laggards are not only mistrustful of new ideas, products, or services, they also are leery of innovators and early adopters.

Figure 10.1 The Types of People Who Adopt Innovations



Returning to the notion of critical mass, the process whereby people adopt the use of interactive media is different from the adoption of other types of innovations (Markus, 1987). Interactive media such as the telephone, text messaging, or Facebook entail **reciprocal interdependence**; that is, even if innovators or early adopters have the technology, they need others to adopt the technology in order to receive the maximum benefits. Think about it: What good is having the ability to text on your phone if other people cannot receive your texts? Accordingly, early adopters must actively persuade others to adopt the technology, resulting in a steep increase in the adoption rate. Look at Figure 10.1 again. The first half of the bell curve demonstrates that the rate of adoption is not a straight line but more like a slightly flattened “S” curve.

Diffusion of innovations theory depicts the process whereby new media technologies are adopted in society. The theory details the decision-making process that individuals use in the adoption process and qualities that make a given innovation more likely to be adopted. Finally, the theory classifies people in terms of their likeliness to adopt an innovation, with early adopters playing an important role in persuading others to adopt the innovation.

SOCIAL NETWORK ANALYSIS

In Chapter 9 we introduced you to systems perspectives, which focus on how groups of people interrelate to form a whole. Systems perspectives are used to understand many contexts for communication, although they are used most often to understand organizational communication. Likewise, network analysis has historically been associated with an organizational context, but the growth of social media has led a number of scholars to implement network analysis to understand the relationship patterns of social media users.

In the 1980s Faberge Organics shampoo had a popular commercial featuring Heather Locklear, who was so excited about using the shampoo that she told two friends about it . . . and they told two friends . . . and so on and so on until the screen was filled with people who had heard about the shampoo from one of their friends. In 2012 the same concept was used by the AIDS Council, who developed a public service announcement for Foursquare that focused on safe sex: When you have sex with someone, you are not only having sex with them, you are having sex with everyone they have ever had sex with . . . and so on (because Foursquare identifies “where you have been,” the commercial talked about how many other people had “been there already”). Both of these ads feature one of the central concepts of social network analysis: All of us are connected to others, who are connected to others, leading us to “six degrees of separation” from all others around the world (although apparently the popularity of Facebook has now led us to four degrees of separation; see Barnett, 2011).

According to Monge and Contractor (2001), “Communication networks are the patterns of contact between communication partners that are created by transmitting and exchanging messages through time and space” (p. 440). Network analysis involves mapping out those patterns, with a special focus on the types of links between members, the roles members play in the network, the mode or channel by which messages are exchanged, and the content of the messages. At its most basic level, consider your own Facebook network. How

many friends do you have? How many of your own friends are also friends with other people on your friends list? How often do you actually message or respond to each of the people on your friends list? Do you primarily share personal information, professional information, or both? How many people do you also talk with using other channels of communication? Social network analysis allows you to develop a picture of how individuals, groups, and organizations are connected with each other to better understand structures of influence and the spread of ideas.

Network Properties

Four attributes of networks are considered in a social network analysis. The first is the **network mode**. Put simply, the network mode involves the channel or channels used by network members. Consider people who work for the same organization but in two different locations; they may have phone and e-mail contact but may never have actually met each other face-to-face. An understanding of which channels are used in the network is important, as each channel has strengths and weaknesses (which we talk about when we discuss media richness theory). The second is the **content** of messages. Gilpin (2010), for example, did a network analysis of the social media content posted by the supermarket chain Whole Foods. She found the content could be classified as focusing either on the core identity of the company or on the well-being of its customers. The third network property is **density**, or the number of interconnections among network members. Highly dense networks involve many connections between network members, such as those between a group of college friends, whereas a less dense network is one of few connections between members. Consider, for example, the informal or social connections between co-workers. Although there may be significant connections among co-workers when considering task-related communication, the co-workers might not have many social connections, making the social network a low-density network. Believe it or not, a lack of a social network among co-workers has been found to negatively predict productivity, so understanding network density can be very important (Litterst & Eyo, 1982). The final consideration is the **level of analysis**. When conducting a social network analysis, is the focus on the individuals in the network, particular groups of organizational members (e.g., departments in an organization or cliques in a friendship circle), or connections among and between organizations?

Properties of Network Links

In addition to considerations of the properties of the network itself, social network analysis also requires uncovering the nature of the connections between network members (Monge & Contractor, 2001). Seven potential links can be assessed: **strength** (the frequency, intimacy, or intensity of the connection), **direction** (the extent to which the link is reciprocal between network members), **symmetry** (whether the two people connected share the same type of relationship with each other), **frequency** (how often the two people communicate with each other), **stability** (the existence of the link over time), **mediation** (whether the connections between network members exist because of a common link), and **multiplexity** (the extent to which two network members are linked together by more than one

relationship or type of communication). To illustrate, consider the simple network depicted in Figure 10.2. You can see that network members A, B, C, D, and E seem to have a dense network likely to also be strong, direct, symmetrical, frequent, stable, and demonstrate multiplexity—they are perhaps people who both work together and socialize with each other. Now consider the relationship between B and E; despite being in the same dense network, they are connected only because A, C, and D serve as mediators. One can easily imagine that at one time B and E might have been directly connected, but their link faded over time. Finally, consider F's relationship with K. The arrow goes in only one direction, perhaps indicating that K's work requires input from F, but F does not require feedback from K to do her job.

Figure 10.2 Exemplar Social Network Graph

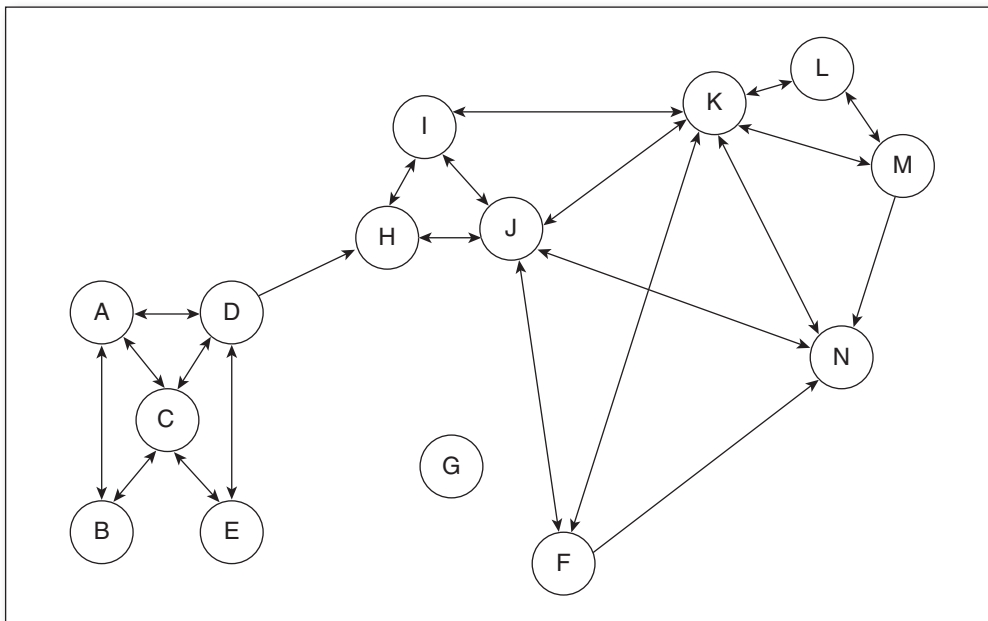


Figure 10.2 includes only a single arrow between network members, but a thorough network analysis might involve multiple types of arrows to demonstrate the different modes of communication between network members. For example, you might have a black arrow to depict face-to-face communication, a blue arrow to depict e-mail, a red arrow to depict Facebook, a green arrow to depict the phone, and so forth. In addition, you might have an unbroken arrow to illuminate links for professional communication and a dashed arrow to show links for social communication. A complete social network analysis is very complex, sometimes requiring 3-D imagery. We encourage you to search online to view images of social network analyses to see the intricacy such work requires.

Network Roles

Social network analysis also requires a consideration of the roles each member plays in the network. Network members are considered **nodes**, since networks are not always comprised of individuals. Five types of roles have been uncovered (Monge & Contractor, 2001). An **isolate** is a node that belongs in a network but has no links. In Figure 10.2, G is an isolate: He or she might work for an organization but does not communicate with others in the organization. Although this sounds improbable, it could be that G's role is a boundary spanner who connects with members of other organizations. A **gatekeeper** is a node that controls the flow of information between one part of the network and another. Consider D in Figure 10.2; he or she is the sole link between members on the left-hand side of the network and those on the right-hand side. A **bridge** is a member of more than one group. J, for example, is a part of the H-I-J group and a member of the J-K-N-F group. A **liaison** has connections with two or more groups that would otherwise not be linked. However, liaisons are not nodes of either of those groups. H, for example, is a liaison for the A-B-C-D-E network and the J-K-N-F network. Finally, a **star** is a node that is highly central to the network. Consider K in Figure 10.2. She or he has six network links, more than anyone else in the network.

In the case of a single organization and talking about individuals, the roles just described make sense, as it is easy to consider individuals playing each role. However, in more sophisticated and extensive social network analyses, we need to recognize that the nodes might be entire organizations. In this case, we need to also consider **hubs**, which are highly dense networks embedded within a larger network. To simplify this notion, consider the Internet as a network. A few heavily used websites, such as Google, Facebook, and YouTube would be considered hubs, whereas very specialized websites might be closer to isolates—they might be password protected and not hyperlinked from any other website.

Implications for Understanding Social Media

Recall that the purpose of social media theory is to uncover the patterns of connections within a system. More than just identifying “who talks to whom,” a social network analysis can allow us to uncover large-scale trends in ideas and influences. For example, Kelly (2008) has mapped the blogosphere, uncovering the connections between news (and faux news) sites. Sedereviciute and Valentini (2011) have developed a method for PR practitioners to uncover organizational stakeholders through mapping social media content. Similarly, De Nooy and Kleinnijenhuis (2013) have developed a mechanism to study patterns of support and attack in the political communication arena.

The concepts described earlier (network properties, network links, and network roles) are most often used to investigate the structure of a social network. However, scholars also use social network analysis to investigate **semantic networks**, which particularly focus on the content of the communications (Gilpin, 2010). In this way, researchers can understand the spread of **memes**—ideas, behaviors, or practices that spread from one person to another in a network (Dawkins, 1989). Consider the spread of the Diet Coke and Mentos experiment, the cinnamon challenge, and the “Keep Calm and Carry On” memes in recent years. Social media not only connect each of us in six (or four!) degrees of separation, they also allow for the production and reproduction of significant social trends.

MEDIA RICHNESS THEORY

The decline and ultimate end of Ashton Kutcher and Demi Moore's marriage was on public display through their tweets. And, according to an article in *Vogue*, Katy Perry claimed Russell Brand texted her that he wanted a divorce. In the fictional world, Berger broke up with Carrie using a sticky note on the TV show *Sex and the City*. Most of us have the empathy to realize these might not have been the best media choices to sever a relationship. However, in the professional world sometimes the choice is less obvious. For example, is it okay to conduct layoffs via e-mail? Media richness theory, developed by Daft and Lengel (1984), recognizes that as new communication technologies develop, the decision about the best way to send a message becomes more complex.

What Is a Rich Medium?

The central argument of media richness theory is that communication professionals should match the communication channel to the content of the information (Lengel & Daft, 1988). **Media richness** refers to the information-carrying capacity of the medium. One determines the richness of the media by assessing four characteristics: speed of feedback (related to synchronous or asynchronous capacities), ability to personalize the message, availability of multiple cues, and language variety (Daft & Lengel, 1986). Face-to-face interaction is considered the most "rich" medium. Imagine an organizational training session. A face-to-face trainer can quickly adjust the session if he or she sees that employees do not understand a particular process ("Okay, let me try another way to explain how this new software program is different from the old program"). The trainer can recognize individuals in the group and craft messages to those individuals ("José, your department won't need to be concerned about this next application"). The trainer can use words, facial expressions, gestures, pauses, eye contact, and a host of other possible nonverbal cues in the session. Finally, the trainer can change the vocabulary or jargon usage depending on with whom he or she is talking. Contrast this with a much less rich medium: a DVD. Imagine a group of employees sitting in a room watching a recorded training session. If the employees do not understand something on the recording, little can be done; the DVD cannot be changed in the moment to adapt to audience confusion. Moreover, given production expenses, the DVD likely would be produced for all employees and wouldn't be tailored to particular groups or individuals or to their backgrounds or experiences. As such, it would be considered a "lean" medium. Table 10.1 identifies media from most to least rich based on these characteristics.

How Ambiguous Is the Message?

Of course, the main idea of the theory is that the medium should match the message. As such, the second major consideration is the nature of the message that needs to be sent. Daft and Lengel (1984, 1986) were influenced by the work of Karl Weick (see Chapter 9), so they focused on the notion of ambiguity. **Ambiguity** refers to the possibility of multiple interpretations. If the goal of communication is understanding (as Daft and Lengel

Table 10.1 Media Richness

Richer Media	Face-to-face
	Video conferencing, social networking, interactive websites
	Telephone
	E-mail
	Texting, instant messaging, microblogs
	Video or audio recordings
	Memos, letters
Leaner Media	Bulk mail, brochures, pamphlets, flyers

assumed), then ambiguous messages are those that run a greater risk of being misunderstood. Imagine you are an employee of an organization facing financial crisis. The senior management team of your organization has decided that, rather than layoffs, they will reduce employee benefits. You might have many questions about such a decision. Will this affect all employees? Is it a permanent decision, or will benefits be returned once the crisis is over? Will the elimination of these benefits really solve the financial problems, or might there still be layoffs sometime in the future? Can individuals choose which benefits are reduced? After all, health care might be a major concern to some employees and retirement benefits might be of greater concern to others. In short, this sort of situation is highly ambiguous. Not surprisingly, according to media richness theory, the more ambiguous the message, the richer the medium should be in communicating that message. In the situation just described, media richness theory would suggest using a town hall meeting or even small group meetings to explain the decision and to answer questions; a memo would not be an appropriate choice. On the other hand, using e-mail or a memo might be a perfectly suitable method for announcing the meeting itself, as the time and date of a meeting is not particularly ambiguous.

As asserted earlier, communication effectiveness is assumed to occur because of a match between the ambiguity of the message and the richness of the media. A highly ambiguous message communicated using a lean media form is likely to exacerbate uncertainty and create misunderstanding. Conversely, using a very rich medium to communicate fairly straightforward information is a form of overkill, potentially wasting time and money and possibly contributing to a sense of information overload. Can you imagine having a personal conversation about every bit of information you deal with on an everyday basis? It would be exhausting! As it is, you likely delete some e-mails without reading them because of information overload.

Some scholars have challenged media richness theory because the theory implies there is an objective richness to particular media that does not vary based on individual or

organizational variations. After all, we all know people who pick up the phone for even the simplest of questions, whereas others prefer e-mail exchanges. Similarly, organizations have differing cultures related to the preferred ways of communication. However, scholars have found that above and beyond such variations, there are objective differences in the ability of various communication channels to communicate particular types of messages (Trevino, Lengel, & Daft, 1987). As such, a skilled communicator needs to consciously consider media richness in the communication process.

USES AND GRATIFICATIONS THEORY

Uses and gratifications theory (UGT) represents a somewhat different means by which to analyze and explain the use of mediated communication. Rather than look at the media choices made by a message sender, UGT focuses on *why* a receiver uses particular media forms. Specifically, UGT maintains that because humans have options and free will, individuals will make specific decisions about which media to use and when to use them (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973). The choices and decisions you make are based on personal needs and values you wish to fulfill. Thus, you can select among various media for **gratification** of your individual needs.

Three primary assumptions drive our discussion of UGT. First, Katz et al. (1973) believed audience members actively use various media to fulfill certain needs or goals. Thus, media usage isn't passive, involuntary, or coerced. Instead, media technologies represent numerous options available to fulfill a person's social or psychological needs and values. Indeed, the increase in communication technologies available to people in the 21st century only boosts the viability of the notion of choice (Ruggiero, 2000). In this way, UGT suggests media use is active and goal driven based on individuals' needs.

Second, **mass communication** isn't something that happens to you; nor do the media do anything to you. There is no magic spell cast by media owners to coax you into viewing their programming. Instead, UGT maintains a person must identify his or her need and make a media choice (Katz et al., 1973). Individuals *choose* to surf the Internet, tweet, or put together a Pinterest board. In this regard, the term *media effects* is misleading. Katz et al. did not believe in the simple "straight-line effect" whereby a given medium causes people to think or behave differently. According to Katz et al., audience members choose a medium and allow themselves to be swayed, changed, and influenced—or not. You choose to view a YouTube video and watch; YouTube doesn't turn itself on and watch you.

Third, media outlets compete with other available means of satisfying personal needs (Katz et al., 1973). Stated differently, there are many ways to fulfill individual needs. If you feel frazzled after a hectic day at work, you may fulfill your need to relax and unwind by watching a sitcom (mass media) or escaping to the movies. Alternatively, you may meet your needs by taking a run in the park, practicing yoga, or soaking in a warm bath with a glass of wine. Thus, the mass media represent only a handful of alternatives available to you. Next, we present reasons individuals use the media and how media exposure can gratify various social and psychological needs.

Why Do We Watch What We Watch?

McQuail (1987) identified four broad classes of motivations that include several subcategories. For example, we can use the media for entertainment purposes. Under the umbrella term of *entertainment* are some specific subtypes; individuals can relax, escape from daily problems, feel some form of excitement or emotional catharsis, pass time, or simply enjoy an artistic pleasure. You may relax by listening to satellite radio while on your commute home from a long day at the office. You may have watched *The Ring* to experience an eerie thrill or *Casablanca* to experience a romantic heartbreak. Your children may watch *Dora the Explorer* on DVD while riding in the backseat of your car to prevent boredom. Similarly, you may turn on a TV sitcom as a diversion from the daily grind. Table 10.2 provides an overview of gratifications.

Table 10.2 Gratifications

Gratification	Examples
Entertainment	• Listening to a Barry White CD to set a romantic mood • Watching <i>Psycho</i> to experience a thrill • Surfing the web because you have nothing else to do
Information	• Seeking advice about practical matters, such as how to cook a turkey (Food Network) • Finding out the weather so you know what to wear to work
Personal identity	• Reading <i>Vogue</i> or <i>Esquire</i> so you know how to dress and be considered stylish • Putting together a Pinterest board to share your passions
Personal relationships and social interaction	• Listening to the Sports Radio Network on your drive to work so you can talk about it with your co-workers • Watching <i>Cake Boss</i> every week to bond with your family

Second, media outlets and content are used to provide information (McQuail, 1987). This media function presents individuals with opportunities to learn about current and historical events, to obtain advice, and to feel secure or satisfy curiosity by acquiring general knowledge. Thus, you may turn on news radio for the weather, traffic updates, and local sports scores. You probably have watched or read about local, national, and world news to find out what is going on in your neighborhood as well as in the world. You may read an advice column for investment strategies or etiquette protocols. You may use the Internet to scour real estate web pages and research the dimensions of your dream home.

Third, people use the media to reflect, reinforce, or contrast their personal identity (McQuail, 1987). In other words, individuals can choose among various media and media

content to gain insight into or assist in the development of their own attitudes or beliefs. For example, you might watch Dr. Phil to hear how others struggle with relationship issues. Likewise, a person often acquires a deeper sense of self by comparing, and perhaps contrasting, one's self with characters portrayed in various media. For instance, you are probably familiar with the hit show *The Big Bang Theory*. Although you may find the characters of Sheldon, Leonard, Raj, and Howard to be hilarious with their lack of social skill, you also are apt to compare your own experiences and attitudes with theirs. Are you that self-centered? That neurotic? That immature? That insecure? We hope not! But that is exactly the point of the show—to present extreme personalities audience members can at once relate to and simultaneously ridicule for their triviality.

A fourth and final reason is that people turn to various media for personal relationships and social interaction (McQuail, 1987). Media exposure can help individuals learn about or connect with others through comparisons of interpersonal relationships and social situations. Certain media can even serve as a substitute for real-life relationships by offering companionship. Thursday morning watercooler gossip about the latest twist on *Survivor* creates a sense of community. Following the management blunders on *The Office* allows viewers to compare and commiserate about their own workplace foibles. Reading a magazine article about the growing trend of stay-at-home dads or a newspaper interview with successful single moms may provide readers with an opportunity to consider another type of family arrangement.

UGT maintains people have many options from which they deliberately select to meet personal needs. The question, then, is not what impact the media have on us, but, rather, why people choose the media forms they do and what gratifications they receive from their choices.

Summary and Research Applications

In this chapter, we presented an overview of four theories of mediated communication. First, we described the diffusion of innovations: the process by which people decide to adopt a new media technology, the characteristics that make a new media technology more appealing, and the categories of people most and least likely to adopt the new technology. For example, Chan-Olmsted, Rim, and Zerba (2013) were able to apply the theory to explain the adoption of mobile news services among college students. Second, we explained a social network approach to understanding the factors associated with determining the relationships among members of a social system. Weber and Monge (2011) used a social network analysis in their investigation of digital news sources. They concluded that a few central websites controlled the flow of information across the entire sphere of digital news providers. Next, media richness theory provides advice for choosing particular media to send different types of messages, helpful in understanding media choices within organizations, such as communication preferences between superiors and subordinates (Salmon & Joiner, 2005; Shepherd & Martz, 2006). Pazos, Chung, and Micari (2013) successfully used media richness theory to predict employees would be more likely to use instant messaging for simple tasks (e.g., requesting or supplying information) than for more complex tasks (e.g., to problem solve or resolve a disagreement). Finally, UGT focuses on the choices receivers make. It argues

audience members are active and use media forms that provide them with the individual gratifications they seek. As an example, researchers uncovered five gratifications for using MP3 players: control, companionship, entertainment, status, and concentration (Haridakis & Hanson, 2009). Concentration and entertainment were the strongest predictors of using an MP3 player.

Key Terms

Ambiguity 184	Media richness 184
Bridge 183	Mediated communication 176
Compatibility 178	Mediation 181
Complexity 178	Meme 183
Content 181	Multiplexity 181
Critical mass 179	Network mode 181
Density 181	Node 183
Direction 181	Observability 178
Disenchantment rejection 177	Rate of adoption 179
Frequency 181	Reciprocal interdependence 180
Gatekeeper 183	Relative advantage 178
Gratification 186	Replacement discontinuance 177
Hub 183	Semantic network 183
Innovation 177	Stability 181
Isolate 183	Star 183
Level of analysis 181	Strength 181
Liaison 183	Symmetry 181
Mass communication 186	Triability 178
Media 176	

Case Study 10: Casino Controversy

When the Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board approved applications for the development of two casinos within the city limits of Philadelphia, controversy immediately ensued. Before the state had unveiled the approved casino locations, anyone could pick up a newspaper or watch a newscast and see something about the much-awaited casino proposal. These stories emphasized that the casinos would bring jobs and tourism to the city. Suburban residents like June Johnson were thrilled because casino revenue would (at least theoretically) help lower the state's escalating property taxes, and the city's union contractors were eager for the opportunity to bid on the development contracts.

However, these initial news stories never considered the local concerns that would surface, such as traffic congestion and crime. When the announcement hit that the casinos would be built next to residential areas, local homeowners and small-business owners were furious.

Karen Moyer, 52, was a longtime resident and homeowner of the neighborhood adjacent to where the casinos were proposed. Worried about declining home values and the quality of the neighborhood, Karen organized a political action group called *CasiNO! Philly*. Karen made use of all of her network connections to get people involved with the group; she not only posted on her own Facebook page, she posted on the pages of local businesses, local schools, and other local nonprofit groups. She created a website and posted information such as newspaper articles about the casino proposals along with contact information for the politicians who had supported the initiative. The website also featured an electronic board where registered users could post comments and organize meetings. She started following the Twitter accounts of local politicians and members of the Gaming Control Board, tweeting responses to them with the hashtag *#CasiNO!Philly*. As the action group's membership grew, *CasiNO! Philly* began tweeting about potential protests and rallies around historical tourist attractions like Independence Hall and the National Constitution Center. The aim was to attract as much media attention as possible, thereby creating negative publicity for the casino proposals.

CasiNO! Philly's social media outreach was strong, but it didn't actually become successful until one of the members of the action group contacted Karen with an idea. Warren Trembly was a 16-year-old skateboarder who attended a cyber charter school with a focus on new media technologies. Warren introduced Karen to an application called *Loke*, which provided real-time navigation information to users through their smartphones, also identifying where other network members were at any given time. The app allowed members of the network to see all current *CasiNO! Philly* activities near the user's current location, as well as all other members' current locations. Warren convinced a core of the activists to start using it to coordinate their efforts, and soon nearly a third of the people who identified with the effort downloaded and used the app.

The coordinated effort worked. Philadelphia newspapers, news radio stations, and TV news stations reported on virtually every protest, which they could easily find because of the information available on *Loke*. Bloggers wrote about it. The TV news stations even began covering the protests live. The *Philadelphia Times* ran a series of news features examining nearby Atlantic City and its neighborhood collapse due to an increase in robberies, vandalism, and prostitution. A popular local

radio talk show held several programs focusing on residents' opinions of the state's proposal. The hashtag #CasiNO!Philly trended nearly daily in the social media stats for Philadelphia.

With all of this momentum, CasiNO! Philly members took their plight to city council where they successfully lobbied to have a referendum put on the city's mayoral election ballot. The referendum would give Philadelphia voters a say as to whether or not they wanted casinos in their districts. If passed, the referendum would also prevent slot machines and gaming parlors from being built within 1,500 feet of homes, places of worship, civic centers, public parks, playgrounds, pools, or libraries.

As the election approached, Karen Moyer's city councilman, Chad DeMario, changed his position on the issue. Initially, when the state first proposed that casinos be developed in Philadelphia, Chad supported the measure. However, after several televised protests, he changed his position and helped pass the referendum.

Not to be outmaneuvered, the casino investors' group ran a full-page advertisement in the Sunday *Philadelphia Times* right before the November election. The ad promised their organization would strive to maintain the integrity of the existing neighborhoods while elevating the city's status as a tourist destination. Election Day arrived, and after all the votes were counted, the referendum passed by a slim margin. The issue of finding the "perfect" location for Pennsylvania's casinos was tossed back to the state legislature. Pleased, Karen Moyer updated CasiNO! Philly's website to read "CasiNO! Philly Wins Media Jackpot! No Casinos Here!"

Questions for Consideration

1. Discuss the adoption of Loke using the diffusion of innovations approach. What qualities of the innovation made it likely to be adopted? How might the CasiNO! Philly members be ranked in terms of the qualities of individuals in the adoption process? How did the group reach critical mass?
2. Describe the properties of the networks and network links Karen and CasiNO! Philly evidenced.
3. Explain the differences in media richness between the CasiNO! Philly group and the casino investor group. What advice would you give to the casino investors if they want to make their message less ambiguous?
4. According to UGT, individuals make choices about how they use various media to fulfill different needs. What choices did CasiNO! Philly make? How about the casino investors' group?
5. Do any of the theories emerge as "better" than the others? Why do you believe this to be the case? What situations might surface that would make a different theory or theories better at explaining the situation?