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The Functional Relationship between the Communicator and the Public

A Descriptive Study in the Light of the variables of Modern Communications Environment in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

A Thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the PhD. Degree in Mass Media

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Thesis Abstract

Praise be to Allah, and peace and blessings be upon His Messenger, and his family and companions, and:

This study deals with the nature of the functional relationship between the communicator and the public in the Saudi media to identify the extent to which the communicator seeks to establish a functional relationship with the public with the aim of providing a media performance that consists with the standards of professional performance on the one hand, and to meet the needs of the public on the other hand, All in light of the developments witnessed by the modern communication environment in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The study is based in its description and interpretation of the phenomenon under the structural functional theory as a scientific framework that provides the researcher with the knowledge context that enables interpretation of the study findings in its natural context. The study in its treatment of the subject has coupled between the qualitative and quantitative approaches in such a manner that that led to crystallization of the theoretical concepts associated with the study on the one hand, and the field information on the other.

The study surveyed, in its field part, the views of the communicator in sixteen (16) of the local media, represented by (438) items, and the views of the Saudi public in the city of Riyadh in a sample of (1020) items using the questionnaire tool for each.

The study consists of two parts, Part I: The theoretical framework for the study consisting of three chapters, which are: structural functional perspective to the media work; performance and functional use of the media; modern communication environment in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Part II is devoted for presenting the findings of the field study and contains five chapters: the methodological procedures for the field study and its sampling characteristics; the media functions of the communicator; the media functions of the public; the functional relationship between the communicator and the public; and finally interpretation and discussion of the findings and recommendations.

The study reached several conclusions, including:

1. in the light of the review of the theoretical literature in the field of media, the functional structural theory, as a theoretical framework on which communication studies are based in interpreting the communication phenomenon,

represented a mounting research trend because it is harmonious with the requirements of the communication process, the forces that affect it, and the changes in the environment of modern communication.

2. Communicators define their media functions in six functions, which are respectively: raising public awareness and promoting social values and their informational participation; informing; educating; commentating, evaluating and talks; marketing; and entertainment. The communicator has sought to achieve these functions at an average of (3.21/5.00) representing (64%); While they define the media functions that they deemed themselves to have succeeded in achieving them in five functions, which are respectively: informing; raising public awareness and promoting social value and their informational participation; education; explanation and evaluation; entertainment; and advertising. Communicators see that they have succeeded in achieving their media functions at a rate of (65%). The study shows that there are differences in terms off media functions between communicators due to personality traits as to the variables of: gender, nationality, age, type of media in which he/she operates, and experience.
3. The public defines its media functions in six functions, which are respectively: news, socialization and development fostering; informatics; entertainment and services; media communication; criticism and evaluation. The public seeks to attain these functions at an average of (3.31/5.00) representing (66%). the public views that the media industry has succeeded in achieving four media functions only, which are: news; soliciting information; entertainment services, socialization and development fostering; evaluation; and media communication. The average of success of the media in achieving these functions for the public is (3.07/5.00) at percentage of (61.4%). Views of the sample items differs as to media functions due to their persona traits in respect of the sector and experience variables, but for the variables of sex, age, function, education and income, no differences among the respondents have shown up.
4. The study showed that the functional relationship between the communicator in the local Saudi media and the Saudi public is poor and inconsistent; the communicator does not seek, in most case, to support his envisages about the public and their needs on objective terms to make benefit from the potential modern communication environment including the capabilities

of communication with the audience in an effective way. This makes the communicator, in determining the media functions, relies on sources of conflicting interests with the needs of the public; or in a manner that lacks objectivity and realism in the interpretation of their needs; or as a result of what might be imposed by the policy of the media means for which the communicator works as to the media function that does not take into account the interests of the public. This means that there is a functional defect in media performance between the two most important elements in the communication process.