
REVIEW ARTICLE

Media Effects Research: Historical Evolution, Theoretical Perspectives, and Contemporary Developments in the Digital Age and the Moroccan Context

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ABSTRACT

The study of media effects has been exposed to significant theoretical and methodological transformations in response to the continuous evolution of communication technologies and media environments. This article provides a comprehensive overview of the historical advancement of media effects research, tracing its progression from early assumptions of powerful media influence to contemporary perspectives that emphasize the complex, selective, and interactive nature of media consumption. The article further highlights the transition from traditional mass media to new media, highlighting how digital technologies have reshaped theoretical perspectives on media effects. Finally, it examines the development of media effects research within the Moroccan context, discussing empirical research exploring the influence of digital media on public opinion, political participation, social behavior, cultural identity, and youth.

KEYWORDS

Communication, Media Effects, New media, Digitization

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Introduction:

Over the last two centuries, there has been a tremendous progress in technology which fueled various social and economic technology-related fields in the world. Related improvement in the field of Mass-Media and communication made it a daily routine for individuals in society; either as TV watchers, radio listeners, and internet surfers or newspaper readers. Among the major functions of media in the lives of people is that they can be a source of information and intellect, and a means of overcoming challenging situations through solution-oriented guidance.

Media, being part of daily routine of individuals and groups has whetted scholars and researchers in the fields of communication and media investigating their effects on individuals and the public to become a central concern in the 20 and 21st Centuries, reflecting the evolving relationship between media technologies and society. Scholars have sought and still seek to understand how media influence individuals' attitudes, beliefs, emotions, and behaviors evolved from newspapers, radio, and television to the internet, social media, and artificial intelligence-driven platforms. Theories of media effects have also expanded to explain the increasingly complex patterns of media consumption and influence.

The present article traces the different and some pertinent empirical approaches to media effects starting with classical theories emerging with the invention of media means: Newspaper, Radio and TV and focusing on their immediate effects on the consumers as passive receivers of media messages. Then, the new theories emerged trying to balance the immediate media effect by demonstrating the existence of minimal impact of media on audiences. The New Media theories emerged later with the advancement of technology which revolutionized the field of media studies from being part of mass communication to intercommunication where key media concepts' scopes have been altered.

The article also brings together different perspectives of scholars and researchers on media theories and models advancement throughout the last decades, in addition to a demonstration of various research studies conducted on media effects in the Moroccan context. The aim is to consider possible intersection of global theoretical developments with Morocco's media effect research landscape, cultural dynamics, and patterns of digital media use.

1. Historical View on Media Effects

By Mid Twentieth century, mass communication in general and the newspaper in particular started to have a wide circulation among people, leading researchers to be more concerned about the nature of effect that these mass media can have on the individual and society as a whole. Mass communication, according to Valkenburg and Oliver (2019: 17) refer to 'homogeneous media use and homogenous media effects', adding that the media effects theories tried to investigate such effects on individuals, groups and societies as well (2019: 7). It is important to note here that Valkenburg and Oliver (2019: 20) made the difference between mass communication theories and theories of media effects. Even though the two terms are used interchangeably in most research, but mass communication theories are broader and do not only conceptualize effects but also media production, consumption and distribution.

Early concerns seemed to think of mass media as having negative influence. In the USA, Toqueville (in Defleur and Dennis 2002: 424) thought that 'increased communication among members of a population, such as took place via the new type of newspaper, would lead to a severe loss of individuality'. In other words, mass media were thought to influence people's minds and attitudes in the same way; meaning that the individual thinking may not count as variable determining media effects. He invented '**dead-level theory**' which takes as a premise that if media organizers and owners present the same stream of information to people, they would affect them in the same way.

Along with this theory, there were concerns with positive impact of mass media as well. Charles Horton Cooley (in Defleur and Dennis 2002: 424) proposed that 'the existence of modern newspapers expanded the awareness of people about other parts of the world'. Thus, the newspaper was considered as a source to get knowledge and make people aware of what happens around them. This idea of positive impact reinforced diversity among individuals. The belief was that exposure of people to different types of content provided by the newspaper, helped audience develop special interests and therefore, strengthened their individuality. This is what constituted the components of '**theory of individuality**' Charles Horton Cooley came up with.

These theories developed so far, had impressionistic backgrounds according to Defleur and Dennis (2002: 425). Empirical research theories started to surface later with the aim of discovering and exploring mass media effects on the population by systematic means. A number of pertinent classical theories of media effects were developed according to Defleur and Dennis (2002: 425)

1.1 Classical Theories of Media Effects

The first is '**the Magic Bullet Theory**' (1914-1918) which supports the negative impact of newspapers. This theory has drawn on Charles's Darwin evolutionary ideas believing that people are 'higher' animals that can be 'swayed and controlled by cleverly designed mass communication', (Defleur and Dennis 2002: 426). Defleur and Dennis stated that most research studies conducted at that time seemed to support this theory but there were contradictions as well. The effect was not the same on every one because people possessed different 'critical abilities' and different 'amount of education'. It was also noticed that people obtained information not only from mass media but there were other sources as well.

The second theory is '**the Two-Step Flow of Communication**' that has been constructed out of a classical study in the 1940s of the presidential elections in the USA. The study was conducted by Paul Lazarsfeld, Bernard Berelson, and Hazel Gaudet. These researchers "rediscovered the importance of the diffusion of information through interpersonal communication" (in Defleur and Dennis 2002: 437). They claimed that information was gained from people who read the campaign in the newspaper, or the ones who listened to the speech of candidates on the radio. Those people did not only transmit information but the way they conveyed information influenced the interpretation of the message on the part of the receivers. Transmitters of information had stronger impact on people who share the same socio-economic status. With the emergence of this theory, ideas on the limited impact of mass media started to surface.

By the 1940s, psychologists discovered the difference among people in the way they learn behavior, acquire values and attitudes. Defleur and Dennis (2002: 438) mention in this regard individual differences in what people learn led to a great interpersonal diversity and this has led to the emergence of '**Selective and Limited Influences Theory**'. This theory was constructed out of the results of a study conducted on presidential elections in Ohio and that resulted in proving the fact that media has some kinds of effects. It encouraged some people (who might have thought to stay home) to vote. It reinforced people views on the candidates, and only few people changed their minds for whom to vote. Another study mentioned by Defleur and Dennis (2002: 438) was conducted with the same aim. Some soldiers were exposed to videos and films about the reasons for conducting the war and the nature of the enemy. The findings revealed that these films helped them gain more knowledge about the war but have not changed their opinion, attitudes or motivation to fight. Klapper (1963: 517-518) similarly claimed that 'children and adults were well-adjusted or maladjusted' see crime and violent scenes on TV but they do not commit similar acts in real life.

These theories which were developed regarding the limited effects of media can be related to the '**constructivist Media Effect model**' suggested by Newman et al (1992:120 in Scheufele 1999:105). According to this model, audiences rely on a 'version of reality built from personal experience, interaction with peers and interpreted selections from the mass media', Scheufele 1999:105).

In other words, audiences form a picture about reality from other sources such as personal experiences and interaction with other people. In addition, even when they use media as a source to get facts, they rely on their own interpretation of the picture presented by media, rather than what is merely presented from this source.

By the 1950s, with the widespread of TV, the intention of research became not only to test the potential impact of media or what content to audiences select, but also to investigate the motivations and psychological factors that helped them in that. In other words, researchers “wanted to understand the gratifications resulted (what needs fulfilled and satisfaction obtained) when audiences selected and attended to media content” (Defleur and Dennis 2002: 439). The result was the emergence of **‘Uses and Gratification Theory’**, a theory that Valkenburg and Oliver (2019: 28) categorize as part of ‘evergreen theories’: the six most cited theories over the last decades. This theory ‘sought to understand the process by which specific messages from specific media selectively reached specific segments of the audience, (Defleur and Dennis 2002: 440). This theory specifically ‘examines how people use the media and the gratification they seek and receive from their media behavior. Uses and gratifications assume that audience members are aware of and can articulate their reasons for consuming various media content’ (Defleur and Dennis 2002: 351). This means audiences benefit from media somehow since media fulfills some of their needs. People select different kinds of media content for different reasons. Such as identifying with media characters, or feeling of emotional release audiences have when they are exposed to their favorite media content. In 1945, Barnard Berelson (in Defleur and Dennis 2002: 440) conducted a survey on people’s reaction to two-week strike of newspaper delivery. Some people stated that they missed ‘serious’ news that the newspaper provides. Some others said they missed their favorite columns, while others missed the social prestige of appearing knowledgeable by reading the newspaper.

This theory seemed to me more concerned with media audiences in the first place. Rokeach and Defleur (1976: 8) criticized this theory for this reason stating, ‘proponents of the uses and gratification approach examine how audiences use the media to gratify similar information needs but do so by taking the audience as the focal point of analysis, not the interrelationship between audiences, media and society. In other words, this theory believes in one-way relation: that media have an effect on audience and neglects the idea that this relation can start from audience to media effects. This theory has later been adopted in the New media age, particularly social media, by Chen (2011), Porter and Donthu (2008), according to Ngai et al (2015: 35).

A similar view to Gratification was developed by Klapper (1963) on media effects from a functional perspective. **The model of functional analysis** he adopts is developed by Merton and the model, ‘specifies the precise element of the media situation which provides the particular gratification (....) is it the mere process of reading or listening or viewing, regardless of content? Is it the concept or the medium? Or is it some combination of these or other elements’ (Klapper 1963:520). He illustrates the idea by soap operas. He says that these TV programs help women deal with real life problems by being a source of advice. At the level of the potential impact of soap operas, this ‘does not enter the realm of true functional analysis until the consequences of this use are demonstrated’, (Klapper 1963: 521). Within this functional framework, Klapper (1963:517) criticized the research orientation concerning the effect of media on audiences as focusing only on this angle and neglecting the other side: the usefulness of the media to people. Klapper (1963: 517) says, ‘mass communication research has, I believe, been too frequently and too long focused on determining whether some particular effect does not occur’ but it does not answer the question, ‘what do people do with mass communication?’ (Klapper 1963: 523). This question has been later empirically addressed by new media.

Along with Gratification theory as well, there is, **Media Information Utility Theory** (in Defleur and Dennis 2002:443) emerging to seek specifically the different purposes to use media information. Among the reasons discovered through research are entertainment, routine, and filling the gap of keeping contact with friends and family. In other words, Media represents an entertaining means and time for people to get relieved from the stress of work and life. Also, and according to Defleur and Dennis (2002: 443), media presents types of information which are of important utility for audiences in daily life, such as car rent. Media, Defleur and Dennis (2002: 443) explain, and especially in urban areas where contact with relatives is not very strong, fills the gap of contacting a friend or family member to get a piece of information. Within this framework, Klapper (1960 in Defleur and Dennis 2002: 343) raised the social impact of mass communication where he ‘downplayed the potential harmful effects of the media’. Klapper (1960 in Defleur and Dennis 2002: 343) concluded that ‘media most often reinforced an individual’s existing attitudes and predispositions. In other words, negative attitudes already exist in audiences and media just elicit them through actions and reactions.

Gratifications and utilities discovered in media research led to new worries; those of TV and its relation to violence. Albert Bandura in the 1960s (in Defleur and Dennis 2002:445) conducted a study on children to seek their modeling behavior as a reaction to watching TV violent scenes. The findings revealed that children imitated or did not imitate the behavior of TV characters depending on whether the aggressive behavior was punished in the violent scene or not. In other words; children copied the violent scene when it was not punished. He came up with **‘Modeling Theory’** which explains ‘the ways in which individuals acquire certain forms of behavior by seeing them performed by someone else’, (Defleur and Dennis 2002: 447).

The theories presented so far reveal that mass media can have powerful and limited effects on audiences at the same time. A new theory came to explain this dilemma, **‘Accumulation Theory: The Adding up of Minimal Effects’**, which explains that media can have short-time limited effects on individuals and long-term effects on the population’s beliefs and attitudes (Defleur and Dennis 2002: 451). Effects can be long term depending on three factors. The first is when media focuses repeatedly on a specific issue.

The second is when media is consistent in presenting information and interpretations. The third is when major media producers agree with each other to present similar content.

Another suggested classical theory of mass media effect has to do with social expectations of individuals in society. Thus, '**Social Expectations Theory**' explains how media participates actively in the process of setting expectations of different people. Defleur and Dennis (2002: 453) state, 'over time, people learn the rules and requirements for acting out parts within various kinds of groups by seeing them portrayed in media content'. Social expectations, as suggested in the theory, can be related to 'norms' that organize all members in a society, 'roles' of people who hold specific positions, 'ranking' of persons in a society in terms of powerful or powerless for example, or 'controls' which are related to procedures for compensating persons with accepted behavior and action, and condemning those who deviate from the social norms.

Valkenburg and Oliver (2019: 23) cite two other classical theories as part of evergreen theories developed in the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s. So, there is Agenda setting Theory developed by McCombs and Shaw (1972), and Cultivation Theory (Gerbner 1969 in Valkenburg and Oliver (2019: 23). **Agenda Setting Theory** is based on the idea of telling people what to think about rather than what to think. Media institutions choose which issues to cover and how to cover them in order to get the desired effects on people. This theory was developed out of a study conducted during a US presidential elections finding a strong correlation between what voters consider as the most important issues and what local news has covered. **Cultivation theory** is based on the principle that repeated and constant exposure to media gradually shapes the public view on reality. This theory which was developed on TV first and then extended later to streaming and social media.

Macquail (1999: 104-105) summarizes the history of media effects by dividing it into four stages. The first took place along the beginning of the twentieth Century to the late 1930s. This period was 'dominated by an experience with strategic propaganda during World War 1, which led to the growing fear of the influence of media messages on attitudes'. This seems to be connected to the magic Bullet Theory (aforementioned). The fear existed because the conception at that time was that media had negative effects. The second phase 'ended in the late 1960s' and was characterized by new view to media influences, 'personal influence was considered to be the main influence on attitude change'. This view seems to go along with 'the two-step flow communication theory' and 'selective and limited influences theory' both of which emphasize the limited effect of media on audiences. The third stage Macquail mentions, 'began in the 1970s and was dominated by the search for new strong media effects'. The fourth stage 'is characterized by social constructivism: The description of media and recipients in this stage combines elements of both strong and limited effects'. The next section will elaborate on the new and current theories of media effects and which belong to the fourth stage

1.2 New Theories on Media Effects

New Theories on media effects have tried to balance the strong and the weak effects of media on the public. According to Alkaabi (2008: 29), media plays an influencing effect in the lives of people and communities, by improving culture and intellect and helping to overpass crisis and social problems by suggesting solutions. Entman (1989: 347) on the other hand states that the popular belief now concerning that issue is that the significant effects of mass media take place only on matters that people consider important. Thus, it seems that the new views on media effects range between strong and limited effects. This section will present some of the main new theoretical approaches developed within the framework of media effects.

1.2.1 Dependency Model

The concept of dependency is defined as a, 'relationship in which the satisfaction of needs of the attainment of goals by one party is contingent upon the resources of another party', (Rokeach and Defleur 1976: 6). In other words, there are two parties and one party does not get an accepted level of satisfaction unless the other party provides it with what it needs. Valkenburg and Oliver (2019: 23) categorize this model as part of 'evergreen theories' or among the top cited in research over the last decades. In the context of media effects, Rokeach and Defleur (1976: 6) specify the element of dependency taking place when audiences rely heavily on the media for seeking information and consequently the effect gets stronger. They state, 'the greater the need and consequently the stronger the dependency in such matters, the greater the likelihood that the information supplied will alter various forms of audience cognitions, feelings, and behavior'. Rokeach and Defleur (1976: 6) specify the conditions under which dependency takes place. The first is when the media, 'continuously takes on more and more unique information functions'. They explain 'unique' in the sense of being the main or only source available. They illustrate this point by the example of the American context where media, 'operates as a fourth estate gathering and delivering information about the actions of the government', (Rokeach and Defleur (1976: 3). The second condition takes place when a, 'relatively high degree of change and conflict is present in a society' (Rokeach and Defleur: 1976: 7). In this case, they add that in such a situation, media plays the role of adapting the audience to the new forms of change to create some stability.

This model was developed by Rokeach and Defleur in 1976 as a new answer for the question whether media exert any influence on audiences. They state in the regard, 'It is almost incredible that after many decades of theorizing and empirical study, media researchers are still typically unable to give a straightforward answer to this question', (Rokeach and Defleur 1976: 3). They criticize prior research studies for limiting their interest only in audiences' psychological characteristics, the groups they are associated with, or even the social characteristics of these groups. They emphasized that, 'mass communication (...) involves complex relationships between large sets of interacting variables that are only crudely designated by the terms media audiences and

society', (Rokeach and Defleur 1976: 3). They explain that the complexity of these relationships involves, 'taking these variables into account individually, interactively and systematically', (Rokeach and Defleur 1976: 5) and that through this analysis, 'an adequate understanding of mass communication effects can be gained', (Rokeach and Defleur 1976: 5)

The Dependency Model Rokeach and Defleur (1976: 9-12) suggest is manifested in the effect media produce on the audience. They suggest three types of impact: the first is 'cognitive' and it takes place when the information provided by the media is incomplete and consequently this creates ambiguity for the recipient, leaving him/her unable to fully understand the information or how to interpret it. Rokeach and Defleur (1976:10) add that, 'when people become heavily dependent upon the mass media for the information, they need to solve ambiguity, the defining or structuring effect of mass-mediated information is considerable'. This means that the more ambiguous information is the more dependent the audiences become on the media. Other cognitive effects Rokeach and Defleur (1976: 13) mention are expanding people's systems of beliefs. Rokeach and Defleur (1976:15) in the regard state that, 'exposure to news messages or even television dramas that portray cities as violence-ridden jungles may increase people's fear or anxiety about living in or even travelling to the city'. This means that exposure to media can increase or create some feelings depending on the type of information presented.

Another effect Rokeach and Defleur (1976: 16) suggest is related to behavior, that is to say, action. In this regard, Rokeach and Defleur (1976:16) suggest activation and deactivation process. They refer to activation as, 'instances in which audience members do something that they would not otherwise have done as a consequence of receiving media messages'. In other words, exposure to media messages leads the audience to act in a certain way; an action which they may not have done if they had not been exposed to media. Deactivation refers to, 'what people would have otherwise done, but which they do not do as a consequence of media messages', (Rokeach and Defleur 1976: 18). In other words, media messages can hinder audiences from acting in the way they should have acted concerning an issue or a problem as a result of exposure to media messages.

The dependency model seems to be flexible regarding media effects in the sense that both conditions for dependency to exist and the possible effects they can have on recipients can be both positive, negative and can vary in the impact degree. For instance, in the media effects related to the affective side, media messages can trigger positive or negative feelings depending on the situation. In addition, the possible effects can be strong or weak depending on the condition of the media status in a particular society.

Along with this approach, Valkenburg and Oliver (2019: 23) refer to is **Social Learning/ Social Cognitive Theory** (Bandurra 1977, 1986) which is based on the belief that people learn behaviors, attitudes, and emotional reactions by observing others (Media content). Adopting certain belief or behavior is conditioned by four elements: Paying attention to the model using celebrities, attractive people and dramatic scenes. Second, retention and remembering the scenes and the stories from media input. Third, reproduction ability of the media input and finally, being motivated for this reproduction.

The next suggested theory or model is called '**The Information Processing Approach**' and it is also characterized by flexibility like the Dependency Model because it is based on the interaction between the audience and media, and similar to Social Learning/ Social Cognitive Theory, it focuses on the cognitive impact.

1.2.2 The Information Processing Approach

This approach was developed by Entman (1989) and it is a combination of the interdependence of media and public through a cognitive perspective. Entman (1989: 349) explains this notion of 'interdependence' as the process where, 'public opinion grows out of an interaction between media messages and what audiences make of them'. In other words; the public depends on the information media presents but people understand it in different ways, not necessarily in the same way the information is presented. Interdependence, according to Entman (1989: 351) is manifested in few points: the first is related to ideology, meaning that a person has more chances of being influenced by a media message according to a specific ideology he agrees with. Second, a person can be influenced depending on whether the information comes from a piece of news, which is supposed to be objective, or an editorial which is persuasive in the first place. Third, being influenced is dependent of the person's degree of familiarity with the topic.

Within this perspective, complete control over what people think, Entman (1989: 349) believes, cannot be complete stating that, 'the only way to influence what people think is precisely to shape what they think about', and not what people think. This incomplete control is justified by the idea that people's acceptance or processing of an idea depends on the degree of interest they have about it and how prominent it is for them. This prominence Entman (1989: 349-350) explains, comes for the schema (or type and the way background knowledge is organized) people hold in their brains, and this is the cognitive side of the approach. In other words, a new idea is accepted if it usually conforms to the schema a person has. After that, the information is stored and it consequently stimulates a new belief or changes an old belief.

These approaches to media impact so far seem to focus on the issue of interdependence and interaction between the audience and media products from both the cognitive and the social impact perspectives. The next theoretical model that will be described will be based on that perspective of interaction.

1.2.3 Framing Theory

It is a theoretical model adopted in 1999 by Scheufele to media effects. This theory is based on the existence of 'individual frame' and 'media frame' and the interaction between them, (Scheufele 1999: 106). Gamson and Modigliani (1987 in Scheufele 1999: 106) define media frames as, 'central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events'. In other words,

it is the way information is organized and presented which constitutes the media frame. Entman (1993: 53 in Scheufele 1999: 107) defines individual frames as, 'mentally stored clusters of ideas that guide individuals' processing of information'. In other words, individual frames may refer to the individual's background about a specific event. The background can be acquired through personal experience or through prior information the individual learned. Those elements define the way this individual receives and understands the information he/ she is exposed to in the media.

Scheufele (1999: 107) adds that these frames can be dealt with as dependent and independent variables, 'studies of frames as dependent variables have examined the role of various factors influencing the creation or modification of frames'. That is to say, media messages' construction and presentation depend not only on the message producer but also on the societal characteristics where this message is produced. Scheufele (1999: 107) states in this regard, 'framing of an issue may be influenced by several social, structural or organizational variables (...) at the audience level, frames are examined mostly as direct outcomes of the way mass media frames an issue'. That is to say, the way a message is framed affects the way it is received by the audience. For media and individual frames as independent variables Scheufele (1999: 107- 108), the focus is more on 'the effect of framing'. In the case of media frames, the most logical outcome is a link to audience frames. That is the media frame affects the audience frame. 'in the case of individual frames', Scheufele (1999: 107-108) adds, 'the question becomes, does individual framing of issues influence the evaluation of issues or political actors? In other words, to what extent the audience background, believes, values and knowledge in general affect the way they evaluate the media message?

It can be deduced that the Framing Model depends on the simultaneous influencing of media frames and individual frames. The next theoretical model focuses more on audiences' side by specifying the conditions under which media can have positive and/ or negative effects

1.2.4 Media Malaise and Mobilization

Media Malaise was suggested by Newton (1999) in the context of British Media. Media Malaise is related to its negative influence mainly. Newton (1999:578) explains that, 'news is a perishable commodity; yesterday events are washed over by today's headlines(...) as a result, most items are covered in an increasingly brief and superficial way and the public is presented with ceaseless flow of fast changing and barely explained events (...) this fast forward effect is said to create political confusion, alienation and distrust among the many citizens who lack the information, understanding and the motivation to make sense of news'.

It can be inferred from this quote that malaise is created as a result of the inappropriate way, with which media presents its messages which in turn, leaves the audience with vague ideas about the events. The way messages are presented is one of the reasons Newton mentions for the existence of media malaise. Another reason he mentions is when, 'media dwells on dramatic news, especially bad news about crime, and conflict, death and disaster (...) if there is little conflict, the media will exaggerate what exists, or try to create it', (Newton 1999:577). In other words, the public feels the alienation because media concentrates on 'bad news' and presents them in an exaggerated way. Newton (1999:579) adds that this problem exists not only with television but with electronic media as well.

As for **Mobilization Theory**, Newton (1999: 581) believes that media can inform and make the audience aware and be knowledgeable thanks to 'the rising of educational levels and easier access to (...) large amounts of (...) information'. Mobilization then is related to positive impact of media. Mobilizing the audience, Newton (1999: 580-581) specifies, means changing the audience 'cognitively' (the way they understand messages) and 'behaviorally' (helping them take the right action). Newton (1999: 581) sets some necessary points to exist for the media having a mobilizing effect on the audience: 'It is not the form but the content of the media which is more important: serious, in-depth treatment of the news in both the electronic and the print media can inform and mobilize, whereas a superficial and sensational treatment may induce malaise'. This means the nature of media content can either lead to positive or negative effect on the audience: when serious, it educates but when superficial, it creates audience alienation from the media.

Newton (1999), like in other previously mentioned researchers, tried to account for both positive and negative effects on the audience by introducing two theories: Malaise and Mobilization. The conditions he sets for both positive and negative effects cover elements related to media content and the audience. However, he seems to ignore the impact of the socio-cultural background of the audience on the way they understand and evaluate media messages.

Other research orientations concerning media effects seem to fall within the realm of these theories: seeking the variable and conditions under which media effects be it positive or negative take place. For instance, Mcquail (1979) states that there are some ways through which audiences get affected by the media. The first is when the media leads election campaigns and according to Mcquail this affects the public opinion greatly. The second way is manifested in media as a source of learning. Mcquail (1979: 13) describes this learning process as, 'often incidental and unconscious for the receiver and almost always unintentional on the part of the sender'. This seems to match media mobilization model regarding the educational role of media. Furthermore, Mcquail (1979: 13-14) believes that media pictures reality in a specific way which the public may adopt by continuous exposure to it. Another way of media influence Mcquail (1979: 20) advocates is when, 'the content of what we know, our way of doing things and spending time and the organization of central activities for the society are in part dependent on the media, then the fact of interdependence is evident'. In other words, when media becomes part of the daily life, the dependence on media becomes stronger and so become its effects. This seems to match the dependency model.

Classical and new theories of media have been developed within the mass media and communication framework analyzing different media means and their effects on individuals and the public. By the beginning of the 1990s and with the creation and spread of internet and digitization of communication and media up today, the theoretical and empirical perspectives and backgrounds have been altered considerably. The next section will describe this transitory period.

2. From Traditional to New Media

The transition from traditional to new media is not to be taken for granted. It is a period that has accumulated various research perspectives, models and theories but at the same time, with the advent of technology a number of these theories have either being adopted to the new context or discarded for demonstrating their utility or lack of utility to the new media context. Ndoyne et al (2014: 165) analyzed the traditional theories through a deconstructive model claiming that postmodernist theory proved to support the new media compared to traditional media. Postmodernist theories refer to the new theories appearing after the classical models and new theories. It is worth noting that the expression 'new media' has been coined by Marshall McLuhan (in Holmes 2012:1) to refer to the use of technology in media (platforms, internet, etc.) in the digital age in 2005 and which has revolutionized different domains including media empiricism in media effects required essentially redefining the scopes of key concepts in media such as communication, audience role, etc. McLuhan has established some grounds for new media research such as 'media globalization and convergence or the relationship between mediums, but 'there is little in McLuhan's work that deals with the kind of revolution in electronic media that is claimed by new media theorists today' (Holmes (2012:1). Also, McLuhan's Medium lost influence after the 1970s according to Valkenburg and Oliver (2019: 23) stating that 'media effects are often a result of a combination of features, among which content plays a prominent role'

In this regard, A number of scholars have described this transitory period. Valkenburg and Oliver (2019:23) notes the cognitive turn of media effects between the 1980s and the 1990s where research started to focus on internal cognitive processes of media effects. Another perspective of research transition is suggested by Newman and Guggenheim (2011: 170) who claim that "the evolving character of media effects reveals an underlying structure moving from relatively simple models of persuasion and prospective attitude change to more sophisticated and layered models as scholars successively address the conditions and contexts of communication effects". Valkenburg and Oliver 2019:24) put it differently, claiming that research started focusing on the connection of media use and media outcomes like the invention of Priming theory, (Berkowitz 1984) Limited Capacity Model (Lang, Dhillon and Dong 1995) and Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty and Cacioppo 1986). The new idea risen is that in order to assess media influence, the researcher needs to investigate why and how this happens, directing research into investigating indirect media effects.

From a technological perspective, Holmes (2012:2) speaks on theorists of the '**second media age**' by the end of the 1990s where the internet (using digital media) would declare the end of the traditional audience as only recipients of media messages and the emergence of more active audiences who have the possibilities of message creation, personalization of content, etc.; that Toffler 1980 (in Valkenburg et al (2016: 28) names as 'prosumers'. Nydoyne et al (2014: 166) specify that new media represents a new set of communication elements that traditional media within the framework of mass communication research cannot account for. In other words, new media provides new boundaries to media messages, channels, and audiences that pose difficulties to the definitions of the mass communication concepts. In describing media in the digital age, Everett and Coldwell (2010: xvi) claim that 'style has become a form of cultural capital that can be leveraged by digital boutiques and multinational media conglomerates alike. Headhunters now engage art and design school graduates not for the institutional ghettos of high culture but for the proliferating worlds of computer-generated images, animation, and motion graphics.' Expressed differently, influencing the public does not rely on high-culture anymore, but on technological elements that stimulate people to follow certain content.

Some other critiques of the mainstream media Ndoyne et al (2014: 169-170) suggest is that traditional media is no more the only source of information, world domination and meaning shaping. He provides examples of Agenda setting theory and Magic Bullet theories of media effects (aforementioned), explaining that for the agenda setting, 'it is common in this age to have mainstream media gets its agenda from the trending issues from the new media, especially the fast-moving social media' (Ndoyne et al 2014: 170). The magic bullet theory assumes that the audience usually wait for mainstream media in order to get information in the same way 'a doctor does to a helpless patient, or a gunman does to fixed target', (Ndoyne et al 2014: 171). Ndoyne et al (2014: 172), even goes further to claim that, 'The new media is an independent information source that requires no traditional theories for it to function. The new media is creative and flexible in its own rights because there are no gate keepers during the procession of information content. It is only alternative not in the sense of complementing (traditional media) but providing a clear and easy way to pass information to a larger audience than the limited audience of the traditional media due to universal access'. The next section will elaborate on some pertinent models and theories advanced in the context of new media effects.

3. New Media Approaches

According to Valkenburg et al (2016: 24), research related to new media effects emerged in the 1970s, before the widespread of the internet and digitalization. Holmes (2012:1) adds that, New media theories and approaches have been formalized in the 1990s with the growth of digital media and information technology in these years. Ndoyne et al (2014: 166) specifies that new media studies take three paradigms: content, the socio-cultural level, and technology.

Among the early new concepts appearing with New media is '**convergence**' (Kittler and Jenkins in Holmes 2012: 3). The concept describes a new concept in media on the ground that digitalization enabled a common language among various kinds of media

means, and that new consumers of media are more socially connected since they can upload their own content and can choose from the variety of available content to consume. It is worth mentioning here that convergence started with Web 2.0 (internet version starting in 2004) that allowed the interactivity with the consumers, rather than Web 2.1 (Internet version of 1990), a ready-made version to consume only, (Holmes 2012: 4) and that's why most of the theories and models suggested so far can be categorized within the hybrid of interpersonal communication, (Valkenburg et al 2016: 24).

The concept of convergence has been criticized by Winston (in Holmes: 2012: 2), claiming that this concept does not necessarily require digitalization; analogue signals as he calls them allow such interchangeability between the mediums, like using the radio in a cellphone or a smart TV. Another critique of convergence comes from 'Ritual Theory' (in Holmes 2012:3) that explain old-aged mediums of media communication have not disappeared such as newspapers, books, and TVs as these mediums fulfill the need for some audiences to avoid face to face relationships. In other words, the attachment to such mediums is not driven by their efficiency or control.

Valkenburg et al (2016: 24-30) claimed that early models and theories suggested in new media context were under what he calls: Computer Mediated Communication (CMC). The aim has been to discover, compare the psychological, and behavioral effects of face-to-face communication with online communication, the findings suggested notable differences of communication with strangers and with known persons, in addition to the effect of anonymity and the absence of non-verbal cues that affected the quality and the style of online communication. In the regard, Valkenburg et al (2016: 24-30) identified a number of rising theories such as Walter's (1992) **Social Information Processing Theory** that suggests how CMC partners overcome the absence of non-verbal cues online employing verbal cues to transmit emotional messages. There is also the **Social Identification/Deindividuation (SIDE)** (Postmes et al 2000) suggesting that CMC without physical appearance cues enhances social identity at the expense of personal identity. There is also Walter's (1996), **Hyper personal Communication Model** suggesting that online communication can lead to more intimacy than face-to-face and it has been strengthened by Web 2.0 technologies that allowed to maintain existing friendships.

The second set of approaches to new media research as Valkenburg et al (2016: 24-30) suggest can be categorized under the 'Mass self-communication and expression effects' that have been developed with the spread of Web 2.0. What characterizes this web and its applications is that information is distributed in a multi-directed way in a network where the public members vary from one to many. And that refers to the possible effect of content produced by the sender on him or herself. Among the theories suggested in this regard is '**Self-Perception Theory** (Bem 1972: in Valkenburg et al (2016: 24-30) stressing that people need consistency in their cognitions, beliefs, and attitudes. Individuals derive their cognitions, believes and attitudes from their own background and they adapt their believes and attitudes by observing their own behavior in retrospect.

Some other pertinent new media effects approaches and theories include **Technological Determinism Theory** which has been developed by McLuhan (1962 in Ndoyne 2014 et al) as part of classical theories but it has been adopted in the new media age since it is related to technology. This theory is based on the belief that media and technology shape individuals and societies' ways of thinking feeling and acting, and with the invention of more technology, the society follows that change. Among other pertinent models and theories developed for media effects and mass communication before digitalization and which have been adopted for digital media context, there is **Cultivation Theory** which is associated with Effects of TV on Society (Gerbner 1976, in Ndoyne 2014 et al and in Valkenburg and Oliver 2019:23) and which Valkenburg consider as an evergreen theory. There is also, **Agenda Setting Theory** which stipulate that news media are always telling society what to think and more effectively what to think about (Shaw and Mccombs 1973 in Ndoyne 2014 et al and in Valkenburg and Oliver 2019:23 as an evergreen theory). **Framing theory** has also been adapted to digital media context and it is based on the idea that the way information is presented affects public opinion, using algorithmic content, influencers, etc. There is also the **Dependency model**, stipulating that digital media sources become the prime sources for the public especially in the time of crisis, based on the belief that the more people use this digital media, the more influenced they get. There is also **Human Action Theory** which is based on the idea that people make choices with a purpose to their actions (Turow 1992 and Mcqail 1887 in Ndoyne 2014 et al). people are not only receivers of media theories, they rather choose, interpret and act on media based on their objectives, needs and context. This theory can be considered central to digital theories because it describes media audiences in the digital age in the most precise ways.

Like Human Action Theory, **Diffusion of Innovation Theory** was developed by Everett Rogers in 1962 in the mass media context and which pertains that communication strongly influences people's opinions through the media according to Lazerfield (1994 in Ndoyne 2014 et al and in Valkenburg and Oliver 2019:23) and which Valkenburg and Oliver categorize as an evergreen theory. The convenience of this theory in the digital age relates to its focus on the communication channels effect, rather than the message effect. There is **Priming Theory** as well developed by Shanto Iyengar & Donald Kinder (1970s and 1980s) that started in cognitive psychology and then adopted to media effects context, and which stipulates that the public gets influenced by standards provided in media in order to evaluate events and people. In other words, media provides people with what to think about rather than what to think. It can be considered huge for digital media age because it is strongly related to concepts like repetition and speed if information, personalization of content and multimodality.

The digital age of media also witnessed the birth of theories that accounted for rising and changing concepts and scopes related to media effects in the digital era. Among some pertinent theories in this regard, there is, **Differential Susceptibility to Media**

Effects Model (DSMM) developed by Patti M. Valkenburg and Jochen Peter in 2013 and which stipulates that Media effects on people are not the same because individuals differ in their predisposition based on personal, developmental, and social factors. There is also, **Echo Chamber Theory** (Cass R. Sustein and Onward 2001) which addresses the issue of the audiences being exposed to similar contents related to their opinions and beliefs (algorithmic content) and which reinforces such ideas in the audiences' minds.

It can be noticed that regarding media effects in the digital age, some traditional (classical/ new) media effects theories have been adopted to account for the digital age media effects. However; media effects still seem to remain the main concern of researchers in all research decades. The next section will elaborate on scholars' perspectives regarding theories and models advanced both regarding the traditional and the digital media effects era.

4. Perspectives on Classical and New Theories and Models of Media Effects

Newman and Guggenheim (2011: 171) summarize the history of media effects by dividing it into three periods. The first takes place between the 1930s and the 1950s and is characterized by describing media effects on audience as immediate and evident based on propaganda and psychopathology of powerful governments and passive automatized consumers, like the 'magic bullet theory' aforementioned. The second period started with Lazarfield and Klapper coming up with minimal impact, and where audience motivations and beliefs influence the interpretation of persuasive messages. The third stage and which is the current stage starting with the advances in technology is characterized by "better measurement tools and improved methodological design" Newman and Guggenheim (2011: 171). This period has specific features according to Newman and Guggenheim (2011: 171), such as the belief that media tells the audience not what to think but what to think about. There is also the existence of parallel research on both minimal and big effects as a central theme, which minimizes the understanding of the real progress in theory of media effects as Newman and Guggenheim (2011: 171) claim, and finally the belief that the accumulation of minimal effects over time can lead to strong effects as well.

Newman and Guggenheim (2011: 171) similarly identified six 'sequential and accumulative stages of media effects research' based on social, cultural conditions and cognitive mechanisms that can help explain when media messages have apparent or limited impact on audiences. There is first the '**persuasion theories**' (1944-1963) describing the direct effect of media based on persuasion, Newman and Guggenheim (2011: 177). The second stage is the '**Active Audience Theories**' where media messages are directed to individuals who are not seen as part of a social structure, rather as persons whose motivations and psychological orientations can strengthen or minimizes the potential impact of media messages. The third stage is '**Social Content Theories**' (1955-1983) and whose core idea of research is "how individuals perceive messages to be influencing others in their social sphere", Newman and Guggenheim (2011: 177) and how 'individuals rely on social cues and interpersonal conversation to interpret and contextualize complex media messages', Newman and Guggenheim (2011: 177). The fourth stage is called '**Societal and Media Theories**' based on the potential accumulative impact of the societal level and individual level over time, Newman and Guggenheim (2011: 178). The fifth stage is called '**Interpretive Effects Theories**' and is based on evaluating attitude change and learning as an outcome of being exposed to media messages and how such exposure can influence 'the salience of, interpretation of, and cognitive organization of information and opinions to which individuals are exposed', (Newman and Guggenheim 2011: 178). The last stage is called '**New Media Theories**' starting from the 1990s until now and it is concerned with new developed theoretical traditions focusing on new technologies and interaction, such as the advent of Computer-Mediated Communication (HCI), Newman and Guggenheim (2011: 178).

From a Micro-level perspective, Valkenburg et al (2016: 7-24) identified five features of new media effects theories. The first is '**selectivity of media use**' as an extension of 'Uses and Gratifications (Katz et al 1973 in Valkenburg et al 2016) and on the basis of 'selective exposure theory' (Knobloch and Westerwick 2015 in Valkenburg et al 2016). According to this perspective, people do not randomly select messages but on the basis of the ones that would affect them. The selection can be based on dispositional factors (age, background, gender), developmental factors (age related comprehension schemata and experience), and social context factors (institutions, parents, schools).

The second perspective proposed is '**Media properties as predictors**' suggesting that the medium through which the message is transmitted is the message itself. This perspective is based on modality, content, and structural properties. In other words, these properties that are associated with the medium trigger or enhance the likelihood of selective exposure. The third perspective Valkenburg et al (2016) suggest is that '**media effects are indirect**'. Thus, there is the influence of an independent variable (media use as an example) on other variables (results of media use) which works via its influence on one or more intervening variables. There are three types of indirect effects: The first is selectivity, the second is the cognitive, emotional and physiological processes during and after exposure, and the third is the post exposure variable that can dependent variable as well (attitudes, behavior).

The fourth suggested perspective is that '**media effects are conditional**' in the sense that media effects are reduced or enhanced by conditions, and here referring again to uses and gratifications theory Rubin 2009 in Valkenburg et al 2016). For instance, there is the need on the part of audiences to enjoy information processing cognitively and emotionally, and the presence of dispositions related to selective exposure theory aforementioned. The fifth and last perspective suggested is that '**media effects are transactional**' in the sense that there is a reciprocal causal relationship of media uses and selective media use factors in the audiences' environment in addition to the outcomes of media (Bandura 2009 in Valkenburg et al (2016). When individuals expose

themselves to media selectively, they shape their own media effects in a part. Also, producers of media content can change because they learn from what they perceive to be audience needs and preferences (Webster 2009 in Valkenburg et al (2016)

Valkenburg and Oliver (2019:27) reduced these features into three, mainly. The first is '**selectivity**': based on uses and gratifications, the audience select what potentially would impact them based on pre-existing needs. There is also 'process gratifications' within this feature and they refer to audience needs that develop while using media. The second feature is '**transactionality**' which conceptualize media use and media outcomes as reciprocally related in the sense that certain dispositions (beliefs, goals, needs) can cause certain selection and media use and which in turn cause certain outcomes of media effects. The third feature is '**conditionality**' about which Valkenburg and Oliver (2019:27-28) claim, 'Media effects do not equally hold for all media users, and that media effects can be contingent on dispositional, situational and social context factors'. In other words, media effects take place not only out of exposure, but also out of the context of exposure and media content processing.

Research within the framework of these models and theories, especially new media and digital media theories seem to be oriented towards proving its minimal effect on the audience as Bennett (2007:74) claims. One of the reasons she mentions for coming up with this conclusion is that trying to attract the attention of a big number of disinterested people is hard and requires the use of impressive personal messages over time. Bennett (2007: 74) suggests that in order to compose effective media messages, it is necessary to know the audience first, 'because opinion is important, politicians try both to anticipate and shape it. marketing research has been adapted to politics to assess the dispositions of various segments of the public. Based on this research, messages are shaped and tested through (...) techniques. Then those messages are sent through many channels, including direct mailings, political advertising, local visits, radio broadcasts, and of course, the news'. Even theories and models advanced after Bennett's claim seem also to support minimal effects or at least effects of media under certain conditions.

The technological revolution has impacted the whole world to become one village. No country can be discarded from this impact be it developed or on the course development in spite of the fact that media effects research can be context-sensitive. The next section will elaborate on research conducted in the Moroccan context within the framework of media effects trying to picturize the pertinent theoretical frameworks and perspectives adopted in this regard.

5. Research on Media Effects in the Moroccan Context:

Research on media effects within the Moroccan context does not seem to be robust enough from our perspective. According to the visualization of the number of published articles which by the way seem to have started by 2021, only about twelve articles have been publicized until 2026. It is believable that the 2021 year seems to be a logic beginning for research with the invasion of the internet and the digitization of media. According to Benchenna and Marchetti, (2020:4) Internet usage has grown immensely by 2016-2017 reaching 66% of Moroccan reliance on mobiles for net access among 94% of internet subscribers. This would consequently open new doors for researchers to explore digital media effects especially with the new perspectives assigned to key media concepts.

The released available articles have been analyzed both from the treated topics and the theoretical background adopted. Seven out of the twelve articles on media effects unfortunately did not adopt a media effect model in spite of the fact that these articles treat media effects directly. To name a few, Tawfiq et al (2026) investigated the relationship between excessive social media use and academic performance among Moroccan nursing students. The study revealed a weak but statistically negative correlation between the two variables. The theoretical background of this research involved prior studies based on the educational context only. Another study in this regard, and which takes a psychological perspective is by Abbouyi et al (2026) investigating social media use and its psychological correlate with Moroccan adolescents and young adults in terms of psychological distress such as anxiety, depression and stress. The findings reveal a highly positive correlation. A different perspective is treated by Mokhtari et al (2025) where the research examines the impact of media multitasking on the reading habits and practices of Moroccan students and teachers. The findings reveal that specific multitasking activities such as surfing the internet and watching TV can significantly affect the reading quality and time span of the participants. Similar to the aforementioned articles, this study involves prior empirical studies conducted in the same context and purpose of the research in hand ignoring a media effects theoretical background adoption.

Three other articles treat their topics on media effects from a cultural and Identity perspectives adopting theoretical models regarding culture and identity while ignoring any adequate media effects model. Nekhass et al (2025) treat the impact of social media taking influential famous figures (Achraf Hakimi and Yassine Bono) on the identity of Moroccan citizens. The findings reveal a positive impact such as strengthening the sense of national pride and unity among Moroccans and the promotion of cultural heritage. The literature review this study bases its background on is research conducted in the context of the influence of social media. The second study conducted by Lamjahdi (2024) investigating the impact of postmodern media on Moroccan culture. Post-modern media refers to media which is not serious all the time and can involve fake news, events and affects emotions (social media). The study reveals a tremendous impact on the process of identity construction (values and morals) of the Moroccan citizen and can be a source for both empowerment and disempowerment. This research article bases its background on models and theories related to identity and culture only. The third article (Ferrati 2021) treats the impact of internet and satellite channels on the behaviors of the Moroccan students' values behaviors and lifestyles and how the global culture affects the Moroccan students' view on their own culture, revealing a significant impact on values, behaviors and attitudes change towards many issues.

Zakhir (2018) treats digital media use and its effects on the promotion of Moroccan Arabic and that is the perspective of language ideology. The study describes how young adults' internet use and social media communication rendered Moroccan Arabic a language to be used not only in spoken interaction but also to be a written language, and even more an intimate language of communication in social media, attributing Moroccan Arabic an advanced role in communication. In short, Moroccan young adults changed their attitudes towards Moroccan Arabic from being used in informal oral communication only to being more positive about it and attributing this language more roles for individuals and society.

The other set of articles treating topics on media effects present more explicit and direct theoretical perspectives on adopted models in this regard. Wajih et al (2025) conducted a research on media effects from a gender perspective. The research evaluates the impact of media visibility on women's leadership advancement in Morocco, trying to explore how female leaders use social media to overcome traditional view on women and to change these norms in the Moroccan cultural context. The findings suggest that gender 'stereotypes' are strongly fought by social media platforms and these latter represent a space for women to reveal their leadership abilities, and most importantly these platforms become a reason for ideas and attitude change among individuals and the public in general. This research is based on Media Visibility Theory. Though it is not a separately defined theory in media effects, the concept of visibility represents the frame of many classical and new media theories. The core idea is how to render a concept visible enough to pave the way for views change about a certain concept.

Another published article in 2025 by Juiher and Ouaddi treats media effects through a marketing perspective. The study analyzes the impact of artificial intelligence- generated virtual influencers versus human influencers on consumer trust and purchase intention in the Moroccan context. The findings suggest the consumer is affected more by human influencers, but the perception of cybersecurity moderates this impact. As far as the theoretical framework of this research is concerned, there is Hovland's (1951 in Juiher and Ouaddi 2025: 69) Persuasion Model which is an essential constitutional model of media effects, especially limited effects. The core idea is that persuasion takes place when the source of the message, the way the message is delivered and the characteristics of the audience align to produce attitude change.

The last three articles that will be elaborated on have adopted notable theoretical models on media effects. Elattari et al (2024) investigated the impact of media consumption habits on the perception of Covid-19 on Moroccan youth in urban areas. The findings reveal that different age groups perceive and interpret media messages differently during this health crisis. The researcher adopted The Extended Parallel Process Model (Tsoy et al in Elattari et 2024:84) that explains the impact of social media on perceived threat and efficacy during pandemics. It is a model developed in 1992 building on fear appeal research and it is based on how people respond to fear-based media messages. This model can be categorized under the persuasive effects and health communication branches as far as public opinion is concerned.

Chentoufi and EL Kirat (2024) investigated Moroccans' perceptions of sub-Saharan immigrants on Facebook revealing that media framing significantly shapes the negative views of Moroccans towards these immigrants and picture them in the most negative ways. This study based its theoretical models on media framing by Entman and Goffman 'Framing Theory'; how media frames play an essential role in shaping and constructing public opinion as part of new theories on media effects as aforementioned in this article. Finally, there is the study that investigates the role of social media in sensitizing Moroccan young people to participate in politics, (Akestour and Skouri 2023). The research takes the political impact of social media on the 2021 Moroccan election as a case study, revealing that social media effects are significant in urging younger generation to be part of the political field constituents. The research adopts media System Dependency Theory or model as part of classical theories (aforementioned) to set an impact based on the interrelations amongst audience, media and society.

Conclusion

Research on media effects has undergone significant transformation, moving from early entailed believes about the powerful influence of mass media to more refined perspectives recognizing other variables such as the active role of audiences, the complexity of media environments, and the influence of social, cultural, and technological factors. Classical theories founded the ground for understanding media influence, while contemporary theories have adapted these ideas to account for the interactive, personalized, and algorithm-driven nature of digital media.

The transition from traditional media to new media has reshaped communication processes, such as the audiences from being passive to active in content creation, immediate feedback provision, etc. This has created new perspectives for researchers in media effects to dig and investigate. Thus, instead of exploring one-way media effects, researchers begin to adopt interdisciplinary approaches that better capture the dynamic relationship between media, technology, and society.

Media effects research within the Moroccan context seems to reflect both global trends and local realities to some extent. The rapid expansion of internet access, social media use, and digital communication has created new avenues for examining how media shape public opinion, political participation, cultural identity, and social behavior. However, empirical research in Morocco seems to be poorly approached and studies conducted are scattered. In short, research in the Moroccan context still needs to adopt robust theoretical backgrounds following a pattern, and to grow with further empirical studies in order to deepen understanding of the specific ways (digital) media affect Moroccan audiences. Overall, the development of media effects research reveals that assimilating media influence requires continuous theoretical adaptation and context-sensitive investigation in response to ongoing technological and societal change.

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