**Democratic-participant Theory of Mass Communication**

The idea of Democratic participant Theory was started by grass-root level media in 1960s. It emerged because of the dissatisfaction with other models such as [Libertarian theory](https://www.businesstopia.net/communication-theory/libertarian-theory-mass-communication), social responsibility theory, etc. The democratic-participant theory believes there is democratic and professional hegemony in the media today and the media is totally commercial.

All these ill practices should be removed for the media to be democratic and be easily accessible or participatory. It considers there should not be monopolization (public/private), centralization of press and top down approach in the media.

The press should be pluralistic, decentralized, bottom-up or horizontal and must have equality. The major concept is participation and full circular communication.

The theory places greater importance to the receivers. There are no political regulations but some legal regulations. The theory is also known as **Democratization theory**

### **Concepts of Democratic-participant Theory of Mass Communication**

Media is said to be important in rural settings and in the cultures that are degrading with time. The theory is believed to conserve and revive local cultures by promoting the right to information (global and local), right to express (feedback), right to use new technologies (means of communication), freedom to local data, freedom to take part in social action, etc. In the process, it expects the government to provide funds, trainings and subsidies after identification if they have financial or technical difficulties.

The democratic-participant theory is more relevant in liberal democratic developed countries than developing and least developed countries because the countries in transition from underdevelopment and non-democracy are alleged to lack the infrastructures and professional skills needed for free media in democracy.

The theory considers local information, feedbacks and social action in community level to be the roles of media. It discourages uniform, monopolized and commercialized media culture. Rather, it wants local non-institutionalized media to provide the information relevant to small groups of population.

This theory makes interaction between the media and the audience possible as the population is less. It also encourages feedback which is only possible in small groups and communities. The model is completely non-political and does not bolster political control; its main objectives being encouraging national development, supporting local culture and maintaining a good relation with other countries.

It also promotes equality between various genders, classes, castes, races, etc. controlled by the group. This focus on equality is known as **association mode** which is the opposite of **command mode** (sender superior to receiver).

### **Major Features of Democratic-participant Theory of Mass Communication**

* Encourages horizontal and bottom up approach in media
* Supports democracy, existing political rule, national socio-economic development efforts and to implement policies
* Media has supportive rather than critical role
* Government controls some aspects if media does not act as it should by the process of registration, licensing, censorship, by preparing guidelines for media, monitoring, etc.
* Self regulation of media is also encouraged
* More applicable to new media
* Development of creativity and innovation in small media
* Replacement of media from big media houses to small media
* Participation and interaction of media and audience (as both are from the same group of population)
* Different communities, groups and organizations possessing their own media

### **Examples of Democratic-participant Theory of Mass Communication**

The examples of democratic-participant theory are the present concepts of community newspapers, community radios and televisions. Another examples are the trend of social action through social media and language programs through phone apps. Even, underground and alternative press are examples of this theory.

The theory is in use in Western Europe which can be seen by the cultural and ethnic revival through media. Many countries have started following the theory in mass media such as Yugoslavia, Kosovo, Ghana, Bangladesh, Nepal, India, US, UK, etc. Community radio is mostly popular in South East Asian countries.

### **Strengths of Democratic-participant Theory of Mass Communication**

* The audience can participate and get alternatives if not satisfied with one media.
* The theory is stricter than libertarian and [social responsibility](https://www.businesstopia.net/mass-communication/social-responsibility-theory) which makes it more responsible towards the needs of the audience.
* The community can work for themselves as social action.
* The theory is not very [authoritative](https://www.businesstopia.net/mass-communication/authoritarian-theory-mass-communication) unless the press hinders the work of the government.
* There are the concepts of equality, inclusion and equal access which makes it eliminate marginalization.
* Democracy becomes strong with the application of this theory.
* Small media gets the chance to work for local people.

### **Weaknesses of Democratic-participant Theory of Mass Communication**

* Criticizing the government is not considered to be productive role of media.
* Local level media might lack professionalism and skills.
* The small local media might not be able to compete with media giants