CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

The present study explores photography as a medium of visual communication, need gratification, representation of reality and compensation. The main area of focus of the study is photography and visual communication. Berlo’s SMCR model of communication is used to understand the process of photographic communication by photographers. The Ritual view of communication enables to put into perspective interpersonal communication through photographs among the individuals. For the purpose of studying the reasons and motivations behind participation in photography practices, the Uses & Gratification Perspective is used. This perspective allows the researcher to explore photography as a practice to satiate cognitive, affective, personal and social integrative and escapist needs. Bourdieu’s Structural Constructionist perspective helps to understand the nature of photography practices of the three different categories of photographers i.e. the professional photographers, the photo-journalists and amateur photographers as influenced by their socio-economic status and the influence of demographic and psychographic factors on the choice of the subject of photographs clicked by people. The Constructionist Perspective of photography facilitates the exploration of photography as a medium to depict reality and as a means of subjective interpretation of the world by the photographer. Psychoanalytic Perspective assists the study of photography as a compensatory mechanism. This theory explains the use of photographs as an object to overcome the feeling of anxiety and fear of loss.

I). SMCR Model of Communication

The SMCR model was propounded in 1960 by David Berlo as an improvement over Shanon and Weavers (1949) linear model of communication. Berlo’s communication model comprises of four ingredients: a.) the source: person or group of persons with a purpose, a reason for engaging in communication. b.) the message: the actual physical product of the source-encoder c.) the channel: the medium through which the message is sent d.) the receiver: the person at the other end of the channel.
Berlo (1960) proposes that there are four factors that influence the communication process: 1.) communication skills, 2.) attitudes, 3.) knowledge level 4.) position within a social-cultural system (Berlo, 1960:50).

The present research made use of Berlo’s SMCR model to understand the process of photographic communication between the photographer and the viewer. Applying the SMCR model to the process of photographic communication, the source is the photographer, the message is the content of the photograph in terms of its theme, the channel, newspaper, book, magazine, internet, television, etc and the decoder is the viewer of the photograph. Berlo (1960) says that, communication skills, attitudes, knowledge level and position of the encoder and the decoder within a social-cultural system influence the communication process. The present research also assumed that these four factors influence the way the encoder (photographer) encodes the photographic message and the way the decoder (viewer) interprets the photographic message. The difference in the communication skills, attitude, knowledge level and socio-economic status of the encoder (photographer) and the decoder (viewer) results in different interpretations of the same photographic message by the encoder and the decoder.

II.) Ritual View of Communication

The Ritual View of communication was proposed in 1975 by James W. Carey in his classic essay, “A Cultural Approach to Communication”. Carey (1989) claims that, “a ritual view of communication is directed not toward the extension of messages in space but toward the maintenance of society in time; not the act of imparting information, but the representation of shared belief” (Carey, 1989: 18). Carey (1989) defined communication as “a symbolic process whereby reality is produced, maintained, repaired, and transformed” (ibid.21). In a ritual view, communication is a collective performance that is meaningful to the participants and that functions to sustain their community through time (ibid.23). “Communication is typified by such concepts as sharing, participation, association, fellowship and the possession of common faith in Carey’s (1989) ritual view of communication” (ibid.18). “The ritual view exploits the mutual roots of the terms commonness, communion, community, and communication. Communication in ritual view is viewed as a sacred ceremony that draws persons
together in **fellowship and commonality**" (ibid. 18). “Communication in the ritual view manifests itself in the construction and maintenance of an ordered, meaningful cultural world that controls and contains human action” (ibid. 18-19).

The present research used The Ritual view of communication to understand photography as a means of visual communication in interpersonal relationships. It was assumed that visual communication in interpersonal relationships through photography helps to **foster the feeling of togetherness and belongingness** in people by enabling them to **share and participate** in the process of photographic communication. The present research assumes that photographic communication in interpersonal relationships will help in the **representation of shared belief** as suggested by Carey (1989). The act or the process of photographic communication in inter-personal relationships is viewed as a **collective performance** that is **meaningful to the people participating in it**. The process of photographic communication is characterized by the feeling of **sharing, participation, association and fellowship**.

III.) **Uses and Gratification Theory**

The development of the Uses and gratification approach is traced way back to the 1940's & 1950's by some scholars but the Uses and Gratification theory as we know it today came into vogue in 1974, after the work of Katz, Blumer and Gurevitch. The U&G theory breathed a fresh life into the field of mass communication research as it shifted the focus from media to people. This theory seeks to explain/predict five things: psychological needs that help shape why people use the media and that motivate people to engage in media-use behaviours to derive gratifications to fulfill intrinsic needs within the confines of a socio-political environment. According to Katz et al. (1974) past communication research focused on “what do media do to people?”, whereas the U&G focuses on “what do people do with media?”

Katz et al. (1974) presented a five-field classification of needs or the **Process Model**. This model says that social and psychological origins of needs lead to motivations which lead to the expectation of rewards which causes the individual to select sources which will give satisfaction.
Cognitive needs: needs related to strengthening information, knowledge and understanding of our environment.

Affective needs: needs related to strengthening aesthetic, pleasurable and emotional experience.

Personal integrative needs: needs related to strengthening credibility, confidence, stability and status on an individual level.

Social integrative needs: these needs perform an integrative function by strengthening contact with family, friends and the world.

Escapist needs: needs related to escape, tension release and the desire for diversion.

The Uses and Gratification theory has been used extensively in mass communication research to study the uses of different media. This theory has been applied to the researches on soap operas, news programs, listening to radio, watching cable, channel surfing, magazine reading, using VCR, tabloid reading, reality TV, the internet and religious television but this theory has not been applied to the study of the medium of photography. The Uses and gratification perspective serves as one of the theoretical perspective on which the current research is based, as one of the main objectives of the present research is to inquire into the question as to why people click photographs?

The present research focuses on the practice of photography and the satisfactions derived from it along five parameters: cognitive, affective, personal integrative, social integrative and escapist. **Cognitive need gratification** through photography includes: the need to enhance knowledge and understanding about the world, satiate curiosity about things, facilitate discovery and exploration and act as an exercise in self-education. **Affective need gratification** through photography implies the use of photography as: a means of expression of emotions, a pleasurable experience that satiates aesthetic sensibilities, a way to deal with boredom and means of entertainment. **Personal Integrative need gratification** through photography means the use of photography as: a medium to keep in tune with inner self, fulfilling self, being in control and reinforcing personal values. **Social integrative need gratification** through photography indicates:
the need to strengthen bond with society, contribute to social prestige, foster a feeling of belonging, help chronicle society for posterity and to act as a mechanism to be a change agent. Escapist need gratification through photography suggests: the opportunity to explore fantasies, act as a breather and give personal space, offer a much needed contrast to routine activities, help forget tensions and problems and provide a legitimate excuse to be productively occupied.

IV.) Structural Constructivist Perspective

The Structural Constructivist perspective was proposed by Bourdieu in 1980's. Structuralism according to Bourdieu means that, "there exist objective structures within the social world which are independent of the consciousness and will of actors and these structures are capable of guiding and constraining their practices or their social representations of the world" (Bourdieu, 1989:14). Constructivism in Bourdieu’s terms means that, "actors' pre-dispositional schemes of perception, thought and action which are constitutive of "habitus", have a social origin and exist in relation to positional schemes of external social structures, such as fields, groups, and social classes" (Bourdieu, 1987: 147).

The present research made use of Bourdieu’s structural constructivist perspective to explain the influence of demographic factors like age, gender, education, occupation, income and socio-economic status and psychographic variables like sociability, self-esteem, locus of control and shyness on the choice of themes or subjects people choose to click in photography. The present research uses Bourdieu’s concept of structural constructivism to explain the differences in the nature of photography practices of photographers belonging to a particular category: professional photographers, photo-journalists and amateur photographers due to their social origin or class. It assumes that photographers belonging to a particular category will display certain similarities in their nature of photography owing to their similar socio-economic status or class. The socio-economic status of the photographer will determine which genre of photography he chooses and how he practices photography.
V.) Constructionist Perspective of Photography

The Constructionist perspective of photography proposes that the reality depicted through photographs is constructed. The present study aims to explore whether photography is a true representation of reality or is it coloured by the subjective vision of the photographer? The question of reality and photography can be approached from the realist and the constructionist perspective. The realists' consider photography to be a means of truthful rendering of reality, whereas the constructionists' see the reality depicted through photographs as constructed. The realist view of photographic reality is popular but it does not take into account the decisions that the photographer takes at every step of the photographic process, whether it is the decision to press the shutter, choose the camera angle, lighting, colour or contrast.

The current research adopts constructionist perspective because this perspective takes into account the element of subjectivity of the photographer, and helps explain how photography is a subjective interpretation of the world by the photographer. The present research views photography as a process that is influenced by the subjective choices made by the photographer at the time of choosing the subject of the photograph, taking decisions about the angle, lighting, exposure etc and decisions made at the post photographic stage, regarding editing, cropping, choosing the colour, contrast, brightness and size of the photograph etc.

VI.) Psychoanalytic Perspective

The origin of the psychoanalytic perspective on photography can be traced back to Freud’s theory of psychoanalysis. Roland Barthes’s and Susan Sontag’s views on photography are heavily influenced by Freud’s psychoanalytic perspective. Roland Barthes in his book Camera Lucida and Susan Sontag in her book, On Photography present photography as a means of representation and a mechanism of knowledge and power which allows the subject to compensate for a perceived loss, absence or threat in the object world and for the feelings of anxiety, fear or despair which are thereby provoked, this may include the loss of power over the object, the absence of a ‘loved one or the threat of difference (Kember, 1998: 6).
The psychoanalytic perspective helps to study photography as a compensatory mechanism. The psychoanalytic perspective enables to understand the motivation behind the desire to click photographs, the unconscious that drives people to practice photography. The study assumes that people use photographs as a defense to overcome anxiety of the passing time or the fear of losing something or someone. The photograph thus acts as a compensatory mechanism for the people who indulge in photography.

Conclusion

The various perspectives discussed in this chapter serve as the foundation for the present research. Berlo’s communication model helps to understand the process of photographic communication between the photographer and the viewer. The Ritual view of communication enables to study of communication in interpersonal relationships through photography. The Uses and Gratification theory allows the exploration of the motivations for photography by studying five types of need gratification derived from photography: cognitive, affective, personal and social integrative and escapist. Bourdieu’s Structural Constructivism helps to understand the differences in the nature of photography of different categories of photographers as a result of their social class and the influence of demographic and psychographic variables on the choice of theme in photography by the people. The Psychoanalytical perspective assists in understanding photography as a compensatory mechanism.