

# Media Dependency Theory

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Media dependency theory offers a helpful way of thinking about the relationship between **media** and the fulfillment of different **audience needs and goals**.

# System of Information



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# Importance of context

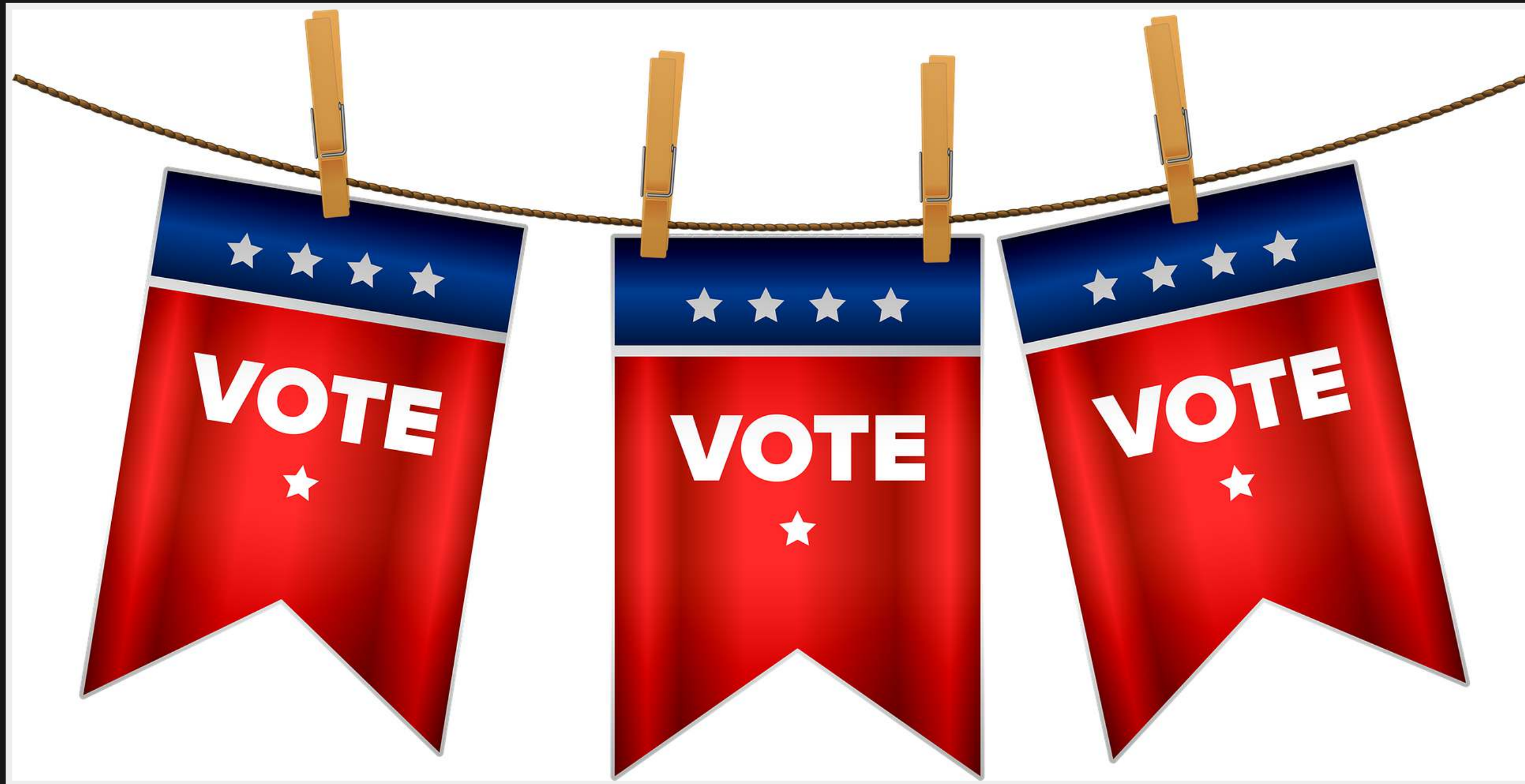


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# Impacts on Extent of Dependency

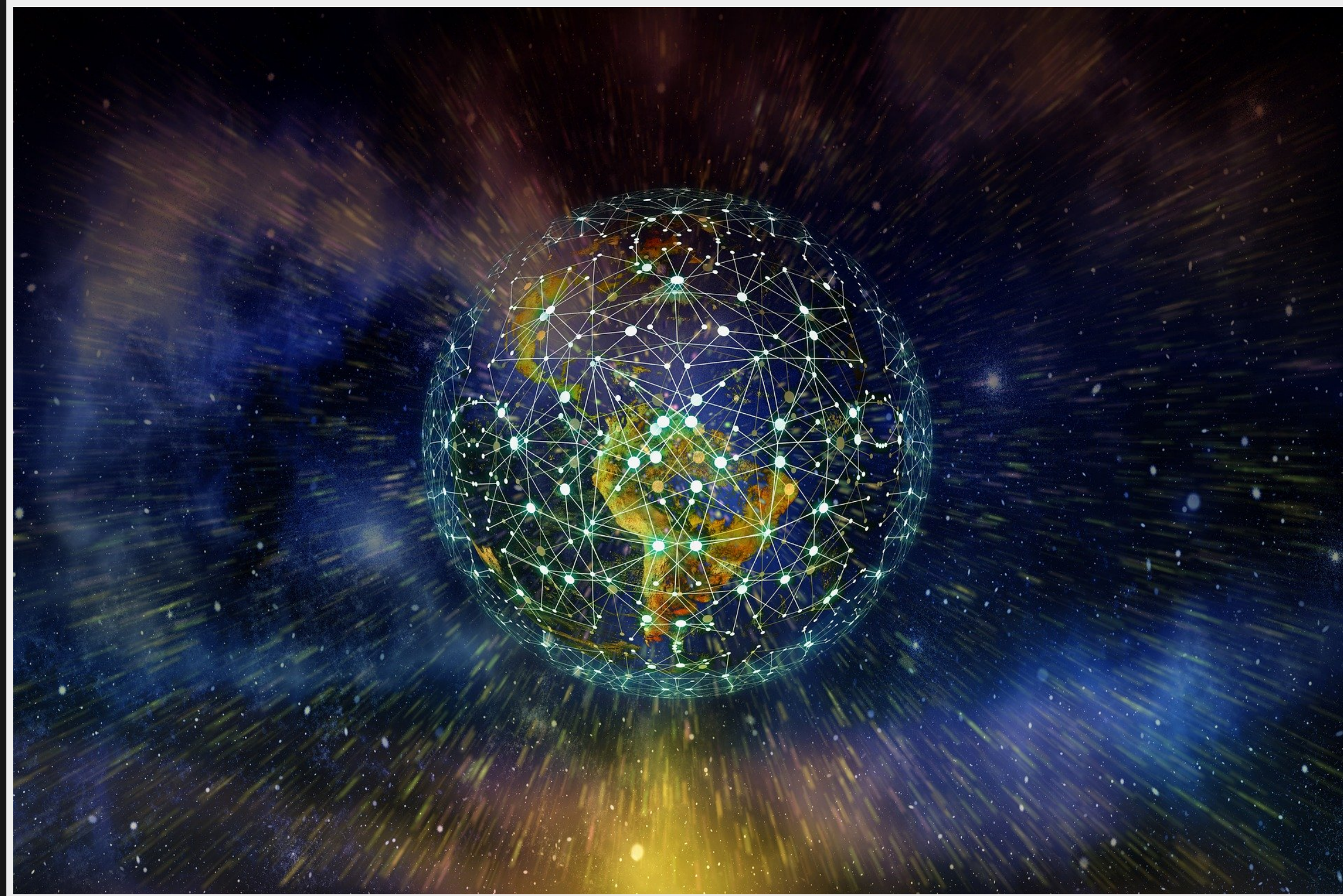
- Key attributes that influence the extent to which people may depend on media for information about a topic:
  - An individual's characteristics and goals
  - Their personal environment and interpersonal network
  - The dominant media and social systems they live within

# Example: 2020 Election



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# Importance of Journalistic Media



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The **degree of ambiguity** about news information impacts the **degree of media dependency**

(Higher ambiguity → Greater presumed dependence)



# Ambiguity and Understandings



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When a media organization has  
**exclusive information**, it tends to have  
**more power** within its relationship with  
an audience member

# Media Restrictions



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# Media Dependency and Intermediaries



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# Key Takeaways

- Media dependency theory views journalistic media as just one set of constituents within a broader system of information
- Media dependency theory focuses on understanding relationships within a system
- Journalism can be especially influential on people's understanding of things they have limited personal experience with
- When a media organization has exclusive information, it has more power in a relationship