

LESSON-33

PERCEPTION IN COMMUNICATION

Definition

S.P. Robbins defines perception “As a process by which individuals organize and interpret their sensory impressions in order to give meaning to their environment.”

James J. Gibson defines it as, “the process by which an individual maintains contact with his environment.”

David T. Kollat *et al.*, state that “the process whereby an individual receives stimuli through the various senses and interprets them.”

Meaning and Nature

Perception is a mental process to get sensory impression and attributing meaning. What one perceives is generally different from objective reality. It is possible that a person may view a thing or a situation, but as in most of the cases, it is very unusual to find such a situation.

Perception is the ability to see, understand and read clearly. This is an act and process of becoming aware. In other words, it is an interpretation that makes a person to understand. The perceivers have to understand the message of the information. A person's perception is the clear picture of reality of what is and what is not. A correct perception gives meaning correctly through the interpretation of a message and needs understanding. Basically, the message must first enter the mind of the receiver. This stage in communication process is referred to as “perception.”

A person may perceive people, events, environments, spoken, written and visual messages. People see things differently. Even ‘facts’ may be seen quite differently by different people. Relevance to one's needs is the most important determinants of one's personal view of the world. Things that seem to aid one's need, satisfaction are seen quickly. But things that look like obstacles, if they are not critically threatening, may be seen quickly, only then to be denied so that they may appear not to have been alter at all. By denying them, people ‘protect’ themselves temporarily from them. If they really become dangerous, however, people drop the blindness and face them.

To ignore differences in perception is to ignore a major determinant of behavior. Yet it is easy to assume unwarrantedly that everyone views the world from the same perception as the viewer and that time spent trying to reach a common view is wasted time.

Why is the perception important in the study of communication? It is simply because people's understanding the ideas, facts, impulses is based on their perception. What reality is not reality itself. We can explain that individuals may read and listen to things, yet understanding it differently. A number of factors operate to shape and sometimes, filter and distort understanding. These factors can reside in the receiver and, to some extent, in the speaker of the message. The receiver or reader is important in the process of communication.

When a receiver, listeners or readers interpret what he listens or reads the interpretation is heavily influenced by personal characteristics of the individual receiver. Receivers' attitudes, motives, past experience, interest, confidence on superiors and the

extent of trust are the relevant personal characteristics affecting understanding and interpretation.

A meaning may be the same but it can be interpreted differently. The reasons for, the different interpretations are divergent attitudes concerning the multiple meanings of words. Unsatisfied needs or motives stimulate individuals and may exert a strong influence on their understanding. Expectations can distort one's ability of understanding in that one will see what he expects to see. If a subordinate expects a manager to be autocratic, dictatorial or authoritative, they may perceive and understand them in that way only.

Some Suggestive Determinants of the Perception Process

1. *Stimulus*
2. *Conditions*
3. Intensity
4. Size
5. Message
6. Novelty
7. Position
8. Context
9. *Audience*
10. *Condition*
11. Information
12. Needs
13. Attitudes
14. Values
15. Interests
16. Confidence
17. Social Context
18. Cognitive Style

Source: Adapted from David A. Aaker, John G. Myers: *Advertising Management*. Prentice Hall of India Private Limited, New Delhi, 1986, p. 237.