

Media audiences assignment



The classic definition of “ media audience” is people who consume the media, in the past, they are readers who reading newspapers or magazines, and listeners who listening to the radio. Nowadays, media audience can be viewers who watching television program of users who surfing on the internet. And there are two views of “ media audience”, on the one hand, some discourses note that audience is passive, which means media dominant audience reactions and feelings. On the other hand, more researchers believe that the audience is active and play an important role in affecting media.

This essay will first explain these two conceptualizations of media audience, and then use different theories and approaches to make comparisons between these two points of views with specific examples. The idea of mass audience is arisen from the arrival of mass society. In Emilee Deuterium’s analysis, Nazi Germany and Stalin’s Soviet Union could be considered as mass society. In her studies, people in that mass society are bonded by needs and had collective conscience, so does the mass audience which mentioned in the mass media theory.

The mass media theory points out that media have ability to influence people’s attitudes, behaviors and aloes, for example the Direct Effect Theory, also labeled as Hypodermic needle theory. The famous “ Invaders from Mars”, that is, an American radio station make up the news of invaders from Mars and made thousands of residents into emergency situations in 1938. People who believe in Hypodermic needle theory pointed out that this example proved mass audience are one-way affected by the media.

Moreover, the Propaganda analysis emphasizes that mass audience can be easily affected by the media. For instance, Joseph Goebbels, the Nazi propaganda minister had put the humbly of Nazi everywhere on the street and the wall, in order to somewhat convince German people to adopt their idea about World War. And they were successful in some extent. Media audience is considered to be active in new audience research. Kevin Williams (2003) mentions that, " Audiences interpret media messages and their ability to do this is determined by a range of individual, social and cultural factors. L In his studies, mass media theory and as well as the mass audience discourse focus narrowly on the size of the audience, or the class of the audience, but ignores " nature of media audience". Likewise, Morley (1978) also point out messages can be produced from audience's reaction of the media content. Approach to new audience research like the Ethnography, provides better evidences than traditional researches in analyzing interaction between audience and media text.

It encourages the researcher to create a " real" environment of media content and observe the immediate reaction of the selected group of audiences, so that they can directly have the data. Film especially Hollywood Cinema, is suggested to have power to dominant its audience. Screen Theory explains that Hollywood cinema is often presented in one person's respective, like the protagonist's own perspective. This leads audiences to receive single and narrow messages from the film. Because the spectator has no options to select the preferred message, so Screen Theory is also used to explain mass audience, or the passive audience.

Nevertheless, Hollywood Cinema has changed and provides audiences opportunity to engage into the film. For example, Rear Window Media audiences By Yucky-Sheen produced by Hitchcock in sass. This film shifts among three camera looks even though its main story is about voyeurism (a male gaze at his courtyard), which give peculator chance to be involved in the whole story. In contrast to old approaches to media audience like Screen Theory mentioned above, Stuart Hall has found the encoding-decoding model as a better approach to analyze new audience.

Lewis said, " encoding-decoding model is the starting point of the active audience approach. " (Cruz and Lewis, 1994)² Encoding process is to circulate the media content among media audiences. And Lewis notes that the decoding process is crucial as it bases on audience's personal ability, values and culture backgrounds etc. To accept, understand and give their own opinion or reaction. Compare the Screen Theory with the Encoding-decoding model, new audience research consider media audience as a part of media circulation which mass audience research doesn't.

Williams suggests the Reception Analysis as a new audience approach which focus more on female audience's experience in consuming media product compare to past media audience research as a result of arising feminist and postponement theory such as, female author's book, soap opera for housewife and fashion magazines for office lady. In Rear Window for example, Elizabeth Cookie (2005) indicates that the camera mimic the male protagonist's gaze outside the rear window, and let spectator to be able to see what he see thus feel the pleasure when watching female half-naked body or some other sexual presentations.

Laura Mulled argues that this film serves for male spectator and “masculine” is represented in the media content. Unlikely, new audience research points out the importance of female audience in the contemporary society. Williams concludes, “Feminist research emphasized the creative abilities and cultural competencies of the female audience to interpret media messages to suit their own needs.” 3 Hobnobs (1982) used Crossroads as an example to analyze active female audience.

He lists several characteristics of soap Peres or romantic novels like, there are often many female characters, they often have complex relationships with different men especially “successful business men”. Nevertheless, series like Sex and the City and Gossip Girl which have fashion elements wealthy life are also appeals to women. The tendency of adding new elements in soap operas somewhat reflects contemporary female audience’s changing attitudes which seem to influence the media itself.

Compared to the 18th century which media audience could only receive information the media give them, new audience suggests medium like television provide flexibility of audience. Marx from the Chicago School thought that not only the culture but also messages were controlled by bourgeoisie. Besides, the Liberal Theory of Press Freedom emphasize Press system and media circulation should not be restricted or controlled, people have rights to know the completely messages but not the intercepted information.

For the new audience research, media audiences now have ability to pick pieces of the media text and create their preferred version of messages

because the medium like television presents information by numerous ways such as music, voice-over, videos, and subtitles and so on. Including what encoding-decoding model suggests media audience decoding ability varies, Fiske (1986) found audiences' decoding ability also depends on their pleasure to be actively engaged in the media interaction. Also, decoding ability can be differential as the arrival of fan culture.

For example, Williams (2005) mentions Madonna as one of the most popular female singers in sass. She considered herself as feminist and promote the ideal of " girls should have same opportunity and ability as boys" on television programs. And the media audience who was her fans would be easily attracted and affected by these elevation programs whilst others would probably not. In a word, television provides a wider and freer platform to media audience thus they can use media as they were used by media in the past. Some people pointed out that, even television or internet provide flexibility, audience are still somewhat passive.

They mention in TV series including soap operas, advertisements are unavoidable to ignore. In their point of view, media audience who watch these television programs would be sold to advertisers like commodities by the media company. And they emphasize, for audience themselves, they have no choice and would be considered passive. On the other hand, the Gratification Model argues against their ideas. Morley (1992) argues that, " personality types' in the audience gave rise to certain needs, some of which are directed to the mass media for satisfaction". For example, media audience doing cooking while watching television programs, playing cards while listening to the radio and even having bath while reading magazines or <https://assignbuster.com/media-audiences-assignment/>

newspapers. In his opinion, media audience is free to choose whether to watch, listen or read the media, which means they actually have ability to avoid watching the ads. So the Gratification Model prove hat media audience is still active and in occupied position. However, the mass audience or mass media theory and new audience theory have something in common for example, the impact of the media on teenagers. The effects model suggests that, "... He media working like a drug... And... Audience is drugged, addicted, duped. " 6 As the example the Invaders from Mars mentioned before, some discourses thought not only teenagers but also adult audience would be drugged by the media. Nevertheless, The Times once reported that violent films could raise Juvenile delinquency, thus youth crimes. In new audience research, theories like behaviorism suggests the same idea, experiments show that human social behavior can be changed day by day. The other similarity of mass media theory and new audience theory can be showed as the bias in doing researches especially surveys.

In doing laboratory experiments such as in analyzing behaviorism, human are not animals and they are different, therefore the experiment result could have bias due to their emotional reaction or something. And of course in surveys, people know how to create entertaining effects, so they may not giving serious answers to the question. Nevertheless, the data and result which come from experiment could not possible stand for real outcomes in real world, which is because laboratory is not able to create the exact same environment like the real circumstance happened in society. According to these bias, both mass audience research and new audience research are not totally convenience. In conclusion, mass audience which comes from the

mass media theory stands that the media audience is passive and easily affected by the media. In the opposite side, new audience theory suggests that the interaction between media audience and the media is also very important, moreover, the interaction varied due to different social status, cultural backgrounds, gender, age, economic factors and so on.

These two conceptualizations of the media audience have many differences. First, they are supported by different theories like Screen Theory and Encoding-Decoding Model, Masculine and Feminist and Reception analysis. Secondly, they are affected by different cultures, for example, mass media theory are in 'high' culture and its arrival brings mass culture instead of 'high culture', in contrast, new audience theory brings popular culture and fan culture which indicates audiences in front of television are able to use the media.