

Psychoanalysis of a family's entertainment patterns



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1. Introduction

The following article indulges into a study of the patterns of TV and radio programmes seen by an average household. We set out to carry our investigation by interviewing a family in Sheffield. After asking them questions like what they usually see and why do they see them we can try and construct a psychological pattern of their entertainment needs. This can then be fused together by various Psychological theories (such as Sigmund Freud's Theory of Id, Ego and Superego, Jean Piaget's Four cognitive stages <https://assignbuster.com/psychoanalysis-of-a-family-entertainment-patterns/>

for a child, and Maslow's Theory of Five Pyramidal Needs) and we will see the influence of media and environment on consumer behaviour.

1. 1 Family demography

The test family interviewed is of British Caucasian descent located in Sheffield, United Kingdom. The Jenkins family is an average lower-middle class family with both parents holding down regular jobs. Mr. Stuart Jenkins is 47 years old and runs his own Public Relations firm, which he established 3 years back after quitting a well paying job at another company. Mrs. Sarah Jenkins, 48 years of age, works as a freelance Spanish translator with dreams of setting up her own Translation Agency. The remaining members of the family are 17 years old Jamie Jenkins and 8 years old Helen Jenkins.

The interview

After a basic interview, the following data has been assimilated about the viewing preferences of the various family members. I will endeavour to classify them:

2. 1 Father

Mr. Stuart Jenkins has an affinity towards programs like Top Gear because of his interest in fast and attractive cars. He has also been a keen follower of all football related telecasts since his introduction to the sport at a young age by his father. He especially watches all Liverpool games and cannot handle a defeat for his team. He also likes to watch old classics like Casablanca and considers the current crop of movies to be an excuse for sex and violence.

2. 2 Mother

Mrs. Sarah Jenkins seldom gets the chance to sit back and watch a show because of her hectic schedule and mentioned that she mostly just caught bits of what her husband and the kids happened to be watching. However, she does try to follow the ' Sex and the City' and ' Desperate Housewives' series', which she prefers to view on her own. According to her she identifies herself with Brie, fortifying her argument by saying that the protagonist's meticulous nature for detail, affinity towards cleanliness resembles and her taste in clothes matches closest to her. Moreover, these serials are often a topic of discussion among her friends.

2. 3 Son

Jamie is interested in the late shows on VH1 for that is the time when the channel airs a multitude of Rock/Grunge music – the music he and his friends listen to. He also diligently follows the happenings on The OC and likes to watch Pro Wrestling. He considers his choice to be his lifestyle and likes the rebellious nature of Ryan.

2. 4 Daughter

Helen loves to watch MTV since she thinks that pop music is ' cool' and proclaims Christina Aguilera to be her mentor. She saw Christina Aguilera at the MTV Music Awards and decided that she was highly talented and was worthy of being made a role model. She also likes to watch The OC, Hollyoakes, The Simpsons, and Family Guy among other teen soaps with her brother because it makes her feel grown up.

3. Governing Theories

Freudian Theory of Id, Ego, Superego : According to Sigmund Freud, the Father of modern psychoanalysis, the human mind is divided into three parts depending upon the levels of awareness. The absolute subconscious is named the ' Id' which in Latin means ' Itself'. This part of the brain deals simply with the primal needs of seeking pleasure and avoiding pain. The ' Superego', also called ' I', is contained in the consciousness as well as the sub consciousness, and is the centre of all morals and values, which are derived from the concepts of right and wrong, taught in our childhood by our parents. The ' Superego' and the ' Id' are in a constant state of conflict, with the ' Superego' trying to counterbalance the ' Id'. The ' Ego' is contained in the consciousness and is influenced by the societal rules around us. It has the unenviable job of trying to balance both the ' Superego' and ' Id'. Being a part of the consciousness, it contains the processes logical reasoning and problem solving, and uses these tools to satisfy the ' Id's' primal needs within the restraints of the ' Superego'.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs : Abraham Maslow, a student of Jung, proposed the widely renowned Theory of Hierarchy of Needs, which states that within every person exists a pyramidal structure of five needs. These are, respectively:

1. Physiological Needs (hunger, thirst, intimacy)
2. Need for shelter or safety
3. Need for social acceptance and belonging
4. Need for esteem and attention
5. Need for self-actualisation or self fulfilment

According to Maslow, once a need is fulfilled, the next need becomes dominant.

Jean Piaget's Cognitive Stages: Jean Piaget was a child psychologist who proposed the now widely held theory of sequential growth of cognitive stages. He explained that a person comprehends all the information that fits into his established view of the world. When faced with information that is not possible to slot into that view of the world, the person has to rethink his view of the world to accommodate the information. Piaget described four stages of a child's cognitive development as follows:

1. Sensorimeter (Birth to age 2) – During this stage, the child learns about herself and her surroundings through sensations and movements. She learns that an object does not cease to exist simply because it is out of the reach of her senses.
2. Preoperational (First speech to about age 7) – The child is now able to think about things even if they are not immediately present. However she still has difficulty in understanding the concept of time. She lives in a form of a fantasy and changes any input information in her mind to better suit her needs.
3. Concrete (About first grade to adolescence) – The child begins to learn to think abstractly and grasp concrete ideas, managing to rationalize them. She starts to ask questions after rationally processing information.
4. Formal Operation (adolescence) – This is the final cognitive stage. The child develops the ability of hypothetical and deductive reasoning

3. 1 Psychological Sketch of Family

Father

Stuart Jenkins would seem to follow the Freudian Theory of Id, Ego and Superego. He quit his job and set up a business expecting to do very well for himself. However, he has not managed to make his firm perform to his expectations. His Id desires all the glitz and perks that come with a successful lifestyle, but he is unable to fulfil this need in his present situation, and feels an overwhelming sense of inadequacy. Thus, his Ego satisfies the Id's impulses and helps him to forget his difficult responsibilities by focusing on that sign of success – a gleaming new car. His attraction towards cars can also be driven by the general notion that cars are associated with Masculinity.

His love for football can be traced back to his father, who introduced him to the game. His love for the sport could be a conditioned response instilled by his love for his father. It helps too that the social setup that he is in, considers football to be a 'manly' sport and thus it helps Stuart to reaffirm his manliness to himself. A Liverpool victory becomes a victory for Stuart himself, and a defeat just a reminder of his own failure. Stuart is a model consumer, and his brand loyalty to the movies of his generation is apparent. Any form of media is open to perception and any message could contain one or more potential 'readings'. Stuart rejects newer movies because it seems to offend his sensibilities, and he perceives them to be corrupting factors.

Mother

Sarah seems to be the typical woman consumer for whom the home is as much a workplace as her office. While Stuart comes back from work to an evening of leisure, Sarah still has work left in managing the house. The cultural stereotyping and the resulting acquired modes of masculine and feminine subjectivities leave her with little time to be able to sit back and watch some television. However, she does not seem to mind it much and is fine with catching a few snatches of the various shows that happen to be on. This reaffirms the consumerist study that the man of the household has much more control over the content of the television than the lady. However, Sarah is partial towards 'Sex and the City' and 'Desperate housewives', possibly because she identifies with some of the characters like Brie, who are independent of any ties. She probably prefers to watch alone to experience some contrived feelings of freedom from matrimony, and feel a bit closer to the screen characters. While the Superego tells her that it is wrong to have such feelings, her Id drives her on. It takes the Ego to channel all her dark feelings into an escapist fantasy. The fantasy in some way fulfils her need for belonging, as per Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.

Son

Jamie seems to be a normal teenager, enamoured by the global mantra of consumerism. With the consumerist society heralding the rebel as the new 'cool', rock and grunge are definitely the music to listen to. His friend circle listens to the same music, and so it is possible that his choice of music is also due to societal influences.

The main protagonist of 'The OC', Ryan Atkins, is an outsider thrown into an alien environment who still manages to gain everyone's respect and affection. Jamie, in his teenage-angst, probably fancies himself to be a bit of an outsider too, and thus wants to model himself after Ryan Atkins. His rebellious anger also finds an outlet through the hard-hitting Pro-Wrestling, just like countless other teenagers.

Daughter

Helen is a typical victim of the consumerist attack on tweens, being exposed to the world of sexual excess that is today's pop music at such a tender age. According to Jean Pagiet's stages of behaviour, Helen is still too young to correctly comprehend the sexual information that is being thrown towards her courtesy of MTV. Therefore it is not a surprise that her model mentor is not Margaret Thatcher, or Helen Keller, but a gyrating pop princess – Christina Aguilera. Sexual information is a must for children, but just like a driving license, it needs to be presented when the receiver is ready for it. Similarly, watching OC with her big brother might make her feel older, but all it is basically doing is desensitising her to violence, sex, and crime.

As deduced from the interview of the Jenkins family, the influence of environment, media on the daily choices that a person makes are very profound. Consumerism can be observed in all spheres of life today. Man's psychological attitude, combined with consumerism drives everybody needs, choices and decisions.

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