
UNIT 2 MEDIA AUDIENCES

Structure

- 2.0 Introduction
- 2.1 Learning Outcomes
- 2.2 History of the Term 'Audience'
- 2.3 Understanding 'Audiences'
 - 2.3.1 Public-Crowd-Group-Mass-Audience
 - 2.3.2 Characteristics of Audiences
 - 2.3.3 Types of Audiences
 - 2.3.4 Audience Typologies
- 2.4 Theories on Audiences
 - 2.4.1 Bullet Theory
 - 2.4.2 Individual Difference Theory
 - 2.4.3 Social Category Theory
- 2.5 Audience Conception Traditions
 - 2.5.1 Structural
 - 2.5.2 Behavioural
 - 2.5.2 Cultural
- 2.6 Approaches to Audience Research
 - 2.6.1 Media Effects
 - 2.6.2 Cultivation Analysis
 - 2.6.3 Uses and Gratification
 - 2.6.4 Cultural Studies
 - 2.6.5 Reception Analysis
 - 2.6.6 Everyday Life
- 2.7 Future of the Audiences
- 2.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 2.9 Further Readings
- 2.10 Check Your Progress: Possible Answers

2.0 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, we took an overview of various issues which have bearing on media and society. This unit examines the concept of media audiences and its development historically. You are aware that one of the elements of communication is 'receiver'. The S-M-C-R (Sender-Message-Channel-Receiver) model which is linear in nature gives no role to 'receiver'. The subsequent two-way model, including feedback made 'receiver' active

beings reacting to the message sent by the sender. The term 'receiver' became 'audience' when the message gained a character of public performance. But we use the term 'audience' in variety of contexts. In the Indian context we also call them 'public', say general viewers in a cinema hall to indicate those using mass media.

In this unit, we shall discuss the evolution of the term itself, followed by the terminological differences between public, crowd, group and audience. We shall also examine the characteristics and types of audiences, theories about audiences, audience conception, traditions and few of the audience research approaches.

2.1 LEARNING OUTCOMES

After reading this unit you should be able to:

- explain the concept of audience;
- describe the evolution of media audiences;
- identify the characteristics, context and typologies related to media audiences;
- discuss the theories and approaches associated with media audiences; and
- explain the relevance of audiences in media studies.

2.2 HISTORY OF THE TERM 'AUDIENCE'

In media studies, the term 'audience' is the most contested territory. 'Who is audience' is most often very difficult to define for a filmmaker or a television producer or a journalist writing a news report. Yet all of them create a message for 'perceived' receivers. The audience is the one for whom the communication takes place. Senders vaguely define their own audience - yet the discourse around 'audience' is open-ended. We do not call people waiting for bus as an audience. An audience means the person has been engaging with media.

In oral cultures 'audience' was always present whereas with the emergence of written word the receivers and sender were freed from the constraints of time and space. Written word made it possible to reach out to receivers not even anticipated by the sender. The beginning of printing and later with photography, sound recordings, motion pictures, radio and television and now Internet have changed the concept of the 'audience'. It has changed from 'fixed', defined, homogeneous conception to polysemic, unstructured, diverse and heterogeneous individuals.

Though communication and theatrical processes are much older, last quarter of the sixteenth century witnessed gradual emergence of polarised identities of performer and listeners in musical performances. The emergence of broadcast system then brought out the concept of individuals sitting in the

privacy of their home listening to radio or watching television. These individuals were different from those attending lectures or concert halls. They were not located at the place where message was created. Let us take an example that you are watching a film made on Mahatma Gandhi. Depending upon the type of film (documentary or feature film or actual footage), the film is made 'about' a time/place, it is made 'in' a time/place and you as a viewer watch it in another time/place. Receivers which most often are referred as 'audience' of mass media are usually distanced from the senders.

McQuail (2000) elaborates the features of Graeco-Roman audience, many of which can be applied to today's audiences. They are:

- Planning and organisation of viewing as well as listening of the performances themselves;
- Events with public and popular character;
- Secular (thus not religious) content of performance- for entertainment, education and vicarious emotional experience;
- Voluntary, individual acts of choice and attention;
- Specialisation of roles of authors, performers and spectators; and
- Physical locatedness of performance and spectator experience.

The advent of mass media demanded formalisation of its audience listeners, readers, viewers for any medium – and they may not be directly observable. Most often broadcast systems were privately owned or operated through state licenses. It became necessary for them to address public needs. So, even for economic reasons it became necessary to assess public opinion and sentiment for defining audience. Measurement of audiences was also essential for market research and advertising departments which led to measuring devices. Such processes impacted the conception of audience.

Media fragmentation and abundance in the late twentieth century has led to more focus on 'receivers' for varied reasons. With Internet, the audience became further distanced from physical notion of space and time. In digital age, politically, socially, technologically and even economically, the concept of audience demands a re-definition. This has led to the advent of Web 2.0, social media applications and diffusion of mobile phones which has wired the world creating and eventually breaking online-offline dichotomies.

In 21st century, with the creation of 'international' audiences, media have become more of marketable commodities and cultural artifacts for world trade. Media messages are treated as goods that need to be packaged, marketed and distributed to reach perceptual 'audiences', some created by artificial demands, others pre- existent due to social and cultural affinity to the media and message content. Audiences then become 'consumers' of media goods. Media and entertainment became one industry covering publishing, film and television production, performance genre including a variety such as popular music and sports.

Audience, unlike in the past, now is defined more as a ‘sociological’ concept rather than the earlier ‘physical’ medium-centric concept. Audiences are socially situated and textually constituted subjects. They derive a meaning or ‘meanings’ from the media text on their own. John Fiske (2000) in his book *Television Culture* defines audience as “the social subject has a history, lives in a particular formation (a mix of class, gender, age, religion etc.) and is constituted by a complex cultural history that is both social and textual”.

Mosco and Kaye (2000) remark, “The concept of the audience is one of the governing ideas in mass communications research. It is also one of the most hotly contested...the concept was created largely out of marketing departments of companies with a stake in selling products through media”. They further remark that it has now expanded the scope of media studies but it is found puzzling why the discipline of communication studies still keeps using this marketing concept.

2.3 UNDERSTANDING ‘AUDIENCES’

If you examine your own experience of listening to radio, watching television or films, listening to music, being on social networking sites or even being part of a concert, you would know what it is being a member of an ‘audience’. The English word ‘audience’ has Latin roots - *audire* meaning to hear. Mosco and Kyle (2000) elaborate the context where earliest use of the word was found in 14th century. They remark that audience referred primarily to formal hearing in front of a magistrate, court official or sovereign and how sense of power is inherently linked to the word/concept. We also use words like ‘mass’ or ‘group’ as the connotation of audience. Let us understand how there are different meanings to words that get used interchangeably.

2.3.1 Public-Crowd-Group-Mass-Audience

You know your friends; it’s a group. Usually in a group, members know each other, share common values, have knowledge about membership, have a certain structure of relationships and continue over time with some goals to achieve. The crowd is larger and restricted. It is observable and within a particular place. Crowd gathers at the place of demonstration or an accident. It has spontaneity of formation and dispersal, unlike a group. Crowd also shares same ‘mood’ and some degree of identity but it does not have any structure or moral or social composition.

Unlike group and crowd, public is relatively large, more dispersed and enduring. Public conceptually refers to political formation around a cause or an issue. Protesters, union gatherings indicate publics who work to achieve political change. Democratic societies gave rise to the need for ‘informed citizenry’. Publics are thus linked to public opinion. In State supported public service broadcasting, the audience is public and not the consumer, as is the case with commercial broadcasting.

McQuail (2000) attributes the credit of defining mass to Herbert Blumer in 1939. Blumer defined mass as a new type of social formation in a modern society unlike the other concepts. Mass refers to different, heterogeneous, fluid, desperate, irrational, un-intellectual, scattered, loose, anonymous, large number of individuals as a collective. Mass reflects members not knowing each other yet share similar 'interest'. The concept of mass also assumes an element of manipulation by someone else. They are not self-aware, without self-identity and are incapable of acting together to attain any objectives. The term mass also gets used for 'mass market', 'mass electorate' unlike audience.

Audience as a set of spectators for public event, readers of printed book, viewers of motion picture visiting cinema-hall, television viewers, internet users or members on social networking sites – indicate 'institutionalisation' by media. Audiences unlike mass have been much more dispersed, individualised, privatised and large due to the advent of digital media. Audiences get impacted by changes in technology and society. Media audience unlike all other concepts are linked to media as receivers and they have exposure to a common message. They have their likes and dislikes, interests and preferences and expectations in their engagement with the media.

2.3.2 Characteristics of Audiences

Media audiences can be examined based on the following characteristics.

- 1) **Numbers:** Most media audiences are largely perceived in terms of numbers. Being technologically mediated and involving large capital investments to reach them, audiences inevitably were looked at as 'numbers'. With the advent of multiple media outlets and distribution mechanisms, the physical number of audience still matter to the 'sender' media institution. But in academic discourses, audiences do not only refer to 'number' but also to the 'social' context. So, audience is not mere quantity but has qualities as well.
- 2) **Anonymity:** The audience members do not know each other. Their nature varies depending upon the medium. There is no face to the audience. At times the audience gets appropriated and at times rejects messages that sender would have thought would succeed. Public knows everything but the senders do not know them.
- 3) **Heterogeneity:** Media audiences vary in their primary characteristics as individuals. They could be people of different age, gender, political ideology having differential social and economic standing. They are not organised and self-acting.
- 4) **Geography/Place:** Usually in the world prior to the Internet, transnational television and satellite radio, audiences were geographically constituted. In concerts and lecture halls, audiences are face-to-face but media audiences are most often not. Cinema halls and early television changed '*locatedness*' of print media readers. With new media technologies, both time and place

of audiences became much more anonymous, large and passive.

- 5) **Time:** The audiences are also defined in terms of 'daytime', 'prime time', 'first telecast', and 'repeat show', 'regular' or 'one-time' and so on. Prime time audiences are usually assumed to be working people whereas afternoon shows are for home makers. With newer technologies like Video on Demand, recording of live telecast and digital media, the notion of real-time audiences need to be further studied.
- 6) **Medium/Channel/Content:** Media organisations try to define those they attempt to reach out as their audiences. The type of medium by its very nature also defines broad characteristics of its audiences. For example, newspapers are usually for literates whereas radio programming language will define its intended listeners. Even within the same medium, genre/type of content defines its audience. Language, semantic codes, genres, subjects and styles define who the audiences are for that message. We see that in today's television environment channels differentiate themselves through content. Researchers have shown how genre defines its audiences like soap operas for women and sports and news for men. There is also a concept of 'gendered audience'. Gendered audience refers to the nature, type, volume of particular media usage by males or females and how their roles, preferences, interests influence these choices.
- 7) **Expectations:** Audience has certain expectations from media to address their information, entertainment and education needs. Media makers also attempt to address audience expectations. Print and electronic media continue to 'measure' their audiences as precisely as possible so as to change their message content in line with audience expectations. Filmmakers often visit cinema halls to assess viewers' response to their films.
- 8) **Longevity:** Audiences for any given medium may or may not be fixed for a continuous period of time, depending upon the medium; audience may change their preferences or shift away. Even in a medium like television, the audience for a given programme may vary as people move in and out of channel or programme using remote control.

As student of mass communication, you need to be aware that media audiences are rooted in the society's social and cultural systems and techno-economic base. Members of the audience produce, reproduce, develop and distribute culture through media. In the following section, an attempt has been made to discuss different types of audiences.

2.3.3 Types of Audiences

There is no consensus on the types of audiences in media studies as scholars have suggested varied classifications. For our purpose, we can broadly define it based on the size, geography, and the sphere of usage.

There can be group audience or a mass audience. As you know from earlier discussions, group refers to 'taste' culture or 'class' culture, such as people

who like watching a particular programme or like an actor. There is also a 'fan culture'. Group audiences usually have similar interests and are interested in particular 'type' of media content. Mass audience represents audiences created for mass media like television or film. The same media content is mass distributed to people for mass consumption.

We also refer to audiences in term of local national or transnational audiences. Unlike earlier music concert or lecture hall 'local' audiences, mass media channels made most audiences 'national' or 'regional'. Satellite broadcasting and Internet made transnational audiences possible. It is often argued that local audiences are likely to have similar interests and homogenous characteristics. Local cable channels, community or campus radio station, newsletters create local audience. Public service broadcasting creates national audience.

By sphere of usage we imply public or private sphere. Certain mass media have public character for example films in cinema halls which the audience not only watches away from home but also experience a sense of being part of society/ collective in theatre. Research has shown that in non-western societies cinema- hall audiences have a distinctly different character than western societies. Even in folk performances like *Ram lila* or *bhavai* or *lavani*, the performer/viewer dichotomy does not exist, and audience members also become part of the performance. Private sphere media usage depends upon an individual's likes, needs, interest or motivation. It is usually within the confines of the privacy of the home. Digital technologies, especially hand-held devices like mobiles or tablets have merged the public-private divide. Today you listen to people's most personal conversations in most public spaces or see individuals watching films on smart phones or tablets while travelling in train or bus with you.

2.3.4 Audience Typologies

There are three main ways of defining sender-audience relationship; Audience as target, audience as participant and audience as spectator. Mass media in its early and even present avatars transmit information and beliefs to its potential 'target'. Audiences are perceived as destination for sending signals or messages for the purpose of control or influence. Public service advertisements for anti- smoking or rural health mission are examples of target framework. In 'participant' framework, based on Carrey's expressive/ritualistic model, audiences share and increase commonality with the sender. Communication being normative does not want to change the receiver. Television shows with studio audience, dial-in radio shows, online response/comments by readers to newspaper articles are examples of a participating audience. In the spectator audience, the sender only seeks attention and does not want to transmit information or influence. The examples of sports matches advertising, to catch attention are spectatorship instances.

Ien Ang (1991) in her landmark book “*Desperately seeking the audience*” takes an institutional perspective. Referring to television audiences, she notes American television audience as ‘market’ whereas European television audience as ‘public’. She uses Rom Harre’s concept of audience as ‘taxonomic collective’ which is “an entity of serialised, in principle unrelated individuals who form a group solely because each member has a characteristic that is like that of each other member” (Harre, 1991).

Check Your Progress: 1

Note: 1) Use the space below for your answers

2) Compare your answers with those given at the end of the Unit.

1) Mention some differences in ‘participant’ and ‘spectator’ audiences.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

2.4 THEORIES ON AUDIENCES

Some of the following theories of mass communication define relationship of media and audiences.

2.4.1 Bullet Theory

Hypodermic Needle or Magic Bullet theory came into being in 1940s and 1950s. It was born out of the stimulus-response assumption. It believed that media had direct, immediate and powerful impact on its audience. It also presumed that media changed behaviour of its audience. Messages were viewed as bullets and the audiences as sitting ducks to be struck by the media.

The theory came at a time when Hitler had monopolised mass media to unify German public; radio and television were becoming popular and persuasion industries such as advertising and propaganda were emerging. Walter Lippman, in his 1922 work titled ‘Public Opinion’ gave importance to the role of media.

There were also studies during that time examining the influence of motion pictures on children and number of propaganda theories. It was a time when power of media was over-estimated.

The theory views a needle or bullet being ‘injected’ or ‘shot in’ at the ‘mass’ audience and audience get immediately influenced. The underlying assumptions are that audiences are passive, do not have other sources of information and they are going to believe whatever media transmits. There

have been few examples of this. The Indian media telecast of Lord Ganesha idols drinking milk, which made everyone else go and try it or the American experience of 'War of Worlds' in forties when millions of Americans believed that aliens were invading earth and so they fled their homes. Bullet theory assumes audience as an enormous, undifferentiated mass.

The theory was refuted when evidences of audiences rejecting media messages or differentially interpreting them came through researches.

2.4.2 Individual Difference Theory

Rooted in psychology, after World War II, this theory negated Bullet Theory. It stated that even if media presents messages, members of the audience interpret them selectively. This selection is influenced by the individual characteristics such as knowledge, attitudes, practices, mode of personal gratification from the media consumption and so on. Individuals selectively choose exposure, attention, perception and retention.

This theory presented that since the media messages are perceived selectively by the individual member, the retention, interpretation and influence are also individual specific as each individual possess diverse psychological mechanisms. Media content while activating them do not do so indiscriminately. Unlike bullet theory, the media effect is limited as it is based on the individual differences.

This theory negated the role of social structures and membership of the individual with the social group. Since it isolated the individual from his/her social environment, it gives no framework to media producers to make messages for individuals. Uses and gratification approach to audiences also stems from this theory.

2.4.3 Social Category Theory

This theory assumed that in any given society, there are groups or categories of people with specific characteristics. Members of those groups or social categories react to the media messages in a similar way. Let us take an example of response to an English music video or reality show on a Western channel, which would be easily accepted by young college-going youth compared to an elderly who may disapprove of the presentation. Unlike individual difference theory, here the selection by the individual could be based on his/her age, occupation, sex, income, education, prior exposure and so on. The social category or context of individual influences the pattern of media attention and response.

All the three theories discussed above define the nature of audience in relation to the mass media. By now you know that, no single theory is right or wrong and each explains the context in which they were born. It also needs to be understood that mass communication as a discipline is still inventing its own foundation.

Most of the earlier theories were born out of sociology, psychology, anthropology and so on. Also, being a behavioural science, most theories are normative and culture-specific.

Activity -1

Select a television programme of your choice. List your primary characteristics (age, education, sex, occupation, income etc.) of the audience for that programme. Now try and talk to five people who belong to similar characteristics and examine which of the above theory is applicable in the context of that television programme.

2.5 AUDIENCE CONCEPTION TRADITIONS

Now you understand that audience has varied typologies and theories to relate them to mass media. Here we would discuss how audiences have been conceived in three main traditions. Each of these traditions in a way represents progression of audience concept through research methodologies and their relationship with media.

2.5.1 Structural

With the development of mass media, it became essential to know who was using which medium. This tradition looks at media system and individual media use. Also known as audience measurement, it examined 'reach' of print media based on circulation figures, gathering data essential for managements to seek advertisements. Apart from size of the audience, the need to know basic social compositions, linked advertising with market research industry. Structural tradition looks at demographics, amount and kind of media exposure, 'flow' of audience from one media to another and so on. It is centered on questions like 'who does what with which media'.

2.5.2 Behavioural

This tradition explores effects and use of media by its audiences. As we discussed earlier, the early mass media research was based on 'effects' of media on children or young people. Early studies viewed audience as passive, receiving media unknowingly, getting exposed to 'impact' or 'influence'. Most of the effects research adopted experimental methods and manipulated communication (channel, content, reception) to examine audience response. Another type of behavioural tradition is media 'use' research. A lot of structural data was juxtaposed with the media use data to draw conclusions about media effects. A great deal of research on motives and selection patterns of audiences have also been undertaken within this tradition. Here the questions are 'what does the medium do to people' unlike socio-cultural tradition which questions 'what people do with media'.

2.5.2 Cultural

Unlike both the previous traditions, this tradition looks at media as institutions and how audiences negotiate meaning of media texts. Reception analysis, cultural studies and everyday life approaches represent this tradition. It not only looks at media content but also the context of reception. More qualitative and ethnographic in nature, this tradition examines social and cultural context of meaning production by audiences. It also attempts to examine how media messages are embedded in ideology and how audiences negotiate their meanings from those messages. The objective here is not to examine influence or use but the nature of relationship and rituals associated with the consumption by the audiences.

Check Your Progress: 2

Note: 1) Use the space below for your answers

2) Compare your answers with those given at the end of the Unit.

Outline the main characteristics of the following traditions of audience research:

1) Structural

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

2) Behavioural

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

3) Cultural

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

2.6 APPROACHES TO AUDIENCE RESEARCH

In the previous sections we have discussed how theories and traditions have evolved over the years in media studies that have influenced conception of audience. Now we shall discuss varied ways of researching audiences and how that reveals their relationship with mass media. By now you must have understood that the paradigms of role and relationship between media, audiences and society influence the approach to audience research. Following is the brief description of more prominent approaches to audience research.

2.6.1 Media Effects

One of the oldest approaches, it came into existence to understand response of audiences to media content. Rooted in media stimulated immediate response model, effects approach tried to establish correlation between media messages and their influence on its receivers. This approach presumed that media messages are sent and received by audiences mostly passively. This approach was aligned to bullet theory but eventually it was realised that the message (sent and received) and response (as recorded) was interfaced by numerous other variables. Characteristics of source, message itself, channel, context of reception, receiver motivations and needs besides many extraneous factors questioned effects research tradition. There are varied effects traditions, each having their own assumptions about 'image of audience', 'text', 'societal context', basis of involvement, and hypothesised effects. Persuasion studies, knowledge gap, uses and gratification and diffusion also borrow from effects approach.

2.6.2 Cultivation Analysis

George Gerbner and his colleagues are credited with this 'influential and sometimes controversial' research approach. In 1969 it was named as cultural indicators research programme, applied mainly for television audiences. There are three different elements to it:

- a) Institutional processes impacting production of media content through decision making and policy formation.
- b) Message System Analysis, as messages are reflection of mainstream modern culture.
- c) Relationship between exposure to television messages and audience beliefs and behaviours by comparing groups of light and heavy users of medium under study.

This approach to audience analysis examines macro system oriented as well as individual oriented micro phenomenon. Structure of culture and changes in that structure as well as processes occurring within that structure are examined. It was criticised for having emphasised the 'quantum of exposure' and negation of other sources of information to the audience members.

2.6.3 Uses and Gratification

This approach was based on the works done on the use of radio by listeners in 1937 by Paul F Lazarsfeld (1901-1976), attitude change work by Carl Iver Hovland (1912-1961) and many others. Lazarsfeld's work intended to measure impact of radio on attitudes of listeners and it led to the development of opinion poll as a methodological tool for audience research. Hovland's work in social psychology examined propaganda studies and attitude change of people.

Gratification studies built on the notion of selectivity give active role to audience members. It states that viewer/listener chooses messages and media not only to define prior opinions and habits but also to satisfy needs, interests and strivings. Media are used to escape, achieve social mobility or for reassurance. Rooted in functional analysis, this approach links content as well as effects research.

2.6.4 Cultural Studies

Developed during the sixties and seventies, on the 'borderland' of social sciences and humanities, cultural studies most directly take on question of audience. It focuses on actual message or discourse of communication as well as genre of media message. Critical approach of research, it considers media as principal instruments of ruling elites for maintaining ideological control over its audiences. Unlike literary criticism, it explores popular and mass culture. Unlike all the three approaches discussed above, cultural studies are qualitative and critical in nature.

2.6.5 Reception Analysis

From the quantitative tradition of audience research, reception studies brought in qualitative analysis in audience research. In last twenty years, reception analysis has become an established field of study. David Morley's pioneering work of 'Nationwide' television audience in 1980 is considered the beginning of reception analysis. You need to understand that cultural studies and reception analysis overlap and cultural studies has broader concerns. Based on Hall's encoding/ decoding model, reception analysis viewed television programmes as 'meaningful' discourses or texts structured in dominant ideology. It refers to studies focusing on meaning, production and experiences of audiences and their interaction with media texts.

2.6.6 Everyday Life

Unlike earlier works on 'researching audiences', everyday life or day-to-day life approach borrows from humanities and focuses on subjectivity. It examines audience experiences and role of media in their daily life. Rooted in reception analysis, it acknowledges that member of the audience interprets the media messages contextually. The circumstances, outlook and prejudices in 'everyday life' situation influence the reception of media content. Unlike the

earlier passive audiences who were consuming media commodities, this approach, like uses and gratification, looks at audiences as active beings. The active role of the audience is in interpreting the meaning from the media messages.

Activity-2

List your expectations as a member of an audience for television news channel as well as newspaper. Do you find any difference? Analyse the reasons.

2.7 FUTURE OF THE AUDIENCES

While you are reading this, more and more content would have been generated by the audiences themselves on social media. With User Generated Content on social networking sites and acknowledgement of it by the Main Stream Media (MSM), another dichotomy of writer-reader has disappeared. Now is the time of collaborative content generation and real time interactivity. While the State is becoming more and more rigid about forms of reaction and action by audiences, technology and society keep surprising everyone. There have been numerous examples of citizen journalism, user posted personal accounts of disasters or political insurgency, blogger protests, online petitions, flash mobs and so on. People who are not ‘trained’ to create media content are today becoming ‘producers’. Alvin Toffler used the term ‘prosumers’ (producer/professional- consumers) way back in 1980 in his book *The Third Wave* which has turned out to be true.

From Ang’s question of ‘what it means, or what it is like to live in a media saturated world’ in 1996 to Liz Bird’s ‘audiences are everywhere and nowhere’ in 2003, audience research has come a long way. From the one-to-many and centre-to-periphery conception of mass media to the more diverse, one-to-one and many-to-many media will create newer audiences. Audiences today use media in multi-fold. For instance, you watch television on mobile, and SMS your friend and update your status on social media new areas for audience research.

2.8 LET US SUM UP

This unit exposed you to the concept of media audiences – their evolution, characteristics, theories, approaches and traditions to research them. The very nature of defining communication influences the way one views audiences. In public service broadcasting the audience becomes ‘public’ whereas in a commercial broadcasting they are ‘consumers’. Audiences differ in terms of geography, time, heterogeneity, longevity, medium and expectations. There are mainly three traditions of audience research- structural, behavioural and socio- cultural. Audience research approaches have differed from effects to everyday life and cultural studies to reception analysis.

Now you can appreciate that in understanding media and society relationship, audience is an important element. Media audiences define the communication and it is because of them that communication takes place. With digital technologies the future of audience has become more dynamic as audience has become media producer now.

In the next unit we shall discuss the concept of media literacy and its need in the present times.

2.9 FURTHER READINGS

- 1) Ang, I. (1991), *Desperately seeking the audience*, Routledge, London.
- 2) Barnouw, E. (1989) (ed.), *International Encyclopedia of communications*, OUP, New York.
- 3) Fiske, J. (2001) *Television Culture*, Routledge, London.
- 4) Hagen, I and Janet, W. (2000) (ed.), *Consuming Audiences? Production and Reception in Media Research*, Hampton Press, New Jersey.
- 5) McQuail, D. (1997), *Audience Analysis*, Sage, California McQuail, D. (2000), *Mass Communication Theory*, Sage, London
- 6) Nightingale, V. (2011) (ed.), *The Handbook of Media Audiences*, Wiley and Blackwell, United Kingdom
- 7) Ross, K. and Nightingale, V. (2003), *Media and Audiences: Issues in Cultural and Media Studies*, McGraw-Hill International, England.

2.10 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: POSSIBLE ANSWERS

Check Your Progress: 1

- 1) The 'participant' audience is based on Carrey's expressive/ritualistic model. It shares and increases interaction and commonality with the sender. Television shows with studio audience, dial-in radio shows, online response/comments by readers to newspaper articles are examples of a participating audience. Spectator audience on the other hand, the sender only seeks attention and does not want to transmit information or influence. The examples of sports matches, advertising to catch attention are spectatorship instances.

Check Your Progress: 2

- 1) Structural tradition looks at media system and individual media use. Also known as audience measurement, it examined 'reach' of print media based on circulation figures, data essential for managements to seek advertisements. It is centered on questions like 'who does what with which media'.

- 2) Behavioral tradition explores effects and use of media by its audiences. Lot of research on motives and selection patterns of audiences have also been undertaken within this tradition. Here the questions are ‘what does the medium does to people’.
- 3) Cultural tradition looks at media as institutions and how audiences negotiate meaning of media texts. Reception analysis, cultural studies and everyday life approaches represent this tradition. The objective here is not to examine influence or use but the nature of relationship and rituals associated with the consumption by the audiences.



ignou
THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY