Introduction to Media Audiences

Definition

The **audience** is any group of people who receive a media text.

All audiences are different and in media studies we are particularly interested in the **target audience**. This is the audience that **media producers** aim their product at.

**Media producers** have a profile of the group of people and individuals whom they see as their **intended audience**. A film about teenagers will have a **target audience** of teenagers. The ***Harry Potter*** films will have children and the family as the **target audience**.

For any media text we can ask who is the **target audience** for this text. Then we have to ask what sort of audience is the **target audience**? Is it a **mass audience**?

This is a very large group of people of several million such as the audience for ITV’s *Coronation Street*. A series such as the US comedy *Ugly Betty* attracts a world wide audience of tens of millions – can you work out why?

Or is it a **niche audience** which is a smaller and more specific group of people. This might be an audience of well under a million music fans who watch a live concert on **BBC3**, the **BBC’s** digital TV channel.

**Every media text is aimed at an audience**. The mobile phone company **Orange** aim their products at a large but selected audience of movie goers as they advertise mainly in the cinema. This is a **target audience** of a considerable number of individuals whom **Orange** have targeted as being suitable customers for their products.

Things that interest producers about an audience include gender, age, class, job, ethnicity and leisure interests, as well as its size.

It is possible to make some assumptions about an audience such as its likely size, and the type of people in the audience. For a televised football match the audience is mainly young male football fans.

Consider

Consider how you, as an audience member, read and evaluate a film or magazine advertisement? To what extent is your reading and evaluation influenced by your age, gender, background etc?

Activity

* Choose a television programme you like. Break down what exactly you like about the programme.
* What particular features do you identify with?
* What things particularly attract you about this programme?
* Now try and work out who the producers think is the target audience – is it you?

How big is this audience? You can check this by looking at weekly television audience data at the back of Broadcast Magazine or [http://www.barb.org.net](https://media.edusites.co.uk/?URL=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.barb.org.net) .