The Mystery of the Audience
Making sense of the unknowable

- Mass media and the lack of feedback; in media industries “failure is the norm” (Sociologist Todd Gitlin)
- This leads to the “problem of knowing” (Gitlin)
- “Audience” is the name of a problem, not a thing known
The declining state of network television
“The result is that the music industry finds itself fighting over pennies while waving goodbye to dollars. For instance, the growing but still specialized market for vinyl records is generating more revenue than the music on YouTube, one of the biggest destinations on the Internet, but that’s because YouTube pays royalties in the tiniest fractions of cents.” NYT
The Capitalist Solution to the unknowability of the Audience: Quantification

- The language of money is numbers
- What gets counted is rarely obvious: meanings are not inherently “things” that can be weighed and measured.
TV Upfronts 2016: Your Guide to Network Pitches and Programming

From Jodi Sweetin to '90s Reboots, Here's What TV Networks Are Presenting to Advertisers During Their Upfront Pitches

By Jeanine Poggi. Published on March 28, 2016.
The Pitch: CMT plans to double its original programming this year and bow its first batch of scripted series, while remaining true to its country music roots.

Ratings: The Viacom-owned channel ended 2015 with its total viewership down 15% to 297,000 in prime time, while its 18-49 ratings sank 16%.

Programming: "Still the King," CMT's first scripted series about a washed-up, one-hit wonder musician (Billy Ray Cyrus) who discovers he has a 15-year-old daughter, will premiere June 12. And "Million Dollar Quartet," inspired by the 2010 Broadway musical about how Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash and Jerry Lee Lewis became stars, will debut in November.

The network also announced a new summer event, CMT Concert of the Summer. Billed as a new CMT tentpole, the special will feature a yet-to-be-named country music star and promises to "redefine the concert-going experience."
Disney Channel

The Pitch: Kids cable networks are thinking way beyond the traditional TV set as they plan their new programming because kids see little distinction between watching a series live or on demand on other platforms or devices. To this end, Disney Channel is abandoning its traditional programming model where content is created for TV and then rolled out on other platforms. Instead, it is making new episodes of series available on all platforms the same day they premiere on linear networks. Previously, shows were not available on video-on-demand or the Watch Disney apps until the day after they aired on TV.

Ratings: Disney Channel ended 2015 as the most watched cable network in total day for the first time, just barely edging out Nickelodeon, which held the title for 20 years. But like most cable channels, Disney is also feeling the pressure. Its 2-to-11-year-old audience in total day declined nearly 18% during the year.

Programming: Disney is pitching advertisers 17 new series, 28 returning shows, the Radio Disney Music Awards and two new original movies. "Big Hero 6," the movie about an inflatable robot, will be turned into a TV series set to air on Disney XD in 2017. Disney renewed "The Lion Guard," based on the "Lion King" franchise, for a second season. Disney Junior, its network aimed at kids 2-7, will launch "Doc McStuffins," an animated series about a little girl who runs her own repair shop for stuffed animals. Disney also acquired the rights to "Cosmic Princess," a movie about a 15-year-old girl in space who is the direct descendent of the first human born in space.
The TV industry’s view of the audience

• Sit down and be counted: for commercial TV to work, the audience must be turned into numbers

• Why don’t we ask the audience what they want (i.e., vote)? Because the language of money is numbers.

• Nielsen CEO: “the holy grail of audience research is totally passive measurement”
Nielsen and Arbitron: the old model

- The Nielsen People Meter
- Sweeps weeks and Diaries (Arbitron)
- Nielsen: > 5000 national households, 20,000 local meters (just channels)
• 1 TV set = 54,000 people

• Nonrepresentative sample problems: low income, transient, and non-English-speaking audiences undercounted

• Problems of multiple sets and viewers

• Do people actually watch the ads? Remotes, VCRs, DVRs, and beyond
Accuracy Controversies

- Ratings are an educated guess, but how good?
- The bigger the market, the more accurate: national monthly ratings are pretty accurate, big cities are still pretty good, smaller cities less so, and small rural markets are terrible.
The Sociology of Ratings Accuracy

- Hypoing during sweeps
- ABC executive: “you can’t take into consideration everyday, ‘boy do I have confidence in that number or not?’ ... It wouldn’t be practical to think about whether these numbers are right or not.”
- Nielsen CEO: “ratings are the common currency” of the TV industry
• Internet advertising: the problem of click-throughs

• ease of counting: social media (e.g., facebook) and demographics, but more active audience
Efforts to adapt: Portable People Meters
AT&T Plans 100 Upfront Events to Pitch Addressable TV Advertising

Aims to Educate Market on Household-Level Targeting

By Jeanine Poggi. Published on March 17, 2016.

AT&T will show marketers and agencies results of some addressable campaigns over the last four years. Credit: AT&T

Despite years and years of indications that addressable TV advertising has arrived, marketers heading into this year's upfront negotiations still don't consider it a robust, regular tool for reaching consumers. To try to finally change that, AT&T AdWorks is planning over 100 events around the country to prove that its targeting initiatives can and do work.
Social media platforms

- Advertising is not just a way to pay the bills on social media; it is why they exist.
- Services and content are “free” to users, because “the product is you”; the companies “rent your eyeballs to advertisers”
- Instead of “mass” audiences like TV, audiences can be very precisely targeted.
New Techniques

- Data mining (google knows when you’re asleep and awake, and much more)
- Encouraging interaction (rather than “couch potato” passive consumption): e.g., clickbait
- Selling browsing history (cookies, searches) to advertisers and platform integrators
- Highly targeted advertising
http://www.awesomenesstv.com/
New Efforts to turn audiences into $$

- Facebook: new tool to make it easier for advertisers to plan and buy ad campaigns across television and Facebook, working with Nielsen. 88% of tablet owners and 86% of smartphone owners use devices while watching television.

- Symphony's VideoPulse, a cloud-based service that captures live media usage by individuals across several platforms (including VOD, OTT, Web, mobile, gaming devices, DVR and linear TV), is currently being beta tested by major media companies like NBCUniversal and Viacom.
New Efforts to turn audiences into $$

- Google announced a product that will let marketers target ad campaigns to consumers using their email addresses. The program, called Customer Match, lets companies upload a list of customers’ email addresses gleaned, for example, from its loyalty membership program. The company can show specific ads to these customers when they are signed into Google.

- NYT: “The idea is that you combine the pinpoint intent of something like search with information that you have about your customers,” said [a] senior vice president for advertising and commerce at Google. The product will let advertisers show customers ad campaigns if they have not recently shopped for the company’s products.
Nielsen's “Total Audience Measurement”

• Began rolling out in Dec. 2015

• Exec: "What we have to do to perform a cross-platform total audience measurement is line all of those numbers up, so they have to be apples-to-apples comparisons," Clarken said. "They have to follow the same underlying rules. They have to be on a single-sourced platform, because otherwise you're cobbling numbers together and creating Frankenmetrics."
Nielsen's “Total Audience Measurement”

- a single-sourced platform to account for all viewing across linear TV, DVR, VOD, connected TV devices (Roku, Apple TV and Xbox), mobile, PC and tablets. The only thing left out: streaming content on wearables like the Apple Watch.
Nielsen's “Total Audience Measurement”

- For one client's broadcast drama that aired in early September, Nielsen found the following:
  - 45 percent of the episode's audience watched during its live airing
  - An additional 32 percent watched it via DVR during the first seven days after it aired
  - 2 percent watched on DVR between 8 days and 35 days after it aired
  - 7 percent of the audience watched it on VOD from within 35 days
  - 6 percent watched via a connected TV device
  - 8 percent watched digitally, streaming it on a PC, mobile device or tablet
Music industry and the pursuit of quantification

- Record/DVD sales numbers
- Radio airplays
- Downloads
- Streaming
- Copyright collectives: BMI and ASCAP
Scholarly approaches to media and quantification
Mass Society Theory
DESTROY THIS MAD BRUTE

ENLIST

U.S. ARMY - 600 MARKET ST.
So wie wir kämpfen

Arbeite Du für den Sieg!
Defeat the Kaiser and his U-Boats
Victory depends on which fails first, food or frightfulness
Eat less WHEAT
Mass Society Theory

• A big concern after WWII: How do world wars and totalitarian states happen?

• Mass society theory: people are no longer members of communities, they are part of an undifferentiated mass, a gray lonely crowd

• This makes them, according to the theory, more susceptible to manipulation -- hence modern tyrannies like Nazi Germany
Problems with the concept of the “masses”

• Stereotypes of the audience: “Joe Six Pack”
• Raymond Williams “There are no masses. Only ways of seeing people as masses.”
• Sometimes people do as they are told by the media -- but sometimes they don't.
“What do metrics want?”

- Numbers are not truth, they are “a way of seeing,” a perspective that focuses attention on some things and not on others.
- Facebook and twitter encourage users (not just advertisers) to view their friends and themselves through the lens of numbers.
The Audience Talks Back
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2xjJXT0C0X4
Active audience and TV

- Remote controls
- VCRs
- DVRs
- Internet discussion lists
- Re-recycling
- Citizen media: from blogs to Youtube.com
Rise of User-Generated Contents

- **User-Generated Contents (UGC)**
  - Users and mainstream media
    - Audience comments and contributions
    - Example: CNN iReport
  - Pro-Am efforts
    - Professional and amateur collaboration
  - Collaborative creation
    - All amateur
    - Example: Wikipedia, Wikinews
  - Citizen journalism
    - Every citizen can be a news reporter
    - Example: OhMyNews
What kinds of active audiences really matter?

• “Prosumption” and fan culture, e.g., Trekkies, Pop star fans, cat video uploads

• The new political activistisms online: the Arab spring, Occupy Wall Street, Black Lives Matter

• Global anti-totalitarian online activists: wikileaks, the Panama Papers
Encoding-Decoding Model for the Age of digital UGC?

Programme as 'meaningful' discourse

**Encoding**
- meaning structures 1
- frameworks of knowledge
- relations of production
- technical infrastructure

**Decoding**
- meaning structures 2
- frameworks of knowledge
- relations of production
- technical infrastructure

Internet based UGC