

Worksheet D - Media Analysis Fundamentals

Medium is the Message

TV is not an object, it is a *structure*. It is impossible to separate media from their power structure; super powerful multinational companies produce the majority of media. Media messages tend to reflect the values and ideology of their producers and distributors. Whereas art can generally be viewed on its own terms (in relation to the author/creator; however institutional frameworks do apply to the exhibition or art), commercial media should be viewed in the context of power, economics and the inherent value in the belief in technology.

Media Reflect and Direct

Communication is a complex relationship between producer and audience. Rarely is there a unidirectional (or syringe model) trajectory of any message. Society's values are both reflected and directed by media. This does not mean there is an equal power relationship between producers and consumers of media, but "feedback" does factor into the relationship between producer and audience.

Media are Fantasies

Highly trained technicians and artists construct media. Although we tend to believe video and photography accurately represent reality, they are re-creations that involve editorial decisions. Media is its own kind of reality.

Media are a Map

Just as art produced by ancient cultures inform us of the values and perceptions, media have a similar capacity to inform us of the belief systems of their producers. Media as maps allow us to understand the territory of values and beliefs related to the cultural, spiritual and/or economic system that created the media.

Media are Comprised of a System of Symbols

Symbols are signs of cultural understanding that enable us to understand media messages. Brands, logos and text convey specific messages that are interpreted according to individual belief systems, education and domestication. Brands, logos and text generally differentiate graphic design from pure visual art.

Mass Media Put a Human Face on Abstract Legal Entities

Media translate abstract legal entities, such as corporations, into symbolic worlds. We begin to identify models, actors and spokespeople as real people within the symbolic world of media-generated realities. People such as the Verizon man are merely characters in a story told by the media.

The Symbolic World of Advertising is the Dream Life of Corporations

Rarely do commercials represent the aspirations and desires of real people, but rather project desires and ideals of body types, attitudes and beliefs upon artificial entities (such as corporations represented by brands).

Products Have Magical Powers That Influence Human Emotions

Because our system of mass media is driven by the commercial imperative to entice product sales, "brands" and products become the most highly prized parts of media messages. They have the power to grant love, happiness and esteem. Their lack is nearly always portrayed as a cause of misery. Human relationships are almost always secondary to products.