

## Audience as a Content Creator Reality and Available Opportunities

الجمهور كمنشئ محتوى

الواقع والفرص المتاحة

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### Abstract

My paper is about audience as a content creator. Starting with the problem of translation as one of the biggest challenges we face in understanding what is happening in the international media arena, which is fundamentally characterized, first and foremost, by a deadly struggle to win over and influence the audience and, accordingly, the role of the audience as a content creator, it is necessary to start by disentangling the meaning of the two words "public" and "public," because the media deliberately use the word "public" to show off, to make an impression, or to claim that they have a wide audience.

**Keywords: Audience, Content creator, reality of content creation, opportunities of audience as content creators, the sphere of the international media.**

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### ملخص:

هذه الورقة تدور حول الجمهور كمنشئ محتوى. بدءا من مشكلة الترجمة باعتبارها واحدة من أكبر التحديات التي نواجهها في فهم ما يحدث في الساحة الإعلامية الدولية، والتي تتميز بشكل أساسي، أولا وقبل كل شيء، بصراع مميت من أجل كسب الجمهور والتأثير عليه، وبالتالي، دور الجمهور كصانع محتوى، لا بد من البدء بتفكيك معنى الكلمتين "عام" و"عام"، لأن وسائل الإعلام تعتمد استخدام كلمة "عام" للاستعراض، أو ترك انطباع، أو للدعاء بأن لديهم جمهورًا واسعًا.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الجمهور؛ منشئ محتوى؛ الفرص المتاحة للجمهور؛  
ساحة الاعلام الجديد.

I have the honor and pleasure to welcome the first scientific conference of our faculty, Faculty of Mass Media and Communication Technology of Misr University, faculty to which I am proud to belong to long time ago, especially after the presidency of Dean, Professor Dr. Hisham Attia, for the college, presidency which is characterized by significant development and creativity.

I would like to welcome all participants, our colleagues: Doctors, researchers and specialists who honored us with this participation that we highly cherish.

I have also to welcome and deeply thank all in charge of preparing and organizing this conference, especially Dean Prof. Dr. Hisham Attia and Prof. Dr. Amani Al-Husseini and dozens of members of our faculty family who contributed to the success of this event and turning it into a distinguished scientific event.

My paper is about audience as a content creator. Starting with the problem of translation as one of the biggest challenges we face in understanding what is happening in the international media arena, which is fundamentally characterized, first and foremost, by a deadly struggle to win over and influence the audience and, accordingly, the role of the audience as a content creator, it is necessary to start by disentangling the meaning of the two words "public" and "public," because the media deliberately use the word "public" to show off, to make an impression, or to claim that they have a wide audience.

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### **Public versus Audience:**

**Public** indicates "people" as a whole, all types of people. It does not define any particular group of people. Encyclopedia Britannica defines "public" as: relating to, or affecting all or most of the people of a country, state, etc. So, public can be also considered to mean everything related to public affairs, related to the state, its policies, its citizens... related to, paid for by, or working for a government - public spending - public education - public funding- public housing - public television, and even public opinion and public awareness. While **audience** refers to a concrete group of people, a particular group of people, a group who participates in any activity or become members of any group. It generally indicates a group of people, for instance, showing theatre or participating in a meeting or listening to a

speech...Encyclopedia Britannica defines "audience" as: a group of people who gather to listen to something or watch something, who attend a performance, read, or listen to something.

**Masses:** The words: "mass - mass society -mass media must also be dismantled. According to Denis McQuail's definition, masses are: (a huge group of unorganized individuals without distinct features and nothing specific brings them together or unites them). To other researchers' masses are: a huge human mass of various groups that do not have a specific structure or composition and do not meet at a time, or for one thing, but they are united by an overwhelming feeling of a mysterious collective bond that is made and imposed by an external force. Different encyclopedias and dictionaries generally refer to "masses" as: a collective, inclusive, general, whole, total, a huge thing or mass of no definite shape, many people or things congregated to do something involving or affecting large numbers of people or things. (Unified effects theory - hypodermic needle communication theory).

In European literature, since and after the French Revolution, millions of people have taken to the streets demanding compensation for their sufferings and sacrifices during revolution and wars. Since then, concerned parties have begun to consider masses and think about how to deal with it, and since then, a negative interpretation of the term "masses" prevails, interpretation that implies the meaning of "unconscious submission" of a huge number of people to an external influence. The same interpretation is applied to terms such as mass society, mass communication, mass opinion, mass behavior, ...For example, mass culture is referred to as a way of losing the personal identity of individuals, where external forces entwining publics into a group without a specific identity or a specific position, and delegating them to others to express their opinion, opinion that would not have been possible if they were alone.

Agreeing to the validity of the above-mentioned interpretations means that mass media audience is not the elite, elite have other channels to access news and knowledge. Mass media audiences are "masses" in the above-mentioned meaning. And mass media consciously and deliberately subjects huge masses - without their

participation, without their will or awareness - to what they deem to be correct, with the aim of serving some parties that the masses do not even know or why.

This assumption is also fundamentally different with saying that mass media allow "the interaction and participation of a broad audience in the development of content". On the contrary, media sets priorities, determines contents and then framing all according to their own visions with the absence of audience's "participation", "will" and "awareness".

In "mass media" the audience does not create content, but rather plays a very secondary role, a carefully drawn for audience role, role of a player in an interesting entertaining game. A game that the audience does not choose, does not share in laying its foundations and does not know what is meant by it. Audience can only comment on media contents, after filtering, arranging, and framing them in a way that brings the desired response (Gatekeeping-Agenda Setting-Framing theories).

### **Different Stages -Different Places of Audience:**

According to numerous media research results and theories, "audience" has taken different places in different stages of the history of mass media.

If we divide media history into (1) before World War II and (2) after World War II, (3) New liberalism philosophy (4) stage of revolutionary development of communication technology, no doubt we will notice the following:

(1) Till World War II audience had no place in media. This was "information era", era of "one way communication", where newspapers were published and radio broadcasted, with little regard for the audience. Audience was a passive party who received media messages and produced the desired response, audience was "object" (مفعول به). (Stimulus Response Model- Magic Bullet...).

(2) After World War II and the remarkable development in communication technologies followed, millions of people who participated in war started calling for specific demands in exchange for

their sacrifices and sufferings, millions of people took to the streets demanding compensation. Media sought to attract these masses to make its work a success and profitable. Audience became a "subject" (فاعل) (Two-Step Flow of Mass Media). The irony here is that governments viewed this phenomenon as an imminent danger, especially because of the difficulty of controlling large angry masses. To solve this dilemma, organizations were established, and local, regional and international laws and treaties were established to restrain the public and subjugate it, dozens of institutions and companies concerned only with monitoring the trends and numbers of the media audience appeared, most famous of which is Nielsen media research.

(3) A crucial stage in the development of the audience's role in the communication process must also be considered here. It is the "philosophy of neo-liberalism" proclaimed by British Prime Minister Thatcher in the seventies of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a philosophy that put an end to the nation-state, and overthrew the previous economic laws that allowed only 49% of any project to be monopolized. As a result, a few global media conglomerates, mainly American, monopolized the process of reshaping the consciousness of the masses, under the slogan "Occupation of consciousness, not the land," a slogan that later characterized the fifth-generation wars. Since then, the public has been "captive" of media monopolies, once again becoming just an object (مفعول به).

(4) At the stage of revolutionary development of communication technologies, started long before, but especially since the beginning of the new millennium, a handful giant media conglomerates dominate world media. In 2011, 90% of US media was controlled by 15 billionaires and six corporations while in 1983, 90% of media was controlled by 50 companies. At this stage, audience has become captive of a handful media monopolies and audience has become again and again an object (مفعول به).

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## **A Quick Look at some of the Most Influential Media Monopolies:**

A quick look at some of America's most influential media conglomerates shows how influential they are and role of audience as content creator. This is particularly evident from revenues, concentration of ownership and the scale of participation in the global media market, accordingly the ability to reshape human history and geography on the surface of the globe with the absence of audience as a content creator.

1. **News Corp**, a mass media, publishing (books and newspapers) and cable television company under Murdoch's family. It is dominating news, television, film, and print industries, and is the operator of the largest American satellite TV system. News Corp is the world's fourth largest media group in terms of revenue. Fiscal 2022 full year revenues and net income were records at 10.39 billion USD and 760 million USD respectively.

2. **Fox Corporation** is a multinational mass media company operated and controlled also by Murdoch family. Corporation includes big ten networks. Among FOX brands: FOX Business Network-FOX Sports-FOX Entertainment-FOX TV Stations- FOX News which is the most-popular network in total day users, with daily averaged nearly 1.44 million visitors and in prime time 2.26 million. In the fourth quarter of 2021, Fox recognized revenues of \$4.44 billion.

3. **Comcast** is the largest American-multinational telecommunications and media conglomerate, it is the second largest broadcasting and cable television company in the world by revenue and is a high-volume producer of feature films for theatrical exhibition, and over-the-air and cable television programming. Company provides services to U.S. residential and commercial customers in 40 states. In 2022 its overall revenue was \$121.4 billion and a \$213.75 billion market cap.

4. **Walt Disney Company** is a giant media empire and largest producer of children's materials in the world. It broadcasts in different languages. Disney annual revenue for 2020 was \$ 2.864 billion, and one of the highest world market caps -\$238 billion. In terms of box office shares according to 2121 statistics Disney holds the largest one, generating revenue numbers of USD 67.4 billion in 2021. It has,

generating almost 67.42 billion USD in revenue over 12 months. Disney's streaming portfolio subscriptions increased to 196.4 million.

Recently, the company has been producing films that promote homosexuality. And to imagine the scale of company's influence, after DeSantis lately announced his candidacy for USA President from Florida, the company declared that it would withhold its financial aid to Florida.

5. **Warner Bros. Discovery Inc** (WBD), a global multinational mass media and entertainment conglomerate. Its properties including film and television studios- comic book publisher- several U.S. networks producing different contents: global streaming & interactive entertainment -sport materials- video games- food network- cooking channel... It also holds stakes in several media industry companies. Among Warner Bros' properties is famous CNN

6. **CNN** is a multinational cable news network, globally, its programming seen by viewers in over 212 countries and territories. As of February 2023, CNN had 80 million television households as subscribers in the US. In 2022 its revenue was 33.8 billion USD, with one of the highest world market shares. According to Nielsen, in June 2021 CNN ranked third in viewership among world cable news networks, it averaged 587,000 total primetime viewers, and 474,000 total day viewers.

7. **Charter Communications** is one of the biggest US Communication technologies and entertainment corporations, it operates under the Spectrum name, boasting 32 million customers and a market cap of \$105.15 billion. In 2021, it reported revenues of \$51.68 billion.

8. **Apple Inc.** is the world's largest multinational technology company, after adding streaming and news media services to its portfolio and with more than 100 acquisitions, Apple shifted from being a tech company to being a hybrid of tech and media production. In March 2022, in just one of its areas of work (Apple TV plus) the company had more than 25 million paid subscribers and a market cap of \$2.74 trillion USD. Apple is also the world's largest technology company by revenue, with 394.3 billion USD, in 2022 revenues. As of



March 2023, Apple is the world's biggest company by market capitalization.

9. **Facebook**: Now Meta, formerly **Facebook**, reached an important milestone up to 2.20 billion monthly active users, with global market share of: 36.64%. In 2022 Meta recorded an advertising revenue of 113.6 billion USD, according to official US data this was possible through its acquisitions of Instagram and WhatsApp. Ultimately, Alphabet Inc. and Facebook have brought in \$182 billion USD and nearly 86 billion USD, respectively, in revenue in 2020.

10. **YouTube** is one of the most popular social media platforms, today it dominates the content marketing industry and the pioneer video sharing platform and 2<sup>nd</sup> largest search engine. In 2022 YouTube had approximately 29.24 billion USD of advertising revenue, with market share reaching 27.01%, and 210 million viewers in US alone.

11. **AT&T** Inc. is a multinational telecommunication holding company and the world's third largest telecommunications company by revenue and the third-largest provider of mobile telephone services in U.S. For 2021, AT&T reported revenues of \$168.86 billion.

12. **Netflix** is an American subscription video on-demand over-the-top streaming service. It is one of the leading entertainment services worldwide. Netflix had 222 million subscribers as of the end of 2021. It generated \$29.52 billion only in streaming revenue in 2021, it also generated \$182 million in revenue from its DVD rental business.

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In 2011, 90% of US media was controlled by 15 billionaires and six corporations while in 1983, 90% of media was controlled by 50 companies.

These seem to be just numbers for just American global giants of communication technology industry and content creators, these numbers carry alarming connotations. If we add the Japanese, British, French and German media giants, the picture becomes very dark.

This kind of concentration of ownership undermines any meaning of democracy and any meaning of the existence of an independent audience with independent will and action, an audience who participates in developing the content of the communication media.

This bleak picture does not give way to what is called: citizen journalism, alternative media, etc... which are supposed to play an independent role in countering the massive flow of content put forth by the communication giants and their owners. Simply because citizen journalism, alternative media, etc., are all platforms that are built, operated and depended on the technological infrastructures built by countries that have come a long way in scientific and technological development, and are now reaping its results.

Tens of American and European media researchers criticize mass media work mechanisms, including famous *Douglas E. Schoen*, the American lawyer, political analyst and author, who joined Mike Bloomberg 2020 presidential campaign. *Schoen is the author of: "The End of Democracy? Russia and China on the Rise and America in Retreat"*. Noam *Chomsky*, famous American public intellectual wrote his remarkable "*10 strategies of manipulation by media*" including: 1. The strategy of distraction 2. The strategy of creating problems, then offer solutions 3. The gradual strategy 4. The strategy of deferring 5. Go to the public as a little child 6. Use the emotional side more than the reflection 7. Keep the public in ignorance and mediocrity 8. Encourage the public to be complacent with mediocrity 9. Self-blame Strengthen strategy. 10. Getting to know the individuals better than they know their strategy.

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This is the reality... what about available opportunities? Will Arabs remain consumers, receivers? Could they play an influential role in the future media space?

Yes, some near opportunities are available and some others are far reached.

1. The first possible near opportunity is to stop using Western and American translations of words that we can translate in a manner consistent with our standards, values, culture, and religion. For example, the translation of the word "homosexuality" is شذوذ in Arabic, not مثلية. There are thousands of such words that we use without paying attention to their dire consequences.
2. Among available opportunities in the short term, may be possible to expand Arab participation through the available social communication platforms, participation that reflects the aspirations and hopes of the Arabs for development, and not as small partners of global monopolies.
3. It is also possible in the short term to impose a certain degree of government censorship on anti-Arab sites in terms of history, values, customs, and religion, especially on pornographic sites and sites that promote abnormalities and low moral values. But this would not be possible, would not be effective and influential without the role of the Arab state. It is our fate not fault, it is our duty.
4. On long term, the development of the role of Arabs on media level requires the development of knowledge, science, and technology. The United States and Europe would not have been able to reach this stormy development of communication technologies and media in general unless it was behind this a stormy development of knowledge, science, and technology.

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