

Challenges of Measuring Media Audiences in the Digital Environment

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Abstract

Audience measurement studies are not limited to simply collecting and analyzing data; they extend to building strategic insights that contribute to developing media content, guiding marketing decisions, and enhancing audience engagement. The study concluded that one of the requirements of audience studies in the digital media age is the necessity of combining inquiries about user interaction with on-screen content with a description of the context of that interaction, including motivations, locations, timelines, and a map of the digital media network used, etc. This is despite the fact that it requires time-consuming projects, often employs multiple methodologies, and demands advanced technical skills.

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Introduction

The natural evolution of media has been accompanied by a corresponding evolution in audience studies to include studies of digital media users. The new media environment focuses on users who have greater control over content selection for digital media, shifting the audience's role from passive recipient to active user and participant.

The issue of audience identification and measurement has become increasingly complex and ambiguous with digital media. Identifying an audience does not mean revealing its identity, but rather understanding its size, demographic, cultural, and social characteristics, as well as the behaviors exhibited before, during, and after exposure to media messages.

In the age of multiple screens, it is difficult to determine when people become an audience, and equally difficult to formulate questions about audience interaction with digital media. Traditional audience size measurement tools are no longer effective in the face of the complexities created by digital media technologies, which have established a new virtual (electronic) space for media audiences and have contributed to changing their media consumption patterns in the digital environment. So, what are the various challenges of audience measurement in the digital environment?

First, Defining the Study's Concepts:

The research involves a number of terms whose meanings must be defined and clarified. These are:

1- Measurement: Derived from the verb "to measure," meaning to assess or evaluate. Webster's Dictionary defines measurement as the verification of range, degree, quantity, dimensions, or capacity using a standard. (Saleh Mohammed Abu Jadu, 2000.)

It is the process of giving a quantitative (numerical) estimate of things, qualities, or people being measured using agreed-upon standard units, by comparing the unknown thing with known standard units of measurement in order to quantitatively express that unknown thing. (Amin Ali Muhammad Suleiman, 2009.)

In other words, measurement is a process that uses measuring instruments with pre-agreed standard units in order to arrive at a quantitative expression of the property or characteristic to be measured. (Ahmed Magdy, at the following link: <https://www.sanadkk.com/blog/post/133/>, 15/02/2026).

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Measurement is the quantitative determination of the characteristics of things, facts, events, and individuals. This quantitative determination of the extent of characteristics and attributes acquires its value through rules and procedures that are characterized by complete accuracy and control. It applies to characteristics and attributes that can be subjected to counting and quantitative estimation, such as length and time. It can also be described through abstract concepts such as change in behavior, perception, satisfaction, etc., as an outcome that can be measured through other processes that also have characteristics that are subject to quantitative measurement. (Fadil Daliou, 2010, p. 38)

As for the characteristics and features that can be described through other concepts such as type and color, they are determined qualitatively, as such features are not subject to counting and measurement. Measurement in audience studies is the quantitative determination of audience characteristics related to the audience in its interaction with digital media (exposure level, motivations, determinants...). Audience measurement methods vary to include a wide range of tools and techniques, including: questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, digital data analysis, and others.

2- The public: It is stated in *Lisan al-Arab* that: The public of everything is its majority, and it is said that it is its public, and the public of people is their majority, and the public of the people is their nobles, the singular of which is public, and I gathered the people, and I gathered the thing. (- Ibn Manzur, 1994, p. 141)

Researcher Suad Jabr Saeed defined it based on the technical definition of the word "Mass," which corresponds in Arabic to the word "jamhara" or "hashd," derived from the Greek word "maza," meaning a barley meal. It was used to express a large, uncountable quantity, as well as a large number of individuals, whether a crowd or a mass. (Suad Jabr Saeed, 2008, p. 21).

In principle, the technical definitions of "audience" do not stray far from the linguistic meaning, which is a gathering of people around a particular idea, event, or activity.

The term "audience" is used as a translation for both "public" and "audience," despite their differences. "Public" refers to the general population or people in a society, while "audience" refers to the group of individuals who read, listen to, or watch any media outlet or its various units.

Thus, "audience," as a translation for "public" and "audience," despite their different meanings, stem from the fundamental idea of the audience's role as a crucial element within the communication process.

The audience has garnered the attention of numerous researchers and scholars across various academic disciplines (political science, economics, and sociology), resulting in diverse perspectives that attempt to understand and interpret this phenomenon, varying according to the contexts in which the concept is applied.

From an economic and market research perspective, the audience is viewed as a group of potential consumers. Jeffrey K. Roars defines it as "the foundation upon which companies are built." (Jeffrey K. Roars, 2017, p. 22)

Sociologists, for their part, considered the public to be nothing more than a group of individuals forming a community, and subsequently, a society. Muhammad Jamal Al-Far defined the public as a social concept that varies from one society to another depending on the nature and circumstances of each. Here, regardless of the intellectual context in which the concept was introduced, Muhammad Jamal Al-Far presents the public as a group of individuals within a society—that is, as the people.

From a political perspective, the primary goal of politicians' interest in the public has been to gain the largest possible number of votes, as the public is generally the sum of the electorate. Researchers' definitions of the public have varied according to their different schools of thought and ideologies in describing the reasons for the formation of this gathering (as a communicative process) and the nature of the individual

within this gathering—whether a passive, unconscious individual or an active, socially engaged one. (Muhammad Jamal Al-Far, 2013, p. 130)

3- Media Audience:

This refers to a group of people who are supposed to be targeted by a particular media outlet: a television channel, radio station, newspaper, or website.

The term "media audience" is used to describe all situations where a group of people are exposed to messages presented by media in its various forms and at different stages of development. It is also used to refer to the audience as a sociological phenomenon whose emergence and development are linked to the widespread use of media in modern and postmodern societies. (Ali Qassasiya, , 2007, pp. 48-49).

4- The Digital Environment:

Digitalization is defined as a sophisticated reproduction process that enables the conversion of any document, regardless of its type or medium, into a digital chain. This technical work is accompanied by intellectual and administrative work to organize the information in order to index, catalog, and represent the content of the digitized text. (Al-Dalhoumi Saleh, 2001, p. 72) Digitization is the process of converting data into a digital form and processing it using computers.

Therefore, the digital environment is a collection of diverse tasks and functions with which people interact in various institutions through digital technology applications.

The digital environment is a set of services provided by information networks and the internet, through various digital means and technologies that enable the processing, storage, retrieval, and dissemination of information digitally via electronic devices. (Najiboul manakher, 2021, p. 112).

5- Digital Media:

It is difficult to define digital media precisely. However, it can be defined within a complex context that includes three elements: (Clementina O. Okafor and all, ,2015, p32)

- Technological tools and devices.
- Activities, practices, and uses.
- Social arrangements and organizations that form around these tools and practices.

This definition superficially applies to traditional media; however, the difference lies in the characteristics and descriptions of its tools, uses, and arrangements.

The term "digital media," or "new media" as it was initially termed in the 1960s with the advent of the internet, is used to encompass a growing and diverse range of applied communication technologies via the internet.

It is a set of new digital methods and activities that enable us to produce, disseminate, and receive media content in its various forms through electronic devices (connected or offline) in an interactive process between sender and receiver. (Mansour Hossam, 2022, p. 89).

Secondly, The Characteristics of the Digital Media Environment.

The digital media environment is characterized by its ability to bring together seemingly contradictory practices and perceptions. This becomes clear when we list and analyze the most important basic features

of digital media that have influenced the relationship between the audience and digital media. These features are:

1- Interactivity:

It is evident, when discussing the novelty of the internet, that its ability to support widespread interaction is the most striking aspect. Interactivity itself can be usefully divided into: (Andrea Press and Sonia Livingstone, 2006, p184.)

- Social interaction (i.e., interaction between users, such as email)
- Textual interaction (i.e., interaction between the user and documents via hypertext over the internet)
- Technical interaction (i.e., interaction between the user and the system, such as video games, computers, and electronic games)

It is clear that different media showcase different forms of interaction. Interaction itself is not qualitatively new, and no traditional media encompasses all forms of interaction.

2- Interactive isolation of audiences:

This characteristic can be used to describe a set of practices or situations undertaken by digital media users.

The concept is associated with digital media, which is often described as the age of individual content consumption, where individuals are isolated from one another despite being connected to the network. (Muhammad Abdul Hamid, 1993, p. 104)

While users believe that simply communicating via the internet and social media makes them social, researchers argue that spending long periods online isolates individuals, turning communication into distancing and creating a form of in-person isolation within an environment designed for virtual openness, where we simultaneously approach and distance ourselves. (Lilia Saadoun, 2023, p. 149).

The collective reception of traditional media – especially television – in the family space is heading towards disappearance, and the masses have become inclined towards individual reception on mobile devices and at different times, but they still interact with the rest of the masses either directly or through digital platforms within the framework of what can be called “interactive isolation”. (Amina Bassafa et al., 2025, p. 43).

In general, technology has contributed to shaping a new pattern of family life that Patrice Flichy calls "living together alone." As a result, and due to other factors that will be mentioned later, mass groups have begun to disintegrate, and the public is fragmenting. (The same reference, p. 49)

3- Media Fragmentation:

The main impact of this process lies in its undermining of traditional approaches to understanding media audiences. With the increasing fragmentation of media in the digital age (multimedia) and the ever-growing number of audiences (digital media users), measuring audience interest using traditional measurement systems becomes difficult.

Many observers have noted the increasing fragmentation of the digital media environment, where a growing range of content options are available across an ever-increasing number of distribution platforms. Simultaneously, the ability to provide even more choices within these platforms is rapidly expanding. The digital media environment facilitates unprecedented levels of audience fragmentation due to its vast storage capacity and rich knowledge base.

Digital distribution technologies enable content personalization and facilitate the production of highly targeted news for specific audiences. The process of personalization is clearly designed to attract all possible audience segments with all available options. (Clementina O. Okafor and all, Op.cit, p34.)

4- The Culture of Convergence:

In contrast to media fragmentation, media in the digital environment is based on elements of media convergence or integration.

In the past, technological devices were separate, each with a specific function; the camera was used only for taking pictures, the telephone for making and receiving voice calls, and the tape recorder or CD player for playing music. Today, however, all of that has changed. Smartphones can now perform all these functions.

We are now surrounded by a multi-layered media world, where all means of communication and information are constantly evolving to adapt to the ever-changing demands of technology, thus changing the way we create, consume, learn, and interact with each other. Consequently, digital media overlap and merge into a single system or a set of interconnected systems. (IBID, p36.)

The convergence of media in the digital environment involves two changes: the first concerns how content is produced, and the second concerns how that content is consumed.

The first change encompasses the transformations media institutions have undergone after adopting an integration strategy. This involves expanding the reach of their content beyond traditional broadcasting to include digital platforms. For example, television, in addition to broadcasting on the standard terrestrial network and digital satellite, is now also expanding to mobile phone television and internet or smart TV.

The second change relates to how audiences receive media content in the digital environment. Previously, individuals were content to watch the main news broadcast at home on television with their families. However, in the digital age, they can now access the news on their internet-connected smartphone apps, read their emails, share what interests them on Facebook, like what they read, and leave comments. (Amina Bassafa and others, previously cited reference, p. 44)

5. The Emergence of New Media: Convergence has contributed to the transformation of some communication technologies into media, such as the telephone, which was originally used for conversation but has become a media tool through which the internet can be accessed and media content in all its forms can be consumed, such as reading newspaper articles, watching videos, and listening to the radio.

6. The Increasing Presence of Media in Social (Family) Life: Digital media such as smartphones, smart TVs, smartwatches, and video games have become accessible to everyone and available in every home, and even to every member of the family. This growing social presence is due to several factors, including the decreasing prices and the portable nature of these technologies. (Amina Yahya Nabih, 2018, p. 86)

7- Information Abundance:

This refers to a very large and complex collection of data and information (organized or unorganized). The digital communication environment is characterized by what we can call information abundance. We live in an information abundance represented by the huge number of television channels and the proliferating content of the network. (Nafisa Naili et al , 2024, p. 82)

8- Commodification of Media Content:

Digital media technologies, especially digital satellite television technologies, have allowed for the proliferation of television channels. This proliferation has led to competition over broadcasting programs, especially sports programs. The commodification of media refers to the increasing importance of the

content model, the emergence of new distribution technologies, and the development of the phenomenon of content commodification. (Amina Yahya Nabih, previously cited reference, p. 86)

In contrast to active choice theories, and this certainly applies to studies based on uses and gratification theories that focus on the active role of users in choosing content that best meets their desires and motivations, Mikro-Guy, in her study on "Theorizing Inconsistent Media Choice in the Digital Age," proposes another theoretical direction, which explains media choice as the product of involuntary processes resulting from media consumption habits. (Micro-Guy, and all, « Theorizing inconsistent media selection in the digital environment », February, 2021, disponible en ligne :

https://boa.unimib.it/bitstream/10281/302429/1/Gui_Shanahan_Tsay_preprint%20%281%29.pdf,
(9/11/2025)

Hossam El-Din Fayyad believes that the phenomenon of consumption has become the trend of the post-industrial era, especially in light of the disappearance of the functional and utilitarian nature of tools to become mere thematic parts for play and entertainment, after the individual was seduced and his consciousness falsified. As an example of this, we can explain the increasing trend of families towards digital luxury, and we can also explain the way in which children use mobile phones and their motives for owning them. (Husam Al-Din Fayyad, 2025, p. 20)

9-Cost of Consumption and Exposure:

Many references describe the characteristics of digital media as low-cost or free. Whereas in the past, the recipient paid nominal sums or financial subscriptions in exchange for consuming each media outlet under traditional media, today, under digital media, one does not need to consume media content except for an internet subscription, or as the researcher Naili Nafisa put it, "one does not need to sacrifice their package of personal data to the owners of social media sites, who in turn sell it to advertisers and commercial companies." This prompted her and us to question the methods and techniques of exploitation employed in this type of consumption.

While the term "consumption" suggests an applied marketing approach or a critique of the economic functions of the media, here it refers comprehensively to the fact that the masses actually spend time and money, directly or indirectly, on the media. (Klaus BruhnJensen, , 2002, p143.)

Dan Schiller also confirms that global spending on information technology is expected to increase to \$4.6 trillion in 2020. (Lamia Saber, 2024, p. 147) The time and money that different social and demographic groups spend on various media and types of texts is important as it is essential information for studying the relationship between the audience and the media.

10- Image addiction: Visual perception has entered the digital age with its open capabilities and broad effects, and this is what Mikro-Guy concluded in her study, where she found that in the context of digital media, "physiologically attractive content is more abundant because the competition for users' attention is stronger." (Micro-Guy, and all, Op.cit)

11- Audience Autonomy:

The term "audience autonomy" refers to how contemporary characteristics of the media environment—from interactivity and mobility to on-demand functionality and the increasing volume of user-generated content—contribute to enhancing audience control over media consumption.

Perhaps the most significant impact in this regard is the growing interactivity of new media environments and how they blur the traditional boundaries between content creators and audiences. This interaction has led to new tensions in the relationship between author, text, and audience, particularly by blurring the distinction between author and audience. The end result is the transformation of the audience from a passive spectator to an active participant in a virtual world.

One industry analyst described the contemporary media environment as one where the consumer is "destructively dominant." The use of the term "destructive" is particularly significant, as it could have a devastating impact on the traditional dynamics of the audience market. (Clementina .O. Okafor and all, Op.cit, p35.)

A historical reading of theorizing about the concept of the audience, as well as the reality of daily observations of individuals' practices in using digital media (such as children's addiction to electronic games), reveals discrepancies in the level of this supposed independence and control. Digital media technology has not granted us freedom, but rather an illusion of reality, a mere shadow of it.

According to Marcuse, the ultimate expression of absolute freedom may be the truth that this feeling of freedom is not true freedom, but rather the freedom promoted by the media, film, and digital industries. Technologies for accessing, selecting, clicking, liking, downloading, and uploading may seem, at first glance, to be a vast gateway to freedom of choice. You can do as you please within the virtual space, but don't forget that a paid internet subscription imposes a physical constraint on access. Access requires a phone number, information, and digital spatial data (JPS) that interact with the string of restrictions in the Internet Protocol, potentially leading to account blocking or closure, etc. It is through our presentation of the various characteristics that the digital environment presents that we find ourselves – most likely – facing binary propositions ranging between the positivity and negativity of the audience in the use of digital media, ranging between the power of the audience and the power of digital media, a relationship based on negotiation and debate, which increases the difficulties and challenges of studying the complex nature of the audience of digital media users, at the same time as this environment provides many opportunities for development.

Thirdly – Challenges of Audience Studies in the Digital Environment:

Audience research faced some conceptual and methodological problems even before addressing the digital media environment.

The inaccuracy in measuring the audience of internet and digital media users may stem from several considerations, primarily the novelty of this medium. Time is a crucial element in finding a solution to this purely technical dilemma, as is the case with other media.

Just as in the early days of television, most research focused on simple questions about effects and attempts to avoid harm. More complex questions about meaning and practice were only raised gradually and reluctantly. Similar to research related to television, the research agenda that accompanied the emergence of the internet centered on: What are the effects of the internet on children and youth? Does playing violent online games increase aggression in children? And similar questions that explore internet uses and its effects on the audience.

While attempts to understand the nature of these influences are problematic and not easily controlled, questions about audience practices in the digital environment and their communication behaviors present an even greater challenge.

Studying digital media audiences is not without theoretical and methodological difficulties. Among these difficulties are: (Ali Qasaisiya, 2004, p. 160)

Theoretical Challenges:

Since the end of the 20th century, audience studies have faced new challenges previously unknown to audience studies, which Fatiha Bark identified as follows: (Fatiha Bark, 2019, p. 54).

- The rapid development of information and communication technologies, and the inability of scientific theorizing to keep pace with this constant and ongoing evolution.

- The difficulty of placing trust in a virtual persona whose true identity is unknown.

Problems Related to the Scientific Theorization of Audience Studies in the Digital Environment:

Empirical studies of digital media use are currently divided into two main approaches: one continues the consumption-oriented approach in audience studies, while the other continues the reception-oriented approach—as discussed in the previous section.

Interestingly, both claim to be heirs to the ethnographic shift, albeit in different ways. One focuses on life in front of the screen, while the other focuses on life on it. Although these studies offer much, their initial research choices tend to continue branching out within audience studies. This is problematic, as we still lack studies that integrate reception and consumption. (Andrea Press and Sonia Livingstone, 2006, p187.)

In an article, Sayed Bakheet mentions some of the theoretical problems of social media research, which we can use as projections on the theoretical problems facing studies of digital media audiences as a whole. We mention them as follows: (Mr. Bakheet, , 2016, p. 165)

The lack of suitable theoretical models, frameworks, and concepts to explain the behavior of digital audiences leads some researchers to conduct their studies without relying on theoretical frameworks and instead depend on traditional models and frameworks that may not be appropriate for the nature of new communication phenomena related to digital media.

- The inability of comprehensive and holistic theories to encompass new communication phenomena related to the digital environment.

- A lack of effort in developing theoretical approaches that align with the nature of new communication phenomena related to the digital environment, and the tendency of some researchers to borrow models and theories from other fields and disciplines for the sake of research precedence without sufficient understanding of their applicability.

Problems related to audience characteristics and uses in the digital environment:

* This technological development of digital media has resulted in a unique audience of users, whose most important characteristics include:

- A virtual audience with no physical existence.
- Difficulty in identifying its demographic characteristics (gender, age, educational level).
- Difficulty in determining its location. The audience has shifted from being considered a recipient to performing both roles (sending and receiving). (Fatiha Barak, previously mentioned reference, p. 54)

Theoretically, one of the challenges in audience studies in the digital environment is the difficulty of precisely defining its characteristics. Researchers tend to emphasize that anything is possible when it comes to audience presence in the digital sphere. For example, analyzing online texts reveals that individuals with male gender identities in real life can adopt female identities, the wealthy can behave like the poor, and the elderly can project a youthful persona, and so on.

According to Andrea Brass and Sonia Levinson, the only characteristics that cannot be consciously concealed are a participant's literacy skills. A person may be judged by their writing wit and fluency, which is difficult to hide. (Andrea Press and Sonia Livingstone, Op.cit, p187).

It is also no longer possible to clearly distinguish between production and reception, or between mass communication and interpersonal communication, or between the forms of media that were distinct until then (print, image, music, broadcasting, games, etc.). (IBID, p183.)

One of the challenges researchers face when studying audience use of digital media, and attempting to understand the contexts and problems of this use, is that when dealing with the user, research must be based on understanding how they use a range of distinct media. Users adopt a set of strategies to connect and integrate these various media in ways that make it difficult to investigate their processes and analyze their psychology within daily life at home.

Methodological Issues:

Audience studies in the digital environment prompt us to consider the methodological approaches to studying audiences. Can we learn from previous audience research experiences, or must we start anew?

Those who follow media audience studies in the digital environment will find that they still rely on empirical approaches to studying social phenomena (and audience studies is one of them) without incorporating qualitative approaches. Training institutions have established an empirical framework that researchers or students find difficult to deviate from or challenge. (Abdel Latif Bouzir, Ismail Ben Debili, 2015, p. 127)

This may be due to a number of methodological challenges faced by researchers studying digital media users, including:

- The lack of new scientific methodologies capable of addressing the emergence of new "electronic media" and social networks.
- The changing and different characteristics of media-related phenomena in the digital environment compared to previous contexts, in terms of the interaction patterns between the components and variables of the media phenomenon, the factors that constitute it, and the role of each factor. This means it is difficult to explain these phenomena using the same factors that influenced traditional communication phenomena.
- The continued prevalence of quantitative tools—despite their limitations—in studying some social media phenomena. These phenomena require a diversity of research tools and an integration of quantitative and qualitative methods, given that they are human, social, and communicative phenomena that cannot be observed, analyzed, and interpreted solely through quantitative means. (Muhammad al-Bashir bin Tabba, Fatima Nafnaf, 2019, p. 267)

Practical Challenges:

Aside from the methodological issues related to the question of effectiveness and the preference between quantitative and qualitative approaches, and the extent to which these approaches are valid for studying the practices and behaviors of the user audience, and aside from their theoretical propositions, numerous practical challenges arise, related to:

Weakness in the training of researchers: This is represented by: (Youssef Tamar, 2018, p. 6)

- Weaknesses in the pedagogical programs designed for various training stages, particularly in methodology and the near-total absence of qualitative methodology, coupled with the weakness of the trainers themselves due to the same reason in their university training, have resulted in researchers lacking training in methodological tools, especially qualitative ones.
- Inadequate training and a lack of proficiency in using digital technologies and the methodological tools and practical procedures they offer for studying digital media users.

3.2. Technical Difficulties: These can be observed through some of the challenges researchers face when applying methodological procedures and research designs to study digital media users. These include:

- Audience discourse and practices are more difficult to understand because these practices are often private (in the bedroom or study). This makes the researcher's presence more prominent in ethnographic research,

for example, than it was in the days when family television was being watched in the living room. Audience interaction with digital media may be more explicit or personal, including pornography, emotional conversations, personal advice, and so on.

- Also, using media is more difficult to plan than in the days of mass communication - filling out a questionnaire to record evening viewing is difficult, but it is by no means as difficult as recording and interpreting internet browsing or evening chat. (Andrea Press and Sonia Livingstone, Op.cit, p185.)

Web analytics has become increasingly common in audience studies in the digital environment. However, digital media researchers do not have stacks of carefully curated videos, piles of newspapers in the corner of the office, or industry records of audience ratings categorized by demographics. In fact, they barely know how to track their "texts" due to the triple problem of: the sheer volume of material, its ephemeral existence, and its virtuality across multiple digital worlds. (IBID, p186.)

Data collection methods for media content are crucial in audience and content design. While collecting and analyzing content data might seem easier than audience data due to its accessibility, practical experience tells a different story. For example, newspaper articles or specific episodes of television programs can be retrieved from an archive or the internet. Therefore, data collection appears straightforward and doesn't require sophisticated techniques (though this doesn't mean that finding and retrieving this data can't be a lengthy and arduous process). However, newer forms of digital media often involve a more complex process, most notably downloading vast amounts of data about content produced by, for example, social media users—posts, comments, follows, and likes.

Furthermore, collecting audience design data on how digital media users communicate with each other and interact with text, such as hypertext that relies on user "execution," is more challenging. This type of data is not readily available in the digital media content itself. - In addition, the sheer volume of data collected in audience and content designs raises many practical issues, as there has been little discussion about the best way to analyze data resulting from audience and content designs in the digital environment, especially those related to ethnographic designs, except for a consensus on the need to code, classify and interpret them. However, how exactly to do this is a relatively neglected issue in critical audience studies, and researchers have followed a range of different methodologies. (Fadi hirzalla and Liesbet van zoonen, 2017, disponible en ligne :

https://spkb.blot.im/_readings/Media_Effects-ethods_of_Critical_Audience_Studies_-_Hirzalla__vanZoonen_2_017.pdf, (10/11/2025))

Perhaps the most significant challenge facing audience researchers in the digital environment is employing an analytical methodology that validates the premise that media texts do not possess a single, fixed meaning, but rather that their meanings are shaped through the interpretive processes of the audience or users. Therefore, the analytical approach must be capable of determining the degree to which a text is open or closed to different interpretations, as well as the types of interpretations that are likely to emerge. (IBID)

Conclusion:

In conclusion, this research demonstrates that studying audiences in the digital age necessitates combining inquiries into user interaction with on-screen content with an examination of the context of that interaction. This includes identifying motivations, locations, timelines, and mapping the digital media networks employed. While this approach requires time-consuming projects, often employing multiple methodologies, and demanding advanced technical skills, it is inherently complex.

The phenomenon of digital media audiences is multifaceted, exhibiting both symmetrical and contradictory structures. Any attempt to understand and control it is inherently futile. Here, we concur with Ang's assertion that "scientific classification is itself an act of violence perpetrated against the audience and everyday life." (Klaus Bruhn Jensen, Op.cit, p165.)

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