Understanding audiences
J201 Introduction to Mass Communication
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Critical for a Strategic Communicators to understand their audiences:

① Identify audiences and their media environment

② Craft message to fit audiences

③ Select/cost media to target audiences
How to know your audience?
Forms of inquiry

Two ends of a continuum of inquiry

The Idiographic Orientation
Unique characteristics of phenomena
Rich description of “idiosyncratic” features
Intention is to explain one case fully

The Nomothetic Orientation
Generating generalizable principles
Establishing “trans-situational” laws
Intention is to explain a class
Starting point: Market research

Developed from 1920s...
Hit its stride in 1960s
Today a major industry

Who is using what? How are they using it?
Who is not using the product? Why not?
What are their beliefs and attitudes about it?
RESEARCH TECHNIQUES

① Focus groups

② Surveys

③ Observation of behavior (ethnography - big data)
FOCUS GROUPS

A facilitator places respondents into a group

Ask questions, listen to responses and interactions

Reactions are in an artificial social context

Level of representativeness: low

Level of detail: medium
SURVEY RESEARCH

Contact many people, ask them about what they do, think, value

Large numbers of respondents

Built on statistical properties to enable representativeness

Dependent on accurate recall
Level of representativeness: potentially high
Level of detail: low
OBSERVATION (ETHNOGRAPHY - BIG DATA)
A researcher “visits” a person/group and observes them

Opportunity to see what they actually do
Not dependent on accurate recall
Responses are in a genuine social context
Level of representativeness: depends
Level of detail: high
DEFINING STRATEGIC GOALS

Not a simple question!

Not usually to “have people buy more X” or “get people to vote for Mr Y”

Good goals are nuanced and specific

Two fundamental questions: WHO do you want to reach? and WHAT do you want them to do?
Understanding audiences

Strategic Objectives/Goals

- Increase brand knowledge/awareness (cognitive)
- Create associations between product: (cognitive)
  - Persons/celebrities/experts
  - Lifestyles
  - Emotions
- Shape images of brand (cognitive)
- Differentiate product from competition (cognitive)
- Correct misperceptions (cognitive)
- Shape attitudes toward brand (affective)
- Expand market shares/sales (behavioral)
- Reinforce brand loyalty (behavioral)
MARKET RESEARCH IN POLITICS

Who are your supporters?

What are they watching?

Who is most likely to turn out for you?
Political audiences

This bubble chart shows weekly cable audiences arrayed by partisanship (the horizontal axis) and voter turnout (the vertical axis). Larger bubbles indicate a larger audience. High-turnout Republicans are more likely to be watching channels in the upper right hand quadrant — e.g., Fox News, Golf Channel, History Channel. The audiences for MSNBC and CNN skew toward high-turnout Democrats.
Political audiences
See you Friday...