

MEDIA AUDIENCES

PRIMER QUESTIONS

1. What are your newspaper reading habits? Which newspapers do you usually read? At what time(s) of the day do you usually read newspapers? Where do you usually read newspapers? How much time do you usually spend reading newspapers on an average day?
2. What are your radio listening habits? Which radio stations or formats do you usually listen to? At what time(s) of the day do you usually listen to radio? How much time do you spend listening to radio on an average day?
3. What are your television viewing habits? Which television channels or television shows do you usually watch? At what time(s) of the day do you usually watch television? How much time do you usually spend watching television on an average day?
4. What are your internet habits? Which web sites do you usually visit? At what time(s) of the day do you usually access the internet? How much time do you usually spend on the internet on an average day?
5. Which medium do you interact with the most during an average day—newspapers, radio, television, or the internet?

Every time you read a newspaper, listen to a radio program, watch a television show, or surf the internet, you are joining together with tens, hundreds, thousands, perhaps even millions of people into an “audience” for the given media content. Though your individual habits of media use are unique to your own particular lifestyle and interests, researchers compile certain aspects of the way you and others interact with media—such as the average of how many hours of television you watch each day—into giant databases describing media audiences. Therefore, a **media audience** is actually an artificial construct that describes only the common denominators of individuals interacting with selected media.

In Chapter 3, a media audience was likened to the people who pass by a tree. Similarly, an audience of people living in a particular country represents passersby for a media system. A person who passes by a tree will be able to reach some of its leaves easily but will have to exert extra effort to reach other leaves. A person’s access to, and indeed awareness of, all the tree’s leaves depends on the directions in which the tree’s feeder branches carry the leaves, and on the parts of the tree with which the person comes into contact. Similarly, media audiences can reach some but not all of the media content available in a media system, depending on where the content is carried, and where the audience comes

into contact with the media system during daily routines. Content that is distributed through points of contact within an audience member's daily routines is easily reachable—for example, a newsagent that the audience member passes by on the way to work, a radio receiver in an audience member's car, a television set in an audience member's kitchen, or a web site saved as a bookmark on an audience member's computer at home. In contrast, content that is delivered through available media outlets but is censored or is too expensive or is offered at an inconvenient time, is unreachable even though an audience member may know it exists. And content that exists but is not delivered by any of the media outlets within an audience member's daily routines is not only unreachable but also may be unknown.

A RHETORICAL PERSPECTIVE ON MEDIA AUDIENCES

As Roger D. Wimmer and Joseph R. Dominick explain in *Mass Media Research*, a number of private and public organizations with vested interests compile databases on media audiences. In countries with a prevailing libertarian philosophy for media systems, commercial firms usually compile most of the databases on media audiences. These firms sell the data to media organizations and advertisers, and release a small amount of data at no charge to the government and the public. In countries with a prevailing social responsibility philosophy for media systems, government-related agencies and commercial firms usually compile databases on media audiences. The government-sponsored data is often made available to the public for free, and is used by the government to study public behaviors and attitudes, to monitor and set public policy, to formulate strategies for distributing media content through public-service media, and to assess whether content is meeting educational or cultural goals. Also media organizations themselves compile databases about their own audiences, which are used in conjunction with databases purchased from commercial audience research firms, to formulate strategies for distributing media content—such as the outlet to be used for distribution (e.g., a cable channel versus a broadcast channel), the time slot in which to schedule the content, and what prices to charge for advertisements.

The majority of audience data that is compiled is **quantitative**—that is, numerical information measuring people's habits related to media use. Usually, these numbers revolve around percentages of men versus women, as well as percentages of age brackets that have accessed particular media content. However, as Thomas Lindlof explains in *Natural Audiences* (1987), quantitative approaches to studying media audiences are often devoid of "situational contexts" that help to explain how media are encountered. Situational contexts are better characterized by **qualitative** data—that is, descriptive information about an audience's surroundings and culture that influence their interactions with media content, as well as how they think and feel as a result of the interactions.

In this chapter, a rhetorical perspective is used to combine both quantitative and qualitative information for comparing situations of media audiences across the eight countries. Combining both quantitative and qualitative information renders more interesting and more complete comparisons of media audiences across different countries, because—as described in Chapters 1 and 3—a rhetorical perspective constructs reasonable interpretations of how people are invited to feel, think, and behave in relation to the media that are available and the culture of the country in which they live. The rhetorical perspective in this chapter draws on

the discussions from previous chapters to help create situational contexts providing reasonable explanations for the interactions of audiences with available media in each country.

SOURCE CITATIONS FOR STATISTICAL DATA

Sources of statistical information in this chapter are cited here to avoid cluttering the subsequent comparisons of information. For information on newspaper audiences, the primary source was *World Press Trends* (2003, 2002). For information on radio and television audiences, the primary sources included government-related regulators and public-service broadcasters listed in the preface of this book. For information on internet audiences, the primary sources included the following: InternetWorldStats (www.internetworldstats.com), Nielsen NetRatings (www.nielsen-netratings.com), Nordicom (www.nordicom.gu.se/mediastatistics_index.html), the European Interactive Advertising Association's (EIAA) *2003 Media Consumption Study* (www.eiaa.net/), Arbitron (www.arbitron.com), the Pew Internet and American Life Project (www.pewinternet.org), China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC) (www.cnnic.net.cn/en/index), the U.S. Embassy in México, BuddeComm (www.budde.com.au), and "Global Diffusion of the Internet IV: The Internet in Ghana" (2004), by William Foster, Seymour Goodman, Eric Osiakwan, and Adam Bernstein. For information on newspaper, radio, and television specifically audiences in Ghana, a primary source was a study by Jonathan Temin and Daniel A. Smith published in the journal *African Affairs*, titled "Media Matters: Evaluating the Role of the Media in Ghana's 2000 Elections" (2002). For information on television and internet audiences in Lebanon, the primary sources were the Lebanese research group Information International and Internet Traders International (www.lebindex.com/index.html), respectively.

INTERNET AUDIENCES

Throughout this book, the internet has been identified as a medium that has shaken up previous paradigms of media distribution. The internet is not restricted by country borders, and, indeed, is hardly restricted by any kind of geographic limitations. Nor is the internet widely restricted by government regulation. Rather, the internet is mostly restricted by how audiences use it.

One dimension of worldwide internet use involves the most frequently used languages. As Table 12.1 shows, English was by far the most frequently used language on the internet in 2004, at 35.9 percent of total use. The next most frequently used language was Chinese, at 13.2 percent of total use. Spanish is the fifth-most-used language on the internet, at 6.7 percent of total use; and French is sixth at 4.4 percent of total use. Another dimension involves internet use across regions of the world. As Table 12.2 shows, Asia had the most internet users (31.7 percent of the world's internet users) in 2004, followed by Europe at 28.4 percent, followed closely by North America at 27.3 percent. Other regions of the world were far behind these three regions in percentages of users of the internet.

A third dimension involves countries with the greatest internet penetration. As Table 12.3 shows, in 2004 Sweden had the highest internet penetration, at 74.6 percent of the country's population; next were Hong Kong (72.5 percent) and the USA (68.8 percent).

TABLE 12.1 Top 10 Languages Used on the Internet

LANGUAGE	PERCENTAGE OF PEOPLE USING LANGUAGE
1. English	35.9%
2. Chinese	13.2%
3. Japanese	8.3%
4. German	6.8%
5. Spanish	6.7%
6. French	4.4%
7. Korean	3.8%
8. Italian	3.6%
9. Portuguese	2.9%
10. Dutch	1.7%

Source: Internet World Stats (www.internetworldstats.com).

TABLE 12.2 Percentage of Internet Users out of World Users Across Regions and Continents

REGION/CONTINENT	PERCENTAGES
Asia	31.7%
Europe	28.4%
North America	27.3%
Latin America/Caribbean	6.9%
Middle East	2.1%
Oceania/Australia	1.9%
Africa	1.6%

Source: Internet World Stats (www.internetworldstats.com).

TABLE 12.3 Top 10 Countries with Highest Internet Penetration

COUNTRY	PERCENTAGE OF INTERNET PENETRATION
1. Sweden	74.6%
2. Hong Kong	72.5%
3. USA	68.8%
4. Iceland	66.6%
5. Netherlands	66.5%
6. Australia	65.9%
7. Canada	64.2%
8. Switzerland	63.5%
9. Denmark	62.5%
10. South Korea	62.4%

Source: Internet World Stats (www.internetworldstats.com).

TABLE 12.4 Top 10 Countries with Highest Numbers of Internet Users

COUNTRY	NUMBER OF INTERNET USERS
1. USA	201,661,159
2. China	87,000,000
3. Japan	66,763,838
4. Germany	47,182,668
5. UK	34,874,469
6. South Korea	30,670,000
7. Italy	28,610,000
8. France	24,352,522
9. Canada	20,450,000
10. Brazil	19,311,854

Source: Internet World Stats (www.internetworldstats.com).

Aside from Sweden and the USA, none of the other countries discussed in this book were in the top ten in terms of internet penetration.

A fourth dimension involves countries with the largest number of internet users. As Table 12.4 shows, of the top ten countries with the largest number of internet users in 2004, the USA had the most internet users—more than double the users of the next closest country, China. The high use of the internet in the USA is probably a result of a combination of wide accessibility of the internet in the home, a predominance of English-language web sites, and a large population. In terms of other countries compared in this book, the UK had the fifth-largest number of internet users, and France had the eighth-largest number of internet users.

A significant activity on the internet involves searching for pornographic content. As reported by John Arlidge in a March 3, 2002, article on the *Guardian's* web site, "The Dirty Secret That Drives New Technology: It's Porn," it is estimated there are over 80,000 adult web sites on the internet, and the two most popular word searches on the web are "sex" and "porn." According to *Web Search: Public Searching of the Web* (2004) by Amanda Spink and Bernard J. Jansen, adult web site searches constitute somewhere between 5 and 20 percent of all searches. Historically, pornography has been a central force not only in users searching for specific content, but also in driving major technological developments of the internet—particularly in the downloading of photographs and video. Now we turn to comparing audience uses of the internet as well as other media in the eight countries.

MEDIA AUDIENCES IN FRANCE

Newspaper Readers in France

In earlier chapters, we learned that newspapers are not as widely read in France as they are in the other seven countries, in part because readers in France prefer magazines to newspapers. Another reason is because newspapers—especially national newspapers—are formal, and contain elevated language that is not intended for a general-interest readership. We also learned that the largest circulating newspaper is the regional daily *Ouest France*.

TABLE 12.11 Top 10 Web Brands Visited by Internet Users in the UK

BRAND	PENETRATION	AVERAGE TIME PER PERSON (HOURS:MINUTES:SECONDS)
1. Microsoft	62.24%	0:32:09
2. MSN	61.65%	2:08:01
3. Google	54.2%	0:23:27
4. Yahoo!	40.43%	1:11:33
5. BBC	34.14%	0:38:26
6. eBay	32.94%	2:10:14
7. Wanado	23.62%	0:21:16
8. Amazon	20.67%	0:20:26
9. AOL	20.63%	4:38:46
10. Ask Jeeves	16.73%	0:12:19

Source: Nielsen/NetRatings (September, 2004).

of people online were connected to the internet for an average of two to three hours per day. Most people—about one-fourth—used the internet between the hours of 1900 (7:00 PM) and 2300 (11:00 PM).

In terms of content, internet users in the UK commonly accessed three categories of web sites in 2004. Tables 12.11–12.13 provide the top ten web brands, the top ten online news and information destinations, and the top ten online entertainment destinations.

Table 12.11 shows that most people in the UK were visiting web sites of commercial companies. However, the BBC ranked fifth out of the top web brands visited. Of these, top brands visited, users spent the most time visiting AOL and eBay.

Table 12.12 shows that two BBC channels, news-related channels from portals and search engines, and newspaper sites were popular with users seeking news and information, who spend the most time at BBC News and AOL News and Weather web sites.

Table 12.13 once again shows that the BBC is frequently visited by internet users in the UK, but this time in the context of entertainment searches. As a whole, the top-visited brands indicate that internet users prefer entertainment web sites that offer movies, music, and games.

MEDIA AUDIENCES IN THE USA

Newspaper Readers in the USA

In earlier chapters, we learned that most newspapers in the USA are big-city or local newspapers; that newspapers are usually delivered to the home or purchased in a convenience store; and that foreign newspapers are often very hard or even impossible to find. We also learned that only one national newspaper (*USA Today*) has national content and is available at virtually every newspaper vendor. This situational context plus two other factors lead to *USA Today* having the largest circulation. One factor is that *USA Today* is distributed for free in many hotels. The other factor is that *USA Today* is similar in form to television, which Americans have a great affinity for viewing (see the data on television viewing in the next section), compared to television viewing in most other countries.

TABLE 12.12 Top 10 Online News and Information Destinations Visited by Users in the UK

BRAND/CHANNEL	PENETRATION	TIME PER PERSON (HOURS:MINUTES:SECONDS)
1. BBC News	13%	0:25:55
2. BBC Weather	6.68%	0:05:24
3. AOL News and Weather	5.7%	0:27:59
4. YELL.com	5.66%	0:09:41
5. Yahoo! News	5.63%	0:17:42
6. About.com	5.12%	0:02:37
7. News Corporation Newspapers	4.98%	0:19:41
8. Weather Channel	4.95%	0:06:38
9. Guardian Unlimited	4.58%	0:08:03
10. Google News	3.76%	0:01:15

Source: Nielsen/NetRatings (September, 2004).

TABLE 12.13 Top 10 Online Entertainment Destinations Visited by Users in the UK

BRAND	PENETRATION	TIME PER PERSON (HOURS:MINUTES:SECONDS)
1. BBC	34.14%	0:38:26
2. Windowsmedia	12.73%	0:04:22
3. Gorilla Nation Media	7.71%	0:05:51
4. AOL Music	6.45%	0:12:57
5. Internet Movie Database	5.56%	0:09:41
6. The National Lottery	5.55%	0:17:57
7. Play.com	5.11%	0:16:37
8. BskyB	5.08%	0:10:03
9. UGO	4.69%	0:06:48
10. LAUNCH	4.36%	0:13:14

Source: Nielsen/NetRatings (September, 2004).

Within this situational context, newspapers in the USA reach 55 percent of the population on a daily basis, and newspapers reach more men (58 percent) than women (53 percent). People tend to read newspapers mainly in the morning before they go to work. The two groups that read newspapers the most are the forty-five to fifty-four age bracket, and the sixty-five and older bracket, each of which constitutes 21 percent of total readership. The age bracket of eighteen to twenty-four constitutes only 9 percent of newspaper readership. In other words, USA newspapers tend to be read more by older adults.

It is somewhat common to see people reading newspapers at breakfast-oriented restaurants, particularly diners, and to see men reading sports sections of newspapers in bars.

Radio Listeners in the USA

The average adult listens to radio approximately 2.85 hours per day. Most radio listening is done in vehicles as people commute to and from work; thus, radio listening peaks during morning and afternoon drive times. However, a significant portion of radio listening also occurs in the home and at work. In 2004, 21 percent of people twelve years and older listened to internet radio during an average month.

In earlier chapters, we learned that most radio stations are private and commercial, though noncommercial NPR radio is regularly found in big cities and in some suburbs and rural areas. Still, listeners who scan across the FM band will come across commercial radio broadcasts most of the time. Usually there will only be one or two frequencies during a scan of the FM band where an NPR broadcaster can be found, and sometimes one or two frequencies on the FM band occupied by a noncommercial university or college broadcaster. Within this situational context, the majority of radio listening in the USA is to commercial stations, though NPR-member stations have significant proportions of upper-income and university-educated listeners. Approximately only one out of nine radio listeners regularly listens to an NPR-member station. Thus, radio listeners generally have very high exposure to advertising. In general, younger people listen to pop (Top 40) radio stations, and in big cities to hip-hop or dance stations. Older listeners tend to listen to news/talk stations or oldies stations. Country-music stations generally have widespread listenership, especially in rural and suburban areas. Radio listeners in the USA hear music that is almost always USA-based.

Television Viewers in the USA

The USA has one of the highest daily averages for television viewing in the world: The average adult views television for four hours, eighteen minutes per day. But that statistic only reveals part of the pervasiveness of television viewing in the USA, because in the average home the television is actually turned on for more than seven hours a day. Most television viewing is during prime time, which is 1900 (7:00 PM) to 2300 (11:00 PM), when approximately 60 to 70 percent of the population is watching. Most people watch television in the home. Usually, several television sets are located in different rooms throughout a home. Often, children have their own televisions. In addition, as indicated in Chapter 8, it is very common to see people watching television in public places such as bars/restaurants, medical offices, universities, and business waiting lounges. Figure 12.1 depicts a typical scene in a bar in the USA, where patrons are surrounded by television sets. The photo captures five of the nine television sets in the bar, each of which shows a different television program.

As we surmised in earlier chapters, foreign content is hard to find on television in the USA. We also learned that commercials permeate most television programming. In prime time especially, commercials routinely add up to twelve minutes per half hour, which typically results in less than eighteen minutes per half hour for regular programming once the minutage for promotions is also subtracted. And many infomercials seen mainly in the morning are essentially thirty minutes of straight advertising. This situational context leads television viewers to be exposed to clipped American programs containing multiple and prolonged advertising breaks. Thus, television viewers who surf up and down television channels will consistently come across ads. During certain segments of a half-hour cycle, viewers will almost exclusively come across ads, regardless of the television channel.



FIGURE 12.1 *Multiple Television Sets in a Bar in the USA*

Source: Robert M'Kenzie.

The omnipresence of advertising also affects the regular television content that viewers see. Because advertising as a sole method of financing discourages programs that do not appeal to the largest possible audience or a niche audience with high disposable income, most television programs—even more serious programs such as news programs or talk programs—are designed to entertain rather than to educate or challenge viewers. Below are just a few examples that help to illustrate how the overwhelming prevalence of advertising affects the content of television in the USA.

- Prime time consists almost entirely of entertaining dramas, comedies, and films, at the expense of educational or cultural programs.
- Documentaries do not occupy a large portion of television listings; of the documentaries that are broadcast, most focus on celebrities rather than on regular people or on educational subjects.
- Characters in some television shows are purposely shown to be carrying shopping bags or drinking sodas with the labels for the brands prominently framed in the camera shots.

To extend the last point, television program content routinely incorporates advertising-based “consumer” values into the plot line. A potent example is the plotline for an episode of the children’s cartoon series from Disney called *American Dragon: Jake Long* (a series about a boy who is “entrusted with mystical powers of the American Dragon”). On January 22, 2005, an episode called “Dragon Breath” was aired, in which the plot line revolved around Jake getting bad breath just before he was to go on a date with a girl to the school dance. As Jake passed through school hallways looking to ask girls out on a date, people ran away from

him, the female janitor put a bucket over her head, and another girl fell over and hit her head—all because of Jake's stinky breath, which was eventually cured when his dog placed a necklace with a potion in it around Jake's neck.

The subject matter of bad breath is more than just an arbitrary plot line for a television cartoon. Potentially, ideas for plot lines in children's cartoon series can revolve around non-commercial values such as "getting along," "sharing with others," "overcoming a fear of the dark," and other, limitless themes addressing the basic plights of being a child. But bad breath is a likely choice for commercialized television content that constantly airs advertisements for consumer products such as mouthwash, gum, and breath mints. Usually, these advertisements imply that something is wrong with your hygiene—something that can be fixed by a product. By association, the subject matter of bad breath in a children's cartoon is similarly rampant with fears about smelling bad, being made fun of by other children, being rejected by a potential girlfriend (or a boyfriend), and so on. A bad breath plot line in a children's cartoon or in any television series is a good example of a typical consumer-oriented value that is endemic to commercialized television content financed exclusively by advertising revenue.

Internet Users in the USA

In the USA, about 53 percent of people online used the internet every day in 2004. The most frequent activity of people using the internet was communicating with family and friends, looking for maps and directions, and finding product and service information. Most people used the internet between 1600 (4:00 PM) and 2200 (10:00 PM).

In terms of content, internet users commonly accessed three categories of web sites in 2004. Tables 12.14–12.16 list the top ten web brands, the top ten online news and information destinations, and the top ten online entertainment destinations.

Table 12.14 shows that most internet users visited web sites of commercial companies. Web-site portals and search engines dominate the brands visited—of these, internet users spent the most time visiting AOL and Yahoo!.

Table 12.15 shows that internet companies are the primary source of online news and information for internet users. Only one newspaper-based company—Gannet Newspapers—is

TABLE 12.14 Top 10 Web Brands Visited by Internet Users in the USA

BRAND	PENETRATION	AVERAGE TIME PER PERSON (HOURS:MINUTES:SECONDS)
1. Yahoo!	60.73%	2:47:18
2. MSN	60.66%	1:39:17
3. Microsoft	57.88%	0:39:46
4. AOL	49.24%	6:48:16
5. Google	42.36%	0:29:27
6. eBay	31.06%	1:44:57
7. MapQuest	21.31%	0:11:58
8. Amazon	20.44%	0:19:18
9. Weather Channel	20.35%	0:21:03
10. Real	20.14%	0:37:59

Source: Nielsen/NetRatings (September, 2004).

TABLE 12.15 Top 10 Online News and Information Destinations Visited by Internet Users in the USA

BRAND	PENETRATION	AVERAGE TIME PER PERSON (HOURS:MINUTES:SECONDS)
1. Weather Channel	20.35%	0:21:03
2. CNN	15.97%	0:41:01
3. MSNBC	14.66%	0:20:26
4. Yahoo! News	14.6%	0:34:12
5. About.com	13.34%	0:04:47
6. Yahoo! Get Local	12.91%	0:08:20
7. AOL News & Weather	12.01%	0:47:10
8. WeatherBug	10.15%	1:04:53
9. Infospace Directories and Resources	8.75%	0:10:41
10. Gannett Newspapers	8.07%	0:14:20

Source: Nielsen/NetRatings (September, 2004).

TABLE 12.16 Top 10 Online Entertainment Destinations Visited by Internet Users in the USA

BRAND	PENETRATION	AVERAGE TIME PER PERSON (HOURS:MINUTES:SECONDS)
1. WindowsMedia	16.33%	0:11:08
2. Gorilla Nation Media	10.58%	0:09:14
3. ESPN	9.95%	1:02:14
4. AOL Music	9.93%	0:16:38
5. LAUNCH	8.54%	0:22:13
6. MSN Entertainment	8.09%	0:15:11
7. Yahoo! Sports	7.97%	1:30:02
8. Intermix Media	7.6%	0:22:44
9. NFL Internet Network	7.49%	0:28:45
10. CBS	7.4%	0:12:05

Source: Nielsen/NetRatings (September, 2004).

listed in this table. In addition, cable television companies—*CNN* and *MSNBC*—were popular destinations for internet users. Internet users spent far more time at WeatherBug seeking news and information than at any other online news and information destination.

Table 12.16 shows three sports web sites in the top ten most visited online entertainment sites. In addition, two web destinations geared to business start-ups—Gorilla Nation Media, and Intermix Media—are frequently visited entertainment destinations. As a whole, these top-visited brands indicate that internet users in the USA visited entertainment web sites primarily covering business advice, music, films, and sports.

MEDIA AUDIENCES IN MÉXICO

Newspaper Readers in México

In earlier chapters, we learned that in México there are many newspapers available—nationals, regionals, and locals. We also learned that many newspapers in México are significantly financed by government advertising insertions. This situational context is partly behind why there is a lack of publicly available data on newspaper readership—because newspaper executives are reluctant to have readership figures exposed that may be perceived as too small, relative to the amount of government funding that is received. Another factor contributing to the lack of public available data on newspaper readership is México's status as a developing country. Within this context, specific statistical information is available for México City, but for the entire country of México is largely in the form of rough estimates.

In terms of newspaper audiences, approximately 20 percent of people read a newspaper on a daily basis (in México City, this figure is 32 percent). The average newspaper gets passed around to five readers. In México City, the average person reads a newspaper for twenty minutes per day. In México, peak times and typical situations for reading newspapers are quite loose, largely because the average workday begins at 1000 (10:00 AM) and ends at 1900 (7:00 PM) or 2000 (8:00 PM) for most people. Because there is usually a two-hour lunch beginning at 1400 (2:00 PM), there generally is a more leisurely pace to working on the job, which in turn leads to newspaper reading being scattered throughout the day. Accordingly, it is common for people in México to read newspapers before they go to work, during work, and then to a lesser extent, in the evening after work. It is not common to see people reading newspapers on public transportation—mainly because it is usually very crowded.

Radio Listeners in México

In México City, the average adult listens to radio for approximately 3 hours, 25 minutes per day. It is estimated that outside of the capital, the average adult listens to radio around two hours per day. Most radio listening in México City is done in vehicles as people commute to and from work or take taxis. In México City, about two-thirds of people listen to radio while they are at work. Across the country, a fair amount of radio listening occurs in public community areas within smaller (often indigenous) communities. In México, radio listening peaks during three loosely defined “drive times” during the morning, midday, and afternoon or evening. But as is apparent from this wording, the concept of drive time is in its infancy, so morning, afternoon, and evening drive times do not have widely accepted standardized time frames.

In earlier chapters, we learned that most radio stations are private, and that almost all stations—including the government-funded IMER stations—run advertisements. Within this situational context, listeners who scan across the FM band will come across commercial radio broadcasts almost all the time. In some but not all markets there will be one or two frequencies during a scan of the FM band on which a community (indigenous), public, or university broadcaster can be found. Thus, radio listeners in México have regular and high exposure to advertising. In general, younger people listen to contemporary music stations, whereas older people listen to talk-oriented and regional music stations. Radio listeners in México hear a lot of music that is USA-based.

CONCLUSION

PRIMER QUESTIONS

1. In general, which of the nine elements of a media system—cultural characteristics, philosophies, regulation, financing, accessibility, content, imports/exports, and audiences—do you think has the greatest overall impact on a media system?
2. What have you learned about the media system of the country in which you are living, compared with media systems of other countries?
3. What, in your view, are some of the most unique attributes of each media system of the eight countries that were compared?
4. What are some of the similarities across the media systems of the eight countries?
5. What are some of the major policy issues that this book has identified, which are put into practice in every country when a media system develops?

SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTERS

Many people may find the world to be too big and too full of diverse populations, languages, and cultures to be conceptualized with much clarity. With some 200 countries inhabited by some 6.5 billion people collectively speaking 7,000 languages, it is a formidable challenge to understand how they all come together into a definable entity we call the world. Part of the difficulty is that the average person really experiences only a very tiny portion of the world. As a result, much of what we learn about the countries of the world comes through interactions with media content. But the content that we read in newspapers, listen to on radio, watch on television, and surf on the internet is hardly a free-flowing bonanza encompassing all there is to read, hear, and watch. Quite the opposite: Media content in any country is uniquely shaped by a multitude of forces, only some of which are obvious. Furthermore, the ability to understand the world from multiple perspectives is critically connected to the variety of the media outlets and the resulting content that is delivered within the geographic area in which a person lives.

One of the strongest forces affecting media content is the climate of globalization enveloping the world. Globalization is primarily a business-initiated activity that is

connecting companies, governments, and people across the world's countries—even countries that previously have had minimal contact with each other. The chief players in this business-initiated activity are the global media conglomerates, which increasingly are distributing products—only some of which are media products—outside of their domestic markets to foreign markets across the far reaches of the world. Some of the global media conglomerates—such as News Corporation, Viacom, NBC Universal, Bertelsmann, Disney, Time-Warner, and Sony—are so mammoth that their wide assortment of media technologies reach into millions of homes all across the world and deliver content on a daily basis. The content that is delivered by global media conglomerates is both standard—that is, the content has common features regardless of which country it is distributed to—and it is idiosyncratic, because it often gets tweaked to conform to regulations and audience interests that are perceived to be unique to a particular country or region.

When we study media as a system consisting of interrelated elements, we are able to see processes and influences on content that otherwise might not be very apparent. We are also able to see how two or more elements have a direct relationship with each other, and how these elements have greater impacts on the media system in some countries than in others. But most of all, we are able to gain a comprehensive overview of how a collection of elements—cultural characteristics, philosophies, regulation, financing, accessibility, and audiences—work together to produce different kinds of general content, news reporting content, and content that is imported or exported.

Conceptualizing a media system as a tree, wherein the parts of a tree match up with certain elements of a media system, helps us to clearly visualize what a media system looks like—especially those “underground” elements that are more difficult to see than the “above-ground” elements. Conceptualizing a media system as a tree brings about imagery that also helps us see how one part of a tree affects an adjacent part, which affects another adjacent part, and so on. Just as the soil feeds vital nutrients to the roots of a tree, cultural characteristics of a country have deep-seated and pronounced effects on the philosophies that emerge to define the purpose of a media system. Major philosophies include authoritarian, libertarian, communist, social responsibility, developmental, and democratic-participant. Philosophies for media systems are translated into media regulations, the most central of which are government or government-related regulations—though other important regulating influences are exerted also by citizen groups, advertisers, audiences, and media organizations. Just as a tree trunk provides a foundation for the branches that rise up into the air, regulation sets the foundational parameters for the ways in which media content is financed, leading to the accessibility of media in a given geographic area—that is, the newspapers, radio frequencies, television channels, and internet web sites that are available. Just as tree branches carry and form leaves into unique patterns, the accessibility of media delivers a unique selection of content to a particular geographic area. Just as some leaves stand out from the others, one type of content that draws heightened attention to itself is news reporting, which offers commentary on both the media system as well as the welfare of society in general. Just as the seeds of a tree carry the potential for content to sprout up in faraway locations, another type of content is that which is exported from a media system in one country, and then imported by media systems in other countries. And just as passersby can come into contact with a tree, audiences can interact with newspapers, radio, television, and the internet. The patterns and habits of the ways that audiences interact with media as they go about their daily routines are

profoundly affected by the content that is available, as well as how easy and costly it is to access the content.

UNIQUE ATTRIBUTES OF EACH COUNTRY'S MEDIA SYSTEM

France's media system revolves around a marketplace in which the state is both a regulator of broadcast content and a competitor for broadcast audiences. The French government takes an active role in promoting culture as well as political pluralism in media content. France has an extensive global media reach through its association with former colonies and current territories. France is one of three countries (the others being China and Lebanon) in this book that have regulations setting quotas for how much foreign-language media can be imported, to preserve the stature of French culture and the French language. French media content in both broadcast media and newspapers often contains expressions of art and culture in keeping with a French penchant for beauty.

Sweden's media system revolves around a limited marketplace in which the government plays an active role in promoting opposing political viewpoints and protecting children, as well as limiting violence and maintaining open access to public records. Newspapers are funded to guarantee opposing political viewpoints, whereas Sweden has a limited commercial broadcast marketplace in which public-service radio and television are favorably positioned against private competition, and are financed to provide multiple outlets delivering Swedish cultural programming as well as programming for Finnish-speaking audiences. Because Swedish audiences live in a relatively small country, they are accustomed to regularly consuming imported as well as domestically produced English-language content. Following a societal outlook that the virtues of nature extend to human behavior, everyday Swedish media contain some of the most vivid depictions of nudity, sexuality, and the human body.

The UK's media system revolves around a marketplace in which the government has a strong presence in requiring both commercial and BBC television broadcasters to fulfill rigorous public-service obligations. In this marketplace, multiple BBC radio and television services are steadily positioned against strong commercial competition. The UK has an extensive global reach in the distribution of media content primarily because of an acclimation to the English language by populations in so many parts of the world, as well as the UK's continued relationships with Commonwealth countries and former colonial countries. Especially considering its size, the UK has perhaps the most sophisticated media system out of the eight countries—insofar as it hosts multiple newspaper, radio, television, and internet outlets; its content is widely distributed both domestically and internationally; and policies and regulations governing these outlets, plus detailed research on media audiences, are intricately developed and readily available to the public.

The USA's media system revolves around a robust commercial marketplace in which the government prefers to stay on the sidelines, letting competition have the first chance to set the rules. One area in which the government is actively involved in the marketplace is in restricting nudity and profanity. The reliance on market forces results in a media system that is almost entirely profit driven. As a result, the USA has far more advertising minutage present in radio and television content, and more advertising space in newspaper content,

compared to the other countries. The pervasiveness of advertising that results in almost all media forms in the USA significantly shortens and speeds up the other content. The USA media system is the most prolific exporter of both media outlets and media content around the world. Contrarily, the USA does not import much media content from other countries. More typically, the USA imports formats of television shows from other countries, which are then produced domestically so the shows can be modified to suit the perceived tastes of USA audiences.

México's media system revolves around a marketplace in which the government has a strong presence in guaranteeing the dissemination of government information through newspaper, radio, and television content. The government guarantees this presence through licensing stipulations for radio and television broadcasters, and through paid insertions in newspapers. Though México's media system is well-developed, the country itself is in a developmental stage of attempting to address inadequacies in infrastructure, economy, societal welfare, and political democracy—while attempting to move beyond a legacy of government corruption and internal conflicts. Though México's media system operates in a primarily commercial marketplace, the federal government funds diversified content carried on IMER radio stations, whereas the state governments fund public-service content on public television stations.

China's media system revolves around a marketplace in which the government controls almost all operations of newspapers, radio stations, television stations, and internet service providers. The Chinese government is allowing an increasing commercialization of media content resulting in newspapers and broadcasters carrying more advertising. Chinese media are strictly prohibited from criticizing government policies, and from airing foreign content containing Western values deemed to be morally degrading. With the world's largest population, China presents the largest potential domestic media audience.

Ghana's fledgling media system revolves around a marketplace in which the government takes an active interest in guaranteeing that media have the right to free expression, including criticism of the government. Many of the government's regulatory guidelines are aimed at securing democracy, though regulators lack essential resources and enforcement powers to actively implement the regulations. Ghana's media marketplace was previously dominated by state-owned media, but is accommodating the growth of private media. Though both state-owned and private media accept advertising revenue, the lack of capital on the part of vendors as well as the lack of disposable income by the general population has hindered the growth of this method of financing.

Lebanon's media system revolves around a marketplace in which a weak government competes with religious sects and financial interests to regulate the media—a situation that largely results from the ten-year civil war. Both Lebanon's media system and the country as a whole are in a developing stage. In post-civil-war Lebanon, the private sector plays a more active role in the development of the country's media system than the government. However, two areas in which the government plays an active role in regulating media include restricting content that arouses religious or ethnic conflicts, and restricting sexually oriented content that offends traditional morals. Yet, in the context of the Middle East region, Lebanon has one of the most advanced and freest media systems. In Lebanon, there is an abundance of foreign-language content in newspapers, radio, television, and the internet—content that originates not only from Western countries (primarily France, the UK, and the USA), but also from within Lebanon.

FINAL THOUGHTS ABOUT “THE FOREST” OF MEDIA SYSTEMS

This last section borrows from the tree metaphor one more time, to help us close this book with broader speculations about media systems across the world. As the heading of this section implies, media systems across the world are intertwined with each other in such a way as to produce something akin to a worldwide forest of media systems. In order for us to leave behind the individual observations about media systems that have been made, so that global speculations can be posed, this section addresses universal policy issues that have cut across the chapter discussions. Policy issues are essentially decisions about media operations that either have been deliberately made or have arisen as a result of a country's cultural inclinations or intended philosophies for a media system.

One issue that has reverberated throughout this book involves policy decisions about the extent to which a media system should offer private versus public media. It seems to be a near-universal policy across most countries that newspapers should operate primarily as private media. In contrast, policymaking in most countries regarding broadcast media seems to provide for more of a balance—although rarely an exactly equal balance—between private and public media. One common assumption behind such policymaking is that private broadcast media are thought to be less vulnerable to government influence and more responsive to consumer tastes. However, the idealism of this assumption is countered by observations throughout this book that while private media allow audience members to select content from a range of choices, that range is significantly limited by a number of economic and political factors. An alternate assumption behind such policymaking is that public media are thought to be less vulnerable to government influence and more responsive to the good of society as a whole. However, the idealism of this assumption is countered by the reality that audiences do not have much direct involvement in defining for public broadcasters what kinds of media content serve the good of society as a whole. Policymaking discussions in this area are also complicated by existing models that blur the distinctions between private versus public media—for example, as in the case where private media have public service requirements (such is the case in the UK and the USA), or where public media are permitted to air advertisements (as is the case in France and Ghana). Moreover, as the internet continues to proliferate in the delivery of content that has originated in newspapers and on radio and television, and in the delivery of content that originates on internet web sites, it remains to be seen whether government-related policymakers will implement public funding for the internet, along with regulations stipulating that the internet has to meet yet-to-be-defined standards of public service. In the final analysis, media systems that are dominated by private media will likely be missing certain dimensions of public good, whereas media systems that are dominated by public media will likely be missing certain dimensions of audience entertainment.

A second issue is news reporting as a product, public service, or propaganda. Because news is not a form of fiction like other genres of content, it serves as an authoritative factual description of the events it covers. But as Chapter 10 demonstrated, news reporting in every country embodies an outlook that is endemic to the particular country, and therefore provides a nationalistic tone that often reinforces the righteousness of the given country. Though news reporting in a particular country may be packaged as objective or truthful, in reality it cannot escape the context of the time period in which it is reported, nor the

economic, social, and political landscape in which it functions. Depending on how news is positioned within a media system, the following shortcomings may result: News positioned as a product tends to downplay audience betterment because its primary goal is to deliver entertainment that will attract a sizable-enough audience; news positioned as a public service tends to downplay audience desires because its primary goal is to convey information that the audience should know; news positioned as propaganda tends to obscure audience tastes because its primary goal is to deliver interpretations that the government wants the audience to believe. None of these assessments of news is particularly pleasing to acknowledge. Nevertheless, the central point is a critical one—that news reporting serves larger economic and political motives requiring a critically thinking audience to continuously apply skepticism to the information that is delivered, with the understanding that news reporting is largely nationalistic and serves fundamentally to reinforce the integrity of the values of the originating country and the culture in which it is delivered.

A third issue is policy decisions on nudity, sexuality, and profanity. Though all of these concepts are about distinctly different subject matters, in policy discussions about media content they are often grouped together. It is truly amazing and confusing that in some countries nudity and sex between two adults in media content is perceived of as a natural phenomenon but in other countries is perceived of as a degradation of morals. Similarly, it is fascinating how in some countries certain words in media content are considered to be profane, yet in other countries the concept of profanity in any kind of discourse does not seem to exist—let alone the discourse of media content. Policymaking in these areas will continue to be framed by predominant perceptions of morality in the particular country, but will also be affected by the degree to which audiences discover how these subject matters are presented by media content from other countries.

And a fourth issue is policy decisions about violence. Similar to the subject discussed in the last paragraph, it is fascinating how violence in media content is presented so differently. One school of thought—generally followed by the European countries—is that violent content is most appropriate in news coverage because it realistically and appropriately shows the horrors of crime and war. This same school of thought tends to assume that showing violence in fiction-oriented media content has a more gratuitous purpose, and is therefore harmful to society. Another school of thought—generally followed by North American countries—is that violent content is better left to fictitious content, but that across most genres of content, violent content presented in a graphic way should be avoided. This school of thought assumes that showing violence in a close-up camera shot is needlessly offensive—or “gross,” as it is sometimes called.

As this book draws to a close, hopefully in the future you will continue to seek to examine media systems of other countries around the world. If you do, perhaps you will decide that certain elements of media systems of other countries are basically very similar. Or perhaps you will decide that certain elements of media systems of other countries are basically very different. Either way, you will probably conclude that every media system has both liberating and constraining qualities. In the end, as a result of reading this book, you likely are persuaded that comparing media from around the world can free you from cultural myopia—that is, interpreting the world solely from the vantage point of the media system of the country in which you are living.