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Audience research in Denmark

During the early days of academic media and communication research in Denmark in the late 1960s and early 1970s, there was practically no empirical interest in the media audience. Lacking a social science tradition in communication studies (unlike the situation in neighboring Sweden), all academic research took place within the humanities – in disciplines like linguistics, literary studies and history – and was often heavily influenced by the ‘critical theory’ perspective of the Frankfurt School (Jensen & Rosengren 1990). Often expounding an ideological critique of the culture industries based on qualitative textual analysis, the detrimental effects of ‘bourgeois media’ on audiences was deduced from semiotic and early discourse analysis.

The 1980s witnessed a distinctive turn toward the ‘new reception studies,’ which were seen by its practitioners as a necessary corrective to the conclusions drawn by the textual analyses. In 1986, Klaus Bruhn Jensen presented his doctoral dissertation, *Making sense of the news*, the first full-scale reception publication in the Nordic countries, inspired by the Hall/Morley approach to audience decoding processes. During the same period, pioneering studies were done by Kim Christian Schrøder and Tove Arendt Rasmussen in the area of American serial TV fiction, and by Kirsten Drotner in the area of youth media. Framed within the theoretical framework of British and to some extent German cultural studies, this research was normatively qualitative, following the paths of reception research and audience ethnography. In the period 1988-2002, Klaus Bruhn Jensen founded and directed the section on Audience Research in the International Association for Media and Communication Research.

During the 1990s, a wide variety of reception studies were undertaken, especially about different television genres, not least news and fiction series. In addition, one area of specialization was the media use of children and young people. The following list is not exhaustive, but highlights some important researchers and areas of study:

- At the University of Copenhagen, Anne Jerslev and Christa Lykke Christensen, have examined the reception of TV and TV programs aimed at young people, often in a gender perspective. While adopting a critical stance towards the viewing practices of young audiences, they have emphasized the media literacy and discriminating capabilities of young audiences. Thomas Tufte has explored the potential and real role played by TV fiction in processes of social change (e.g. in the area of HIV/Aids prevention) in the developing world.
- Birgitte Tufte and Birgitte Holm Sørensen from the Royal School of Education (later: the Pedagogical University of Denmark) have done research on TV

viewing and other media use among children and young people in various national research projects. In recent years their research –and that of young scholars in these institutions (e.g. Carsten Jessen) - has explored the media sense-making processes of young media consumers, and the digital literacies of emerging generations of digital natives, as it appears in computer-mediated communication and games.

- Kim Christian Schrøder, Roskilde University has explored the sense-making processes applied by consumer-citizens to different forms of corporate advertising. In recent years he has explored how people in Denmark navigate in the cornucopia of news media around them, how they select, from the vast news supply spanning traditional and digital media, personalized packages, or constellations, of news media. His research follows in the footsteps of previous work by Jørgen Poulsen on newspaper readers and Ib Poulsen on radio news listeners. Kim Schrøder is a co-director of the DREAM Centre (see below).
- Nete Nørgaard Kristensen, University of Copenhagen and Unni From, Aarhus University are currently doing audience research on the reception of newspaper journalism, not least cultural journalism.
- Hanne Bruun and Kirsten Frandsen from the University of Aarhus are currently in charge of a national project on TV entertainment in the 21st century, focusing on the role of TV entertainment in the daily life of the respondents. Karen Klitgaard Poulsen, University of Aarhus, has studied young people and their reception of popular American TV shows like Beverly Hills 90210. She has also for years explored the audiences of printed magazines and the impact of magazines in the wider media matrix.

Commercial audience research

Through the 1990s and 2000s, a wide variety of quantitative as well as qualitative studies have been done in the context of the commercial media sector and public broadcasting, as well, from television meters to readership surveys to product development through focus groups. In recent years commercial research has increasingly had the ambition of mapping people's consumption of cross-media. This research gathers information about the factual aspects of people's cross-media reachability and vulnerability to strategic media campaigns, trying to find their weak spots.

'Audiences of digital media'

Among the first to engage in audience analysis related to digital media, including computer games have been:

- *University of Copenhagen*: Klaus Bruhn Jensen, Rasmus Helles, Anne Mette Thorhauge, Kristine Jørgensen. Since 2002, a research group on Digital Communication and Aesthetics has examined digital media and genres, including quantitative as well as qualitative studies of audiences and users, some of them in collaboration with commercial and other external partners. Among the topics addressed have been mobile media in everyday life; computer games, including the role of sound in player action; and new configurations of one-to-one, one-to-

- many, and many-to-many communication across media types.
- *University of Aarhus*: Since 2000, the Center for Internet Studies based at the Department of Media Studies, University of Aarhus, has focused on the political and social consequences of the Internet. Empirical studies have addressed online political participation (Jakob Linaa Jensen, Niels Ole Finnemann), the history and development of websites and the Internet (Niels Brügger), the Internet in organizational contexts (Jesper Tække) and the Internet as a center of cross media dynamics through user-generated content (Anja Bechmann Petersen), all fully or partly based on audience analysis approaches. Further, Jakob Linaa Jensen and Anne Marit Waade have done research on the impact of old and new media for tourism practices. Per Jauert has conducted research on radio listening and use of digital audio media.
 - *University of Southern Denmark*: Kirsten Drotner at the University of Southern Denmark has undertaken a range of national and international studies of media and youth. Since 2004 she has directed the Danish Research Centre on Education and Advanced Media Materials (DREAM), a joint research center between the University of Southern Denmark and Roskilde University which explores through a multitude of empirical ‘audience’ and user research projects how digital technologies and applications may serve as facilitators of learning for young people in informal and semiformal contexts. Since 2009 DREAM’s focus is on participants’ digital content creation and social network communication in museums and science centres, through projects which cross-fertilize museum visitor studies, media audience research, design research and digital literacy research.
 - *IT University*: Rich Ling, Gitte Stald, Lisbeth Klastrup. Since its founding in 1999, the IT University of Copenhagen has contributed to audience and user studies of a variety of digital media genres and publics. Among special focus areas have been computer games and mobile media; other topics of research have included media use among children and youth, and social network sites.
 - *University of Aalborg*: Malene Charlotte Larsen has investigated young people’s uses of social media, for instance the very popular ARTO network for the 10-15 year-olds.

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