

Contemporary Media Institutions Essay Assignment

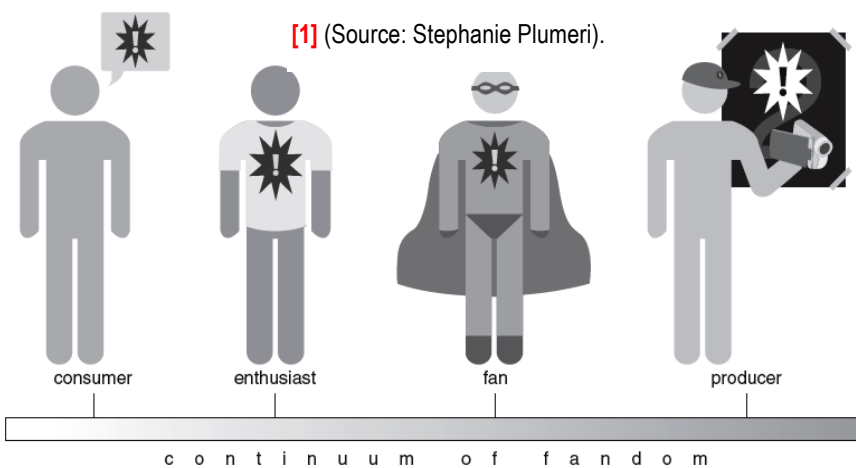
b) What is participatory media? Using one or more examples discuss the extent to which and the ways in which participation has transformed the media landscape.

In today's media landscape participatory media plays a big part in peoples everyday lives. It has transformed the media in a range of ways and has socially and culturally changed the way we live. In this essay I am going to explore what exactly participatory media is and look at some of the ways audience participation has transformed the media landscape and to what extent it has done so. I am going to cover online participation looking at the three examples; social networking, fans/fandom, and YouTube and also briefly look at how participation has transformed journalism, politics and public service broadcasting (real world not virtual).

So what is participation media? There are many different aspects of participatory media but they all focus around the idea of audiences playing an active role in shaping media content. New media has meant a big increase in the ability of audience to participate; especially with the Internet due to the increased freedom it has given the public to get involved. It's provided the means for people to access media content at anytime and anywhere.

Public service broadcasting has had some transformation due to new forms of participation. One example in the 1990's was the BBC Community film unit and the creation of video nation in which a member of the public was selected to give a 5min diary that was broadcast. Many documentary style programmes heavily focus on the involvement and accounts of everyday people and the topics of these shows aim on not just informing and educating but also entertain, cause intense emotion and focus on the most outrageous, unique and interesting. In turn reality TV has transformed, moving from shows like Big Brother, X-factor, and Britain's got Talent, to the development of heavily scripted reality of real peoples lives. The Only Way Is Essex and Made in Chelsea, for example. These shows have greatly effect moral values and ideology of the audience as the aspiration to be on TV and famous has intensified.

Social networking has transformed how people communicate with one another. What began with email and online forums has grown into instant messaging sites like MSN and Skype so people can talk to one face to face despite being miles or Continents apart. Then there is Facebook which isn't just about keeping in contact with close friends and family as it has become a way for people to upload their whole life online for everyone to see. You can connect to games, upload pictures, music, calendars, and create events & fan pages. Many companies have pages on Facebook to promote products and offer discounts, news & events. Twitter takes socialising to a new level again by providing the public with a way of following the famous and communicating with them on a more intimate level, making them feel more connected. In turn celebrities can use this to their advantage - often for popularity and promotional means - but sometimes for a good cause.



What's interesting about Twitter is that it also provides another way for audience participation which is the transformation of audiences being encouraged to tweet their ideas, opinions, and questions. Many TV programmes now have their own official Twitter pages and provide their hashtag at the start of programmes asking audiences to become involved. Most news sites, gossip sites, TV broadcasters and

radio stations also have pages. This brings to light the narrowed gap between audience and producer compared to in the past. In Chapter 8 of *Media Audiences: Effects, Users, Institutions, and Power*, by John L. Sullivan pages 194 to 195 I found the following quote which supports this idea... *"Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998, p. 141), recognizing that there are perhaps different levels of passion and involvement in fan activities, developed a continuum of audience experiences. Levels of engagement with popular media ranged from "consumer" on one end to "petty producer" (people who turn their fan activity into a profession and market their productions back to fans) on the other, with "enthusiast" and "fan" as levels of fan involvement in the middle of the continuum"* [1]

The chapter follows with another theory... *"Sandvoss (2005, p. 8) offered a more inclusive definition of fandom, taking into account both dedicated and casual fans. He defined fandom as "the regular, emotionally involved consumption of a given popular narrative or text in the form of books, television shows, films, or music, as well as popular texts in a broader sense such as sports teams and popular icons and stars ranging from athletes and musicians to actors." As Sandvoss's definition demonstrates, we are all fans of something in today's media-saturated environment"*. [2] ...This second quote is significant in terms of audience participation as it supports the idea that we all are participatory to some degree and that the media landscape has transformed in terms of being a fan and fandom due to the many ways we can immerse and interact with the media. As the chapter goes on to state...*"The category of "fan" has dramatically expanded as a result of the even smaller niche media products and platforms available today (such as cell phone games and media, cable and satellite television channels, YouTube channels, and other forms of micro-media)"*. [3]

Another element of this transformation is the commercial side as participation of the audience can be used to the advantage of industries as the following quote from Chapter 2: *Cultural context - Behind the explosion of participatory media of We Media* supports... *"Just as weblogs and forums have turned audiences into participants, other industries have thrived by developing tools to turn their customers into creators... Nestle has built a toolkit that enables its customers to develop their own flavours. GE provides customers with Web-based tools for designing better plastic products. Providing the tools and services to enable customers to act as their own auctioneers is at the heart of one of the most successful Internet companies, eBay"*. [4] The recent Google Chrome adverts promote participation that users can use their site to benefit being creative and to set up their own businesses. One TV ad called *"Google Chrome: Julie Deane"* *"charts the rise of Julie Deane & The Cambridge Satchel Company. From creating the satchel idea to becoming a hit with vloggers and bloggers and then exploding onto the fashion world; we see how Julie used the web to go from kitchen to catwalk."* [5] The whole idea of the advert is how participatory media can be used for success.

I came across a journal article by Hye-Kyung Lee on Participatory media fandom focused on anime fansubbing with the quote...*"fansubbing is situated at the disjuncture of the global mediascape, which intensifies with the increasing public access to means to copy and share, the expansion of collective knowledge and the rise of fans' voluntary labour coordinated on a global scale. It exemplifies participatory media fandom whose globalization exceeds that of cultural industries in terms of extent and velocity."* [6] ... I thought this would be a good point to include in my essay on how participatory media has transformed the media landscape negatively because subbing anime (along with other foreign media) although technically promotes a larger international audience it *"exemplifies cultural industries that are facing pressure from their own consumers who, networked and coordinated on a global scale, can self-organize mediation and distribution of cultural commodities, based on the non-commercial principle."* [7]

"In the era of social networking sites such as Tumblr and Twitter, fans are enjoying a previously unattainable level of direct interaction with their favourite actors and actresses." [8] I found this quote online which supports the idea that participation has had quite an effect on the media landscape. Today's media culture is so heavily focused on fame and celebrities, especially news wise with gossip sites and magazines, yet audiences are able to feel connected to stars on a much more personal level taking away the perception of the famous being untouchable or different from the everyday audience.

Fandom and community. LiveJournal is an example of a site based on audience participation and though its purpose is for blogging (creating a personal journal which you can share with the world) fans have used the site to create pages where they discuss what they love and create their own work based on. They have formed communities, and even ideologies/"tropes". [9] [10] [11] Transformation of fandom becoming more accepted by shows, some even encourage it. It's less about being a geek as a whole range of genres now have fans (especially when it comes to creating Fanfiction). Conventions bring the virtual communities together in the real world.

Actor Misha Collins is an example of a celebrity who discovering the active participation of his fans and fans of cult TV show Supernatural online has cleverly used fandom participation for charitable causes on an international scale creating Random Acts "a non-profit organization that's aiming to conquer the world, one random act of kindness at a time" [12]. He's also combined this with Gishwhes, an international scavenger hunt using media that's just run for it's second year, "we're proud to announce this year's teams filmed hundreds of videos of global Random Acts of Kindness (in partnership with our non-profit Random Acts (www.therandomact.org) and inspired over 100,000 people to pledge to do a Random Act of Kindness in over 120 countries" [13].

A completely different sector of media that has been transformed is journalism due to the technology available to the mass. Mobile phones today are no longer just for communication; they feature cameras with quality good quality enough for everyday people to capture and distribute videos of major events/news worthy material as they happen across the world. This is called citizen journalism. An example of this is the 2004 Tsunami, Banda Aceh, Indonesia, where people's video clips even made national news and The BBC have a page on their news website asking for people's personal accounts/experiences. [14] In fact the majority of news articles on line feature comment boxes for readers to post their own thought and views on the stories.

Politics wise there has also been some degree of transformation. Social protest using networks like mobiles and Facebook to communicate messages is an example of this, as are online petitions. Everyday people now have more of a Public Voice due to participatory media. Of course it doesn't always have a positive effect. Increasingly politicians have become the subject of many mash-up videos, a famous one being the apology speech by Nick Clegg over tuition fees. An extra degree of participation is that the song went on to be reported on many major news programmes [15] and even talked about by Nick Clegg himself (in a positive light as a way of showing himself as being a 'good sport' about it). [16].

In fact mash-ups have become increasingly popular and in some cases famous globally and have in turn caused quite a transformation to the media landscape. Despite the issues with piracy and copyright laws surrounding the content of these videos (and audio) there are even shows like 2012: Mashed where the public is encouraged to create videos to be shown on TV. [17] "...because we cannot see each other or hear each other's voices over the internet, a virtual body can replace the real body. Initially, a virtual body was accomplished through description, but now it can be accomplished through the use of images...identities can be re-imagined at will and can be condensed or diffused by images of other identities". Page 13 of Building Virtual Communities: Learning and Change in Cyberspace, written by Renninger, K. Ann and Shumar, Wesley suggests that audiences separate their virtual self's from their real life identity giving them more freedom to participate more comfortably and become what/who they may desire. Many people share their creative work online under a persona they create for themselves which supports the above quote.

And its not just mash-ups, there is a whole range of creativity that links to audience participation, creating and sharing their own work using online sites like Flickr, DeviantART, LiveJournal, and of course YouTube "a site of participatory culture" according to Jean Burgess and Joshua Green [18]. To what degree though is complex as there are different levels of participation; those who upload, those who watch, those who watch, ECT. There is both traditional media like official music videos and film trailers, clips of TV and film, accredited channels like CW, BBC, and Channel 4 and user generated content like singing own songs and playing instruments, comedy sketches, blogs and video diaries.

The two categories combine making convergence. This includes remixes of popular music, parodies and spoofs of TV, film and music plus celebrities, politicians, news events and fan subbing of foreign media. Fan videos are an interesting example of the creative works of users which combine audio of a music artist and video of a film, TV, actor, character, ETC together to create a tribute from a fan. Some involve “shipping” of a couple they like on a show or an Alternate storyline they have created. To take this further YouTube users even collaborate together creating videos where they combine their work together. RIP a manifesto’s first rule “*culture always builds on the past*” [19] links well with this idea of creativity from taking existing material, editing & changing it and re-publishing it as your own. Essentially “*YouTube is a combination of user participation and a way of viewing media material*” [20].

There is another element of transformation that YouTube participation has caused to the media landscape which is that it acts as an archiving system due to the media content that is uploaded on the site by its users. This was never actually the intention of the creators of YouTube. It’s also on an international scale as content from all countries can be uploaded and blogs online often point viewers to other content and places providing links and structure.

Though there has always been a degree of audience participation the age of new media has meant that participatory media is now an everyday part of many people’s lives and audiences are a lot more active and have the ability to change and shape their own personal media lifestyle. Whether this is by blogging and using social networks, creating communities both on and off the Internet, mash-ups of music and video, setting up businesses, sharing their own videos, music and images, or partaking in citizenship journalism. In terms of the extent to which and the ways in which participation has transformed the media landscape, I think that it has a great deal of effect to some areas of the media when it comes to interactivity and also fandom. YouTube, for example, is one are of participatory media that has transformed the media landscape massively due to its unintentional archiving of media. Expanding on this is that people can also sell their creations. Anyone can sell their music on I-Tunes or post writings/stories as books for kindles and E-readers. Audience interaction is encouraged on twitter and there is a great deal of popularity for reality TV which relies heavily on the participation elements. Many areas I looked at online as examples of participatory media have had some negative effect on today’s media landscape as it can be argued that part of the reason we have so many issues with piracy and copyright is down to audiences using participatory media to fansub, remix, converging existing media, ECT. Of course not every media aspect has been transformed by participation as there hasn’t been such an effect on politics in terms of it influencing any policies, results, elections.

Word Count: 2,016

Bibliography of Sources;

Books

Building Virtual Communities: Learning and Change in Cyberspace, written by Renninger, K. Ann and Shumar, Wesley, published by Cambridge University Press, 2002

[14] Community As Multilayered Communicative Space, Quote from page 13

Community in the Digital Age: Philosophy and Practice, written by Feenberg, Andrew and Barney, Darin David, published by Rowman and Littlefield, 2004

[9] Chapter 10, Virtually Democratic: Online Communities and Internet Activism, Richard Kahn and Douglas Kellner

[10] Digital Fandom: New Media Studies, written by Booth, Paul, published by, Peter Lang, 2010

[11] Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World, written by Gray, Jonathan; Sandvoss, Cornel; Harrington, C. Lee, Published by New York University Press, 2007

Media Audiences: Effects, Users, Institutions, and Power, written by John L. Sullivan, published by SAGE Publications, Inc, 2008.

[1] [2] [3] Chapter 8: Media Fandom and Audience Subcultures, pages 194-195, SECTION 4: AUDIENCES AS PRODUCERS AND SUBCULTURES.

The Cultural Industries 2nd Edition, Written by David Hesmondhalgh, Published by Sage, 2007
'Introduction: Change and Continuity, Power and Creativity'

Theories of the New Media: A Historical Perspective, written by Caldwell, John Thornton, published by Athlone Press, 2000

[18] [20] YouTube: Online Video and Participatory Culture. Written by Jean Burgess and Joshua Green, Published by Polity, 2009

Journals

Jose van Dijck 'Users like you? Theorising agency in user-generated content' Media, Culture and Society 2009

Manuel Castells (2007) 'Communication, Power and Counter-power in the Network Society' in International Journal of Communication 1

[6] [7] Participatory Media Fandom: A Case Study of Anime Fan-Subbing, written by Lee, Hye-Kyung , Volume 33, Issue 8, pages 1131 - 1147

Roles of audience participation in multiplatform television: From fans and consumers, to collaborators and activists by José Alberto García-Avilés, Volume 9, Issue 2 November 2012

TV

2012: Mashed, First broadcast 23 Sept 2012, 11:40pm, Televised on Channel 4.

RIP A Manifesto

[19] The manifesto, point one

Websites

BBC - <http://www.bbc.co.uk>

[14] NEWS: ASIA - Aceh Quake: Your Experiences - <http://www.bb.co.uk/news/world-asia-17680793>

Eight Traits of the New Media Landscape

http://henryjenkins.org/2006/11/eight_traits_of_the_new_media.html

From couch potatoes to cybernauts? The expanding notion of the audience on TV channels' websites, by EUGENIA SIAPERA, Published by Sage, 2004 - Online PDF <http://faculty.ist.psu.edu/lkvasny/IST402/AudienceAnalysis.pdf>

G.I.S.H.W.H.E.S 2012 - http://cluster.gishwhes2012.com/g_blog/

[13] G.I.S.H.W.H.E.S. The Greatest International Scavenger Hunt the World Has Ever Seen! Quote from paragraph 2.

Great-Ads - <http://great-ads.blogspot.com/>

[5] Google Chrome UK Advert "Julie Deane", Written By Sylvia G, 2012 - <http://great-ads.blogspot.com/2012/09/google-chromeuk-advert-julie-deane.html>

Innovative Practices of Youth Participation in Media by Sanjay Asthana, Ph.D, Published by UNESCO, 2006 - Online PDF <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001492/149279e.pdf>

Random Acts - <http://www.therandomact.org/>

[12] About Random Acts, Quote from paragraph 1

The Guardian - <http://www.guardian.co.uk>

A nation of audience participation, Written by Tim Adler, Monday 11 June 2012
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2012/jun/11/nation-of-audience-participation>

We Media

<http://www.hypergene.net/wemedia/weblog.php?id=P37>

[4] Chapter 2: Cultural context - Behind the explosion of participatory media - Customer as Innovator

YouTube - <http://www.youtube.com/>

[15] Media coverage of the Nick Clegg Apology Song: I'm Sorry Uploaded by YouTube user The Poke.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9egE3DjAynw&feature=player_detailpage

[16] Nick Clegg reaction on The Apology Song-I'm Sorry Uploaded by YouTube user BhamUrbanNewsUK.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dNUiNYFcw8g&feature=player_detailpage First broadcast 23 Sept 2012, Televised on UK's national television BBC One, The Andrew Marr Show.