

# Media and Cultural Analysis

## สื่อและการวิเคราะห์ทางวัฒนธรรม

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### Abstract

This paper is based on dissecting functions of media; to explore the scope on how media representation corresponds with the society. Media learners are replaced with *audiences* as they both share the experience of consuming information. The meaning that media conveys is consistently inserted by chosen textual analysis to make the paper more objective, and to provide reader broader perspectives of its embodiment. Qualitative research method is applied as a tool to dig into respective findings. The subjects are stressed on culture, ideology, and identity that media fundamentally performs as a linkage. Films are utilized as underlying medium to mirror historical and current situations which contain buried message of social conditions. The advantages of studying media is to help audiences understand themselves and fathom different social dimensions.

**Keywords:** media, representation, audience, culture, ideology, identity

### บทคัดย่อ

บทความนี้มีพื้นฐานมาจากการวิเคราะห์หน้าที่ของสื่อ เพื่อสำรวจขอบเขตว่าสื่อมีความสอดคล้องกับสังคมอย่างไร ผู้เรียนหรือผู้ที่ศึกษาเกี่ยวกับสื่อจะเทียบเท่ากับ *ผู้ชม* เนื่องจากผู้ชมจะมีหน้าที่ทั้งแบ่งปันประสบการณ์และบริโภคข้อมูล ความหมายที่สื่อจะส่งถึงผู้ชม มักจะแทรกอยู่ในการวิเคราะห์ตัวบทที่ถูกคัดสรร เพื่อให้บทความชิ้นนี้เป็นรูปธรรมและเพื่อขยายมุมมองการตีความจากตัวเรื่องที่ได้รวบรวมไว้ วิจัยเชิงคุณภาพถูกนำมาใช้เป็นเครื่องมือเพื่อหาผลการวิจัยที่เกี่ยวข้องตามหัวข้อหลัก ได้แก่ วัฒนธรรม อุดมคติวิทยาและอัตลักษณ์ ซึ่งสื่อดำเนินการเป็นตัวหลักในการเชื่อมโยง โดยสื่อกลางที่ใช้เพื่อสะท้อนสภาพสังคมทางประวัติศาสตร์และสภาพสังคมในปัจจุบัน คือ ภาพยนตร์ข้อได้เปรียบของการศึกษาสื่อ ก็เพื่อให้ผู้ชมมีความเข้าใจเกี่ยวกับตนเองและเข้าใจความแตกต่างทางสังคม

**คำสำคัญ:** สื่อ เครื่องแสดง ผู้ชม วัฒนธรรม อุดมคติวิทยา อัตลักษณ์

## Introduction

If media represents our body, its mind would be functioned by covert cultures. Media is never made for only entertainment as Jean-Francois Lyotard, a famous French philosopher and sociologist, revealed that everyone must study media because “every person is jacked into the informational circuitry”. [1] Information that has been circulated has different impacts on individuals which later manipulate their concept of ‘self’. Human progress their cultural identities and communicative rosters all through life in various social institutions such as family, religion, and school. [2] Among these given communities, their behavioral mechanisms are developed to serve social order. Influentially, media consumption inevitably plays a key role in our perceptions in order to form individual identity. Therefore, the process of interpreting cultural and social connotations via cultural artifacts as media is crucial for ones’ points of view towards the world.

At the first level, as the identity is found, human tend to understand a sense of 'others' more thoroughly. The discrimination between 'us' and 'outsiders' will be fairly separated, but yet understandable. People try to define their individualism so that they could participate with others and nurture their self-satisfaction. [3] Until, they reach the level of differentiating how other groups have higher judicious and socioeconomic power. For example, a symbol from the American film of The Dark Knight that Joker is running the city and bombing skyscrapers with joy. It impersonates how nonsense a Joker is which relates to the movement of terrorist attack from 9/11. [4] This one scene attracts audiences' attentions from all over the world. It somehow implies the huge influences from the States that dominate the world social forum. The audience is forced to have sympathy with Batman--the leading character, which leads to the interpretation that Joker is bad, also convinces the situation in 2011 that the assault from terrorists were unacceptable. On the other hand, those who put themselves on Joker's side would unquestionably attempt to look for more reasonable answers from his action. When they have their satisfying justification, their identification is as well another step evolved. On national level or group identity, media represents issues that the nation has been confronting, to demonstrate, Buddhism deterioration from Thai horror film (Phobia II) is embedded in the plot as the population has been consuming news about misbehaved monks nowadays. It is a perfect sample how media tries to reach religious ideology of reviving Buddhism by spreading the news of a famous monk; Luang Phor Khoon as he left decent legacies to all Buddhists. [5]

In the direction of scrutinizing audiences’ perceptions from media consuming, qualitative research method is applied to explore in-depth information. To conduct qualitative research is to collect knowledge of social phenomena and factual environment [6], in this case, films are mainly accounted as medium, and its textual analysis is the result of audience’s interpretation. Qualitative research disregards quantity measurement, but pays attention to small details. To illustrate, a researcher will focus on how peer-group discuss their favorite horror film instead of concentrating on the amount of members of the group. This research method is chosen to gain deeper perspectives from media consumers.

Before examining the correlation between media and audiences, studying how media function on individuals and society is compulsory.

Media composes meaning and constructs values to reach ideology that has been set by a specific community. [7] These communication outlets are seen in many creations such as newspaper, website, radio, television, photography, advert, cinema etc. They feed images and information in a ‘natural’ aspect, for example, the advertising of whitening cream from women—the image illustrates the beauty of women by presenting a hairless soft skin with flowery odors. The audience perceives this image as natural, but the process of production is controlled in the most unnatural way considering all scripts, makeup, and camera angles. It is called ‘the ideology of beauty’ in Thai society, however, this ideology is altered in other communities. For instance, in some European countries, having skin tanned is ideal. Hence, the interpretation from media message is filled with cultural notes. One of the major concerns that every society has in common is *inequality* among human race. These three dimensions below shall describe the unjustness in masses;

- Classism, “the systematic oppression of subordinated class groups to advantage and strengthen the dominant class groups” [8], appeared widely in the context of world cinema including Thai films, for example, a gradual self-destruction process of a leading character’s neighbors in *Ladda Land*, at the end of the story, the head of a family commits suicide. The movie represents a stressful lifestyle of a middle class parent who tries to work hard to serve capitalism. The concept of having more materials means owning more happiness is designated as commercialism grows rapidly in Thailand. *Parasite* is another depiction of materialism and Americanization. The film is set between the rich and the poor, the rich shows their superiority by showing off US-made toys, tent and other things that the poor family cannot afford. They only hire Korean teacher with American names. It shows how Americanization dominates Korean culture. [9]

- Racism, a collective recognition of biological divergence between human [10], has been occurred in every corner of the world, as the main theme from the same movie *Ladda Land*, a ghost conveys the expression of racism. She is gazed as a migrant worker, whom in Thai society is treated poorly compared to the citizens because human marginalize different ethnic group to create a sense of ‘us’ and ‘others’. Racism in Thailand, like other countries, had emerged from an enduring background. Historically, the southern Muslims are mostly Malay. When the Prime Minister General Por Phiboonsongkram governed to make change of transforming Thailand into a civilized country, the dressing and lifestyle had changed. Other ethnic groups were merged into *Thainess* except Malays in the South. [11]

- Sexism, “discrimination based on gender and the attitudes, stereotypes, and the cultural elements that promote the discrimination. Given the historical and continued imbalance of power, where men as a class are privileged over women” [12], this sex-based prejudice is a root of an unfair cohabitation. In media context, it has been presented

since the very first era of film production. The prominent case is from British film production in 1950s—Alfred Hitchcock's period with his masterpiece *Vertigo*, he exemplifies women as objects. The production is operated by patriarchal points of view. [13] Male is the carrier of the look to present a greater power they have over women. They have more intellects, better job opportunities, while they gaze women as fascinating objects, in other words, women are seen as decorations. The female leading character is always presented with well-polished appearances and manners. She tries to commit suicide but Scottie—the protagonist, comes and saves her life in time. The scene connotes the fragility and helplessness in women that endlessly need men as rescuers. [14] Comparing to current social values, male still has priorities considering the global trend. Especially in Thailand, there is a documentary film called *Girlfriend for Sale* [15], reflects the attitude that some Thai women from rustic area even see themselves as objects, they want to be chosen as they understand that foreign men have more potentials to provide them a decent quality of life. Instead of looking for a job and earn money, they focus on contacting a translator to make a deal with any male foreigner who physically prefers them.

### Conclusion

Culture and social conditions via media representation provide self-reflective comprehension which brings about an improved perceptive respond between communicators. In other words, media learners will be more skillful to communicate with others such as face to face communication, written official letters, and telephone. Furthermore, studying or inserting media in contexts for modern teaching methods is a productive way for learners to keep up with the world's pace, discover themselves, raise their social awareness, broaden attitudes towards international relations, and latterly maintain their belonging group in propitious ways.

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