Media Audiences

You will need to consider:

- how media producers target, attract, reach, address and potentially construct audiences
- how media industries target audiences through the content and appeal of media products and through the ways in which they are marketed, distributed and circulated
- how audiences interpret the media, including how they may interpret the same media in different ways
- how media organisations reflect the different needs of mass and specialised audiences, including through targeting
- how audiences use media in different ways, reflecting demographic factors as well as aspects of identity and cultural capital
- the role and significance of specialised audiences, including niche and fan, to the media
- the way in which different audience interpretations reflect social, cultural and historical circumstances
Theoretical approaches

- Reception theory Stuart Hall

Encoding & decoding, preferred, negotiated and oppositional readings

Task: How does ‘The Bridge’ target audiences?

- Who is the audience for The Bridge? Think about age, gender and social class, lifestyle and taste. Justify your response
- How does the text itself target audiences? Consider genre, narrative, star and character, representations, intertextuality
- How does the marketing target audiences? Scheduling, social media, posters & trailers

Use the digital resource ‘Identifying audience’ for the suggested answers

Who are the different audiences and how are they targeted?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Audience (age, gender, class, lifestyle, taste)</th>
<th>How are they targeted? (through text, through marketing)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>younger audiences aged 15+</td>
<td>Those 15+ might be targeted for this show because it is a TV post-watershed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Female audiences</td>
<td>Female audiences might be a target for this show because the main character is a woman named Saga and she is a headstrong woman she might be an role model or aspiration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Main audiences</td>
<td>Male audiences would be targeted this through headstrong other main male characters in the show might like the female character and their relationship build</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fans of Nordic noir / interest in Scandinavian culture</td>
<td>Fans of Nordic noir will be targeted this show because there is a lot of nordic noir elements in the show which could interest an niche audience.</td>
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</table>
How do Audiences respond to ‘The Bridge’?

Audiences of the bridge may respond differently, depending on their own attitudes towards the character or the show on itself. One type of audience might identify themselves with Saga, ‘pick and mix’ with her personality traits and they may find themselves relating to her headstrong personality.

Another audience might watch the show for escapism. The Uses & Gratifications Model, where audiences might watch something for escapism. The show is about examining the clues and questioning the protagonist while the show continues.

On the contrast another type of audience to respond to this is those who are hooked in by the enigma codes. Such as ‘why did they cut the bodies in half and swap them?’ Enigma codes like such help engage the audience, keeping them hooked and wanting to understand the enigma codes.

Audience response

Series 3 - Generally around 1.3-1.8 M viewers with Series 1 around 1M and Series 2 similarly around 1.4M

Imdb 8.6/10 from 33,259 responses, with very similar gender split.

Sample User Review of Series 1 - Exciting “new touch” on the often typical genre 9/10 Author: pompousmodesty from Finland 5 October 2011

‘So far (episode 3) “Bron” provides all the classic criminal genre elements with a modern and smart touch. The characters and actors fit their roles well (albeit being caricatures of the genre). I especially enjoy the humorous and feminist take on Saga Norén’s character. For me all these little stylistic touches just add to the enjoyment. And the plot elements fit an interconnected Scandinavian/European reality without seeming overdone or simplified. I’d say this is one of the most exciting crime dramas of the decade, even since its function is not intended to be a long-running series with one main protagonist. I like the “issues” approach of “Bron” more than the classic European detective drama we’ve seen so far in the 2000s’

Look at the coverage of “The Bridge” by The Guardian. What are the different responses to “The Bridge”?

https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/the-bridge
Audience Task: What pleasures might audiences gain from 'The Bridge'?

Task: Create a word cloud of the pleasures we might gain from the text. Develop three of these points with examples from the text itself. Check against the list of potential pleasures

Pleasure of intellectual puzzle – enigma codes and cliffhangers

Audience expectations of genre
– pleasure in seeing expectations fulfilled (Neale)

Reality – creates audience empathy and identification

Moral messages – reinforces ideologies but also challenges these

Star/character identification and unusual representations

Audience Positioning: How does the text position audiences? Discuss in groups and feed back to the class

Positioned with Saga & the restricted narrative means that we only know what she knows. We therefore seek answers to narrative enigma codes (as defined by Barthes) as Saga does – what is going on?

• We solve the mystery alongside her and become part of the team. This fulfils the audience’s need for belonging or social needs within Blumler & Katz’ Uses & Gratifications model.

• Positioned to decode Saga as “different” (lack of social awareness, literal interpretations) but sympathetic and vulnerable – particularly through her backstory (sister) and her relationship with her mother.

• Positioned with the forces of law & order to see certain criminal behaviours as deviant
Readings – Stuart Hall

Look at the reviews by Mark Lawson, Clive James and Tom Leins

Extended writing task:

Write a paragraph on each of the following questions

1. What is the preferred meaning of ‘the Bridge’?
2. How is this encoded?
3. What other readings might this text generate? Give examples

Preferred reading – a “quality” crime drama, driven by enigmas and a classic investigative narrative. Will be enjoyed by fans of Nordic noir in particular.

Different readings – Remember to refer IN DETAIL to the text to support your ideas on readings – e.g. what do Saga/Henrik/Hanne do/say etc?

An oppositional reading may struggle to find Saga a sympathetic character. Audiences may view her apparent autism with concern, or find it difficult to connect to her emotionally as her responses are so different to our expectation and she lacks humour.

A more conservative audience may respond negatively to the Swedish liberal attitudes to sex, gender and political correctness.

Mark Lawson Review – negotiated reading

“The Bridge’ certainly continues the strengths of the genre: a clever plot that combines public concerns and private crises, a moody and ominous atmosphere and yet another central female role of the sort that British TV actresses are offered as rarely as salted herring in a British breakfast. To Sofie Gråbøl’s sweated detective in ‘The Killing’ and Sidse Babette Knudsen’s sweating premier in ‘Borgen’, we can now add Sofia Helin as Saga, a Malmö cop whose non-sympathetic attitude to colleagues, witnesses and victims verges on Asperger’s.

Despite this, ‘The Bridge’ provides significant ammunition for those who argue that UK viewers and reviewers are indulgent towards series from the European snow zone in a way that they would never extend to home-grown shows.”

https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/tvandradioblog/2012/apr/18/scandinavian-tv-drama-overrated
Clive James review

Clive James (Weekend, 6 August) tells us that

“In The Bridge, the head girl Saga Norén (Sofia Helin) has a case of near-autistic something-or-other which would make any hetero male viewer think twice about angling for a lift in her Porsche, although it’s probably true that any hetero male viewer would think of it once. At one point we see her having sex and she is under him, over him and off him in a matter of seconds, like the Scandinavian version of the female black widow spider, the one that carries a textbook on how to form normal relationships”.


Preferred reading: Summarise Tom Leins’ response to “The Bridge”


The Bridge is the critically acclaimed Danish-Swedish co-production that has spawned multiple re-makes across the world. The drama was set in motion back in 2011 when Sofia Helin first starred as the socially awkward Swedish detective Saga Noren, who is forced to work with her Danish counterpart, Martin Rohde, (Kim Bodnia) after the discovery of a dead body on the Oresund Bridge, which connects the two countries.

In The Bridge - The complete Season Three (Arrow Films) Saga once again partners-up with a Danish officer - this time the equally troubled Henrik Sabroe (Thure Landhardt) - as they unravel a series of disturbing murders, each of which sees the killer arrange the bodies of well-known left-wing figures in increasingly sinister tableaux. The elaborate crime scenes are seemingly designed to reinforce the ‘traditional’ family values that are perceived to be falling by the wayside in Scandinavia, and send shockwaves through the two countries. Meanwhile, Saga is also wading through the toxic fallout of the previous season, and battling against her own private demons.

Scandinavian cop-shows come and go, but The Bridge remains as exciting as it ever was. The issues brought to the fore by the killer’s actions feel dangerously contemporary, and the interplay between Saga and Henrik carries a real charge. Saga, as brought to life by Sofia Helin, is a tremendous creation, and the character’s appealing quirks appear undimmed by repeated viewings of the show. Returning viewers can rest assured that the quality of the series is as high as ever - despite the change of personnel - but if you have yet to experience The Bridge’s unique charms, then you are in for a treat. This is a seriously classy cop-show.
De-saturated colour palette, high contrast, low-key lighting – stylistically generic and creating enigmas.

The team – with Saga as protagonist foregrounded. Low angled shot emphasises the power of the law.


CU of foregrounded female protagonist on front with direct mode of address. Henrik in background looking troubled – stock characters of mismatched partners.

Scandinavian version – multi-lingual blurbs – international appeal.

Bilingual title reflects production context – co-production.

Three lines represent Series 3 – continue earlier branding.
The critically acclaimed Danish-Swedish crime drama delivers a spectacular Series 3 with Sofia Helin returning as the iconic Swedish police detective Saga Norén. When a famous Danish gender activist and owner of Copenhagen’s first gender-neutral children’s nursery is found murdered in Malmö, Saga is assigned to the case, together with a new colleague.

The murder sparks the beginning of a series of spectacular crimes reaching back into Saga’s own past. With her career at risk, and the question of personal responsibility haunting her, it looks as if she might be pulled from the case. When her mother unexpectedly re-enters her life, Saga must also cope with unforeseen – and unwanted – demands from her.

“GREATEST SAGA IN SWEDISH HISTORY. SCANDINAVIA’S COOLEST COP IS BACK WITH A NEW PARTNER”
- THE OBSERVER