

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter reviews the literature in four main areas along with a summary: (1) Media exposure (2) Reading interests of teenagers (3) Previous similar studies, and (4) Summary.

2.1 MEDIA EXPOSURE

It is undeniable that mass media is becoming a great influence in people's lives in determining one's behavior, attitudes, and feelings. This results from the mass media consumption behavior or media exposure of individuals in selecting what source of information and what kind of information to be exposed to in order to meet their desires. In consuming media, people as audiences tend to expose themselves to the media and information that are in line with their experiences, interests and attitudes.

Media exposure can be divided into two parts as selective processes and reasons for media exposure.

2.1.1 Selective Processes

Selective processes are the factors that determine whether audiences are satisfied (success) or dissatisfied (failure) with the messages they receive. The selective processes can be divided into three stages as follows (Klapper, 1960):

- Selective Exposure
- Selective Perception
- Selective Retention

Selective Exposure

People tend to expose themselves to particular types of mass communications owing to their attitudes and interests and to avoid materials that contradict their interests (Klapper, 1960).

Selective Perception

Perception is the interpretation of what we see. Each person is exposed to certain type of media that he or she is interested in as well as interpreting and processing the messages received from the media into cognition (สุรพงษ์ โสธนะเสถียร, 2533). The interpretation is in line with ones' understanding, expectations, motivations, and physical, emotional and psychological conditions.

Selective Retention

People selectively retain only the bits of messages or information that they agree. If the whole information they perceive is favorable, they may remember all of it. In contrast, if it is unfavorable, they may clean it entirely from their mind (Bittner, 1983)

2.1.2 Reasons for Media Exposure

Dr. Surapong Sothanasathian (สุรพงษ์ โสธนะเสถียร, 2533) describes that people or audiences are as much important as mass media, and their reasons for media exposure or consumption can be stated as for the following purposes.

For Cognition

This is to serve the basic needs of every man, which are curiosity and acceptance of being part of a group or society. Therefore, people need to know what is going on around them through media. The knowledge can be in the form of academic knowledge, general knowledge and entertaining knowledge.

For Diversion

People expose themselves to media because they need stimulation to entertain or excite themselves in order to reduce boredom in their lives. In addition, media exposure can provide them with emotional release or relaxation – the relaxation from stress or chaotic situations in everyday life.

For Social Utility

This can be divided into conversational currency and parasocial relationship. Conversational currency is being exposed to media for modernity that can be expressed through language usage. For example, retaining popular words or new language from media, teenagers speak with their friends in groups with slang words, showing their similar taste in activities. Moreover, in an advanced society

where people turn to feel lonely and lack interaction with others, media serves people as parasocial relationship. They tend to depend more on media like television, books and radio as their friends.

For Withdrawal

People expose themselves to media to avoid doing jobs in their everyday life. For example, some try to finish their jobs earlier because they want to go back to watch their favorite programs or read their favorite books. Some may read magazines in a bus just to avoid annoyance caused by the people around them.

Therefore, teenagers as media consumers may choose to be exposed to certain types of media owing to their interests and psychological needs. In this study, teenagers may read teen novel books because the books can give them entertainment and relaxation after studying. Moreover, in terms of social acceptance, which is one of the greatest needs among teenagers, teen novel books are becoming popular among teenagers, so they may read the books to show that they are just like other teenagers who read this type of book (as part of a group) and that they can speak and share their opinions and feelings towards the novels they read with other readers.

2.2 READING INTERESTS OF TEENAGERS

2.2.1 Factors Influencing Reading Interests of Teenagers

Teenager or “adolescent” means “to grow into maturity”. On the average, adolescence extends from 13 to 21 years old for girls and from 14 to 21 years old for boys. It is a period of transition when an individual changes physically and psychologically from a child to an adult (สุภัทรา นัตรเงิน, 2526).

Like any other people of different ages, teenagers have needs to fulfill their happiness and aspirations. These needs, which are varied according to different ages, are considered as teenagers’ motivations that determine and form their behaviors.

Sukhum Chaloeysap (สุชุม เกลยทรัพย์, 2529) studied factors influencing reading interests among children and concluded that children employ six natural needs that are mentioned as follows:

1. The need to love and to be loved

This is the primary and most wanted need of every man. Children need their parent's love and care and want to show their love for parents or things to be seen.

2. The need for security

This need brings warmth and feelings to children, enabling them to appreciate the world around them. This sense of security is gained by, for example, eating and sleeping well, enjoying playing and interacting with friends.

3. The need to belong to or be part of a group

Children need to be welcomed everywhere, including at home and school. They are ready to follow their friends in many aspects like speaking, playing, eating, dressing, and so on, just to be accepted as a part of the group.

4. The need to achieve or be something

Children need achievement in their everyday lives like their friends. If one's achievement is greater than those of his or her friends, he or she will be proud and gain more self-confidence.

5. The need for change

Children love changes, such as changes in work they do, books they read and pictures they see. Changes give them excitement because, in their everyday lives, they often experience repeatedness, which bores them.

6. The need for aesthetic satisfaction

This need brings children cheerfulness and gratification, which differs from person to person according to one's background knowledge, parents' instructions and taste.

Consequently, these natural needs of children can also be regarded as the same needs of teenagers, with the slight difference in that the needs of teenagers are deeper and broader owing to their changes in psychological, emotional and social development.

Furthermore, despite the natural needs, social factors like family, friends and teachers with whom teenagers are most familiar also influence their reading interests (รัฐจวน อินทรกำแหง, 2517). For example, a teenager read books that their

friends read so that he or she can keep up with talking to the friends about the same story.

According to the book “Literature for Children and Teenagers”, two additional factors that stimulate children and teenagers to read are identified as follows:

- Loneliness: children and teenagers who are the only child of the family or who have sisters or brothers with large gaps in age tend to experience loneliness easily. In these circumstances, they need friends or something to hold on to. A book is one of them. It provides entertainment that can help take away loneliness.

- Curiosity: it is every man’s instinct, and children and teenagers may have more curiosity than adults because of their lack of experiences. Everything seems to them to be a new thing and needs to be explored. To them, books with targeted contents can well respond to their curiosity and directly pave their ways to knowledge (รัญจวน อินทรกำแหง, 2517).

2.2.2 Reading Interests of Teenagers

Based on the above mentioned factors, many educators have identified reading interests of teenagers. One of them is Supatra Chatngoen (สุภัทรา ฉัตรเงิน, 2526) who has categorized reading interests of teenagers according to age and sex as follows:

- 11-12 years old

Boys like to read books of which the stories are about adventure, mystery, science and invention while girls are fond of reading books about love affairs and family life.

- 13-14 years old

Boys start to focus on their bodies, so their favorable books are about calisthenics. Girls do not like reading academic books, so poetry and adult novels like romance are their favorite. Some even read books about careers.

- 15-16 years old

At this stage, both boys and girls seek freedom and look for relationships with others apart from family, so their interests in reading emphasize on books about relationships, sex education and guidance on life.

Moreover, Supattra Chumkate (สุพัตรา ชุมเกต, 2522) stated that teenagers aged between 17-18 years old in late adolescence have reading tastes similar to those of adults. They begin to be interested in life, current situations, and social problems.

Noticeably, teenagers prefer reading adult books, showing that they wish to be adults or follow adults' ways of life. Therefore, it can be said that books for teenagers should serve the teenagers' needs and bridge the transition between teenagers and adults harmoniously.

2.3 PREVIOUS SIMILAR STUDIES

2.3.1 Studies Related to Reading Behaviors of Teenagers

The survey on “Reading interests of Thai children and youth” conducted by the Department of Curriculum and Instruction Development (กรมวิชาการ กระทรวงศึกษาธิการ, 2519, กล่าวถึงในสุพัตรา ชุมเกต, 2522) studied the reading interests of 3,350 students in Bangkok who were studying in primary school level (Prathom 5-7) and secondary school level (Mathayom 1-4). In terms of the reading interests of the students in Mathayom levels, the study showed that they preferred reading story telling books and novel books the most. Most of them borrowed books from libraries, followed by buying books from bookstores and borrowing books from their friends. Noticeably, they decided to choose what books to read by themselves.

Additionally, in the research report “Literature that meet the needs of adolescents”, Tasana Saladyanant and Ladda Rungvisai (ทัสนา สลัดขะนันท์ และลัดดา รุ่งวิสัย, 2537) studied teenagers' reading interests, characteristics, contents and formats of the preferred literature and needs and attitudes of them towards literature. A part of this research report revealed that teenage boys and girls had different interests in types of short stories and novel books they read. The top three favorite types of short stories and novel books that boys preferred reading were adventure (30.9%), humor (19.5%) and science (13.5%) while girls preferred reading humor (25.4%), romance (19.5%) and adventure (19%).

According to the research “The behavior of children in Bangkok on reading youth’s literary, amusement”, Sujetra Seesuteewong (สุจิตรา ศรีสุธีวงศ์, 2544) studied recreational reading behaviors of 450 secondary school students in Bangkok and found that most of the students had experiences in reading novels. Adventure, humor and investigation were the three types of novels most students preferred. Mostly, they read novels twice a week. Furthermore, factors like parents, sisters or brothers, friends, or teachers were key factors that had influences on teenagers’ reading. More than 40% of the teenage readers chose to read youth literature due to their family’s recommendation, followed by friends (21.46%) and teachers (16.34%), respectively.

In America, according to the manuscript “Enticing Readers: The Teen Romance Craze”, Dr. Berta Parrish and Karen Atwood (1984) conducted a research study on teen romance reading behaviors of 250 junior and senior high school students who were studying at grade 8-12 from three schools in the greater Phoenix metropolitan area. The results revealed that most students from all grades had read at least 1-5 books the 1983-1984 school year. Moreover, 28% of the eighth and twelfth graders had read thirty or more romance novels all together while 50% of the ninth graders continued to read the fewest, namely only five or fewer books. The books were also easily read, taking most of the students from grade eight, nine, eleven and twelve less than five hours to complete. Their most favorite type was mystery at 40%.

Similarly, the National Education Association (NEA) conducted a poll on “Reading Habits of Adolescents” that asked 12-18 years old teenagers nationwide about their reading habits, interests and abilities. The survey showed that 66% of the samples preferred reading fiction, which was short stories and novels, to non-fiction (26%). The most popular books were the ones that told the stories about people of their own age, followed by books about sports, mysteries and culture. Girls tended to read more actively and enthusiastically than boys, that is, 30% spending time on reading every day for fun, compared with only 19% of boys. Lastly, more than 15 books were read by the teenagers during the past year, accounting for 41% (BNET Business Network, 2001).

2.3.2 Research Related to Effects of Teen Novel Book Reading Behaviors

The effects of teen novel book reading behaviors in Thailand have not been analyzed clearly; however, a previous research study by Raymond A. Mar and his colleagues (2006) showed a positive relationship between reading fiction and social abilities.

Published in *Journal of Research in Personality* 40, the research “Bookworms versus Nerds: Exposure to Fiction versus non-fiction, divergent associations with social ability, and the simulation of fictional social worlds” surveyed 94 participants from the University of Toronto community ranging from 17-57 years old to identify the extent of performance of social ability between those who read fiction and those who read non-fiction. Mar and his colleagues asked the participants to identify the names of fiction and non-fiction authors given in a long list of names that also included non-authors. The more authors of fiction that the participants recognized, the higher they tended to score on measures of social awareness and tests of empathy. For example, they were able to recognize a person’s emotions from a picture showing their eyes only or to take another person’s perspective. Recognizing more non-fiction authors showed the opposite result. Therefore, it was concluded from the study that the more fiction one read, the more empathy they had and the better they performed on social understanding and awareness. Moreover, the tendency to become absorbed in a story predicted the empathy extent. On the contrary, reading more non-fiction or fact-based books showed the opposite relationship.

2.4 SUMMARY

In this chapter, the theories review the media exposure and the reading interests of teenagers. However, the previous similar studies are mostly concerned with reading behaviors, reading habits, and reading interests of teenagers in general, and not many research studies about teen novel book reading behavior and its effects in particular have been conducted in Thailand. Since the popularity of teen novel books among teenagers is on the rise, this study aims to find out the behavior of teenage readers in

reading teen novel books and its effects so as to get useful information for the readers and for those who are interested in further analysis. In the next chapter, the research methodology will be presented.