

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

In recent years, the concept of post-truth society has been widely discussed in cultural and political contexts. It is a term that describes a situation where facts are not always the first consideration when people are forming opinions. Instead, emotions, beliefs and political views become more influential in how people understand information (McIntyre, 2018). In this situation, truth is not always considered as something that should inform public decisions.

The information can be presented differently depending on who and how it is delivered. As Entman (1993) points out, the media do not only report events, but they also select which parts of an event to present. Therefore, for many people, their understanding of reality is through the story of the media and not the actual reality. The problem relates to the distribution of disinformation in the current era. According to Wardle and Derakhshan (2017), disinformation refers to a type of information that is false and which is intended to deceive. On the other hand, misinformation lacks such malintent.

In this digital era, internet connectivity has created an extremely wide global reach. Anyone can access a variety of information from around the world in a matter of seconds. This information then spreads rapidly, particularly through social media and various online sources that people consume daily. Debord (1994) argues that concrete reality is not as important as images and appearances in today's society. Its appeal lies in its visual appeal. According to Sunstein (2001), individuals tend

to seek out information that supports their views and avoid information that contradicts their beliefs. Over time, this can cause individuals to lose awareness of important things around them. The film *Don't Look Up* (2021) by Adam McKay depicts this kind of situation.

This film tells the story of two scientists who discover that a comet the size of Mount Everest is heading toward Earth. Initially, the government and the public were warned about this danger. However, their warnings were largely ignored. Interestingly, the atmosphere seemed to remain calm despite the imminent danger. Television shows respond to this with a lighthearted and humorous tone. Elections and public image become the top priorities for political leaders. Even the wealthiest tech executives see the potential for profit in the comet. At the same time, many people are more interested in memes, slogans, and celebrity news. Despite the comet being clearly visible in the sky, many individuals continue to dismiss the threat and refuse to take it seriously. The film demonstrates the consequences of distraction and confused information for people's reactions to important problems.

In this context, this study examines how the film *Don't Look Up* (2021) depicts media disinformation and public ignorance as a component of a broader post-truth landscape in contemporary America. These phenomena are not seen in this study as individual failings, but as conditions shaped by the media environment, political communication and the ways information is consumed in modern society. In doing so, this study will contribute to discussions in media and cultural studies about why truth fails to catch on, why trust in expertise is diminishing, and why public ignorance remains in the face of the easy availability of information.

## **1.2 Research Questions**

Based on the background described previously, this study is guided by the following questions:

1. How does *Don't Look Up* (2021) show media institutions as agents of disinformation and spectacle in a post-truth society?
2. How does *Don't Look Up* (2021) show public ignorance as a result of media consumption, political beliefs, and the rejection of scientific authority?

## **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

This study is conducted with the following objectives:

1. To examine how *Don't Look Up* (2021) depicts media institutions as agents of disinformation and spectacle in a post-truth society.
2. To analyze how *Don't Look Up* (2021) depicts public ignorance as a result of media consumption, political beliefs, and the rejection of scientific authority.

## **1.4 Scope of the Study**

This study examines the depiction of media disinformation and public ignorance in *Don't Look Up* (2021) as a reflection of post-truth society. The analysis looks at the internal elements of the film: characters, setting, and conflict. It also considers cinematographic elements such as camera shots and sound that help to show how media spectacle and public reaction are portrayed in the film. These elements are not discussed separately, but are used as evidence to support the larger discussion.

The study also uses concepts from cultural and media studies to read the film from outside the story. The discussion is supported with concepts like post-truth society, media sensationalism, disinformation and public ignorance. By combining these two ways of analysis, the film can be seen not only as entertainment but also as a text that shows how truth and public awareness are treated in modern society.

### **1.5 Previous Studies**

Several studies also analyze *Don't Look Up* (2021) but from different perspectives. The writer found six studies that discuss the same film but focus on different issues, such as skepticism, psychology, gender representation, satire, metaphor, and journalism. The difference between those studies and this research lies in its main focus. None of them specifically discusses media disinformation or public ignorance as conditions of post-truth culture. Through this study, the writer aims to offer a different perspective on how the film depicts distraction and disinformation in society.

The first study, written by Nur Mutmainna Halim et al. (2024), is titled “*The Representation of Skepticism in Don't Look Up Film: An Overview of Current Environmental Issues.*” This study uses Peirce’s semiotics to explain how skepticism appears in the film through the government, media, and society. The authors explain that skepticism can reduce public awareness about environmental problems.

The second study, written by Vandor, Mehrwald, and Hobodites (2024), “*Don't Look Up: The Effect of Role Models on Climate Anxiety and Climate*

*Action.*” This study examines the psychological impact of role models in the context of climate change. The film is used in the discussion. The study finds that role models can encourage action but can also increase anxiety.

The third study is written by Amy Chambers (2022) titled “*The handsome astronomer and the yelling lady’: representing scientists and expertise in Don’t Look Up.*” This study explores the gendered representation of scientists in the film. Chambers points out that Kate Dibiasky is written as an “unlikable” female scientist, whereas Randall Mindy is re-imagined as a more palatable media personality. This study concludes that the film reflects gender biases that remain entrenched in the portrayal of science in the media.

The fourth study, written by Hannah Little (2022), is titled “*The Use of Satire to Communicate Science in Don’t Look Up.*” This article discusses the use of satire in science communication and demonstrates how humor can be used to critique political and social systems. Satire has its strengths in promoting awareness among people, but according to Little, the application of humor could also undermine the importance of certain topics, such as global warming.

The other one is another work by Hannah Little, written in 2022, titled “*The science communication of Don’t Look Up.*” This paper examines the role of metaphor in the representation of the climate crisis and argues that the comet functions as a metaphor for real-world environmental crises. The study concludes that the film demonstrates both the possibilities and the limitations of the metaphor as a means of communication.

The sixth study, authored by Declan Fahy (2022), is titled “*Caricatures and Omissions: Representations of the News Media in Don't Look Up.*” The paper argues that the film presents journalists and talk shows as more interested in entertainment than serious reporting.

The commonalities between the studies are found in the object of analysis, *Don't Look Up* (2021). However, they differ in subject and analytical approach, ranging from semiotics, psychology, gender, satire, metaphor, to journalism. These studies provide important insights about different aspects of the film, yet none of them discuss the film in terms of media disinformation and public ignorance in a post-truth society. Thus, this paper provides a different discussion by focusing on the way the film portrays these social conditions.

## **1.6 Research Methods**

### **1.6.1 Data and the Sources of Data**

The main data of this study is the film *Don't Look Up* (2021) directed by Adam McKay. Media disinformation and public ignorance are primarily viewed through the story and visual elements of the film. The second data are books, journals, articles and other sources related to media studies, post-truth society, disinformation, and film studies. These sources underpin the discussion and provide a theoretical understanding.

### **1.6.2 Methods of Collecting Data**

The writer did some steps in collecting the data. First, the writer watched carefully *Don't Look Up* (2021) several times to understand the story, the

characters, and the film's cinematic elements. Second, the writer watched the film and took note and also screenshot of the scene, dialogue, and cinematic technique related to the focus of this research. These parts are important because they demonstrate how media sensationalism, public ignorance and disinformation are presented in the film. Third, after collecting these parts, the writer grouped and organized the data into intrinsic and extrinsic elements. Finally, the writer did library research in order to find supporting sources that give theoretical explanations and different points of view to make the analysis of the film stronger.

### **1.6.3 Methods of Approach**

This study is based on two approaches, namely: objective approach and sociocultural approach. The first one is the objective approach. Wellek and Warren (1949) divide the analysis of literature into two approaches, intrinsic and extrinsic, with intrinsic factors relating to elements within the work itself such as character, setting, and structure. In this research, the objective approach is used to identify the narrative and cinematographic elements present in the film, such as character, setting, conflict, camera shots, and sound.

The sociocultural approach is the second approach used in this study. This approach considers the film from a broader perspective, outside the story itself. Turner (2006) argues that film is not just an art object but also a social practice that is both shaped by and shapes the social and cultural conditions in which it is made and consumed. This is to say that to understand a film completely one must look beyond its narrative to the social world in which it is embedded and to which it speaks. Storey (2018) similarly argues that cultural texts such as films reflect the

social and cultural context of their production and that they are not just forms of entertainment but documents of the time and society that produced them.

This study places *Don't Look Up* (2021) in the context of American society in the twenty-first century, based on the sociocultural approach. The talk will focus on the film's relation to post-truth politics, media disinformation and public ignorance as these are manifest in real social and political life. The paper discusses external factors such as a post-truth society, media sensationalism, disinformation and public ignorance, which reflect in the narrative and characters of the film. In this way the film is not seen as a single work of art but as a cultural text, as a demonstration of the way social conditions influence the treatment, communication and neglect of truth in modern society.

## **1.7 Writing Organization**

### **CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents the background of the study, the research questions, the objectives of the study, the scope of the study, previous studies, the research methods, and the writing organization.

### **CHAPTER II INTRINSIC THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This chapter describes the theoretical framework of this research. Intrinsic elements are those elements that are within the film itself. These include character and characterization, setting, conflict, and cinematographic elements such as shots and sound.

### **CHAPTER III                    EXTRINSIC THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This chapter deals with the extrinsic theoretical framework that has been used in this research. It describes the idea of the post-truth society and how it has evolved in modern America. In addition, it also discusses media sensationalism, disinformation, and public ignorance as the main elements that form the post-truth condition in society.

### **CHAPTER IV                    RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

In this chapter the writer analyze the film by connecting its intrinsic and extrinsic elements. It shows how *Don't Look Up* (2021) depicts media disinformation and public ignorance as characteristics of post-truth society. It also considers the ways in which the narrative, characters and cinematic techniques relate to social conditions in which truth is frequently exchanged for distraction and political interests.

### **CHAPTER V                    CONCLUSION**

This chapter presents the findings of the research. It summarizes the main findings and explains their meaning for understanding post-truth society as reflected in popular films. This chapter also offers suggestions for future research.