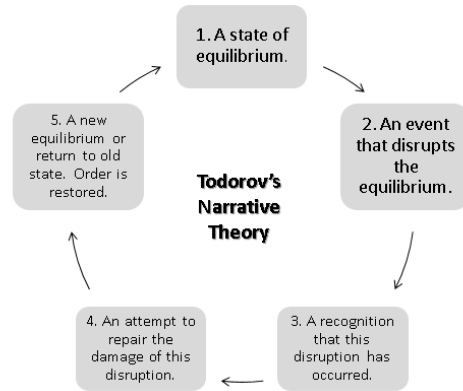# GCSE Media Studies

Theoretical Framework Revision Knowledge

Todorov's Narrative Theory

Tzvetan Todorov studied classic fairy tales and stories and theorised that many stories follow the same narrative structure and involve transformation of character/story. Namely:

1. A state of equilibrium.

2. An event that disrupts the equilibrium.

3. A recognition that this disruption has occurred.

4. An attempt to repair the damage of this disruption.

5. A new equilibrium or return to old state. Order is restored.

Todorov's Narrative Theory

Vladimir Propp's Narrative Theory

Propp suggested that every narrative has eight different character types, these character types are:

- **The villain** — fights the hero in some way.
- **The dispatcher** — character who makes the villain's evil known and sends the hero off.
- **The (magical) helper** — helps the hero in the quest.
- **The princess or prize** — the hero deserves her throughout the story but is unable to marry her because of an unfair evil, usually because of the villain. The hero's journey is often ended when he marries the princess, thereby beating the villain and resulting in a "happily ever after" moment.
- **The father** — gives the task to the hero, identifies the false hero, often sought for during the narrative.
- **The donor** — prepares the hero or gives the hero some magical object.
- **The hero**— reacts to the donor, weds the princess.
- **The false hero** — takes credit for the hero's actions or tries to marry the princess.

Do not try to assign all character types to every media product that we study in our CSPs. That will be probably impossible. However, you may be able to apply some of them to all media products.

Uses and Gratification Theory

Blumler and Katz developed this theory. It assumes that members of the audience are not passive but take an active role in interpreting and integrating media into their own lives. The theory also holds that audiences are responsible for choosing media to meet their needs. The approach suggests that people use the media to fulfil specific gratifications.   The theory suggests that consumers use media products for at least one of these reasons:

Personal Identity – to identify with media that the consumer can identify with, share similar values to, etc.

Surveillance/ Educate – to learn new things.

Diversion/Entertain - to be entertained and also some form of 'escapism' enabling us to forget our worries temporarily.

Social Interaction – the ability for media products to produce a topic of conversation between other people

Hypodermic Needle Theory or 'Magic Bullet' Theory
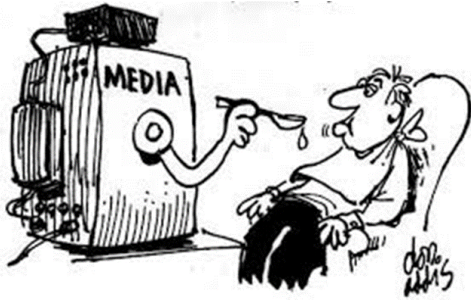
The idea is that the mass media has an immediate and powerful effect on the audience. The media injects ideas and views into the brains of the audience therefore controlling the way that people think and behave. It expresses the view that **the media is a dangerous means of communicating** an idea because the receiver or **audience is powerless** to resist the impact of the message. People are often seen as passive and are seen as having a lot media material "shot" at them. Critics of this theory suggest it is outdated and people consume media in different ways. Other theorists, such as Stuart Hall, suggest that media audiences are more active than that and have the ability to accept, negotiate or reject media messages.

## Stuart Hall's Audience Reception Theory

Stuart Hall (1973) suggested that the Hypodermic Needle Theory was too simple and that there were three main perspectives involved in the way in which an audience responds to a media product. This involves how the audience is positioned by the product and influences their response to it.

Preferred reading
The audience responds in exactly the way the media producer wants them to.

Negotiated reading
Where the audience compromises between the producers intended reading and their own opinions and preferred reading of media text.

Oppositional or resistant readings
The audience rejects the meaning or intended reading of the media product.

Cultivation theory

This suggests that frequent contact with the same message – for example, an advertisement – will have an impact on the audience's attitudes and values. For example, the concept of desensitisation, the idea that consistent exposure to violent media will lead to an audience which is less likely to be shocked by violence. Such an audience is more likely to behave violently. However, critics suggest that fictional violence is not the same as real violence. Many millions of audience members are exposed to death and violence on TV, film and computer screens, but there is little proof that such consumers are less shocked by real killings and violence.

Two step flow theory
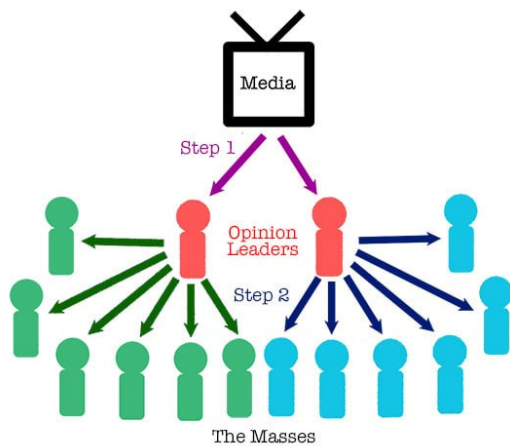
Codified by Katz and Lazarsfeld, this theory contains elements of both passive and active audience. It was developed as part of a review on voter choice in 1940s America. Two step flow suggests that the media are less influential than what the theory dubs as "opinion leaders". An "opinion leader" is a figure within a definable group who has influence over other people in that group, passing on information or ideas. This might be a political leader or a significant public figure. They gather information and interpret this to their own group, which accepts their interpretation. In general, the opinion leader will only have influence over a particular group of people and may be seen as quite a divisive figure. For example, a political leader will probably only influence those who agree with their political viewpoint and ideas. Katz and Lazarsfeld described what they saw as "the flow of media messages from radio and print to opinion leaders and then the leaders lead the messages to lesser active users in the population". As part of this process, the opinion leader might add a subjective spin on the message influencing receivers. Sometimes opinion leaders will filter material to select the information passed on. Elements of two step flow are clearly worth considering in relation to the ways in which newspapers and adverts try to manipulate their audiences, and in particular how Marcus Rashford has achieved success and influence. Consideration of how newspapers and adverts try to influence audience offers an interesting means of exploring passive audiences. Adverts do have an effect on audiences, and newspapers certainly shape the opinions of their readers. How much this depends upon the passive audience is worth considering as part of the exploration of the CSPs. Similarly, the relationship between the audiences of the two radio CSPs offer some interesting similarities and differences, considering their potentially different means of transmission.

Laura Mulvey's Male Gaze Theory

The theory [which was developed from film, but can be expanded to all media forms] suggests that that women in film are typically objects of the male gaze which highlights that women on screen are seen primarily as the objects of desire. A male may see only the 'sexier' aspects of the female representation. Women may look at themselves in a negative way, picking fault with parts of their appearance when they see how women look in the media.

Is this true in our CSPs?

Agenda setting

Agenda-setting theory was formally developed by Max McCombs and Donald Shaw in a study on the 1968 American presidential election. The theory outlines the "ability [of the news media] to influence the salience of topics on the public agenda". At the most basic level, the theory explains how certain issues become dominant because the press and the media do not reflect reality; they filter and shape it through concentration on a few issues and subjects, which leads the public to perceive those issues as more important than other issues. Different media have different potentials to set the agenda. Newspapers only have a finite amount of space to print articles, so the choices they make about what they include will depend upon the agenda they wish to set. All products will set a particular "agenda" depending upon their purpose, whether that is the selling of a product, an idea or an experience.

News values theorists

News values are a measure of the level of importance a particular news story is given by a media outlet, and the attention it is given by the audience. Different cultures have different sets of values, although theorists **Galtung and Ruge** suggested twelve factors which define the level of importance ('newsworthiness') of an event – the more an event demonstrates these criteria, the more likely it is to be reported. However, these ideas have been updated by other theorists (in particular, more emphasis has been placed on the importance of celebrity and the agenda of the news organisation) whilst the values of social media and online news have only recently begun to be studied, leading to a list much longer than the original twelve postulated by Galtung and Ruge.

Segmentation

Geographic segmentation This is when an audience is divided based on its location. This might be according to local or national boundaries – markets might be segmented based on physical areas (cities, counties, regions, countries, and international regions) or types of areas (rural, suburban and urban). The rise of online media has made geographic

segmentation less prevalent than it used to be – where it exists, the segmentation is usually based on global factors (for example, UK newspapers and magazines are unlikely to interest a broader international audience; Marcus Rashford will probably only appeal to the English-speaking world although British football has an international reach).

Demographic segmentation

Demographics describes audiences based on objective data such as age, race, gender, income, location and many other factors. It is frequently used as a marketing tool to define the best ways of reaching consumers and understanding their responses to media products. Demographic segmentation allows media industries to work out the size of a potential audience and whether products and services are being targeted effectively. Demographics can be somewhat generalised in order to identify customers.

Psychographic segmentation

Psychographic segmentation utilises subjective ideas based on perceptions of the audience's lifestyle, activities, interests, behaviours and opinions. Whereas both geographic and demographic segmentation are based on verifiable data, psychographics is based more upon the wants, needs and desires of the target audience and this allows a fine-tuning of the message/delivery mechanism.