

Teaching guide: theoretical framework

This teaching guide will cover all four areas of the theoretical framework (language, representation, industries and audience) for GCSE Media Studies (8572). Students are required to closely analyse and compare media products in relation to relevant key social, cultural, historical and political contexts. This resource is for first teaching in 2021 and first exams in 2023.

- Social contexts – these include the broader attitudes and fashions at the time the product was created. How closely does the product reflect (or subvert) the values, attitudes, and expectations of the audience, both at the time of release and when considered today?
- Cultural contexts – these include a consideration of how a particular product fits into the broader media landscape of its time. How closely does the product reflect (or subvert) other products/content?
- Historical contexts – these include an understanding of the broader factors which influenced a product's creation. How does the product reflect the time in which it was produced?
- Political contexts – these relate both to the specific impact of government regulation and influence/interference on the media. Also the broader social politics of representation and changing social attitudes.

Media language

This section of the theoretical framework covers the codes and conventions of media products and forms – how they look, how they work and why they are the way that they are. It covers such elements as narrative, genre, semiotics, intertextuality and the creation of meaning – what is denoted and connoted? Understanding media language requires students to balance theoretical knowledge with practical experience and will generally underpin the exploration of most products covered.

Media language is not explicitly covered in the study of film, music video and radio, although some aspects may be worth considering as a part of the wider consideration of these media forms.

Language applied to Close study products(CSPs)

Semiotic analysis

Semiotic analysis of media products involves understanding how cultural, social and natural phenomena can be explored as signs and what they symbolise. The basic question in semiotics is why things mean what they mean. A sign is something which can stand for something else – in other words, a sign is anything that can convey meaning, effectively being a second layer of language. A symbol is created when a sign's meaning is interpreted. Signs appear in various forms: pictures, words, letters, objects, natural objects, gestures, phenomena and actions.

Semiotic analysis considers what signs contain, how they are used and how they develop meaning for societies and individuals – what do they symbolise? For example, fully appreciating the meaning of Galaxy's slogan "why have cotton when you can have silk?" demands that audiences understand metaphor as well as expectations of advertising and possibly the historical positioning of the Galaxy brand. Critically, semiotic analysis requires an understanding both of denotation and connotation.

Semiotic analysis stages

Denotation

This is the first stage of semiotic analysis (or indeed any deconstruction) and defines the literal meaning – what is there? What can the audience see/hear? For example, "the Omo advert denotes a middle-aged lady hanging out washing." Understanding what is being denoted will lead to a consideration of connotation and will also allow for broader contexts of the media to be explored (why does the product look the way it looks?)

Connotation

This the second stage of semiotic analysis and defines how meaning is interpreted – how does the audience respond to what is denoted? Connotation is subjective and fluid, the same sign can have many different connotations depending upon how it is used or positioned, ie the colour red can mean danger, passion, love, anger. The older media products, particularly the Omo advert and *Doctor Who*, will provide an interesting avenue to explore how connotations can change over time, although considerations of any product in relation to target audience will provide a clear focus for discussion.

Technical codes

These include ways in which hardware is used to create meaning and is linked to denotation. These might include particular shots (for example, high-angle), sounds (diegetic or non-diegetic), or features of layout (use of headlines).

Symbolic codes

These explore the connotation of what the product shows. For example, a particular costume might symbolise a character's mood or attitude (Darth Vader's black outfit

compared to Luke Skywalker's predominantly white outfit in *Star Wars: A New Hope*, for example). Another example might be a shot of the Empire State Building, which could symbolise New York.

Some codes fit both categories – music, for example, can be both technical and symbolic.

Anchorage

This is the process whereby a media product fixes (anchors) meaning by using another piece of media to reduce the number of connotations, allowing the audience to interpret the intended meaning. The caption for the image of the child on the front page of the selected issue of *The Times* suggests that his expression and pose connote happiness due to the fun of World Book Day rather than, for example, laughter caused by a classmate out of shot, both of which could be possible interpretations.

Sign

A sign is formed when a denoted object is interpreted via connotation leading to an understanding of meaning. A sign can be broken into two parts: the signifier and the signified. The signifier is the thing, item, or code (the denotation). Each signifier has a signified, the idea or meaning expressed by that signifier (the connotation) which is dependent upon context and often guided by anchorage. Together, the signifier and the signified form a sign. There is often no direct relationship between a signifier and a signified. The same signifier can have multiple signifieds leading to the creation of different signs. For example, the word "bright" can have a number of different meanings; the Omo advert appears to suggest that the word is a sign connoting the effective cleaning power of the product, but there is also a sense that the word is also being used in the sense of intelligence, a different sign based on the same signifier. What a sign symbolises depends upon how it is connoted.

Icon

In media studies, the word "icon" is used in the sense of "cultural" or "social" icon. Icons are culturally-derived signs, although meaning can be subjective. An icon is a recognisable representation which has a degree of longevity, although its meaning may not necessarily be fixed or shared. Within the media, the use of the word "iconic" is often used as a synonym for successful or influential. An example of an icon might be the TARDIS in *Doctor Who*, an image which has come to represent the series despite originally being used because police boxes were a common feature of 1960s society, being iconic themselves as a sign of law and order. *The Times* might be regarded as an iconic newspaper, considering its longevity and influence. Marcus Rashford and Lara Croft could be labelled as iconic in relation to their relative cultural impacts within their particular media forms, despite their comparative newness.

Symbol

A symbol is anything which indicates, signifies, or is understood as representing an idea, object, or relationship. Symbols are ways of making visual or aural links between concepts. Effectively a symbol can be regarded as the deeper meaning of a sign based on the connotation of that sign. Symbolism is therefore linked to interpretation and can have an ideological dimension. For example, Lara Croft could symbolise gender balance (considering the rarity of female central characters in video games) or she could symbolise the male gaze (considering the way she was designed by her (predominantly) male programmers. The cover of *Heat* could symbolise a demystification of celebrity or it could symbolise a culture of voyeurism, depending upon the point of view of the consumer.

Linear models of communication

The linear model of communication is defined as a one-way process during which a sender (media producer) transmits a message (media product) and a receiver (the audience) hears or sees the message. The product is communicated through whatever channel the media product requires, based on its media form (for example, television programmes being sent via digital signal) although the same product can be received via multiple channels (for example, digital or online versions of *The Times*). The sender is more prominent in linear model of communication. The linear model of communication precludes feedback or interaction and is increasingly out of date (consider, for example, the importance of audience feedback with relation to Marcus Rashford's online success or the interactive financial models supporting *Lara Croft Go* and *Kim Kardashian Hollywood*).

Sender

The technical name for the creator of a message in the linear model of communication. Any media producer – the source of the product. For example, the BBC could be regarded as the sender of *Doctor Who* and (with HBO) *His Dark Materials*; Condé Nast Publications could be seen as the sender of *Tatler*; Framestore, ad agency AMV BBDO or indeed Mars themselves could be considered as the sender of the Galaxy advert. The creator encodes meaning into the message.

Message

The technical name for a media product in the linear model of communication. Any product studied can be regarded as the message, although the deeper purpose of a product could also be considered here. For example, the message of *The Mirror's* article on Amazon 'no till' shops could be seen to be an attack on corporate greed at the expense of individual interests as exemplified by the company's prior stance (through the use of words such as "so little corporation tax") which might be seen to appeal to the paper's target demographic.

Receiver

The technical name for the audience of a message in the linear model of communication. Being a receiver is dependent upon having access to a means of reception (for example, a radio to listen to a radio broadcast) although media convergence has led to far more methods whereby reception can occur. In the linear model of communication, the receiver is passive and does not respond directly; they decode the message and develop an understanding of what the sender encoded depending upon interpretation of signs and symbols. Developments in interactive media have made the linear model of communication somewhat outdated.

The constructed nature of reality

Consideration of media language requires an understanding of why certain choices are made regarding presentation of material, in particular the way in which meaning is created for an audience through selection (material included), combination (materials juxtaposed) and exclusion (material rejected). This links to the idea of audience positioning and the ways in which beliefs, representations and ideologies are presented.

Students must understand that all media products undergo a degree of editing and that the ideas presented are mediated by the producers. They need to uncover and understand what choices have been made and why. Part of the linear model of communication outlined above involves the agenda being set by the producer/ sender. This links very closely to elements of media audiences, media representations and media industries and is prevalent in all products, although some more obviously than others (newspapers particularly).

All products covered should be considered in relation not only to the reality they internally construct (for example, *Doctor Who* constructs a reality in which time travel is possible; the Galaxy advert constructs a reality in which Audrey Hepburn is willing to promote a chocolate bar) but also the broader implications for the audience of why that reality has been constructed (*Doctor Who* uses time travel as a means of educating the audience; the Galaxy advert suggests that the era of Hollywood stars was effectively a golden age through a different form of time travel).

Narrative

All media products have a narrative structure and students must demonstrate an understanding of this. At the most basic, narrative equates to elements of plot and story. These might be linear (for example, the Galaxy advert or non-linear (the trailer for *Black Widow*, which includes elements of the story out of sequence, or *Doctor Who*, which contains flashbacks exemplifying Susan's "unearthly" qualities).

Narratives might be conventional or unconventional. A narrative can be found in a single frame or image (for example, the implicit story of the woman in the Omo advert). Possible questions students should ask are: what is the story? How is the narrative designed to work? Why is the narrative structured in the way that it is? How might an audience respond? Why?

Propp

Vladimir Propp (1895-1970) was a Russian folklore scholar whose 1928 book *Morphology of the Folktale* attempted to offer a standard narrative structure (at least in regard to Russian folklore). His ideas were based on the analysis of around 100 Russian folktales and were not in themselves media-specific theories (it is important perhaps to note this, since it is an error often made by media students). However, they have been co-opted by media studies since they do offer a fairly straightforward explanation of why media narratives contain a number of very similar elements (several other theorists have presented similar ideas, for example Algirdas Julien Greimas).

Propp's ideas about narrative are very detailed but students should know that, at the most basic level, he suggested that narrative generally follows a "quest" structure, following the concept of the hero's journey archetype outlined by Joseph Campbell amongst others. Of particular importance are Propp's character archetypes ("spheres") which have been very influential (many subsequent writers, such as Chris Vogler in *The Writer's Journey*, 1992, have developed this concept).

Propp's "character types" are:

- the hero – the person on a quest to solve the problems or resolve disruption
- the villain – the person who tries to block the hero's progress in their quest
- the dispatcher – the person who sends the hero on their quest
- the helper – the person who helps the hero during their quest
- the donor – the person who helps the hero by sacrificing something on the hero's behalf
- the damsel in distress – the person who needs saving to help resolve the narrative
- the princess – the person who becomes a prize for the hero.

In many narratives, these characters are not exclusive and can sometimes shift, depending upon how the narrative develops. A useful exercise can involve trying to apply them to a range of narratives. Consider the episode of *Doctor Who*, there are (effectively) only four characters and there might be some debate about who the 'hero' is (the Doctor? Ian Chesterton? Possibly even Susan? And who is the villain?)

Another challenge involves applying Propp's ideas about characterisation to non- standard narratives (for example, magazine covers, single frame adverts). In these contexts, a slightly more adventurous approach might be considered: the 'hero' could be the potential buyer of the magazine/product in which the rewards are the fulfilment of aspirational fantasies (the prize) – the experience offered by the magazine or the product. The magazine cover/advert itself becomes the dispatcher, offering a goal for the hero reader to seek. The reader/consumer could also be the 'villain', since they themselves stand in the way of success (whether due to personal inhibitions or a lack of financial capacity).

It is useful for students to create a Proppian model for all of the media language related products. However, media producers do not "use Propp" or create characters based on Propp's theory; rather Propp's ideas can offer students a structure by which they might understand archetypes which appear across media forms. Students should certainly avoid phrases such as "the makers of the Galaxy Audrey Hepburn advert use Propp's characters to..."; instead, students should apply Propp's ideas to particular narratives ("in the Galaxy

Audrey Hepburn advert, we can see a number of character archetypes as outlined by Propp's spheres...").

Narrative development

It is also useful to consider the broader structure of narrative, in particular a structuralist theory most closely associated with Tzvetan Todorov (1939-2017). Todorov's work covered many disciplines, but he is most well-known to media students for his theory of narrative. At its most basic, "Todorov's Theory" suggests that narratives follow a typical route (a very simplified version of Propp's "functions", effectively) of five stages. These are defined as:

1. State of equilibrium
2. Equilibrium is disrupted
3. Characters recognise the disruption and seek to find a way of restoring the equilibrium
4. Complications occur preventing the characters from achieving this easily until a climax is reached
5. The action is resolved and either the equilibrium is restored or a new equilibrium is created [closure]

We don't necessarily see all of these stages and in some media forms we would not want to (for example, a trailer is unlikely to present the final stage of equilibrium). The end of the episode of *Doctor Who* similarly ends on a climactic cliff-hanger [enigma] in order to bring viewers back the following week. It can be a useful exercise to discuss why certain narrative elements are excluded from a plot (although they will always be implicit).

Sometimes we will join the action after the state of equilibrium has been disrupted. Advertising and magazine covers often have implicit narratives (we are often positioned somewhere between the disruption and recognition) with the only way of resolving the disruption (achieving closure) being to buy the magazine/ product.

Quite often, in order to understand the initial equilibrium, exposition (background information) is provided although in some cases this is not given (we are not told, for example, where Lara Croft is exploring in *Lara Croft Go*). In some cases, we can only assume what the state of equilibrium is (presumably, the woman in the Omo advert maintaining a positive domestic environment).

Todorov's theory suggests that closure (the satisfactory end of a narrative, at least from an audience perspective) does not necessarily mean that things will go back to the way that they were at the start. It may be that there is no closure, either for narrative or practical reasons (for example, an on-going newspaper story, a drama serial with several episodes, a movie trailer).

It is important that students do not see any structuralist theory as something which media producers adhere to (as in "the makes of *His Dark Materials* use Todorov's Theory..." – they don't) but rather as a way of explaining why narratives are the way they are ("considering the implied narratives on the *Heat* cover in relation to Todorov's Theory of narrative structure..."). Both Propp and Todorov offer tools by which narrative can be analysed, deconstructed and understood and this is how they should be applied.

Exposition

Background explanation or information. The opening crawls of the *Star Wars* movies are an example of exposition. Often implicit, particularly in print adverts or single images. In *Doctor Who*, limited exposition of the Doctor and Susan's background is provided, which adds to the mystery. In *The Times* article about Amazon Fresh, the opening paragraphs provide exposition about the background to the story.

Disruption

Disorder which generally triggers the main narrative action – for example, Susan Foreman's "unearthly" nature disrupts the equilibrium of Ian Chesterton and Barbara Wright's existences leading to their investigation into the Doctor; the bus breaking down disrupts Audrey Hepburn's journey in the Galaxy advert leading to her meeting with the driver.

Complication

Further challenges which develop and deepen the narrative, developing audience interest. For example, within a particular level of *Lara Croft Go*, the internal narrative will be complicated by a series of challenges which need to be solved as part of the broader narrative of the game. In *Doctor Who*, Ian and Barbara follow Susan to the junkyard and believe that she is being held against her will, which leads to their breaking into the TARDIS.

Climax

The climax is the turning point of a narrative, a point of significant tension and drama, or the moment within the action when a solution is given. A particular narrative can have several climactic moments (for example, Kin Kardashian revealing a particularly effective product during a video) but will usually end with a particularly powerful image (the NHS pay story on the CSP edition of *The Mirror* is effectively the climax of a longer narrative which has been covered by previous editions of the paper). The climax of the Galaxy advert is the Audrey Hepburn character's pleasure in being able to eat her chocolate bar while the climax of *Doctor Who* is the TARDIS taking off with Ian and Barbara as unwilling passengers.

Resolution

The point in a narrative where the disruption has been dealt with and all complications solved can sometimes be the same moment as the climax. Depending upon the narrative form, the resolution can lead into a subsequent disruption (for example, the mystery about Susan's background in *Doctor Who* is resolved when Ian and Barbara enter the TARDIS but is then followed by a new disruption when they are kidnapped by the Doctor). The Galaxy advert is resolved by the Audrey Hepburn character's escape from the traffic jam.

Audience appeal of narrative

Enigma – mysteries which the narrative offers and which will (hopefully) be solved. For example, the various cover lines used by *Heat* and *Tatler* which set up enigmas (what has Posh been lying about? what should we be wearing in lockdown?). Effectively created by the disruption and deepened by the complication.

Closure – the satisfactory solution to the enigma. A well-rounded, effective outcome (we discover Posh's lies; we are shown what to wear). The moment of resolution.

Audience pleasure in terms of narrative is often derived from the tension between enigma and closure.

The relationship between technology and media products

In terms of the various media forms where narrative is a factor, it is important to consider how changes in technology have affected the ways in which the narrative is communicated. This links not only to the linear model of communication but also to the means by which a narrative is structured and its content understood. The CSPs date from 1955-2021 and the various limitations of the technologies of the time (or the ways in which those technologies shaped or even created the form of the products) need to be explored as an aspect of narrative.

For example, the technical limits faced by *Doctor Who* in 1963 (large, hard-to-move cameras, 405-line black-and-white resolution, small sets, few takes) had a huge effect on episode structure as well as options for broadcast (famously, the first episode was repeated due to being originally shown the day after the Kennedy assassination) whilst *His Dark Materials* benefits from HD cameras, CGI, international audiences and on-demand viewing on digital platforms. Products like *Lara Croft Go* or Marcus Rashford's social media channels would not exist without recent technical innovations (improvements in mobile gaming platforms and the rise of UGC on streaming services coupled with its accessibility on a range of platforms). The way a product looks is very much dependent on the technology behind both it and the platform(s) via which it is disseminated.

Forces that drive technological change

Primarily these are linked to broader technical changes in the world at large, ie increased computing power and bandwidth allowing streaming of video/downloading of games to become viable. The use of CGI in the Galaxy advert also demonstrates a clear example of technological development influencing content.

However, economic factors can also be a driving force (BBC's collaboration with HBO was a primarily financial decision made by the BBC whilst games like *Kim Kardashian Hollywood* and *Lara Croft Go* have a "freemium" aspect whereby the main revenue streams are generated from in-app purchases rather than from buying or downloading the games themselves). The move of many newspapers to erect paywalls (*The Times* is notable for this) is a response to diminishing sales of physical editions. Changing social attitudes and fashions have also led producers to find alternative means of communicating (the rise of social media influencers as celebrities, such as Kim Kardashian and Marcus Rashford, is

notable in terms of its effect on the media landscape, particularly the younger audience for whom such stars have an equal, if not greater, status than more established “traditional” media figures).

Image manipulation

Image manipulation has existed for as long as the art of photography (or even for perhaps as long as humans have been creating images), digital image manipulation has become particularly important in recent years. With regard to the creation of narrative, the ways in which an image is cropped, retouched or presented can have a significant impact in terms of the way meaning is encoded. The most obvious example from the CSPs is perhaps the Galaxy advert, considering that the entire concept is built on the manipulation of Audrey Hepburn’s image, but there is also scope to discuss, for example, the way the Omo advert has clearly been touched up (it is actually hard to tell whether this is a photograph or a painting, which introduces questions of representation amongst others).

A comparison can be made here with the way Emma Weymouth is presented on the cover of *Tatler*, considering the colouring and apparent digital airbrushing as well as the ways in which the celebrities on the cover of *Heat* are exposed. Understanding that the majority of images in the media are manufactured and manipulated is critical.

High definition

The majority of media products are now presented in high definition (HD), reflecting image quality which is better than standard definition. Although there is no single standard of HD, it is generally agreed to be (at the moment) no lower than 720p (an image of 720 pixels in height), although it can be more (many films are now presented in 4k or higher, effectively ultra-HD). Of the CSPs, only *Doctor Who*, the Radio 1 Launch Show and the Omo advert are presented in a non-HD format, due to being created before the format existed (*Doctor Who* was filmed and broadcast in 405-line black and white, one of the earliest standard definitions, whilst the Radio 1 broadcast has been digitally recompiled from original analogue tape recordings).

Computers and phones generally operate in HD and most newspapers and magazines are now published in HD quality.

Computer-generated imagery (CGI)

Any material included in a media product which has been created using computers. Again, the most obvious example is the digital recreation of Audrey Hepburn in the Galaxy advert, but *His Dark Materials* also contains numerous examples whilst *Lara Croft Go* and *Kim Kardashian Hollywood* are both purely CGI. Elements of the videos on Marcus Rashford’s website (particularly the links and graphics) involve use of CGI to create some of the effects. A point of reference is the use of special effects in *Doctor Who* (particularly the opening sequence and the TARDIS travel/materialisation effects) which were created using practical special effects “in camera” (mixed live) which were, at the time, state-of-the-art for British TV. How much a narrative’s existence, structure and content is based on CGI can form an interesting point of discussion.

Mobile communication technology

This is the technology which allows mobile phones to exist. Without it, mobile gaming and possibly Kim Kardashian and her contemporaries would not have much success. Marcus Rashford may not have had as much influence without this technology. Similarly, the rise of streaming services might not be as prevalent. Many of the CSPs have a presence on mobile devices and some depend upon them. A clear link to any discussion of technological change and convergence.

User-generated content

This is usually used to refer to online content such as blog posts, wikis, videos, comments etc. It effectively challenges the linear model of communication since it requires the receiver to become a sender. Marcus Rashford and Kim Kardashian are the most notable examples of UGC in the CSPs, since they are successful models of a user (of social media) generating content which has in itself led to further UGC (comments on their social media channels and from other users sharing their posts). It could be argued that traditional media forms invited UGC (letters from listeners etc) and it could even be considered that the Radio 1 broadcast is a kind of UGC if the relationship between Tony Blackburn's work in pirate radio and the BBC is taken into account. The interaction of the user and the game, particularly within *Kim Kardashian Hollywood*, also suggests an element of UGC.

Genres

Genre is synonymous with style or type of a media product. Genre theory explores how genres are shaped, change and develop over time. The specification does require a theoretical approach to genre which goes beyond the general (see below). Although no specific theorists are named, some are suggested below; however, none are compulsory for this specification and teachers are advised to consider the concepts most appropriate for their students. Genres are defined by codes and conventions – basically, the expectations and the “rules” which place a particular product into a particular generic category. A discussion of what these are for particular genres (the Western is often a useful initial point of focus, being both very clearly defined by codes such as costumes, settings and characters as well as conventions of plot and theme) although a discussion of movies such as *Shaun of the Dead* and *Hot Fuzz* (both rated 15 by the BBFC) can allow for a consideration of hybridisation. *His Dark Materials* could also be regarded as a hybrid of sci-fi, fantasy and family drama.

Technical codes

Although many technical codes are ubiquitous across media forms, certain genres can be characterised by their use of particular examples. For example, chiaroscuro lighting is a technical code of Film Noir; jump scares are a technical code of survival horror games; cropping and touching up are both technical codes of magazine/ newspaper photography. It is not enough to discuss a technical code used such as camera work, without saying how it is conventionally used within a genre.

Verbal and non-verbal codes

Verbal codes are those based on communication using words and language as opposed to non-verbal codes, which are based on images, actions or behaviour. A useful example of non-verbal codes is the climactic shoot-out at the end of *The Good, The Bad and The Ugly* (Leonne, 1966) which contains no dialogue or text; the imagery, action and behaviour of the characters (as well as the editing, camera-work and music) are all archetypal examples of the Western. The verbal and non-verbal codes of the text/images in newspapers/magazines provides evidence for their generic positioning, as does the use of visual and textual cues in the games. The tone taken by Kim Kardashian within her social media posts and on her websites as well as the editing/camera positioning are similarly archetypal for social media influencers.

Symbolic codes

As noted above, symbolic codes are a fundamental aspect of broader understanding of how a media product develops meaning, based on broader cultural and social experience as well as anchorage. Within genre studies, an understanding of symbolism can help create an awareness of why certain genres flourish whilst others fade. It can also be used to explain how genres vary over time. For example, although the Omo advert might be regarded as sexist from a modern perspective, the symbolism of the woman being responsible for (and enjoying) domestic matters is still an image which has currency in twenty first century advertising, however much we might disagree with it. Similarly, the symbolism of the language/images used in the newspaper articles is very closely linked to their respective generic identities, as is that of the magazine covers. Decoding generic identity based on symbolic codes is something we do almost instinctively, and it is worth spending a little time discussing the process.

Design

This is the stylistic decisions made about a product. The design of any product is at least partially based on its genre (for example, a TV advert is almost always going to be 30 seconds long and is almost always going to end with text promoting the product while adverts to be screened before movies (or indeed trailers themselves) can often be longer; the design of a tabloid newspaper or magazine is very different to a broadsheet or a glossy.

Layout

A publishing term, the “layout” refers to the element of graphic design that deals in the arrangement of visual elements on a page, in particular organisational aspects of composition and how these are used to achieve specific communication goals. It would be unusual to discuss the “layout” of moving image products (*mise-en-scene* would be a more common phrase to use here) although the term could be used in relation to games, considering how these are designed – both *Lara Croft Go* and *Kim Kardashian Hollywood* demonstrate layouts which are typical of their respective genres. More traditionally, the layouts of a newspaper page, print advert or magazine cover can be very clearly analysed and linked to the design elements, as discussed above.

Typography

This is the way in which printed words are arranged. Typography includes selecting typefaces (fonts), point sizes, line lengths, line-spacing (leading), and letter-spacing (tracking), as well as adjusting the space between pairs of letters (kerning) – it should be noted that students will not need to know all of these terms, although the first two are helpful. The term can also be applied to the style, arrangement, and appearance of the letters, numbers, and symbols created by the process.

The particular typography of a specific product can provide clues to how it fits into its genre. A comparison of *The Mirror* and *The Times*, demonstrates usage of very different typographies (the use of sans-serif/serifed typefaces and the point-sizes of the headlines being the most obvious). To a certain extent, all of the media language- specific products include typography, and the reasons for the choice of particular typefaces as well as colours, size and positioning can provide an interesting way to discuss effect, meaning and impact. On a side note, students might be advised not to conflate the words typeface and font – traditionally, a font refers to the particular size, weight and style of a typeface. The typeface "Arial" may include the fonts "Arial Narrow", "Arial Black", "Arial Rounded MT" and "Arial" itself.

Principles of repetition and variation

Philosopher Steve Neale is credited with the genre theory based on principles of repetition and variation. Neale's ideas are based on film genre, but are applicable to any product. Neale suggested that genres all contain instances of repetition and difference. In particular, difference is essential to the economy of the genre but repetition is essential as part of the creation of genre identity.

According to Neale, genre is defined by two things: how much a product conforms to its genre's particular conventions and stereotypes and how much a film subverts these. This then leads to two functions, at least within the mainstream Hollywood system: guaranteed pleasure and meaning for an audience and less financial risk within film production. Neale suggests that mainstream cinema relies on audiences finding pleasure in both difference and repetition – they recognise familiar elements but enjoy the way those elements are varied, or have unfamiliar elements introduced.

Genre is therefore defined by specific systems of expectations and ideas which audiences bring with them to the cinema and which interact with the film itself during the course of the viewing process.

To the film's production team and distributors, genre provides assumptions about which audiences they should be marketing to (for the audience, genre identifies a liked or disliked formula and provides certain rules of engagement in terms of anticipation of enjoyment).

In order to apply Neale's ideas, it is important to place particular products in context. Most obviously, a comparison of *Doctor Who* and *His Dark Materials* offers a traditional approach, but to a certain extent all of the CSPs relating to media language demonstrate Neale's ideas.

- The Galaxy advert plays with expectation as well as tapping into the generic identity of 1950s Hollywood cinema.
- The Omo advert can be considered old-fashioned because it sits at the early stages of the cycle and has become, effectively, a self-parody due to its use of elements which have now become clichés.
- Lara Croft Go, being the product of a genre-defining game series, demonstrates both repetition (the “secret” sound is similar to that used in both Tomb Raider II (1996) and Tomb Raider III (1998) whilst some of the traps/ hazards are clearly based on the early games and variation (the linear path and turn-based gameplay are not typical for Tomb Raider games).

Fundamentally, the idea of repetition and variation in genre can be summarised by asking how closely a product fits its apparent generic template, and why.

Dynamic nature of genre

Genre is not a fixed concept (part of Neale’s point above is that virtually no two products can be the same if they are to be economically successful). Many modern media theorists have discussed the dynamic nature of genre. David Buckingham has suggested that “genre is not... simply ‘given’ by the culture: rather, it is in a constant process of negotiation and change”. Nicholas Abercrombie wrote that “the boundaries between genres are shifting and becoming more permeable” due in part to economic pressures to capture new audiences. As a result of hybridisation and the expansion of the media itself, genres will inevitably change over time; genre conventions shift, new genres and sub-genres are created whilst others fade away. Todorov suggested that ‘a new genre is always the transformation of one or several old genres.’

In terms of the CSPs, this idea is again most clearly demonstrated by the television products, which are both broadly sci-fi (although an argument could be made for teen or family drama) but which are both radically different in almost every way. The Omo advert again demonstrates this dynamic quality (compare it with almost any modern advert for washing powder). Similarly, although *Lara Croft Go* is identifiably both an action and a puzzle game, it demonstrates clear differences from other examples of games in those genres.

Hybridity

A hybrid refers to any genre product which mixes themes and elements from two or more different genres together. An excellent way of introducing this is looking at films such as *Shaun of the Dead* or *Hot Fuzz* which are conscious attempts to hybridise genre movies (romantic comedy and zombie horror in *Shaun*; buddy cop, action, horror and thriller in *Fuzz*). In terms of the CSPs, both *His Dark Materials* and the *NHS Represent* advert demonstrate clear hybridity, although the episode of *Doctor Who* itself contains very few sci-fi elements until the very end (generically, it is more a school-based mystery) whilst the Galaxy advert hybridises the conventions of an advert with the style of a 1950s Hollywood movie. Hybridisation can be used to attract the audience of one genre to another (this is very obviously done with the Galaxy advert) or can be used to draw attention to the deeper meaning of a product (as *Represent* does with the conventions of rap music video).

Intertextuality

Intertextuality refers to the relationship between products, specifically the process of including references to any kind of media text within another media text. The most obvious example in the CSPs is the Lady Leshurr advert, which utilises an intertextual relationship with the codes and conventions of music video. A slightly different example involves the Galaxy advert which clearly references 1950s romance movies in its use of location, music, actors, action costumes and even colour grading in order to create its effects. *Lara Croft Go* is an interesting variation, since it is effectively intertextual with itself (or at least, previous *Tomb Raider* games), including many elements (the menu screen, for example) which are intertextual with early games in the series.

Media representation

This section of the theoretical framework covers how the media portray events, issues, individuals and social groups. It explores the different ways media products shape an audience's knowledge and understanding about topics such as gender, age, ethnicity, national and regional identity, social issues and events. It deals with concepts such as stereotypes, ideology and construction of meaning.

Media representation is not explicitly covered in the study of film, music video and radio, although some aspects may be worth considering as a part of the wider consideration of these media forms.

Whatever ends up in a media product, a great deal will have been left out. All products are constructed and present a mediated (filtered) view on reality and go through the following stages:

- Selection – choices made during the production process will shape both the meaning and the message of the product. The selection reasons can be for quality purposes (the first episode of Doctor Who was reshot due to poor production values), for time/space or for ideological reasons (ie the positive images of race in Represent. Students could answer questions such as 'why was it selected?' and 'what is not there?').
- Mediation – Everything we see has been chosen by design, through choice of shot, edit, positioning of recording instrument, words in a script/article, gameplay mechanic or nuance of performance. This can be for marketing purposes (the Omo advert suggests that to disagree would put the reader in a minority). It can also be for ideological purposes (different stories on the front covers of two different newspapers present a mediated version of the news which reflects their political learnings).

The media is a window on the world

David Buckingham has stated that "the media don't just offer us a window on the world... [they] offer us versions of reality". How far that process of mediation is presented by a particular product – particularly the intended level of realism – can be a critical element of understanding how a representation is created. *Represent* is an interesting example to look at here, considering that there is an attempt to create a very positive image of race alongside the more general message of the advert. The different perspectives on the

Amazon story in *The Times* and *The Mirror* offer a different means of demonstrating this idea.

The medium is the message

"The medium is the message" is attributed to the philosopher Marshall McLuhan (1911-1980). McLuhan meant that the form of a medium embeds itself in any message communicated, creating an interdependent connection since the medium influences how the audience responds. The choice of medium affects the audience response and should be considered as being as important as the content. *Represent* is again quite a useful example to look at, considering how the advert is designed to replicate the conventions of music video – why this form was chosen in relation to the target audience. Similarly, the way the Galaxy advert replicates the form and style of Hollywood cinema provide a helpful focus. However, all media forms influence the way their content is received to a certain extent.

Gender essentialism

Gender essentialism is the theory that gender is a set, binary concept: there are two genders and each gender is defined by inherent physical, social, and cultural traits. For example, gender essentialism suggests that men tend to be stronger than women, that women are more emotionally sensitive, or that men are better at maths and engineering. It is, a form of stereotyping. Gender essentialism is a concept which underpins the reading of many of the products and in particular the perception and representation of female characters (a comparison of *Doctor Who* and *His Dark Materials*, for example, or the connotations of the Omo advert compared to *Represent*).

Social constructionalism

Social constructionalism is basically the opposite to essentialism. Rather than being "natural", the way in which genders (and indeed many other categorisations such as race or social class) are positioned and perceived is based on a combination of personal experience and reference to broader social factors, the media being one. If we see a representation of a particular category within the media, we may believe that this representation is "real" (rather than a construction). How far a media product is attempting to reflect reality and how much it is responsible for constructing it can be an interesting question to explore.

Audience positioning theory

Stuart Hall (1932-2014) was a cultural theorist. One of his concerns was the way in which media products positioned (placed) their audiences and how much the media influenced an audience's position (opinion). Hall's ideas are embedded within reception theory. At a basic level, he suggested an active relationship between producers, message and audience. Hall considered the role of audience positioning in the interpretation of media texts by social groups. He suggested that every media text has a preferred reading (the message which a producer wants to get across (encode)) and that there are three ways in which the audience might be positioned to receive (decode) that reading. These are:

- dominant reading – receiver fully accepts preferred reading, reading it in the way the author intended, making the code natural and transparent
- negotiated reading – receiver partly believes the code and broadly accepts the preferred reading, but interprets it in a way which reflects its own position, experiences and interests
- oppositional reading – receiver's social situation is placed in an oppositional position to the dominant code, thus they reject the reading.

All media products seek to position their audience, some more explicitly than others, and understanding what the preferred reading is can be an essential part of understanding why a product is designed in a particular way and why a varied audience response might be a result. The advertising and radio products explicitly require a discussion of audience positioning and preferred reading, but it might be interesting to consider *Doctor Who* (which had a very specific purpose and remit) and the newspaper products (considering their differing ideological stances).

Techniques of persuasive communication

How a media product tries to persuade the audience to take a particular position. This might be explored within the studies of advertising and newspapers, but is relevant to any product. The choice of language (both verbal and non-verbal), focusing on particular elements within a shot, choice of music, layout and design are all considered by producers when trying to persuade an audience to take a particular position. For example, the Galaxy advert is designed to create a positive feeling of nostalgia in the audience, with the chocolate being associated with a legendary star as well as a warm, enticing narrative. The advert is designed to persuade the audience that buying the chocolate will provide a brief experience of that world. The persuasion here is quite subtle and requires some decoding. The Represent advert contains a different form of persuasion, since it is not completely clear what the clip is promoting until Lady Leshurr (and the captions) tell the audience directly at the end. When studying products, students should consider how an audience is being persuaded to take a particular position

Dominant value system of society

Any study of media representations is likely to consider ideologies and values. Within any society, certain values are going to be dominant – these are the dominant ideologies shared by the majority of people in a society. Mainstream products tend to adhere to the dominant values. In most cases, products will focus on particular values depending upon the audience they are aimed at – newspapers are an obvious example of this, considering their social and political bias although the same could be said of the different values suggested by the magazine covers.

These values change over time due to a wide range of factors (for example changes in social structure and economic influences as well as internal and external factors). The gender values which influence the Omo advert, *Doctor Who* and the Radio One clips are somewhat out of date whilst *Represent* and Marcus Rashford's websites and social media posts explore concerns which are relevant to the particular social groups they are aimed at (the celebration/involvement of black members of the community; the experience of being

in poverty and dealing with a range of personal issues). Neither could have existed when *Doctor Who* was first made in 1963 due to the very different values of the time. It is important that students explore the various contexts which influenced the creation of a media text, and these include the dominant values of the society from which it is derived (and to which it is aimed). A product whose values agree with those of its audience is more likely to be read in a dominant way; one which does not is more likely to lead to an oppositional reading.

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 (compare the respective front pages of *The Times* and *The Mirror*). All products will set a particular "agenda" depending upon their purpose, whether that is the selling of a product, an idea or an experience (the different "agendas" of *Kim Kardashian Hollywood* and *Lara Croft Go* are worth discussing, as is Marcus Rashford's agenda based on his growing influence). Even *Doctor Who* was designed with a particular "agenda" in mind (it was conceived as an educational drama to teach young people about science and history as well as trying to capture a prime-time family audience, amongst other things).

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. With regard to the CSPs, although all of the products demonstrate broader values, only the newspapers demonstrate news values in the sense that it is commonly used in media studies and students should consider the respective importance placed on the front cover articles and the Amazon Fresh story. Galtung and Ruge's original list, and the subsequent updates, are readily available online.

Media industries

This section of the theoretical framework covers the companies responsible for media products – producers (who create them) and regulators (which make sure that they meet industry codes). It also explores the forms of media products. You will need to consider elements such as platforms, brands and the function of particular companies as well as concepts such as convergence, franchises, ratings and positioning. The structure of media organisations will also be explored.

Media industries as a topic is not explicitly covered in the study of magazines and advertising and marketing, although some aspects may be worth considering as a part of the wider discussion of these media forms. Film may only be considered in relation to media industries.

Term	Explanation	Example
Mergers	Companies joining together to form one.	<i>Lara Croft Go</i> is published by Square Enix, two software companies that merged in 2003.
Demergers	A company is broken into separate components.	Marvel Studios, makers of <i>Black Widow</i> was effectively demerged from Marvel Entertainment by Disney, once Disney became Marvel's parent company in 2009.
Takeovers	When a company is taken over by another company.	Glu Mobil, the makers of <i>Kim Kardashian Hollywood</i> , has taken over many other companies in the mobile software industry since 2004.
Concentration	A process in which fewer individuals or organisations come to control more of the mass media.	Time Warner, Viacom, 21 st Century Fox.
Conglomerate ownership	One company which owns a controlling stake in a number of smaller companies.	News Corp, The Walt Disney Company.
Diversification	The way a media company spreads ownership of both related and unrelated products/areas.	The Walt Disney Company has progressed from a film studio to owning theme parks, magazines, games, radio etc.
Convergence	The amalgamation of mass communication technologies.	<i>Black Widow</i> (the convergent qualities of the Marvel Cinematic Universe and Disney's dominance across platforms).

Providers

The below refer to different ways in which media is provided:

- Content provider – Could refer to any company who ‘provides content’ to be broadcast on a media platform.
- Network provider – Companies who provide digital networks (eg EE or Sky Broadband). There is a degree of convergence between ISPs and broadcast platforms.
- Platform providers – Companies such as Facebook and YouTube.

Television licence

In the UK, any household watching or recording live TV transmissions as they are being broadcast needs a television licence. Many organisations (such as schools and hospitals) are also expected to hold them. A television licence is also required to receive on-demand programme services provided by the BBC.

The television licence is mainly used to fund the television, radio and online services of the BBC. Money received is used to run the BBC's services (free from commercial advertisements) and also pays for programming for the Welsh language S4C and the BBC World Service.

Sponsorship

Sponsorship is defined as support offered to an event, activity, person, or organisation financially or through the provision of products or services by an individual, group or organisation (the sponsor). In the media, perhaps the most visible form of sponsorship is where commercial TV programmes are directly sponsored (for example, Ford sponsoring Sky Sports). It could be argued that Kim Kardashian’s appearance in *Kim Kardashian Hollywood* is a form of sponsorship since it demonstrates her tacit approval of the game, although this is not strictly the way the term is used here. Similarly, Selena Gomez appearing on a track and video with Blackpink might be seen as a form of sponsorship, considering her international profile.

Product placement

Product placement (embedded marketing) is an advertising technique whereby references to specific brands or products are included within another work, such as a film or television programme, with a specific intent to promote the product.

Globalisation

Globalisation refers to interrelationships between countries connected by trade, communication and cultural experiences. Within the media, the global sales of film, TV and games (amongst other products), coupled with the influence of the Internet, has led to the proliferation of some media (primarily Western in origin). Products created by companies such as News International and The Walt Disney Company can be broadcast or accessed across the world via the internet, mobile networks or by satellite. In an increasingly

globalised world, there is a suggestion that local cultures could risk losing their unique qualities and be replaced by a single, 'standard' culture. This is known as Cultural Homogenisation. However, the size and reach of media organisations in other territories (particularly in India and China) as well would seem to counter this argument.

Cultural imperialism

Cultural imperialism refers to the process by which one country dominates the media consumption of other nations and consequently influences their values and ideologies. The current influence and impact of US film and TV is usually cited as being an example since these are shown throughout the world and have clearly had an effect both on the expectations and structure of media forms. A recent study suggested that US is the dominant force in world media, with around 85% of the global film market and 65% of the television market being sourced from North America. Cultural imperialism suggests that, as a result, American values, beliefs and ideologies are imposed upon the rest of the world through its consumption of US media products. Examples in the UK include the increased prominence of Halloween as a 'holiday' amongst children and teenagers, the prevalence of 'leader debates' in the run up to general elections or the rise of Black Friday. Of the CSPs, a comparison between the trailers for *Black Widow* and *I, Daniel Blake* might provide the most obvious example, considering their respective sources; a comparison of *Doctor Who* (quintessentially British) and *His Dark Materials* (which has obviously been influenced by US TV dramas, with the inclusion of HBO as a production company) might also provide some points of interest.

International agreements (and disagreements) on regulation and freedom to trade media products

Media companies are, at a fundamental level, national institutions which (despite globalisation) are answerable only to their own managements and their local regulatory bodies. International communication is not subject to any central or consistent system of control. There are a number of international controls and regulations that do constrain nationally-based media, albeit mainly voluntary and mostly non-binding.

An initial attempt to create an international agreement was linked to the creation of an international postal service in the mid-19th century, coinciding with the founding of the International Telegraph Union (ITU). Post- World War II, the UN explored the issue of the mass media matters, with a particular reference to freedom of expression and freedom of communication between countries. In 1978 UNESCO attempted to introduce a “Media Declaration” which included a number of principles for the conduct of international media, especially in relation to propaganda for war and hostile reporting. This was opposed, mainly by the West, although there are still international treaties (including the UN Declaration as well as the European and the American Conventions on Human Rights) that refer to misuse of communication and the potential consequences of this. The development of the internet has led to more sustained calls for international regulation, both in terms of content as well as structure, but at the time of writing no single global body regulates the internet.

Examples of organisations with some global significance with regard to media regulation are shown below.

- The International Telegraph Union: responsible for telecommunication technical standards, spectrum allocation, satellite orbits and other elements of communication technologies.
- The World Trade Organisation (WTO): although primarily focused on economics, the WTO has become more influential within the media due to globalisation. The WTO is dedicated to free trade and protection, which limits national sovereignty in relation to media policy. The EU and other regional trade organisations, or agreements (such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), can have a similar impact on media issues.
- The United Nations Educational Social and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO): has little power and no specific media functions but does have some interest in questions of freedom of expression and the internet.
- The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO): established in 1893, WIPO aims to converge relevant legislation and procedure and resolving disputes between owners of rights, authors and users.
- The International Corporation of Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN): a voluntary private body representing internet users. It allocates addresses and domain names, plus some server management functions but has little to do with content
- The European Commission (EC): can influence certain aspects of broadcasting and telecommunications relating to the member states of the European Union.

Regulation

Government regulation

In the UK, the only government-backed regulator is Ofcom (the Office of Communications) (although IMPRESS is recognised by The Press Recognition Panel, which was created by the Royal Charter on self-regulation of the press after the Leveson Equiry and the VSC is accountable to the Ministry of Culture, Media and Sport). Ofcom has statutory powers to regulate television and radio output as well as aspects of broadcasting including radio and mobile spectrums and the operations of postal, telephone and broadband services. It has no responsibilities for other areas of the media, apart from when these appear on radio or TV broadcasts (for example, a film or game cut-scene shown as part of a broadcast TV programme) although this would be in relation to the parent programme/channel rather than the embedded product. Ofcom took over regulation of the BBC from the BBC Trust at the beginning of 2017.

Self-regulation

The majority of media industries are self-regulated. This means that they basically 'police' themselves. Organisations such as the BBFC (film/DVD), IPSO/IMPRESS, the ASA (adverts) and PEGI (games) are basically paid for and managed by the industries themselves, with varying degrees of independence.

IPSO

The Independent Press Standards Organisation regulates those newspapers and magazines which have signed up to its Editors' Code of Practice. IPSO's self-proclaimed role is to be an independent regulator of the newspaper and magazine industry, promoting and upholding professional standards of journalism in the UK and supporting members of the public where they believe that the Editors' Code has been breached. IPSO can require that newspapers publish prominent corrections and critical adjudications. It may also fine publications in some cases. It should be noted that some publications (notably *The Financial Times* and *The Guardian*) have not joined IPSO and that IMPRESS acts as an alternative press regulator, albeit one with little authority since few major publications have signed up to its Code of Practice.

VSC

The Video Standards Council's responsibility is to administrate the PEGI system. The VSC was set up in 1989 and has been responsible for the age ratings of video games sold in the UK since 2012, which is done through a sub-body, the Games Rating Authority (GRA). The GRA also rates games for at least 30 other European countries.

PEGI

Pan European Game Information. PEGI is a European video game content rating system established to help European consumers make informed decisions when buying video games or apps through the use of age recommendations and content descriptors. It was introduced in 2003 and replaced many national age rating systems with a single European

system. The PEGI system is used in more than thirty countries.

BBFC

The British Board of Film Classification. The BBFC was founded by the film industry in 1912 and is responsible for the national classification of films exhibited at cinemas and any video materials (such as television programmes, trailers, adverts, menus, bonus content etc.) released on physical media within the UK. It is required to classify videos, DVDs and, some video games. The BBFC uses its own rating system. It should be noted that the BBFC only has very limited powers to impose edits or to “ban” films; local councils have the power to decide whether or not films are shown in cinemas within their areas, but they generally follow the advice of the BBFC.

ASA

The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) is the self-regulator of the UK advertising industry. It is self-funded by the advertising industry with a role focused on regulating UK adverts through investigation of complaints and deciding whether these break its advertising standards codes.

Media audiences

This section of the theoretical framework explores how the media creates, targets, reaches and addresses audiences. It also considers how audiences interpret and respond to the media, and how members of the audience might become producers themselves. You will need to consider theoretical ideas such as those presented by Stuart Hall and Blumler and Katz. You will need to cover demographics, psychographics and various ways in which media organisations research and collect data about their audiences.

Media audiences as a topic is not explicitly covered in the study of film, magazines and advertising and marketing, although some aspects may be worth considering as a part of the wider discussion of these media forms.

Audiences and theorists

Active audiences

These theories propose that audiences do not blindly accept the apparent meanings of media products. They suggest that audience members are actively, if sometimes unknowingly, involved in the decoding and interpretation of those products. This links to Stuart Hall’s ideas about reception (see Representation) as well as to the Uses and Gratifications theory ascribed to Blumler and Katz (below). Crucially, the audience is regarded as a critical responder to (rather than uncritical receiver of) a product. Active audience challenges aspects of effects theories (such as the hypodermic syringe model). Active audiences mean that it is impossible for a producer to be certain that the intended meaning is going to be received by the audience since that meaning will come from an active negotiation between the audience and the product depending upon the context in which it is received. An active audience uses the media for its own purposes (rather than

being controlled by the media, which is a key tenet of passive audience theories).

More recently, ideas have developed based on how consumers use the internet. This has provided a range of alternative methods by which audiences might receive and interact, meaning that control of information is no longer in the hands of broadcasters. The tools for creation and transmission are available to every member of the audience through use of convergent media devices. This has led to the rise of the “prosumer” – an audience member who consumes and produces media. Consideration of Marcus Rashford’s active relationship with his audience, or how the two video games require audiences to interact in order to function, offer quite an interesting method of exploring the idea of the active audience.

Passive audiences

These theories suggest that communication is effectively a one-way system. The audience is regarded as an uncritical consumer, simply receiving media products and acting upon their content with little or no analysis, accepting and believing almost everything, in some cases acting solely upon the media’s direction rather than on their own critical judgement. Proponents of passive audience theories claim that the mass media are able to fully influence audiences, who are seen as weak and passive.

Hypodermic needle (or ‘magic bullet’) theory

This theory proposes that the audience is directly affected by their media consumption, either straight away or shortly after they consume a product. Effectively, the media product ‘injects’ or ‘shoots’ concepts, ideologies and positions into the minds of the passive audience, who might then act upon them. Hypodermic syringe challenges reception theory since it requires that a media product has only one message to be decoded by the audience, which it is powerless to resist.

Arguments for hypodermic syringe theory include:

- the influence of propaganda in Nazi Germany
- Vance Packard’s ideas about advertising outlined in *The Hidden Persuaders* in the 1950s
- Bandura’s ‘Bobo Doll’ experiment in the early 1960s
- the UK government’s responses to ‘video nasties’ in the 1980s
- more recent attempts to link video gaming to violent crimes.

Counter arguments suggest that the theory is based on generalisations about the mass-media and fear of the mass audience, giving the media far more influence that it actually has. It also fails to consider the many other contextual influences on an audience – social, political and cultural – and as such is seen as somewhat simplistic and outdated.

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. As mentioned above with regard to the hypodermic model, cultivation theory does not take into account other contextual influences.

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.

Blumler and Katz's Uses and Gratifications theory

Uses and Gratifications theory (UGT), developed over several decades, assumes that the audience is active. It is based on studies which explored why audiences chose to consume certain media forms and products. At the core of UGT is the concept that the audience is complex and mixed, selecting media products based on social, cultural and personal factors (their “needs”). For example, an audience might choose to read a particular magazine because it gives them pleasure (gratification). They might watch a particular news programme because it provides information they can then pass on to others or interpret themselves (use). Broadly, UGT outlines four main uses audiences have for the media.

- Diversion – media products allow audiences to escape, be entertained and relax. (for example, getting “lost” in the world of Lara Croft Go or in the adventures of Ian, Barbara, Susan and the Doctor).
- Surveillance – media products provide information about the world. The information

audiences receive from the media offers knowledge which gives them an advantage in a range of contexts (for example, both *The Times* and *The Mirror* offer a subjective account of current events).

- Personal relationships – humans require interaction with other people. The media provide a range of personal relationships: with fictional characters (for example, the characters in *Doctor Who* and *His Dark Materials*), with fictionalised versions of real people (such as the avatar of Kim Kardashian in *Kim Kardashian Hollywood*) or even with real people (for example, Kim Kardashian, who sometimes utilises audience interaction as a component of her presentation).
- Personal identity – humans have a need to define both personal identity and a sense of self, based on choices, judgements and opinions. Choices made about media consumption provide one aspect of this – what audiences watch, read, listen to and who they admire allows expression of identity. The media also offer value reinforcement – audiences choose to access media products which support beliefs and ideas they already have. The media we consume all contribute to and reinforce our sense of self and our place in the world ie the newspapers we read, films we watch etc.
- Although Blumler and Katz are the academics most closely associated with UGT through their 1974 research, many other theorists contributed to its development.

Strategies and audience

Guerrilla marketing

Guerrilla marketing is an approach to advertising whereby businesses promote products or services in an unconventional, usually low-budget manner. Such campaigns aim to target the audience by being both personal and memorable, compared to more traditional marketing strategies. Guerrilla marketing is a physical experience, focused on popular public places (eg town centres) with a view to achieving a significant audience (if comparatively small, compared to traditional marketing). Examples of guerrilla marketing can include flashmobs, graffiti, stencils or the use of stickers. The aim of it is to create an alternative approach to traditional advertising tactics, which a more “media savvy” audience might not respond to. It seeks to surprise the audience, hyping the product and creating discussion.

The promotion of *I, Daniel Blake* involved guerrilla marketing tactics, with images linked to the film being projected on the side of a building by Kommando Marketing (videos of this can be found on Kommando’s site, although please be aware that audience is not covered in this particular CSP – it is simply given as an illustrative example). Most guerrilla marketing only achieves wider public attention through more traditional communication, such as being featured on YouTube or in more typical adverts.

Viral marketing

Viral marketing uses social networking and other online systems to promote brands or services through a self-replicating approach whereby the audience itself spreads the “message”. The name comes from the analogy of the process being like the spread of a computer (or physical) virus, passed on from one person to another and communicated exponentially through a population. Although the source will usually be a particular

company or organisation, once the promotion is released, its distribution is not paid for by the company (unlike traditional advertising). The key to viral marketing is that it has a personal quality. A consumer will receive a link, perhaps via email or embedded within a social media post, often seemingly sent directly to them. If their attention is piqued, they may forward this to others. If enough people do the same, the advert can “go viral”. Examples of viral marketing include video clips, interactive games, images, text messages, email messages, or web pages. At the heart of viral marketing is the notion that the audience does not realise that it is being marketed to.

Kim Kardashian offers some interesting examples of viral marketing. Some of her products' successes could be seen as based on the viral model (since she promotes these on her social media channels, and relies on her followers re-posting and thus using word-of-mouth). *Kim Kardashian Hollywood* is noted as including a mechanism whereby player progress is promoted via social media by the game itself. This led to a tremendous amount of interest in the game when it was first launched. A fake Twitter account for one of the game's characters was also set up, which at one point had 500,000 followers.

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.

When exploring newspapers and magazines, it is possible to find data which outlines the different demographics of the audiences for *The Mirror* and *The Times* as well as for *Heat* and *Tatler*; and their own marketing materials/advertising rates might provide an interesting source of demographic data. A consideration of Marcus Rashford's key demographic would also be helpful, as would be an exploration of how the demography of video games has shifted, particularly in relation to female, casual and older gamers.

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. A consideration of the way in which the articles in *The Times* and *The Mirror* meet the psychographic profiles of their respective audiences might be of use, as might a consideration of the gameplay differences between *Lara Croft Go* and *Kim Kardashian Hollywood*. The psychographics of Kim Kardashian's target audience and how she responds to these could also be explored, as could the implied psychographics behind the three adverts, which suggest very different lifestyles, behaviours and opinions.

Measurement

BARB

The Broadcasters Audience Research Board. Compiles audience measurement/ television ratings in the UK. BARB is jointly owned by the BBC, ITV, Channel 4, Channel 5, Sky and the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising. Participating viewers have a box connected to their television which tracks the programmes they watch (these are in approximately 5,100 homes, covering around 12,000 individuals). Each viewer with a BARB box represents over 5,000 UK residents. Boxes record exactly what programs are being viewed, with panelists noting who is watching by pressing a button on a remote control handset. Data are collected overnight and published as overnight ratings the following morning. These are used by TV stations and the advertising industry. The following week, final figures are released which are a combination of overnight figures and "time-shift" figures (audience members who recorded a program and watched it within a week). BARB also publish viewing figures for a period of 28 days after the original broadcast.

BARB's data are extremely important to commercial television stations since revenue from advertising depends upon the number of people watching a programme.

RAJAR

Radio Joint Audience Research Limited. Compiles audience measurement data for the radio industry in the UK. RAJAR is jointly owned by the BBC and the Radio Centre. RAJAR collects information on behalf of the BBC and commercial radio stations. Data including station popularity by time, duration, platform (AM/FM, DAB, Online/APP, and DTV) and location are recorded and published quarterly. Information is based on diaries measuring the listening behaviour of over 100,000 adults.

PAMCo

The Publishers Audience Measurement Company. PAMCo oversees audience measurement for the published media industry. PAMCo was set up in 2016 in order to provide a more accurate measurement of audiences as a result of the impact of online platforms for traditionally printed products. PAMCo is launching a system called AMP

(Audience Measurement for Publishers). AMP involves a digital system coupled with 35,000 face to face interviews, allowing for estimates of digital audiences coupled with findings of readership surveys. PAMCo started to collect AMP data in January 2017 and plans to provide the first AMP dataset in February 2018.

Nielsen

Nielsen ratings measure the audience size and composition of TV programmes in the US. Nielsen television ratings are gathered through viewer "diaries" (the target audience self-records its viewing or listening experiences) and Set Meters (small devices connected to televisions in selected homes which gather viewing data and communicate the information nightly to Nielsen).