

Knowledge Map: Media Audiences

Summary: This knowledge organiser looks at one quarter of the Media Studies Theoretical Framework. It covers how, as contributors to the mass media, products reach and appeal to their audiences, and how media theory applies to these audiences.

CSPs that explore Media Audiences:	Online, Social, Participatory Media: Kim Kardashian: Hollywood Lara Croft GO Marcus Rashford	Newspapers: Daily Mirror The Times	Radio: KISSFM Breakfast Show Radio 1 Launch Day	Music Videos: Arctic Monkeys Blackpink	TV and the Sci-Fi Genre: His Dark Materials Dr Who: An Unearthly Child	DON'T FORGET CONTEXTS! Social, Cultural, Historical, Political!
Which exam/section are they in?	Online, Social, Participatory Media: Paper 1, Sections A, B Paper 2, Section B	Newspapers: Paper 1, Section A, B Paper 2, Section B	Radio: Paper 1, Section B	Music Videos: Paper 1, Section B	TV and the Sci-Fi Genre: Paper 1, Section A	

Media Audiences Overview	
Summary	
Audiences are the lifeblood of media industries. Advertisers pay to reach audiences, audiences pay directly for media products, and audiences are needed to justify subsidies or financial support (for example, the TV licence).	
Key Knowledge	
1	Audience Intro Audiences interest many in-groups , such as politicians, critics, and commentators who worry about the influence of the media on society. These people like to assert that 'the media are to blame!' to explain individual's poor behaviour. Some also think that the media has become too powerful, and able to manipulate audiences.
2	Defining the Audience We focus on mass audiences rather than niche e.g. theatre-goers because we deal with media that primarily isn't 'live' in that the audience experience is in real time. Media consumption can be a social occasion, but is mostly private. Social media, however, allows both. These allow advertisers to target huge numbers of consumers. The transition to digital media has led to declining numbers for a single media product or event as our attention is being pulled in many directions and the ease of access to 'On-Demand' services.
3	Categorising the Audience The more people consuming a product, the more money a company makes. Due to changes in technology, consumer habits have also changed. Financial risks to companies are large if they're trying to create a huge audience, so they tend to put more time into identifying niche audiences . However, even blockbuster films are designed to meet the needs of certain sections of the market, and advertisers need to know who these are to market their products. Identifying these elements of the audience is called segmentation . We can break audiences down into segments, like age.
4	Demographics Demography is the statistical study of a population. Main categories are: gender, social class, ethnicity, education, place of residence, religion, family size, age, generation. You may have heard generations classified as Baby Boomers (1945-1960), Generation X (1960-1980), Millennials (1980-2000), or your lot, Generation Z (21stC); research the features of these! Social class is hard to deal with, but media advertisers tend to use the National Readership Survey (NRS; as seen in your Dr Who CSP) to classify audiences.
5	Psychographics This studies personality, values opinions, attitudes and lifestyles, so differs from more solid aspects covered in demographics. These are used alongside demographics to create a more subtle audience profile which can then be used to target audience segments more effectively. It is widely used in advertising and marketing. Psychographics are often collected via focus groups, and often deal in 'types'. These could classify attitudes, such as: trendies, egoists, puritans, innovators, rebels, groupies, drifters, drop-outs, traditionalists, utopians, cynics or cowboys.
6	Who does Audience Research? Audience research is undertaken to meet the needs of advertisers before they invest large sums in advertising space. They prefer information from independent sources such as: Audience Measurement for Publishers (AMP), Audit Bureau of Circulation (ABC), British Film Institute (BFI), Broadcaster's Audience Research Board (BARB), Nielsen, OfCom and RAJAR. The information collected is quantitative or statistical, as well as qualitative which aims for more personal insights. Visit these websites to learn more.

Audience Theory	
Summary	
A theory is an explanation of something, but in studies of human behaviour, it is not easy to prove like in a science experiment. Theories help us understand, and explain, complex processes and relationships.	
Key Knowledge	
7	Theory Overview When considering audience theory, you must think of the question: 'How powerful are the media in influencing the ideas and behaviour of the audience?'. This addressed concerns about the media influencing: suicide, violent behaviour, promiscuity, obesity, poor fitness, poor body image, eating disorders, bullying (especially cyberbullying) overspending, indoctrination, political apathy, growing up 'too quickly' and immaturity.
8	Effects, Cultivation and Desensitisation Effects theory claims that the media can have direct influence on the attitudes and behaviours of individuals. Cultivation theory is effects theory plus time. This means that the more people are exposed to views, the more those views become 'normal'. Desensitisation works the other way; it suggests that overexposure to these things makes us unable to react to these situations. It can be problematic if images of violence are routinely associated with pleasure and relaxation, e.g. in computer games.
9	Effects Theory 2 When you were younger, did you ever copy someone's behaviour? Why do you think you did that? What was the last thing that genuinely shocked you? Why do you think it shocked you? Was it unexpected or surprising? Was it particularly extreme? Can you recognise the symptoms of desensitisation? Compassion fatigue is a lack of sympathy and empathy; overexposure to charity adverts may make us feel like we don't want to help because it appears pointless.
10	Hypodermic Needle Theory Effects theory also suggests that the relationship between audiences and texts is like drug use. In the 1940s and 50s, TVs were referred to as 'plug-in drugs', and now we use drug-based language to categorise people e.g. 'social media junkie/addict'. This idea sets up similarities between the use of media and misuse of drugs: 1. Media allows an escape from reality. 2. Overuse can lead to psychological dependency (addiction) 3. 'Little and often' is acceptable but bingeing isn't. 4. The media can take away your powers of self-control so you behave in ways that are out of character.
11	Hypodermic Needle Theory 2 All of the things above link to the idea that the media 'injects' dangerous and addictive messages directly into us, like a drug in a syringe. This idea is commonly used to criticise media users but we should be suspicious of the claims and implications. Evidence is rarely used to support this idea, and just asserting that the media is like drugs proves nothing. Also, if it was that easy to control people, the education system would be entirely media-based.
12	Passive v Active Audiences Effects theory takes the view that the audience are just passive consumers, meaning that decisions are limited to turning off/on and selecting from the content available to us. More recent research suggests audiences make their own meanings from various media products, and these meaning aren't necessarily the ones the producers intended. This would also mean that audiences use the media for their own reasons. Effects theory is particularly concerned with children it sees audience as a mass with little recognition that individuals may perceive and react to media products differently.

Uses and Gratifications	
Summary	
Blumer and Katz (1974) 'Uses and Gratifications' model is one of the most important media theories. Ensure you can argue why consumers select certain media products.	
Key Knowledge	
13	Uses and Gratifications Theory 1 This idea focuses on the audience's ability to select the media they want to engage with, and the reasons for making this selection. Our needs are met with gratification e.g. if you're thirsty, you drink and feel better. If we are not a passive audience, we proactively seek out the media we wish to consume (to suit our 'needs'). Our needs are classified by U&G theory as follows: 1. Entertainment and Diversion - relaxation and escape. 2. Information and Education - knowledge. 3. Social Interaction - human contact/interest. 4. Personal Identity - Affirming who you are via shared values/beliefs.
14	Uses and Gratifications Theory 2 You can suggest other needs with appropriate reasoning. This theory gives power to the consumers, so media producers need to recognise consumers' needs and meet them or they will lose interaction. However, it doesn't take into consideration factors like cost; we may want something, but can we afford it? And not everyone is experienced enough to find their preferred media; think of your grandparents using a phone! Finally, a lot of media is 'just there', like advertising, and we can't prove whether the media has already influenced our needs. Think of how your CSPs meet needs.
15	Audience Pleasures Pleasure makes us feel good. U&G theory can be expanded by looking at different types of pleasure the audience may receive. 1. Aesthetic pleasure - things that look good. 2. Cerebral - intellectual satisfaction. 3. Visceral - satisfaction of the body, sex/revenge etc. 4. Voyeuristic - knowing things unknown to others (<i>Heat</i> magazine CSP?) 5. Vicarious - second hand pleasure, like your team winning a match. 6. Catharsis - Empathy, like releasing pent-up emotions, shared experiences.
16	Reception Theory This sees the audience as active because they are able to make their own meanings from the media messages they receive. This is because audience members perceive things differently. Media products are created by encoding meanings, and the audience decodes these meanings. This only works well if the encoder/decoder share the same culture. Often, they don't. In the 1930s, smoking was believed to be healthy; society accepted this and advertisements reflected this. As time has gone on and medical research developed, the codes and the our understanding of how to decode them, has changed.
17	Reception Theory 2 No one would now accept that smoking is good for you, so if you saw a poster for this now, you'd disagree, decoding it in a different way. Stuart Hall, who developed this approach, suggested three ways the product may be interpreted or 'read': 1. Preferred reading - this is what the producers want the audience to have. 2. Negotiated reading - the audience accept some messages, but reject others. 3. Oppositional reading - This recognises the preferred reading, but completely rejects it.
18	Audience Positioning Products are polysemic ; they can be interpreted in a number of different ways. A producer may guide an audience to the preferred reading by using audience positioning . For example, the mode of address in a news broadcast is formal and authoritative, so the audience is positioned as a willing learner (U&G; why would we watch the news?). Game shows are more informal, positioning the audience almost as 'friends'. Audiences have to see through the ways they are being positioned in order to accept or reject readings.

The Interactive Audience	
Summary	
Commercial media producers need to produce content which will draw an audience which is attractive to advertisers. Audience figures need to be reliable and well-informed about the factors which will make their products successful.	
Key Knowledge	
19	Intro to the Interactive Audience Audiences that watched 'traditional' media (<i>Dr Who</i> CSP - 60s household) didn't have as much choice as we do today; they watched, listened and read. In today's digital age, you can respond directly, engage with people on screen etc. The word 'audience' has become the word 'community'. Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) identified three stages of audience development: 1. Simple audience - face to face contact like sports games. 2. Mass audience - Traditional media; TV, film etc. 3. Diffused audience - digital technology audience. They expect 24/7 access to media. It's part of almost all they do.
20	The Interactive Audience 2 These three elements do not replace each other; they all exist together. If you watch something and then Instagram your thoughts, you're a member of the diffused audience. They don't just consume media, they perform with it. Your own social media profile is a kind of performance to project an image of yourself. There are many ways interactive audience members can use the Internet to form an identity: Blogs, vlogs, Podcasting, Citizen Journalism, Crowd Sourcing, Content Sharing, Wiki-ing or Live Streaming.
21	Advertising and Marketing Commercial (profit-based) media need to create content that will draw in an audience which is in turn attractive to advertisers. This means the press, radio, magazines etc. need to be well-informed about factors which will make their products successful. They also need reliable audience figures. Advertisers have tried to exploit interactive audiences by paying for: 1. Impressions - number of visitors to the page with the ad, usually a cost per 1000. 2. Clicks - number of times an ad is clicked. Price varies enormously. 3. Actions - a click resulting in a sale.
22	Advertising and Marketing 2 For advertisers, only number 1 above relies on a passive audience. A 'click' is an active action. An active social media user also embeds lots of info in their accounts and profiles; not just demographic and geographic (age, gender etc.) but also psychographics like hobbies and interests. Data mining turns this raw info into specifically-targeted advertisements, and allows analysis of success of ad campaigns. Word-of-mouth is better than an ad, as it reinforces quality, so 'going viral' with an ad is a company's dream - free advertising!
23	Fans and Fandom In some cases, a 'fan' is just a member of a mass audience e.g. watching all episodes of a TV show. Most fans engage more closely though, purchasing merchandise, watching live performances etc. Fans also contribute creative ideas like cosplaying. This makes them prosumers both producing and consuming content. Performing your identity is also part of being a fan, so it becomes part of your subculture or identity (Representation). Most relationships between fans and consumers are one way in that they don't get anything back, but for many, being part of a 'fandom' is a way of sharing passions and interests, expressing ourselves and developing a sense of self.
24	Reaching the Interactive Audience Media consumers today expect to be able to access products whenever and wherever they wish. In order to reach their target audiences, producers need to engage with: 1. A multi-platform approach - the same content available of multiple platforms (convergence). 2. Time-shift viewing or continuous availability - apps like the iPlayer, and abilities to start watching something on one device and then pick it up on another. 3. Synchronised demand - consumers around the world having access to products at the same time. The Internet/social media has swung the power balance towards the audience.