



Key Media Concepts

Audience

What is an audience?
...some different views

A set of individual readers of a text who actively make their own meanings

A group others make generalizations about

A target market or a particular type of consumer which a media producer wants to reach/sell to

Couch potatoes who passively consume the media without challenge

A variety of different groups to which you belong – gender, ethnicity, class, age, sexuality, etc.

Individuals who use the media to satisfy their own needs

You!

Something you DO rather than something you ARF

A group of people who consume a particular film TV show, album, ad, etc.

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Members of society who might at some point use the media

Audience – Who are they?

- Mass/Niche?
- Demographics – gender, age, nationality, income, etc.
- Values, attitudes, lifestyles?

Audience

– different theoretical approaches

- Effects Theory
- Reception Theory

THE HYPODERMIC NEEDLE THEORY



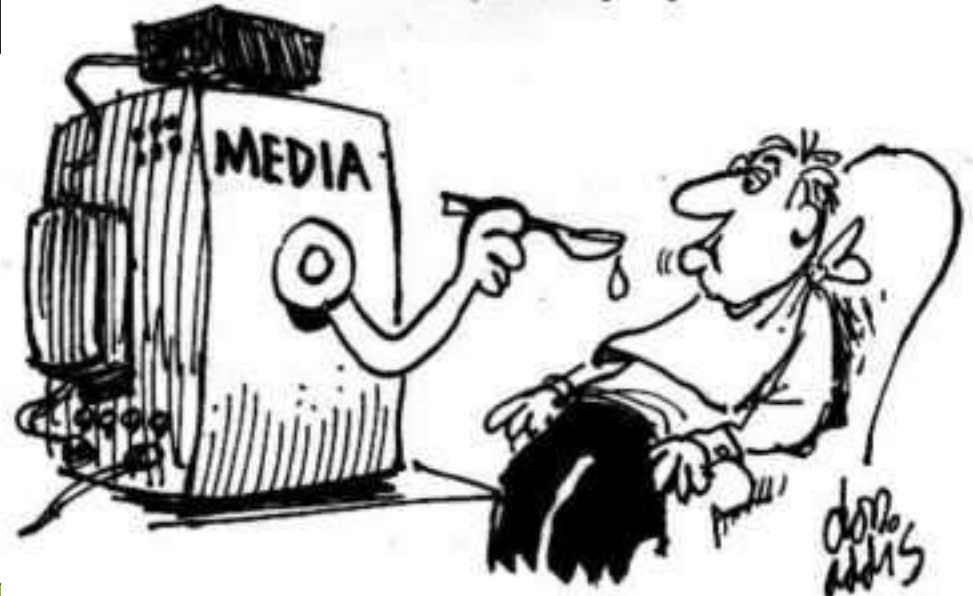
- LINEAR COMMUNICATION THEORY
- DIRECT AND POWERFUL INFLUENCE
- PASSIVE AUDIENCE



Media Effects theories assume the audience to be **passive** in the receiving and interpretation of media texts.

One Media Effects theory

Useful reference:
http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/S_tudents/pph9701.html



Reception theories

assume the audience to be **active** in the process of making meaning from a media text.



‘The meaning is not in the text, but in the *reading.*’

(Andrew Hart, 1991)

Texts need audiences in order to realise their potential for meaning. So a text does not have a single meaning but rather a range of possibilities which are defined by both the text and by its audiences.

Taken from Haynes (2000):

<http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Students/pph9701.html>

Audience – Reception Theory

So, Reception theory is audience centred thinking about a media text.

It focuses on what an audience does with a media text.

Stuart Hall's work on the **Encoding-Decoding Model** is most prominent in this field.

Stuart Hall's Encoding-Decoding Model



Encoding

The director's intended meaning is encoded, based on his/her ideologies, aims and intentions. Along with the technology available to them.



Decoding

The audience decode the meaning, based on their ideologies, aims and intentions. Along with the technology available to them



Stuart Hall's Encoding-Decoding Model

The Encoding-Decoding Model explores the relationship between media text and audience:

- producers encode a media text with an intended meaning
- audiences decode a media text and interpret its content in different ways, taking meanings from it that may or may not be in line with the intended meaning.
- Watch this 3 minute clip for an overview:
<http://youtu.be/LG1fAMiLv18>

Stuart Hall's Encoding-Decoding Model

Hall stated that audiences (depending on their own knowledge, experience, values, attitudes and beliefs) may respond differently to the same media text and suggested that they can take the following readings:

- **Preferred** reading
- **Negotiated** reading
- **Oppositional** reading

Stuart Hall – Preferred Reading

- Some people may take a preferred reading and look at the representations as 'how it is' and/or something to emulate. They would not question the representations.
- Stuart Hall argues that this is the reading that the producers intend audiences to take.

Stuart Hall – negotiated reading

- Some people may take a negotiated reading
- For example, they may recognise that a blockbuster film is made for commercial gain and offers a glamorous Hollywood version of the World and so does not accept the representations as reality, but perhaps still buys into them as unattainable cultural ideals that are pleasurable to consume for entertainment.
- Or, they may not associate the representations in the media text with their own attitudes and interests but could accept the representations as the dominant social view and go along to watch it anyway, especially if friends want to see it.

Stuart Hall – oppositional reading

- Some people may take an **oppositional** reading and completely reject the representations as they do not agree with the values they see embedded in the text.
- For example, a feminist may reject a media text where women are represented only as sexual objects and no longer engage with it. The ideological perspective of the text and the ideological perspective of the audience are in conflict.



What different interpretations and readings do you think this TV Drama trailer might have got? Consider different audiences:

- [Skins Trailer](#)

Apply to your product

Q: What is the intended/preferred meaning of your Trailer?

Q: Which audience is most likely to take a preferred reading and why?

To help you answer this, consider how media language is used to 'speak' to a particular audience, how different audiences might respond to signifiers of genre and narrative, and also, how audiences might respond to how characters, places or subjects are represented.

Q: Who might take a negotiated reading of your trailer and why?

Q: Who might take an oppositional reading of your trailer and why?

In conclusion, how successful do you think your teaser trailer is in enticing your target audience to want to watch the film?