Eduqas A Level Unit 11 Close Study Products Student

EDUQAS Component 2 Section A:
TV in the Global Age
Media Forms and Products in Depth
Language, Representation, Audience, Industry and Contexts

This is the Workbook for use with **EDUSITES Eduqas SET PRODUCTS UNIT 11 A Level MEDIA STUDIES**. All of the notes refer to the content of this unit of work. They are designed to help you create a useful set of notes to help you with understanding the ideas covered in this examination, to support you in your Home Learning and be a clear revision aid in your preparations for the final examinations that you are required to take. You need to always keep in mind the examination board Assessment Objectives that your work is to be assessed with.

Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of:

- the theoretical framework of media, contexts of media and their influence on media products and processes.
- Analyse media products using the theoretical framework of media, including in relation to their contexts, to make judgements and draw conclusions.
- Create media products for an intended audience, by applying knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework of media to communicate meaning.

Create products for intended audience and evaluate communication of meaning

- Demonstrate K&U of theoretical framework – *the Key concepts*
- Contexts of media products & production
- Analyse products by application of the framework/concepts/context

Lesson 1

This paper is all about your ability to write fluently and with a clear structure about the issues raised by the set products.

This paper is about ideas, the set products are there as a means of providing supporting evidence that upholds or challenges the theoretical models you have studied.

Each product is the product of an era.

You must combine a close and detailed analysis of the online products with an understanding of how these products reflect the world that created them, the practice of the industry that constructed them and the audience that consumes them.

Learners will study the role of media industries in shaping media products, as well as considering the way in which both mass and specialised audiences are targeted and addressed. Relevant and advanced theories will inform study of the set products and learners will reflect critically upon these theoretical perspectives. Learners should continue to develop their ability to use relevant subject-specific terminology in this component

- Analyse critically and compare how media products, including products outside the commercial mainstream, construct and communicate meanings through the interaction of media language and audience response

- Use and reflect critically upon a range of complex theories of media studies and use specialist subject-specific terminology appropriately in a developed way

- Debate critically key questions relating to the social, cultural, political and economic role of the media through sustained discursive writing

- Construct and develop a sustained line of reasoning which is coherent, relevant, substantiated and logically structured in an extended response

Television today is a global industry. The international popularity of genres like Nordic noir, the global reach of streaming services such as Netflix and Apple TV+, and the growing number of international co-productions reflect the increasingly transnational outlook of television in the global age.

- Through an in-depth study of two contrasting programmes produced in different social and cultural contexts,

- the dynamics that shape contemporary television production, distribution and circulation.
- The role of public service broadcasting in a global marketplace will be considered, as learners will explore the significance of the economic and industry contexts in which the set products are produced.
- The way in which the television industry is regulated
- The marketing strategies used to promote the set products will also be investigated.
- Learners will also have opportunities to explore how the television audience is defined, constructed and targeted on both a national and a global scale.

Lesson 2

We study global TV for all elements – *industry; audience; media language; representations; social/historical context and era*.

These elements are interlinked - we need understanding of the *media language* and *representations* involved in the *marketing* of this product as this relates directly to a sense of the *intended audience* and how the product was constructed to appeal to that audience.

The cycle of production and audience are inextricably linked - *we cannot consider the structure of the narrative or marketing practices without a sense of who these were targeted at.*

What could they ask you about?

They could ask you to answer a question about anything we cover in this unit, but some elements are more likely than others. Given that the set products are long form TV we can narrow some of these possibilities down. We can be certain that issues of Identity and representations will be vital, but to discuss any of these you must be fluent in the ability to fully deconstruct the set products.

Conventions of TV including the genre, typical content, typical structure etc. (*why these things are used, audience impact etc.*)

Stereotyping and Representation of women, men, ethnic minorities, age, disability, contexts, etc. (*effects on the audience meaning/response, and why used*)

Contexts: what they reveal about the era/nation that made them

Teacher's Standards
Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.

- Discuss why people consume these⌷SEP⌷
- Discuss institutions that make/showcase such media products including the way they construct them, the way they market

Lesson 3

As we have seen in the study of other set products, each media form operates by applying accepted ways of doing things – what we call conventions.

This may be as simple as: *all TV shows start with a title sequence; in crime dramas we are usually shown that crime doesn't pay by narrative conclusions of the police arresting and punishing the criminals.*

These conventions enable audiences to understand and quickly make sense of what they are watching and be sure that they are initially selecting the kind of forms they find entertaining or satisfying.

Applying known genre conventions enables producers to build in some guarantee that their shows will be popular and profitable.

Lesson 4

Genre

Genre is an industrial process:

- To guarantee pleasure and meaning for the audience.
- To offset financial risks of production by using successful formats

The intended audience find pleasure in difference and repetition - *recognition of familiar elements and the way those elements are linked* or *the way that unfamiliar elements might be introduced*.

Genre is what readers believe the product to contain based on prior knowledge of similar products.

It provides a template for construction of messages and content and assumptions about the audience to be targeted.

To the audience, genre identifies a pleasurable formula providing engagement and understanding.

Although A Level Media rarely gives focus to his work, modern media theories are underpinned by the work of Michael Foucault.

It was Foucault who during the sixties coined the term 'Archaeology' to describe his approach to studying history. For Foucault, the Archaeology Model is about *examining the traces and forms left by the past to better understand what he termed a history of the present.*

Foucault's work influenced all those theoretical models now widely accepted to analyze contemporary media products by accounting for the active influence of past products and past representations. Foucault believed analysis must consider more fully how these have contributed to the shape of such products today.

In simple terms, the past shapes the present and without understanding the past we can never fully understand current media products .

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Lesson 5

Media Language

The meaning of a product is constructed through audience understanding of signs – *the connotations of images, sounds, lighting, costume etc.*

The meaning of such signs are in the shared culture that creates the product and the audience that views it.

These common understandings are what Barthes termed myths – like myths they have only a limited link to reality, they are a cultural agreement and as such can be negotiated or changed according to the era.

These myths represent the dominant – *hegemonic* – values of the culture.

Lesson 6

Media Language 2

Binary opposition is a *model of culture in which two theoretical opposites are strictly defined and set off against one another*. It is the in the contrast between what appear to be two mutually exclusive ideas, such as on and off, up and down, left and right or good and evil that we learn more about each than by seeing them in isolation. A heroic figure is more easily understood to be heroic when we see them pitted against a villainous figure. It is in the extremes of contrast that better understanding of meaning is established in the audience mind.

As a structuralist, Levi-Strauss, shares the idea of Propp and Todorov that cultural products are understood by their patterns and structures rather than consideration of context.

On narrative long form TV drama and series, we see ideas of values expressed in terms of those things that are oppositional. In the TV product pairings, we see elements of 'good' and 'evil' expressed by the representation of the qualities and examples of its opposite. We may, in a product such as Peaky blinders find ourselves aligning with the 'bad' gangster through the portrayal of the 'good' forces of the law.

Reception theory there are referred, negotiated and oppositional understanding to the ideas in media products.

This involves understanding who the audience are and constructing a profile of the demographics and psychographics of this group.

From this we can make informed assessments of how they might respond to the style, content and tone of each of your selected TV products. How far you believe they reflect the way the audience are likely to think (most often we can assume that they align in taking the preferred reading presented by the TV show).

Each production team considers the likely appeal of their product to their target audience. In this way we can apply Hall's ideas to each element of narrative, content, values, representations, and the mode of address.

You must use your products to explore how they do this.

- *Consider representations – the tone of representation of ideas and characters and events and mode of address most often stress how the product is relatable to an audience seeking a product that reflects a sense of self and identity (Blumler & Katz)*

- *Consider the content – is it selected to be challenging or reinforcing of ideas the audience have of themselves?*

In postmodern culture, society has become so reliant on the world and images of media products that we have lost all contact with the real world. Audiences struggle to tell the 'real' from the image of the real in such products. More than this, reality has begun to imitate the model blurring any distinction between the two.

Successive media products raid existing media products and copy their narratives. The sense of the image being real is reinforced by this saturation of similar messages – images of images, a succession of images that appear real, so that life comes to resemble a room of mirrors: all reflection and no defining sense of what is real.

He sees media images as highly controlled; the make-up; styling; lighting; etc. construct an image that is not true to reality. However, the audience, seeing such images believe them to be 'real' cementing the image in the audience mind until people and events represented are soon seen only as the image.

Lesson 7

The Test

Lesson 8

Representations

- Understanding - *being able to offer ideas, evidence, and reasons* - for how your selected product constructs a sense of identity for its audience is a crucial part of your readiness for the set exam tasks. Such readiness will enable you to access the higher grades in discussing the impact of media products on audiences and wider society.

Teacher's Standards
Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.

- You should be aware of the key theoretical ideas in this area of identity and have had practice in applying these to the other Set Products.

- Here we focus on the key models of *Stuart Hall, David Gauntlett, Van Zoonen, bell hooks, Paul Gilroy and Judith Butler.*

- These writers and their theoretical models are covered in detail in the Edusites unit on Representation+ and in the unit and Audience+ both of which are available to you as part of an Edusites subscription.

Key ideas to remind yourself of:

- *Representations are constructs – they are not 'true' or 'accurate' – simply opinion*

- *Representations construct one person's/one view of the subject being presented*

- *Representations seek to align audience – their intention is for us to see the subject in a particular way. This may be fairly innocuous narrative necessity such as 'heroic' or villainous but can stray into ideological – women as passive; men as macho; ethnic groups as sly or untrustworthy or noble.*

- *Alignment is always biased – the work of Hall etc. from the mid 1970s suggested that a products point of view may be challenged by audience*

Reception theory there are referred, negotiated and oppositional understanding to the ideas in media products.

- This involves understanding who the audience are and constructing a profile of the demographics and psychographics of this group.

- *In analysing representation, the focus should not be merely be on the relationship between representation and 'reality' but on the potential meanings such representations construct in the alignment of audience.*

- *A key focus should be on who or what is represented & who or what is not represented.*

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- *Representations may intend to fix meanings in a 'preferred reading', but audiences contest meanings according to their own identities (agree/negotiate/oppose)*

Dominant/intended meaning:

- This is often seen as the 'intended meaning', the one that the producers of the product wish/believe most of the audience will take. In this, the audience accept the intended meanings and ideology of those representations the product appears to endorse or to criticise

- *In Peaky Blinders, this would be the way the working class are represented as heroic – the presentation of working and living conditions and the objectives of the unionisers. Even the Peaky Blinders are seen to be fighting against a system of law as corrupt as any of their own crimes.*

Negotiated meaning:

- The audience accept some part of what they see as the intended meaning but reject others.

- *Some may be interested in the depictions of the era's industrial areas as harsh and morally problematic but may find the use of violence or explicit sexuality upsetting.*

Oppositional meaning:

- the audience reject the intended meaning and so formulate their own interpretation.

- They may find the gritty realism of the show off-putting, seeing it as nothing more than a superficial artistic style designed to attract casual viewers to a shoe where historical accuracy is not a concern - the Peaky Blinders though real, operated decades earlier in the late 1800s, not the 1920s).

Media representations construct two key elements of any audience's understanding of a media product. First, by merely covering the topic/issue, the media in effect 'sets the agenda' communicates that this is an issue/subject worth consideration. Secondly, by the way it presents the subject – Agenda Framing - the product actively positions an audience in relation to the subject. In effect, the product conditions how the audience see and feel about the agenda.

The models of McComb & Shaw (Agenda setting) and McComb (Agenda Framing)
imply the power of mass media to shape public understanding of the world around us.
Online fan culture has allowed self-expression and identification with characters (*itself a way of expressing identity*). The online fan culture - *fan art, discussions, fan fiction, memes* - demonstrate how online media allows audiences to participate in popular culture, and to express and re-define their own identities.

One recurring discussion is the reception of the series in different countries and its appeal to different societies such as those in USA and Russia.

This perspective is useful in identifying ways in which LFTV drama represents social groups, and for us to be considering the relationship between audiences, identities, and media products required by the examination. It emphasises the power of audience rather than focusing solely on the importance of media producers, or of institutional elements such as existing genres and narratives, in constructing representations of identity.

Lesson 9

Identity

Media representations never construct only one identity for audiences, most often they offer a range of different and even contradictory messages that may be used by audiences to consider (a) how these match their current sense of self and (b) to apply this to re-shaping or evolving self-identity by either sustaining this sense of self or challenging it

Identities, including gender, sexuality and ethnicity, are now seen as less fixed than they were in the past.

The nature of mainstream LFTV media and the capability to access media products through a range of platforms enable individuals to more deeply explore and express their identities through elements such as: easier access to products; social media discussions; sense of tribe; sharing of ideas via fandom wikis etc.

The contemporary world is saturated by media. The media has evolved to become significantly more diverse, more complex and more 'interactive'.

Because of this pervasive influence, the ways in which we form and construct our identity has fundamentally changed. Rather than identity being a 'birthright' –

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something determined by one's social position and conditions of life – identities have, under media's powerful and repeated influence, become diverse and fluid.

Contemporary culture provides a diverse range of 'symbolic resources' – images and signs – that we use to construct identity and to define our own lifestyles.

The formation of identities is therefore seen not as an inexorable process of socialization, but as a process in which individuals are active, selective and self-aware

- *Define/outline current media models of mass media influence on identity – Gauntlett; Buckingham; Van Zoonen; Butler; hooks; Gilroy; Maffesoli etc.*

- *Select the product that you feel best exemplifies or refutes these models – Although each product deals with this to greater or lesser extent, for me the best examples of this would be in the products of Peaky Blinders for Option A, The Returned for Option B, Killing Eve for Option C*

- *Select the examples/evidence that you will refer to – use the organize/archive/revise tables already created in previous sessions.*

- *Consider the key ideas in relation to Hall and Agreed/Negotiated/Oppositional readings which are often tied to ideas of ethnicity, gender, or class to give some broad understanding of the issues before plunging into the plurality and shifting nature of individual identities of Gauntlett or the ideas of diversity and identity fluidity of Buckingham. You should also consider Butler's model of performativity and hooks' idea of intersectionality here and McComb & Shaw's ideas of agenda setting and framing will offer ideas of mass media product influence on audience values and attitudes.*

Lesson 10

Identity 2

The idea that we understand gender through discourse – *the narrative and spheres of action presented in the media products we consume.* Van Zoonen holds that the media's repeated use of stereotypical images reinforces what are felt to be the dominant societal views. She feels media producers use these as they feel it offers greater chance for the commercial success of their products.

In producing meaning and representations in mass media product forms, women are often objectified (viewed/valued as passive sexual objects).

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Van Zoonen emphasises the need for such mass media products to present gender as socially and culturally constructed, the idea that gender ideas vary depending on the cultural and historical context.

Van Zoonen holds that in the modern media market, ideas of gender are expressed in more diversity on the internet.

Feminist critiques of mass media tend to have a sole focus, that of challenging the dominant mainstream hegemony for its *patriarchal* and sexist representations.

Hooks model of *Intersectionality* states that such a focus is too narrow, rather we should explore how systems of oppression overlap. She argues (like Butler) that rather than a singular identity (femininity) an individual's sense of self is constructed from a variety of overlapping identities - *gender, race, social class, sexuality, etc.* Intersectionality argues that oppressed groups should work together against all forms of oppression rather than focus on one.

Judith Butler's model of performativity argues that gender identity is not something we are born with; it is something we acquire through the everyday performance of gender roles established in mainstream society.

Gender is constructed through the performance of socially learned behaviours rather than being expressed by them. Gender is essentially a repetition of acts associated with the male or female – like a learned theatrical role. In the modern era, actions appropriate for men and women have been transmitted to produce a social atmosphere that maintains and legitimizes a seemingly natural gender binary whereas *Butler believes that gender and sexual identity cannot be categorised into such a simple binary system.*

Gilroy's model of The Black Atlantic is used to imply his view that Western black cultures rather than identifying as Afro-American or Afro-English are in fact their own ethic group – the Black Atlantic – that blend elements of different African, American, Caribbean, and European cultures.

Gilroy's ideas assert that in a post-colonial world, the old colonial history exerts a powerful influence on attitudes to ethnicity of both white and black ethnicities that retain an assumption of the superiority of white western cultures and white identities.

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Such mainstream media tropes often require a submerging of black and ethnic identity to conform to the hyperreality constructed by media.

Define/outline current ideas of mass media influence on identity – *Gauntlett; Buckingham will be of relevance for the notion that identity is both fluid and shaped by the individual's selection from media representations and values.*

Van Zoonen; Butler; hooks; Gilroy offer more specific ideas of the impact of representations of gender and ethnicity and how their mainstream conventional values distort notions of what is 'natural' or acceptable.

Select the product that you feel best exemplifies or refutes these ideas – Although each product deals with this to greater or lesser extent, for me the best examples of this would be in the products of *The Bridge* for Option A*; The Returned* for Option B*; Killing Eve* for Option C

Select the examples/evidence that you will refer to – use the organize/archive/revise tables already created in the previous sessions.

Consider the key ideas in relation to the key theoretical readings and of the era of production: you should keep in mind that movements such as the *#metoo* or *#oscarssowhite* or *Brexit* were after the production and broadcast of some of the products. *The Returned* is the oldest (2012) with the rest all being in the era 2013-2020 so you might think of the influence of issues such as the Afghan wars, Syrian refugee crisis, the Blackberry riots, the financial crash, Brexit and Covid for some of these depending on their age etc. At the time such events were often tied to ideas of immigration, Britishness, ethnicity, gender, and social/economic class to give some broad understanding of how these products were received and understood by audiences (the meaning/response equation). You should also consider Butler's model of performativity and hooks' idea of intersectionality here.

Lesson 11

Character roles

From the earliest versions, the modern iteration of long form TV fiction has leant heavily on an audience appeal constructed and established on:

- Strong lead/central character (*evolved/widened to include a larger diverse group of central characters*)

- Strong narrative (*evolved to include parallel or intertwining narrative arcs*)
- Relatable human dimension
- Set locations/eras that propel/ground/make relatable the narrative arcs
- Use the table on the following slide to create/archive your ideas on at least the TWO set products you have selected to study for the examination.

The long form TV drama has leant heavily on the audience appeals constructed and established by central characters who often act as a lightning rod for the issues of an era: they capture the pulse or mood of an era or a nation or culture at a certain period of time – what is termed its *zeitgeist**

A figure such as Walt in *Breaking Bad* or Tony Soprano in *The Sopranos* are characters who found a resonance with audience – *they embody the fears, hopes, issues of their time.*

It seems that crime dramas contain profound truths, precisely because they reach down to the root of what drives us. They force us to see life as it really is and make us reflect on dimensions that we dare not choose. Through the narrative arc of protagonists, viewers can measure how far we ourselves would go to get where they arrive.

Roberto Saviano states: We appreciate Tony Montana in Scarface, not because we want to be like him, but because we measure ourselves against what he does and the way he does it; measure our own desire for affirmation and yearning to change our destiny.

Walter White of *Breaking Bad* does things that clearly none of us would do, but he does it to fulfil desires we share with him.

1. Outline the central characters/protagonists of each product – this may take in more than one character in each – *Tommy & Grace; Noren & Rhode; etc.*
2. Outline the impact of central characters in constructing a brand identity or appeal for such mass media products and how the morality and values of the era represented in these have changed and shifted audience expectations. Modern fictional central figures have constructed ideas of questionable actions and values – Walt (*Breaking Bad*); Tony Soprano (*Sopranos*); Luther (*Luther*). *Consider*

Hall/Morley models on Reception; Van Zoonen; Butler; hooks; Gilroy also have use here

3. What is the plot role or sphere of action of each of these characters – *apply Propp and Todorov and Levi-Strauss here*

   Consider the elements that might construct central character appeal:

   • Relatable

   • Role models

   • Actions we admire

   • Vicarious living

   • Sexually appealing

   • Enigmatic

   Are there differences in these two products in the construction or representation of their central characters – *consider national origins of the products and their era.*

   Consider ideas of the modern central character – are these characters conventional or do they subvert ideas such of the heroic or the villain?*: Tommy's fragile mental health; Noren's Asperger; etc.*

Lesson 12

Post-modernism

Baudrillard's model states that in postmodern culture society has become so reliant on the world and images of media products that we have lost all contact with the real world. Audiences struggle to tell the 'real' from the image of the real in such products. More than this, he believes that reality has begun to imitate the model blurring any distinction between the two.

Postmodernism argues that we are incapable of explaining our experiences because the world is too fragmented and unfinished to be defined.

In post-modernism, products often reference iconic products from the same or similar genre. Often, this involves breaking down the fourth wall between audience and the narrative reminding us that we are not watching reality – the use of modern rock music to soundtrack Peaky Blinders is an example.

Levi-Strauss suggested that media texts are now made up of "debris" – they are composed of ideas and images that are recycled from one media product to another,

from one era to the next. The fact that we recognise such images offers these a form of assurance, we mistake familiarity for real or true.

This combining of images from other media products are defined by Levi-Strauss as *"bricolage".*

Postmodernism

- Baudrillard argues that media products are part of a continuous cycle.
- Our consumption of each product shapes and sustains the hyperrealities on which all such products operate.
- Our continuous consumption of such products creates a process in which our view of the world and ourselves within it is based more on a continuous process of mediation than of the real world itself.
- More than this, we have moved so far from the real world that we are no longer able to fully perceive it and may only understand reality if it is first processed (mediated) through the media products we consume.

We accept this reality simply because we are so consistently exposed to it in our continuing media consumption.

Postmodernism

identifying features of a postmodern text:

- Generic blurring - hybridity
- Intertextuality – reference to existing media texts familiar to the audience
- References to popular culture
- Bricolage – use of ideas/forms/images form existing sources
- Self-reflexive – acknowledges its own artificiality; self-knowing.
- Parody/Pastiche/Homage – use of iconic elements/ideas
- Irony – awareness of events/ideas being used to make deeper point.
- Ambiguity – elements that are not tied down; enigmas; dislocation.
- Narrative fragmentation or temporal distortion – unsettling narrative

Anti-realist – use of fantasy; sense of displacement;

The images of mass media products come to seem more "real" than the reality they purport to represent.

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Our mental idea of what constitutes the perfect body, our ideas of our own sexual attractiveness and that of others, our view of what is the perfect house, the perfect life etc. are created for us through massive exposure to constantly repeating media images and narratives that have no basis in fact.

These ideas are in effect manufactured for us, products of the media Dream Factory. Despite this, it is these images that construct our expectations of life and our measure of our own success, 'normality', or happiness.

A successful mass media product must be relatable to its audience. To do so it must construct a believable world. In a fictional product this may be that of a past era or the present era.

The elements required to do so would include the physical environment – costume; lighting; props etc. the cultural layers – soundtrack; dialogue – and the deeper ideas of values and attitudes. In documentaries this might appear to be more straightforward in simply filming the realities around them or using archival footage for past eras. However, here too, we must consider mediated issues such as selection of material or voice overs etc. that will be based on the producers own idea of that era or place, which will in turn be based on the same constructed mainstream simulacra of the audience.

Lesson 13

Ownership

- Who owns/controls the platform?
- What is their purpose?
- Who is the target demographic for the platform?
- What values do they promote?
- What products do they broadcast?
- Do these reflect the stated intentions of the platform?
    - o BBC is a PSB platform – it is controlled by legislation and runs to a remit of public service defined in its core purpose to educate, inform & entertain and to fully represent the UK audience
    - o Channel 4 runs to a PSB remit to offer diversity and challenge to the UK audience

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o Apple+ and Netflix run to an intention of profitability and attracting as large an audience as possible.

The set products should be considered against the intentions and purpose of the broadcast platform. The educate/inform/entertain remit of PBS should be weighed in considering *Peaky Blinders* and *The Bridge*; the PBS remit to challenge and diversify weighed against *The Returned*; profitability and corporate branding should be looked at in terms of *Black Mirror* and *Tehran* fit to the Netflix and Apple TV+ remit. Clearly, you should be able to find examples/evidence to support your ideas in the set product episode. Consider the dominant entertainment value of Peaky Blinders to the BBC2 mainstream audience remit. Consider the conventional values it presents and the use of celebrity that would be familiar to that demographic when compared to the fit of The Bridge (foreign language; complexity of narrative; challenging values) to the BBC4 demographic.

The evolving nature of broadcast media.

- Multiple channels – *move from 3 or 4 in 1980s to hundreds; more choice; more content*
- Multiple platforms for access – *satellite; cable; computer; laptops; iPad; phones*
- On demand viewing – *24/7 access; instant downloads/streaming*
- Time shifting – *Sky box; plus one channels; box sets; streaming services such as Netflix; Apple TV+*
- Binge viewing – *rise of the box set; instant availability of box set serial drama on sites*
- Availability of technology in the home – *fractured audience*
- Cheaper technology makes niche scheduling possible/profitable – *niche channels*
- Global audience – *HBO/Netflix/Amazon all target/construct a homogenized hybrid culture*
- Conglomerate structure of media industry – *vertical integration means need for product content*
- Horizontal integration *requires multiple platform/products; globalized audience*
- Social media marketing – *tightly targeted campaigns; confirmation bias; genre*

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- Impact of prosumer – *rise of new global celebrity and influencers; meta critics etc.*

- Impact of streaming channels – *hybrid products of large global appeal; content makers*

- Monetization of catalogues – *demand for content; use of foreign language products; long tail*

Clearly, a significant potential impact of the increasingly global nature of media institutions and their products is that of the creeping homogeneity (*the sameness*) of output. Adorno and Horkheimer have ideas on this, whilst this impact has been the subject of our study of Hesmondhalgh and media industry practices effect on their output. We must also consider the effect on audience. If media products play such an important part in shaping an audience sense of self and of others, then the move to a homogamous culture will over time erode the sense of national identity and of the diversity of culture. Here the work of Gauntlett, Buckingham, Maffesoli and Hebdige would be of value in considering any analysis of your products and the significance of their wider cultural and personal impact.

Lesson 14

Audience

Who watches vs how many:

What issues are relevant in considering the success and relevance of your products?

- Educated audience for foreign language products and for intelligent LFTV form – audience often with aspirational career/job prospects with greater spending power attractive to advertisers/sponsors/subscription services.

- Loyalty – LFTV require commitment to the form/products.

- Brand image and identity – EG: foreign language for C4/BBC4 is part of image of 'educated' channel; the public interest and educated discernment.

- Social media chatter – the 'water cooler' effect; desire to be part of a conversation – cultural icons especially.

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- Social media influencers – power to shape conversations about products; Why would different platforms have different measures and expectations?
- Niche channels (BBC4) less dependent on pleasing license fee payers
- Subscription/niche services less reliant on govt/public opinion (Netflix; Apple+)

How do notions of Public Service Broadcasting feature – EG the BBC; Channel 4

- *BBC PSB remit to 'educate; inform; entertain'*
- *BBC PSB remit to target wide range of diverse audiences*
- *C4 remit to be 'different' and 'challenging'.*

Subscription services less reliant on govt/license payers' public opinion – Netflix; Apple+

- All products are made in an era by people of that time. As such, they carry with them ideas of how people of that time were thinking – *their concerns; their beliefs; their values; their world view.*
- Media products will, if they are successful, be successful *because they reflect the mainstream -* those shared popular understandings and values of most people of their era.
- They tap into the shared values of the audience regarding representations of gender, sex, violence, drugs - what is '*funny*' or '*important*' etc. This is what exam boards mean when they talk of *the cultural context.*

The institutions that produce them diversified – what were content platforms have now become content providers (*Netflix; Amazon; HBO; Sky; Apple TV+*) turning themselves into larger - and culturally far more significant - media institutions and conglomerates with a growing capacity to influence and shape wider society.

Here we can consider McComb and Shaw and the ability to set and frame the wider cultural agenda and debate.

The convergence of audience access to devices and platforms such as the more powerful PS4 and X-Box consoles, tablets, smart phones, and laptops has accelerated this process.

David Hesmondhalgh states that the cultural industries have an interest in making profit, without profit they would not survive, and their products would not be made. Hesmondhalgh sees media products as evidence of commodification – products with

a market value that is more important than any other considerations of value or worth or function. Mass media institutions placing profit before all other issues, explains why mass media products appear trivial and lacking in worth as they chase ever larger audiences

If a particular product is successful companies come to feel that making more like that offers a better 'guarantee' of success than risking a new way of doing things.

Curran and Seaton argue that media products thus come to feel '*all the same*'. The result is that audiences have less choice, a more limited 'type' of film, game, music to select.

Lesson 15

Audience and Industry

The long form TV drama success:

Industry:

- It references a pre-existing genre (*reduces risk*)
- It targets two discrete primary audiences (*hybridity*)
- It applies both nostalgia/excitement of era presented.
- It relies on audience understanding/expectations (*repetition/difference*)

Audience:

- Escapism; social interaction; identity
- Relies/subverts set conventions and understood stereotypes
- Postmodern narrative experience (*audience awareness of forms*)
- Appeals to sense of identity as educated/aware/concerned
- Lends conversations to social media (*twitter-friendly; instagrammable*)

The most obvious and compelling audience model to apply is that of Blumler and Katz's Uses and Gratifications theory:

entertainment/diversion: The obvious idea is to state that audience view simply to divert from everyday lives and issues.

social interaction. The nature of the LFTV audience means that there is always more than likely someone at school/work/socialising to discuss it with. In addition, such products construct the presence of an active online community on social media.

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Personal Identity: Use of events and actions of those in the show to explore social norms, values and actions – this also lends itself to social media discussions and responses.

Surveillance: awareness of what others are viewing; tracking their responses

Lesson 16

The Long Form TV Drama

Long Form Television is a term used to categorise/define a TV drama product in which each season's episodes form a cohesive whole. Examples include *'Breaking Bad'*, *'Game of Thrones*' and *'House of Cards*'.

Most long form TV drama has a consistent cast and narrative arc(s) across all episodes in a season. Conventionally, the average number of episodes for long form TV drama is ten per season. By adopting such a template these dramas are (1) far easier to fit into TV scheduling globally and (2) the box set video on demand expectations of streaming platforms and their subscribers. Successful long form dramas extend over several seasons by extending narrative ideas from the initial season or building on the characters or situations.

As in the UK, US network broadcasters must satisfy the needs of their advertisers whilst meeting the expectations of their audience, their market share. As in the UK, they must do so whilst meeting the controlling demands of regulation and law.

The impact of this on their content has traditionally been a reliance on highly formalised genre conventions with mainstream values that meet mainstream audience expectations. The result has often been that they generate conservative drama.

TV drama was glossy; values were mainstream to appeal to as wide a demographic as possible; the episodic form was dominant as it enabled the audience to drop in our out each week as they channel surfed the networks.

BBC and ITV in the 1990s and early 2000s continued a reliance on genre-based, formulaic drama.

The UK audience for TV networks remains a major element in the structure of the UKTV industry and consequently the formats offered. For the most part the use of TV for viewing (*as opposed to laptops, tablets etc*) dominates.

- Over 75% of UK households have the capability for PVR but since the early 200s this number has plateaued.

- At the same time, there has been rapid expansion in web-based channels such as *Netflix, Amazon; Apple TV+ etc.*

- Netflix dominates with 30% of UK market & 7m subscribers.

UK channels such as BBC4 and C4 have, in recent years, identified a large, yet niche, audience for foreign language TV products such as *The Killing, the Bridge, Wallender, Spiral, Witnesses, Borgen* and *Deuschland 83.* Such products allure for channels is that they attract the desirable ABC1 audience demographic.

The evolution of the long form TV drama is linked into innovations in technology.

- The digital DVD box set initiated the idea of binge viewing, freeing audience from the need to invest a set period one night a week to view the scheduled transmission or to limit time-shifted viewing to one episode at a time.

- Cable TV set the idea of subscription-based access that re-shaped the demographic and their demands/expectations and the demand for more challenging material

- The long form serial format (rather than episodic series) offered the capacity for the audience to invest more deeply in the drama - fandom.

- Access via laptops, tablets and satellite streaming to low-cost subscriptions made access available to a wider audience

- The increased audience size led to demands for both a greater quantity of content and ever more challenging content.

- The emergence of the long form TV drama challenged the simplistic storylines and stereotypical characters that had dominated the mainstream network TV

- *HBO* (*Time Warner*) launched *The Sopranos* in 1999 which ran to 2007. The show was a huge commercial & critical success, HBO selling the show to global networks such as C4 in the UK. The idea of the show, the study of the breakdown of control – personal, family & his criminal empire – of the lead character became a benchmark for compelling drama. In an era of rapid change across all sectors of society, the shows that followed – *The Shield; The Wire etc.* - were about the crisis of identity & the challenge to the

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prevailing hegemony. Dominated by the crime genre, these dark toned, long form dramas came to be seen as vehicles for exploring the ills of society.

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