Media Studies Component 2: Section A

Audiences – Sitcom

What does the sitcom offer audiences?

- Escapism
- Themes
- Aspiration
- Sharing the experience with other people
- We see people like us behave in ways that are identifiable
- Fast paced and easy to watch
- Reassurance in their neat resolutions
- Recognised, comforting format

Use and Gratifications theory

This theory suggests that audiences have **four** main motivations for accessing or choosing media products. You can remember these motivations using the acronym PIES.

P **Personal identity:** viewers can identify with characters or situations in the media environment.

I **Information:** to gain knowledge or be educated.

E **Entertainment:** viewers gain pleasure from being entertained by the media product, which offers an escape from daily life.

S **Social interaction and integration:** where the media product offers viewers a community, with enhanced social interaction.

Demographic

The term 'demographic' refers to how media producers categorise their audience.

A demographic profile categorises audiences based on features such as age, gender, sexuality and lifestyle.

Changing interpretations

As the social and cultural context of sitcoms change, so does the manner in which audiences receive their ideologies and representations.

Marketing

When a new show is attempting to establish itself, marketing is absolutely vital to create a profile for the show and to bring it to the attention of audiences.

Modern marketing often relies on social media. The multimedia nature of platforms, such as *X* or *TikTok*, allows for the exhibition of diverse content, and the social aspect fosters a sense of community.

Stuart Hall: reception analysis model

Stuart Hall suggests that media texts are 'encoded' by producers and 'decoded' by the audience. The producer may place ('encode') messages and values within products, which the audience then respond to. Different audience members will decode the media in different ways.

Preferred reading: the audience member accepts the encoded meaning, and the way the producer wants the audience to view the media text.

Oppositional reading: the audience member opposes the preferred reading.

Negotiated reading: the audience member negotiates a compromise between the preferred and oppositional readings.

Industry

Industry understanding of audiences is especially important when producing shows with a larger budget. Sitcoms are developed for a considerable amount of time before they are filmed. This process also involves focus groups, which consist of people selected to watch a programme and provide feedback on it. A high-budgeted sitcom, such as *Modern Family,* is designed to have a 'four quadrant' appeal. This means the show is intended to attract a wide audience, including both young and old, male and female viewers: essentially, a mass audience.