



**Applying Media Concepts to TV
Fiction (and beyond)**
Steph Hendry

Conceptual Questions

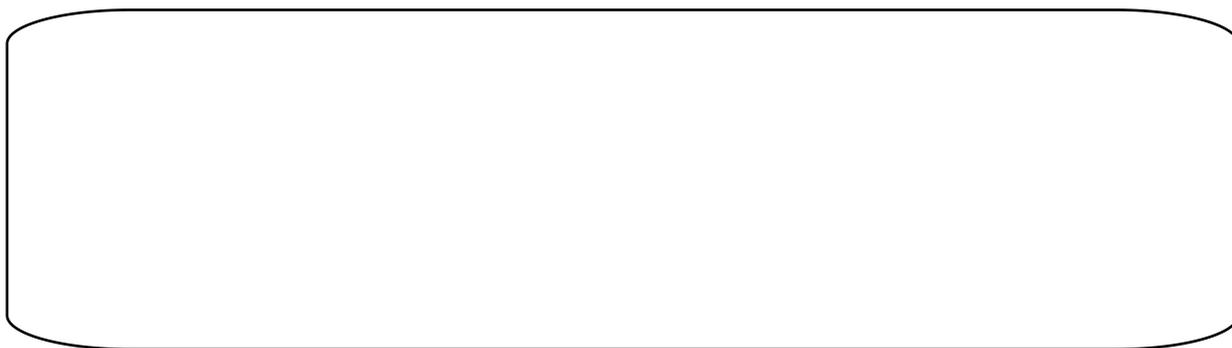
- What is the **product** and what is its **function**?
- What **media language** choices have been made in its **construction**?
- How do the choices help the product meet its **institutional function**?
- Why were those choices made?
- What **meanings** are created by the product?
- What are the **effects** of the media language choices?
- How are **representations** created?
- What meaning is created by the **representations**?
- Does the product use (or subvert) **genre** conventions?
- How does the product construct a **narrative**?
- Who is the **target audience**?
- How do the **media language** choices relate to the **target audience**?
- What is the **audience's relationship** with the product?
- What **ideologies** does the product reinforce, question and/or challenge?

Form and Function

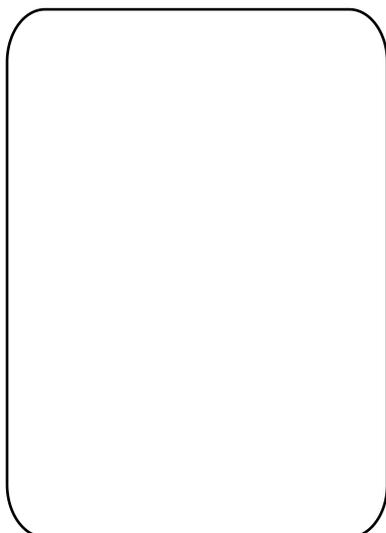
What is the product for? What are its aims? What does it want to achieve?	How does the product (attempt) to achieve these aims? Refer to media language choices.

Analysis

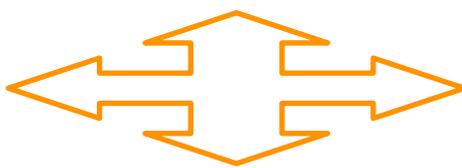
Media Language Observation



Genre



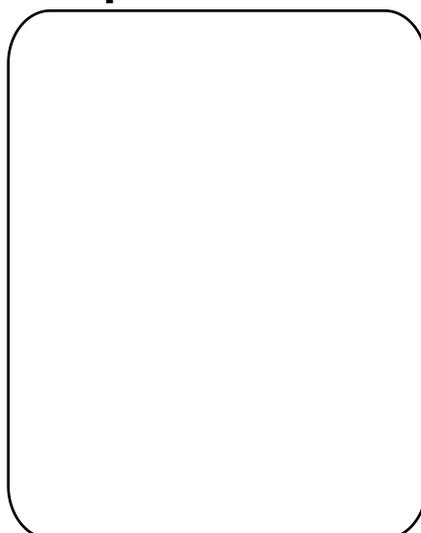
Why?



Narrative



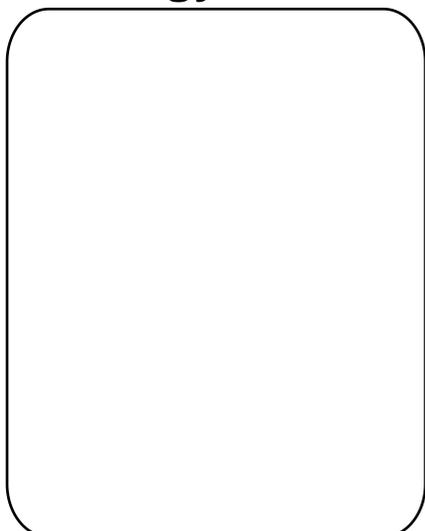
Representation



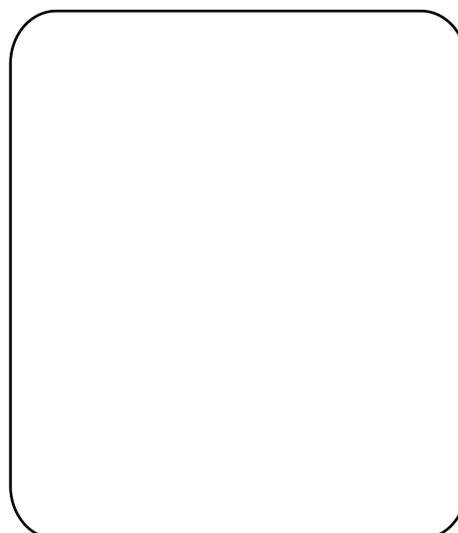
Why?

Why?

Ideology



Audience



Institution



Media Concept Analysis

Media Language Observation ↴	Institution	Genre	Rep	Audience	Ideology	Narrative



Analysis

	Media Language Choices
Megan Fox on the front page of <i>Elle</i> - how is she being represented? What media language choices are being used?	
Megan Fox on the front page of <i>GQ</i> - how is she being represented? What media language choices are being used?	

Why were the choices made? To what effect? (Continue on a separate page...)

Observation (ML choice)	Link to Media Concept	Link to Theory/Issue	Link to Context

Media Concepts Activity – *Dark Swan* (Aronofsky: 2010) Trailer

Media Language Observation ↻	Institution	Genre	Rep	Audience	Ideology	Narrative
Minute One						
Fox Searchlite: Cross Creak Pictures	Large scale distribution for film made by a relatively small production company News Corporation					
Use of spotlight, dark m-e-s and ballet dress, CU on feet and mid shot of dancer		Low key lighting creates immediate sense of mystery	Lone figure – isolated, frail. Subject of gaze	Places the audience on stage – identification through interpellation	Creates sympathetic idea regarding vulnerability of female character	Focuses the audience on the protagonist
Intertitles re awards	USP – marketing technique	‘Serious’/‘quality’ film		Reassurance – Sets expectations re audience engagement	Audience prepared for potential complexity of narrative and ideological position	
Crane shot of rehearsals			Shows protagonist as part of a ‘company’ – reduces status/power			Creates equilibrium and notion of the story being ‘work place’ based - also genre

Media Concepts Activity – *Dark Swan* (Aronofsky: 2010) Trailer

Pan p-o-v shot to show choreographer			Shows character as being potentially point of conflict		Creates dominant masculine representation	Creates idea of antagonist to the dancer
Intercuts of home life/dance practice in the domestic setting			Reinforces ‘hard work’ rather than ‘glamour’ of ballet			
Identification of director’s name/previous work	Known director can be used as USP	Aronofsky’s previous work may create expectations:		Indicates target audience – adult; those prioritising challenging films over simple entertainment		
Audience pov shot following actor ‘Signature’ shot of director	USP as above	Identifies director as auteur	Focuses the attention on the character	Rewards a knowledgeable audience		
Music – Slow, melancholy, ponderous		Reinforces mysterious tone	Sets ominous tone which further highlights female character’s vulnerability	Encourages audience engagement		Creates suspense
Low level tilt shot focussing on stairs – cu on glance between characters			Separates female character from crowd	Places audience ‘in the crowd’	Consolidates power relationship between the two characters	Reinforces protagonist role

Media Concepts Activity – *Dark Swan* (Aronofsky: 2010) Trailer

POV shots of 'Lily'				Positions audience 'on protagonist's side'	Reinforces protagonist's vulnerability	Sets character up as narratological problem/creates conflict
Long shot of rehearsal room			Protagonist is again presented as small			
POV shots of pirouette			Shows protagonist's inner trauma	Creates disorientation		Symbolises conflict
Close up of marks on shoulder blade			Shows the physical strain on the protagonist	Creates sympathetic response		Further problem
Close up of arms				Creates discomfort	Reinforces dominant nature of relationship	Further problem
Sparse MES in dressing room			Cold, harsh environment		Shows world as being unforgiving, almost brutal	Symbolises the conflicts within the environment

Media Concepts Activity – *Dark Swan* (Aronofsky: 2010) Trailer

Minute Two						



Analysing Media Texts

This Factsheet summarises basic analysis skills and provides a framework for practical analysis.

Questioning the Text

In Media Studies “text” refers to any media product such as a television programme, a film, photographs, web pages, advertisements etc.

The central skill for all students in AS and A2 Media Studies is that of **analysis**. Even the practical production modules require an analysis or evaluation of the product that has been created.

Analysis begins by identifying **what** is being used to present information to the audience. This is the first and most basic stage in analysing a media text. As much as possible, the appropriate media language terminology should be used to show an awareness of the professional practices involved in creating the media text: e.g. saying: ‘**a tilt is used**’ is preferable to saying ‘**the camera moves**’. It is more accurate and precise as the term includes the way the camera moves as well as the fact that it does.

Similarly if the analysis includes a discussion of the way the story is

being told, then the appropriate narrative terminology should be used to identify the specific parts of the structure that are being identified.

e.g. ‘**this character is the hero**’

At this stage though, even with the use of terminology, this is only observation and this is a skill that is not rewarded as highly as analysis and evaluation. Because of this it is best to avoid over-description. The observations should be given simply to provide an indication of what has been seen in the text that is going to be analysed.

To convert observation into analysis/evaluation, the reasons for the media language choice that has been observed needs to be considered. All media language choices have been made for a reason – to begin to evaluate a media text it is important to consider **why** that choice has been made.

Activity Choosing the Leading Man

Read the plot summary below and consider the actors offered for the role in the film.

The director of a film needs to cast a male lead. The film will have a high budget and the director is well known and respected. The film will be action driven and have a very strong romantic sub-plot. It is a period piece (early 20th C) and one of the key aspects of the romance is that the teenage female lead is to be represented as independent and free-thinking, quite the opposite of what was expected of a female at that time. She is to be depicted as part of the aristocracy and she is to be married to an older, arrogant and wealthy male, something she has agreed to out of duty to her family, not love. The plot will follow her rebellious love affair with a sensitive, artistic, working-class young man.

Question: Why are these actors unlikely to be cast as the male romantic lead in the given scenario?

Colin Farrell?



Jude Law?



Hugh Grant?



Arnold Schwarzenegger?



<http://i.cnn.net/cnn/2003/ALLPOLITICS/08/08/recall.arnold/vert.schwarzenegger.jpg>

<http://www.movie-gazette.com/directory/directory.asp?strsearch=Jude+Law>

<http://www.geocities.com/guidetofarrell/images/public.html>

<http://www.clangrant-us.org/images/hugh-grant.jpg>

What the Director said.....

None of the actors offered are quite right for this role. Colin Farrell may be seen as being too dark and dangerous – he has a ‘bad boy’ persona whilst Jude Law may be associated with being a ladies-man because of his role in **Alfie** (2004: Dir. C. Shyer) and perhaps because of tabloid stories of his private life too. These factors make the actor unsuitable for the character outlined for this film. Hugh Grant is too old and too posh. Arnold Schwarzenegger wouldn’t work in this role for a number of reasons: his age, his physical presence, his star-identity etc.

Q. What actor would be suitable for the role as outlined?

The plot is (loosely) that of **Titanic** (1997: Dir. J. Cameron) and the role was given to Leonardo DiCaprio. DiCaprio was a very popular actor at the time, having recently starred in **Romeo and Juliet** (1996: Dir. B. Luhrman) and so was recognised and associated with romance. Casting DiCaprio as for the role of Jack enabled the director to meet the plot needs outlined and play on the audience's knowledge and assumptions about the actor.



*Imagine **Titanic** with Schwarzenegger in the role of Jack or Grant as the Terminator. How would alternative casting choices have altered these films? Apply this to other texts and it should enable you to identify more clearly the meanings created by the choices that were made.*

This method can be applied to all types of choices that have been made in the construction of a text.

When the choices are considered in this way it may appear more obvious why certain choices were **not made** making it clearer why the media language used **was** selected.

Observation: Leonardo DiCaprio plays the romantic lead in Titanic

WHY?

- DiCaprio had a romantic star persona and being small and blond, was the physical opposite to the other male character in the love triangle. The plot needed Jack to be portrayed as gentle and sensitive.
- He acts as the romantic 'hero' in the **narrative** of the text and is in binary opposition in terms of social position, personality and looks to the 'villain' played by Billy Zane.
- **Audiences** would recognise him and bring their prior knowledge to the film. Their association would help frame their expectations of the film and add to their enjoyment. Some may choose to view the film simply because he's in it. The actor's star status would help with marketing the film and would also be seen as a factor which would help to maximise the film's profit-making potential for the producing **institution**.
- His persona helps to identify the **genre** of the film. Despite the action sequences, his presence is part of the understanding of the film as a romance rather than an action film.

He provides a **representation** of an idealised male who is not demonstrating traditional masculine qualities. The fact that he 'gets the girl' works in opposition to the idea that the tall, dark and macho male will be more sexually successful, challenging conventional **ideologies** of gender roles.

Each of these actors bring different meanings to the roles they play in the way they look, their acting styles and the audience's prior knowledge and expectations they will have of them. If they were to play romantic leads, the roles would inevitably be different to the one created by DiCaprio in **Titanic** and, therefore, would not have suited the requirements of the plot.

The casting, is, therefore, more than finding an actor who is free or who has the ability to play the role; the casting is part of the complex set of decisions made which support the intended meaning of the text.

Question - Consider the following:

1. *In a newspaper article why would Tony Blair be called 'Blair' and not 'the Prime Minister'?*
2. *Why was the choice of Manchester as a location important in **Life on Mars**? Why not Cambridge?*
3. *Why did **Hello** and **Yes** magazine select these names instead of 'Goodbye' and 'No'?*
4. *Why does **24** use split-screen at certain points and not just simple framing?*

1. Using a formal title appears more respectful than using the surname and so the choice of how to identify someone will communicate an attitude about that person.
2. Cambridge connotes history and tradition. The city is associated with its university and being a place of thought and higher learning. **Life on Mars** needed to create a gritty urban setting for its story and Manchester has connotations of a tougher urban environment than Cambridge, suiting the producers' needs more readily.



Manchester (left) and Cambridge (right). Where would you set your gritty, urban crime drama?

3. Both **Hello** and **Yes** magazine need to create the right expectations of their magazines and, through their names, want to communicate ideas about their brand, provoking connotations of positivity, happiness and entertainment for the potential buyer.
4. **24** uses split-screen in order to visually represent the fact that the events depicted are happening simultaneously. This assists in the construction of the appearance of 'real time' and helps create tension and urgency more effectively than simple framing.

AQA/OCR/WJEC?

Each awarding body requires that students undertake a practical analysis. The format of this examination is different for each specification and so your awarding body's documentation should be referred to for specific details. However, the skills that underpins this examination remains the same: analysis and evaluation. To undertake this there is also a need to have a good understanding of the basic underlying concepts used in media studies.

In addition, analysis skills are required when planning and evaluating coursework productions. Existing texts needs to be analysed when planning a production and the finished work will also need to be evaluated formally for the assessment.

Finally, the essay based examinations all require analysis and evaluation of media texts in order to engage on the topics/issues assessed. This is why it is such an important skill!

An A-B-C of Practical Analysis

When you are provided with a text to analyse it is often useful to consider the following before you start:

A

1. **Identify the text's form and genre. Is the text a:** charity advert? regional newspaper? women's lifestyle magazine? TV sit-com? action film trailer?
2. **Identify the text's target audience. Is it for:** youths? males? parents? a broad mainstream audience?
3. **Identify the text's primary function. Has the text been created to:** inform? entertain? sell? persuade? something else?

[It may be that the exam paper itself provides some of the answers to the above questions or indeed provides specific questions that need addressing – as always in an exam the paper must be read carefully.]

Once these three basic questions have been answered, it is then possible to question more deeply.

B

1. **How is the genre of the text identifiable?** Is it following genre codes and conventions or is it subverting them? **WHY?**
2. **How does the text identify its target audience?** In what ways does it address them? How does it try to appeal to them? In what ways will it please the audience? What assumptions does it make about the audience? **WHY?**
3. **What methods does it use to inform/entertain/sell/persuade? WHY?**

The answers to these questions should be linked to examples of media language in the text. By questioning this way, observations made are immediately getting close to being analytical as the things that are seen are being linked to the genre, the audience or the function of the text from the start. Often students begin a practical analysis by jotting down the details of what they see. This can lead to the response being very descriptive which will not gain good marks. The key is to consider **WHY** the text is constructed the way it is from the very start.

The next stage in practical analysis is to consider the effect the choices made intend to have and may have on the target audience.

C

1. Having created the text for its target audience, does the text actively exclude anyone? Who? Does the text rely on stereotypes? Are these stereotypes of the audience, of others or of both? **WHY?**
2. Are any attitudes or behaviours presented positively? Are any attitudes or behaviours presented negatively? What values does the text promote? **WHY?**

Again, the question **WHY** needs to be considered throughout. Section B considered why the text is constructed the way it is. Section C considers why the text creates the meanings it creates.

Exam Hint

Even though observations need to lead to analysis, another common error in examinations is making the conceptual analysis without providing the textual evidence to support the point being made. Textual references should be used as evidence to support ideas.

Exam Hint

Often marks are lost in an exam when essays have too much descriptive detail within them. Telling the examiner the story, summarising the plot of a text or detailing what is on the page keeps the work at the descriptive level and is not required.

Here is an advert for the perfume *Eternity* and a basic description of it. The description is purely factual and does not in any way analyse or evaluate the advert.

The word 'eternity' is written in capital letters across the top of the image. The font used is a long thin sans serif font which is also used at the bottom of the image for the words 'Calvin Klein' and 'parfum'. The background depicts a countryside scene and there is a glare which appears to have been created by sunlight. In the foreground is a woman who is smiling and carrying a child on her shoulders. Both character have their arms outstretched and, although this is not in the image, it can be assumed they are holding hands.



The A-B-C of Practical Analysis in Action

[What follows is not a definitive set of ideas about the advert. Other people may make different interpretations and the analysis is in no way complete. It should also be noted that this thought process would then need to be organised and structured into an essay style response in an examination.]

A

1. The image is a magazine advert for the perfume *Eternity* made by Calvin Klein.
2. The target audience for the advert is women, specifically women who are either parents or of an age to be parents. The perfume is a luxury product and is part of the Calvin Klein brand. This is a 'designer' product and as such is aimed at the higher socio-economic groups.
3. As an advert the text intends to persuade the audience to buy the product. However, this advert can be seen to be focussing more on creating a brand and product identity rather than acting to motivate someone to buy immediately. However, as Calvin Klein produces a range of products for different target markets, part of the function of this advert is to create a specific identity for *Eternity* which is different to that created by *CK One*.

B

1. The only thing that identifies it as a perfume advert is the word 'parfum' at the bottom of the advert. Conventionally, perfume adverts foreground the product itself - usually in the form of a perfume bottle. This confirms the idea of it being more about creating a brand identity as a perfume bottle aids recognition of the product itself which is not the main point of this advert. It also subverts an often-used technique of perfume advertising which is to associate perfume with sexual success.
2. The text identifies its target audience by using a gender specific model of a similar age to them. It uses a model who is attractive – she is then an aspiration for the target audience. Her body language shows her to be happy and the situation implies she is a mother again adding to the potential identification for the target audience who may also be mothers. The situation is also aspirational as it is set in the countryside which is often seen as an ideal location as it holds connotations of freshness, health and the freedom of open spaces. The fact that the sun is shining adds to this. This links to an ideal of childhood. The child has a happy mother, is enjoying time in the countryside and, this in turn, makes the child happy. The mother and child are depicted as being close and an ideal mother/daughter relationship is represented. This too would add to the aspirational quality of the image for the audience.
3. The advert aims to create associations between the positive imagery and the perfume *Eternity*. It is a subtle technique that relies on the audience retaining this association when purchasing perfume. This technique is specifically related to the age group and the gender of the target audience.

C

1. The advert uses stereotypes of the ideal mother. The mother here is attractive, fun, energetic and provides support and affection. With this focus on the family it may exclude women who are not parents and does not provide an image that is as attractive to young females or to men.
2. This idealised mother (and daughter) comes from an ideological perspective of women's roles within the family. It promotes the idealised nature of the rural and links these to the perfume it is promoting.

Conclusion

In order to provide an analysis of the media language of a text, it is important to identify what is there, but crucial to consider **WHY** it is there and how it makes particular meanings. When considering why, the semiological meanings created and the way the media language choice relates to other media concepts such as narrative, genre, representation and audience should also be considered.

Assessments in Media Studies do not reward the observations; it's the analysis and evaluation of the observations that are important and so it is important to practice this skill regularly until it simply becomes the way you read magazines, watch TV or respond to any media text.

Question

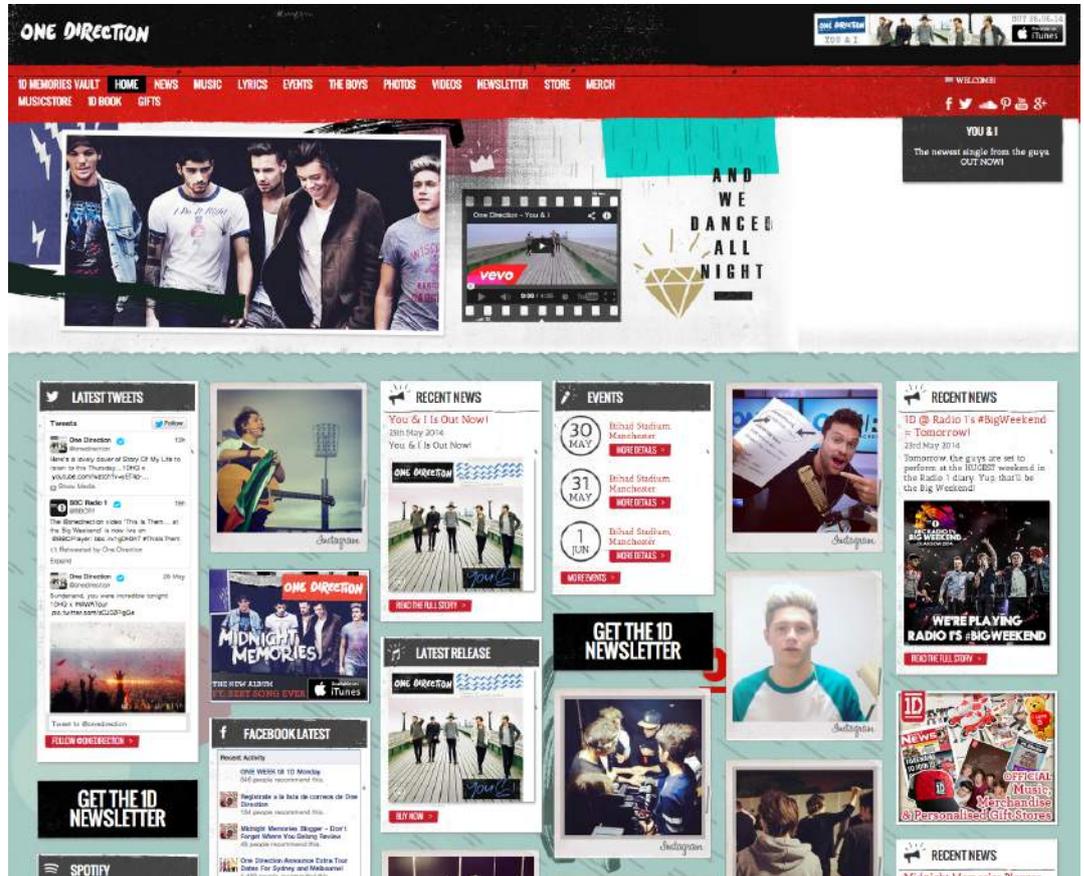
This is an advert for CK One. Repeat the process demonstrated to consider how it makes a different set of meanings to the advert for Eternity



Acknowledgements: This Media Studies Factsheet was researched and written by Steph Hendry

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Analysing the construction of websites is an important skill. Websites follow design conventions, use genre codes and need to consider the specific requirements and desires of its audience.



Website Analysis: One Direction, Kasabian and Media Concepts
 s@albionmill

One Direction

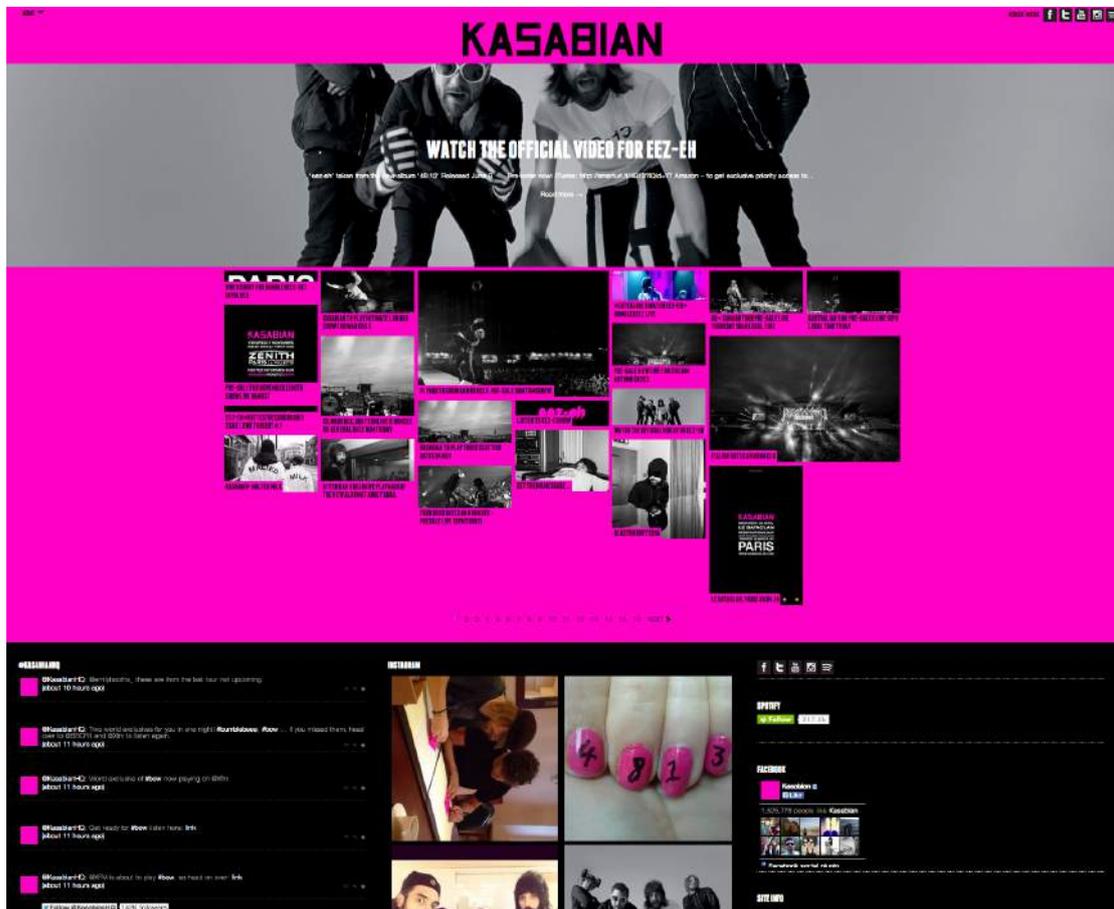
Go online to the One Direction website <http://www.onedirectionmusic.com/gb/home/>

Look around the website and use the questions below to help you make notes.

- Consider the layout and design of the site. How is the information presented to you? In what ways does this website look like other web sites you have seen?
- List some of the features the website contains?

- Consider the images. What ideas about the group do their pictures communicate? What other images are used? What about the images that are not of the band themselves?
- List the reasons why a One Direction fan would come to this site? What would they get out of spending some time here? You should come up with at least 6 different ideas – hopefully quite a few more.
- What can you learn about the target audience by looking at the site?

- If you scroll to the bottom of the page you'll see that the site is owned by Sony Music (they own Syco). Why have Syco/Sony invested in making this site? What are they trying to achieve with it? Again, you should come up with at least 6 different ideas. Complete these sentences:
 - The primary function of this website is to...
 - To meet its primary function the site has a persuasive function. It uses many persuasive techniques, including...



Kasabian

Now go to <http://www.kasabian.co.uk/gb/home/> and analyse this site in the same way – go back and answer the same questions again. Note: Kasabian are signed to Columbia Records. The corporate link is at the bottom of the page.

Considering both web-sites:

- What do the similarities between the two sites tell you about the **codes and conventions of the form** (web-sites)?
- What do the similarities between the two sites tell you about the **functions of music websites** (for institutions and audiences)?

Finally:

Answer the following in full sentences taking care with your spelling, punctuation and wording. You should write at least 300 words as a response so give detail and examples.

- ***How do the sites communicate the musical genre and appeal to their audiences in different ways? Consider the content, the tone, the look and the overall messages you find on these sites and give examples from the websites to demonstrate the points you are making.***

Answer the following based on other websites that have been created to market a musician... select different musical genres.

- What is the genre of music? How can you tell on the web-site?
- What can you tell about the target audience from the web site?
- How does the website try to appeal to their audience? What do they offer them?





AlbionMill



The act of naturalisation is an important part of the way we media texts can both communicate ideologies and hides the fact that this is what they are doing.

The Naturalisation Process

how the media constructs and communicates ideologies

s@albionmill

The Media and Ideology

All media texts reflect some kind of ideological perspective. This can be as simple as offering a fashionable viewpoint or the presentation of a specific political or moral perspective.

Ideologies in media products are often difficult to identify. There are two main reasons for this:

First of all, **most texts don't communicate their ideologies in an upfront and explicit way.**

Ideologies are usually communicated subtly and without identifying themselves in an obvious way. Because of this, they can sometimes be overlooked.

In a rom-com the protagonists are shown dreaming of being in a relationship and the audience is encouraged to root for them as they overcome barriers to their romantic success. The narrative goal is that they will unite in love and (with any luck) marriage. This narrative aim is present across multiple genres and forms and is something audiences will see over and over again. We are rarely made aware that this narrative is based on the **'cultural myth'** (Barthes) that being single is in some way 'less than' being part of a couple and people are 'complete' when in a relationship. Needing to be part of a couple is presented in a way that is accepting of this perspective. This is presented as the 'normal' or 'natural' way to be so any alternative is outside of those norms.

Ideologies **hide in plain sight.**

We often don't 'see' ideologies as we exist within our own culture and its values. Being inside the culture means that ideologies are often too close for us to see. In this case ideologies appear to us as 'common sense' or 'natural' and often do not appear to be ideologies at all.

A current ideology that is part of capitalism, the dominant political and economic ideology of the west is that a person's value is directly related to their wealth. Our culture values wealthy celebrities. We see the super-wealthy as aspirational role models and people gain social standing because of the car they drive, the value of their house or the clothes they wear. This value system often goes unchallenged - the bigger someone's car is, the more important or successful they are perceived to be; the rich are often shown to deserve their wealth; expensive designer clothes are accepted as being 'better' than cheaper versions.

These are all ideological positions that tend to go unchallenged. Culturally these ideas are often accepted as common sense, as just 'the way things are'.

Seeing the ideologies in a media product means that the audience member has to engage on the meanings being created by a media product beyond the surface. This requires some analytical engagement.

Coke Life: A Quick Example

Media language choices hold different levels of meaning:

1. The surface meaning - the denotation

This is the level of meaning that is obvious and straightforward - but is rarely the full meaning intended by a media producer

2. The associative meaning - the connotation

This is a slightly different level of meaning and it relies on the audience's knowledge and agreement of the associations that come with the media language choice and add to its meaning.

Coca-Cola's latest advertising campaign shows the familiar coke bottle but they have changed the colour of the label. The iconic red is now green and the product is called *Coca Cola Life*.

The choice of the word 'life' is very significant. It's denotative meaning is clear but more important is the way the word combines with the colour green of the label to create a whole host of associations. These are the ideas that Coca Cola want us to have when thinking about the new product.

Green/Life/Coke...

Nature/Health/Coke...

Natural/Healthy/Coke...

Surely then, this must be a healthy drink, a natural drink? Definitely healthier than regular Red Coke at least?

Sadly not really. The unique selling point of this product is that the sweeteners in *Coke Life* are natural and so 'better' than sugar.

New cola, more choice

Launching Coca-Cola Life is just one of the ways we're expanding our reduced and low-calorie drinks range in Great Britain. It's all part of our company commitment to offer greater choice to consumers. Read about other actions we've taken in [this blog by Jon Woods](#), General Manager of Coca-Cola Great Britain and Ireland.

Coke Zero and *Diet Coke* does not use artificial sweetener. This is clearly responding to criticisms that sugar-laden soft drinks are contributing to the rise in obesity and Coca Cola is offering *Coke Life* as an option to empower the consumer.

Its use of green is a specific choice aiming to create a healthier image for the drink. Sadly the new sugar replacement is also under scrutiny and it may not necessarily be a healthier choice but the connotations act to help Coca Cola create a brand image and identity for their new drink. It's also worth remembering that sugar itself is natural and comes from plants so *Coke Life* is not as unique as it seems to be implying.

The ad campaign is repeating the message in many different forms and the green label is displayed prominently in supermarkets. This repetition acts to reinforce the brand message so audiences make these positive, healthy associations when they see the product. As the idea that this product is a healthy option becomes accepted, the myth (what Barthes called '**the third order of signification**') created by the advertising campaign becomes naturalised and the idea remains, becoming the way we think about the product.

From Red to Green:

Denotation

Green itself means nothing. It is simply a colour on the spectrum

Connotation

The colour and the word have a host of associations. Green refers to nature, health, purity, spring etc. and it is these associations that are important in the marketing of the Coca Cola product.



Barthes argues that dominant institutions - including the media - create the idea that the ideas they communicate are 'natural' and 'eternal'. There is no need to question such ideas - what would be the point?

The media has a large role in the naturalisation process and it largely works by repetition. A newspaper like *The Daily Mail* has a way of thinking that it repeats over and over again in a range of contexts using different stories. For example, *The Daily Mail* editorial values clearly favour the idea that the poor are usually responsible for their own poverty and, therefore, helping the poor - especially in the form of social security payments, is a problem or a waste of time.

The idea that those on benefits are 'lazy', 'scroungers' or in some way 'stupid' is repeated in the newspaper but also in other media products (e.g. the BBC's *We Pay Your Taxes*; C4's *Benefits Street* etc.). This repetition allows the idea to become more accepted as it appears to be the 'normal'

way of thinking - it is presented as and can feel like 'common sense' rather than an opinion.

People on benefits are portrayed as a simple binary to 'hard-working people' and are often used as target for discontent - they act as a scapegoat for those feeling that they are working hard and not getting rewarded as much as they should be. Those on benefits are depicted as getting 'something for nothing' and held up as group that should be resented. Barthes says that **'naturalisation leads to the silencing of difference'**. The repeated representation of people on benefits this way hides the reasons for poverty and unemployment. It hides the low-wage culture many people find themselves in; it hides systemic difficulties, social mobility problems and issues regarding poverty traps. The normalising of this attitude provides audiences with a simple narrative that purports to explain social problems and once an idea has become naturalised it can be difficult to offer an alternative way of thinking about an issue.

Case Study: Ladbrokes

WHEN YOU WIN IT'S SKILL WHEN YOU LOSE IT'S BAD LUCK
MR BRIGHTSIDE

WHEN YOU KNOW YOU KNOW YOU KNOW
THE GUT TRUSTER

WHEN YOU WIN GET THEM IN
GENEROUS JOHN

ONCE IS LUCKY TWICE IS TALENT
THE PROFESSOR

NO ODDS TOO LONG NO DREAM TOO GREAT
THE BELIEVER

MR BRIGHTSIDE: Betting's just for fun. You never bet more than you can afford to lose and so why get annoyed about it? When he's got his ten game accumulator on, he imagines what he'll spend the money on. But then when he loses, any worries are forgotten immediately. The glass is always half full. He's the upbeat and positive guy you want at the party. Always up for a laugh and always tries to get the most out of a situation. Known for: optimism.

THE GUT TRUSTER: A man who believes there are things beyond the understanding of science. For him, it's not all about the form or statistics. When he bets he just gets a feeling for who to choose, almost like a sixth sense. He's learnt to listen to his gut and trust in it because from time to time, it's served him well. Known for: instinct.

GENEROUS JOHN: Where's the fun in winning if you're on your own? Generous John's friends are what he treasures most, and when he wins, he wants to share the win. His generosity goes beyond money. He's the guy who'd share his chips with you, or lend a girl his coat. If he's got a great tip on the horses, he's the first to tell you about it. He takes pleasure in sharing the love, helping his friends out and being a good mate. Known for: generosity.

THE PROFESSOR: He leaves nothing to chance, calculating everything down to the last detail. He could name every player in Scottish League Two. He combines his encyclopedic knowledge with a mathematician's mind. A little bit nerdy, sure, but cool with it. Whatever the situation you can count on The Professor to be thinking about sport. Known for: knowledge.

THE BELIEVER: Once you've tasted success against the odds, nothing else will do. There's no challenge the Believer won't take on. He'll approach any girl, it doesn't matter whose league she's in. When the Believer gets a challenge he thinks, you and whose army? He's the guy who loves the underdog, the big accumulators and the long odds. Known for: bravery.

One of the few industries that can be seen to be 'recession proof' is gambling. Whether it is the national lottery, horse racing or online bingo and poker, gambling businesses do well in times of economic hardship offering the hope of a large payout. Statistics¹ show that the majority of people who gamble regularly are those who can least afford to lose. In addition, gambling is known to be addictive and can create huge financial problems for people who gamble regularly. In 2005² laws were relaxed allowing gambling to become more visible - although the advertising of gambling is currently being reviewed³ as offering 'free money' as an enticement to customers is argued to be immoral and misleading.

It is in this context that Ladbrokes ran the advertising campaign above. Each poster is an image of a character and a quote. The characters represent 'regular blokes' but they each have a specific philosophy towards gambling. As these ideas are identified as quotes it distances the ideas being communicated from Ladbrokes itself. Ladbrokes aren't saying that 'when you win it's skill - when you lose it's bad luck'. A made up character (Mr Brightside) is saying that. If Ladbrokes made this claim they would find themselves in trouble over advertising standards. The fact

that this irrational nonsense is being used to encourage gambling is acceptable as it's presented as an opinion someone may hold. Similarly 'The Professor's' nonsensical 'Once is lucky - twice is talent' would get the gambling business into trouble if Ladbrokes claimed it was true. They don't of course. They are simply repeating an attitude that some people have to gambling and presenting it as a point of view.

Each character in the series of adverts represents a particular trait that relates to an idea of masculinity in the context of a gambling culture: knowledge, bravery, optimism, instinct and generosity. These are the qualities that we might assume a 'good gambler' has. These may be the ways a gambler likes to think of themselves too and associates positive character traits to these attitudes to gambling.

These are the 'salt of the earth' characteristics that we would probably like our acquaintances to have and, of course, they are the kind of traits that we tend to associate with trustworthiness. The Ladbrokes characters look like normal blokes too. They are all in their late 20s/30s and are culturally diverse. One sports a fashionable beard,

another looks a little geeky and a third could be a manual worker. They offer different levels of identification for the audience - either via their look or their attitude.

The stylised presentation of the images could be argued to hold connotations of comic book characters. More relevant to the context of the campaign however is the fact that the images refer to the street art of Shepard Fairey - specifically the famous Obama picture entitled 'Hope'.



This creates a subtle association and, as the characters themselves are all putting forward attitudes that connect with the need for hope in the positive outcome of gambling, it is likely that this imagery has been deliberately chosen to reinforce the message of the ad campaign.

This repetition of a 'man in the pub' attitudes acts to create a set of normative values. Each character demonstrates personality traits that are seen to be desirable but, despite the variety they all offer the same message, it's 'normal' for all sorts of blokes to like to gamble and being irrational regarding gambling is a quality shared by this collection of men. This message is repeated across the marketing materials in the campaign. Posters featuring one of the characters were placed in Ladbrokes's windows, at bus-stops and on billboards. There were moving image elements of the campaign that repeated the message online with videos on the website and YouTube⁴ and ads that ran on 4OD. More details about each character was provided online and acted to reinforce the message in the posters. The fact that the same message is being reiterated by a range of different characters reinforces the idea that this message is common sense something everyone appears to be in agreement on. At no point are the negative aspects of gambling identified and so the possible personal and social costs of blind hope are not raised.

This is not to say that access to advertising like this will 'force' people to



Pockets of Resistance

There is evidence on-line that not everyone has taken taken the Ladbrokes message on board!

gamble - that would be far too simplistic. Neither will everyone who sees the campaign interpret it in the way Ladbrokes want but the repetition of these messages may start to naturalise the idea that gambling is a good thing to do and that making irrational excuses for this behaviour has some value.

The associations with social success and contemporary ideas of masculine identity are created in these images and the intention is to create positive associations with the act of gambling and the Ladbrokes brand.

Update:

Complaints were made about Ladbrokes's ad campaign and it was investigated by the ASA. It upheld complaints about two of the ads but not the others.

The ruling seemed to be largely based on judging whether the lifestyle depicted in the ads could be perceived as 'cool'. Whilst the irrational attitudes of *Mr Brightside* and *The Professor* were defined as 'irresponsible' the overall naturalisation of gambling as a social activity was not challenged.

The full findings can be viewed here: http://www.asa.org.uk/Rulings/Adjudications/2014/9/Ladbrokes-Betting-and-Gaming-Ltd/SHP_ADJ_267066.aspx#.VDpFd9R4qe

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