

## Audiences

# Uses and Gratifications Model

This model stems from the idea that audiences are a complex mixture of individuals who select media texts that best suits their needs – this relates to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.

The users and gratifications model suggests that media audiences are active and make active decisions about what they consume in relation to their social and cultural setting and their needs.

This was summed up by theorists Blumer and Katz in 1974; 'Media usage can be explained in that it provides gratifications (meaning it satisfies needs) related to the satisfaction of social and psychological needs'.

Put simply this means that audiences choose to watch programmes that make them feel good (gratifications) e.g. soaps and sitcoms, or that give them information that they can use (uses) e.g. news or information about new products or the world about them.

**1 Surveillance** – our need to know what is going on in the world. This relates to Maslow's need for security. By keeping up to date with news about local and international events we feel we have the knowledge to avoid or deal with dangers.

**2 Personal relationships** – our need for to interact with other people. This is provided by forming virtual relationships with characters in soaps, films and all kinds of drama, and other programmes and other media texts.

**3 Personal identity** – our need to define our identity and sense of self. Part of our sense of self is informed by making judgements about all sorts of people and things. This is also true of judgements we make about TV and film characters, and celebrities. Our choice of music, the shows we watch, the stars we like can be an expression of our identities. One aspect of this type of gratification is known as value reinforcement. This is where we choose television programmes or newspapers that have similar beliefs to those we hold.

**4 Diversion** – the need for escape, entertainment and relaxation. All types of television programmes can be 'used' to wind down and offer diversion, as well as satisfying some of the other needs at the same time.

### How to remember?

Imagine a CCTV camera looking at a couple, who are looking in a mirror and standing by a yellow diversion sign.

Stupid? yes... but it works :)