

Table 11.3 Gauntlett: ten minute revision

- Concept 1: traditional and post-traditional media consumption**
- Gauntlett's ideas build upon Anthony Giddens' assertion that society has progressed to a stage that Giddens calls 'late modernity'.
 - The conditions of late modernity enable audiences to escape the prescriptive identities that are constructed for them through localised social norms and traditional viewpoints.
 - Gauntlett argues that contemporary media has brought audiences into contact with a wider range of representations – and, importantly, that audiences can consciously shape their own sense of self.

Concept 2: reflexive identity construction

- The media provides a variety of role models and lifestyle templates that audiences use to guide their own outlooks.
- Audiences are engaged in a continuous revision of their identities.
- Media narratives mirror the process of identity transformation.
- Audiences are in control of the media – adapting and assimilating ideas about themselves through the various representations that the media presents.

Three theorists who challenge Gauntlett's thinking

- **Stuart Hall:** would argue that the media landscape is not diverse, but saturated with stereotypical portrayals that reflect wider social inequalities. This leads to a deeply problematic portrayal of minority groups of all persuasions.
- **bell hooks:** hooks would argue that portrayals of black women are largely absent from the media and, when they are present, they are prone to produce overly sexualised portrayals.
- **Paul Gilroy:** would argue that British media narratives do not offer diversity but are stuck within a colonial mindset that positions non-whites as threatening, primitive or uncivilised.

12 Ownership effects

James Curran and Jean Seaton

Curran and Seaton's widely read history of the media in the UK, *Power without Responsibility*, is concerned, to a large degree, with narrating the story of how the media landscape has fallen under the control of a handful of global media conglomerates.

Of course, the media landscape has changed considerably since the book's first publication in 1981, and the seventh edition of *Power without Responsibility* (2010) very much reflects contemporary concerns regarding digital media. But at the heart of Curran and Seaton's book remains a core concern – a guiding notion of what the media *ought* to be doing, and it stems, in part, from James Curran's detailed reading of the development of the radical press in the early 1800s.

The numerous radical press pamphlets and small-scale newspapers of the Victorian era, Curran argues, were engines for social and political change. Made by the working class and designed to be read by a working class readership, they highlighted the plight of the poor, and fostered, Curran tells us, 'an alternate value system that symbolically turned the world upside down' (Curran and Seaton, 2010, 15).

The lifespan of this early media form, however, was short lived. A combination of rising production costs and increased competition from high quality, professionally produced titles eventually drove the radical free press out of business. Newspapers of the mid Victorian period, Curran argues, could only be mass produced by those who could afford the extensive start-up costs needed to manufacture products on an industrial scale. Curran, too, points to the corrosive effect of commercial advertising which was sold to offset production costs; the radical press, with its agenda to effect political change, did not partner well with the commercial activities of advertisers who represented the system they wanted to undermine. Without advertising income, the

free press could not compete with their commercial rivals, and the process of media concentration – the control of the media by ever larger organisations – began in earnest.

Curran and Seaton suggest that a second and equally turbulent wave of ownership consolidation took place in the latter half of the twentieth century when economic globalisation and the widespread deregulation of the media industry reduced the number of national press titles in the UK to just 11 publications. This lack of diversity, in Curran and Seaton's view, concentrates too much power in the hands of a small number of newspaper proprietors – an entirely different scenario to the news industry's radicalising origins.

Concept 1: media concentration

Creativity versus commerciality

The media industry is driven, Curran and Seaton tell us, by the twin forces of creativity and business. Media creatives – writers, directors, actors and photographers – are tasked to give us exciting, innovative and aesthetically pleasing products, while those we call the media's business managers are responsible for ensuring the profitability and commercial viability of products.

Curran and Seaton suggest that profit-driven motives take precedence over creativity in the world of commercial media – that the agendas of the industry's business managers control creative output. Money wins, while both audience size and audience share determine content. As Jean Seaton explains, 'Commercial broadcasting is based not on the sale of programmes to audiences, but on the sale of audiences to advertisers' (Curran and Seaton, 2010, 90). Because commercial broadcasters need to secure long-term advertising revenue to survive programming, she argues, content is designed to attract economically affluent audiences who are able to buy the products that are promoted during advertising slots.

As a result, peak time television schedules (where commercial space is most sought after and costly) are dominated by lighter entertainment formats, while less popular minority interest products are sidelined to secondary channels or late night slots. Advertising, too, prompts media broadcasters to make content that focuses on capturing an ABC1 demographic – those audiences that can afford to buy the products that advertisers want to sell. 'The reason why,' Curran tells us, 'approximately

Box 12.1 Think about it: the effects of commercial imperatives on set texts

Activity 1: think about advertising effects

Identify which of your set text products are funded through commercial advertising and answer these questions:

- How does advertising affect the content of those products? Are stories sanitised? Are characters stereotyped? Is political content softened?
- In what ways are media products and advertising linked? How does the editorial content in your magazine set texts, for instance, covertly promote the products that are advertised in the magazine?
- Do your commercial set texts serve affluent ABC1 demographics as a result of advertiser needs? In what ways does this need channel content or editorial decisions?

Activity 2: think about audience size effects

- Group your set texts by institution, with commercial products in one group and non-commercial products in another. What do the products in each group have in common? What separates the two groups?
- Are Curran and Seaton right in suggesting that mass audience products tend to be sanitised or lightweight?

Activity 3: think about scheduling

Identify the time of the day that set texts were originally broadcast.

- How do broadcast times affect content?
- What do products broadcast at peak time, 7–10 p.m., have in common?

Activity 4: think about time shifting and on-demand effects

Identify which of your radio/television set texts are distributed as podcasts or through on-demand services.

- What effect does podcasting (time shifting) or on-demand distribution have on the content of set texts? Are products allowed to take more creative risks? Are products more political? More experimental?
- Has on-demand distribution allowed producers to make more niche products?
- What effect does the absence of advertising have on texts produced by Netflix? Do subscription services like these give media creatives more control?

25 per cent of the market sustains half the number of daily [newspaper] titles... is because this is the most affluent part of the market, and generates a large advertising bounty' (Curran and Seaton, 2010, 90).

Conglomerate advantages

Curran and Seaton also argue that the prohibitive costs and risks associated with the production of media products has resulted in the organisation of media companies into vertically and horizontally aligned conglomerates. Indeed, the success of horizontal and vertical integration means that most commercial print, film and television-based media in America and the UK is now controlled by just six global players: CBS, Comcast, Disney, News Corporation, Time Warner and Viacom.

Horizontal integration

Horizontal integration (HI) occurs when a conglomerate acquires media companies of the same media type. News Corporation is a classic example of a horizontally-aligned organisation in that it owns *The Times*, *The Sunday Times* and *The Sun* news titles in the UK. The benefits of HI can be defined as follows:

- **Production costs can be minimised.** Products can be bought in bulk while production facilities can be brought together to rationalise costs. Owning more than one newspaper title, for example, reduces printing costs through the common ownership of a printing facility or through the bulk buying of paper.
- **Sharing resources.** Horizontally-aligned companies have the power and financial means to develop resources that independent producers are simply unable to develop. *The Times* and *The Sun*, for instance, have developed a social media analysis service called Storyful that investigates and verifies content reported on social media – a resource that helps both titles to detect fake news and identify trending issues on social media.
- **Controlling the market.** By owning both *The Times* and *The Sun*, News Corporation uses its considerable news gathering resources to control a substantial slice of the broadsheet and tabloid markets in the UK. News Corporation products are also strategically positioned so they do not compete with one other, while

their use of shared resources helps nurture a competitive advantage over rival titles.

Vertical integration

Vertical integration (VI) enables conglomerates to control the production and distribution of media products. Disney is a good example of a vertically integrated company in that it owns subsidiary organisations that fulfil the following aspects of the production process:

- **Production divisions.** Disney owns film production studios (Walt Disney Pictures, Twentieth Century Fox) and television production divisions (Endemol Shine group, ABC).
- **Distribution services.** In owning Sky Plc and Fox Network, Disney are able to globally distribute their filmic and television content without the need to employ external partners. This allows Disney to retain all profits from product distribution and, more importantly, allows full control of where and when content is broadcast.
- **Subsidiary support.** Film and media products need to be financed, promoted and planned – owning specialist support subsidiaries allows Disney to manage projects effectively. For example, Disney uses a variety of specialist subsidiaries including promotional services (Disney Marketing), merchandising (Marvel Toys) and financial/support services (Marvel Film Finance) to help the conglomerate maximise profits.

The advantages of VI include:

- **Capturing upstream and downstream profits.** Producing and distributing products internally creates substantial cost savings. Production subsidiaries do not need to pay distributors to stream their products (thus capturing downstream profits). Likewise, distributor subdivisions do not have to pay external providers for media content (thus capturing upstream profits).
- **Control over all aspects of the production chain.** Owning a satellite network means Disney can release products in ways that maximise profits. Sky subscribers, for instance, are given access to premium movie content during the lucrative Christmas holiday

- period. VI also allows companies to release or schedule products so that they do not compete with one another.
- **Restricting access to competitors.** By controlling key distribution outlets, Disney can prevent rivals from dominating broadcast schedules and can even change rivals who wish to distribute their products through Disney owned networks.
- **Cross-media ownership synergies.** Owning a variety of media company types enables the conglomerate to distribute product benefits across a range of media forms. For instance, Marvel Television uses the advanced production processes developed for the *Star Wars* film franchise can also be recycled into gaming products.

Box 12.2 Think about it: the effect of horizontal and vertical integration on set texts

Use the following questions to identify the effects of horizontal and vertical integration on set texts:

Activity 1: diagnosing vertical integration effects

- How do ownership patterns help in terms of product distribution?
- What distribution services does the conglomerate own? How do these distribution channels give the product access to mass audiences?
- How do distribution subsidiaries help the set text reach a global audience? How does this increase the profitability of the product?
- What effect does the set text's distribution have on budget constraints? Because the set text is distributed to a mass audience does it have a bigger budget than it would if made by an independent?
- Do cross-media ownership patterns give the set text an opportunity to be translated into other media formats?

Activity 2: diagnosing horizontal integration effects

- Does the product serve a clearly defined target audience as a result of HI ownership patterns? What audiences do sister companies target? Are audiences differentiated to maximise profits?
- How does the set text use the shared expertise/joint resources of a sister company to make or distribute the product?

Concept 2: effects of concentration on media content

Proprietor control of print news

Media concentration has resulted in the elevation of proprietor power. Media owners, Curran argues, control the content and flow of news either directly or indirectly:

- **Direct control.** Proprietor owners, Curran suggests, censor news content that conflicts with their political views and wider business interests. Generally speaking, large-scale conglomerates that own news titles also have vested interests in a range of other business activities all over the globe – banking, engineering, oil and transport – that their media divisions are directed to ignore if conflicts of interest arise.
- **Indirect control** of news content might also be affected through the hiring and firing process, through the installation of editors who are sympathetic to a specific worldview that a proprietor wants to broadcast.

Elitist media/political relationships

Curran also draws our attention to the relationships that have developed between news groups, big business and government, suggesting that the power of concentrated media ownership has forced political parties to form cosy relationships with media moguls in order to get favourable press coverage.

The former Labour Prime Minister, Tony Blair, for example, was famously invited to address News Corporation executives in 1995 before he was elected, while Murdoch's relationship with Margaret Thatcher during the 1980s was close enough, reportedly, that he could affect some influence over crucial policy decisions regarding media regulation. Curran suggests, rather powerfully, that these cosy relationships result in the formation of a news landscape that lacks the critical bite of a fully functioning press establishment.

Mass market news, news depoliticisation and hysterical news values

Media concentration has significantly reduced the diversity of available news titles, while at the same time increasing the readerships of those titles that remain. Catering for the needs of those huge readerships, Curran argues, has resulted in a watering down of news content. Mass readership newspapers are depoliticised as a result – often replacing hard news with entertainment-driven content, while the quality and tone of news coverage is sensationalised in a bid to retain audience share.

Curran and Seaton: a Neo-Marxian approach?

Curran and Seaton suggest that contemporary media ownership places the media in the hands of the few and not the many. In this sense, they take an approach that follows in the footsteps of the Victorian economist and philosopher Karl Marx. Marx argued that culture – the arts and so forth – is deployed to make the working poor believe that there is not really much alternative to the drudgery of their appalling working conditions. Marx argued that:

- **Culture is controlled by social elites.** Curran and Seaton likewise suggest the media is controlled by a minority of wealthy institutions and that those institutions often work for the benefit of themselves.
- **Culture acts as a distraction.** Culture, according to Marx, provides a temporary escape from the drudgery of our working lives and, in doing so, it distracts us from true nature of our exploitation. Curran and Seaton would similarly argue that the media offers us depoliticised narratives through entertainment-oriented media that is highly formulaic.

Regulated media pluralism

Yet, to label Curran and Seaton as nothing more than neo-Marxists would miss much of the thrust of their work. They might call out press proprietor abuses, but they also present a strong case for what might loosely be termed ‘media pluralism’, arguing that the media landscape ought to be populated by a range of company types, both commercial and public service oriented.

Box 12.3 Apply it: media concentration and news-based set texts

This activity is particularly useful for exam-based questions that ask you identify the effects of ownership on set text news products. Analyse relevant set texts using the following prompts:

- Curran suggests that contemporary newspapers have to compete for readers’ interests, often using hysterical news values – making them angry or frightened – to attract and sustain mass readerships. In what ways do your news set texts support this argument?
- Is political coverage minimised or sensationalised in contemporary news?
- Does the editorial mix of contemporary print news feature an unusually large element of softer news features, sports coverage or entertainment-based coverage?
- Do the editorial biases of your set text newspapers reflect the political views of their proprietors?
- In what ways do set text newspapers rely on official sources for stories? Do they readily challenge those sources or accept them as accurate?
- Are journalists and columnists given the freedom to express ideas that conflict with proprietor views?
- Do newspapers incorporate reader commentary and opinion to broaden the perspectives offered?

Exemplar: *The Daily Mail* (OCR). *The Daily Mail* exemplifies much of the thrust of Curran and Seaton’s arguments regarding the effect of media concentration on news reportage. Media globalisation, they argue, has resulted in the domination of the industry by a handful of politically motivated proprietor owned titles that are dependent on advertising and mass audience readership to remain commercially viable. A mass marketisation of news has resulted. Curran tells us, using hysterical news values and softer news content to maintain mass appeal in the face of cut-throat competition. *The Daily Mail* front cover of 17 February 2018 provides ample evidence of both trends. The now discredited and sensationalist headline ‘Corbyn the Collaborator’ invokes hysteria and fear, and, in so doing, sacrifices objective journalism in favour of the overt political bias of the newspaper’s proprietor. Moreover, the competition strapline positioned above the leader exchanges prime front page space for advertising as a result of *The Daily Mail*’s need to target a commercially lucrative ABC1 demographic. The lifestyle-oriented advertorial also evidences the paper’s softer editorial mix – a clear effect of the need to provide content that has mass-market appeal.

Further exemplars for set texts from all exam boards are available online at: www.essentialmediahistory.com

Certainly, Curran and Seaton highlight the need to protect UK public service broadcasting to counterbalance the forces of the free market. In this sense, they are media pluralists, suggesting that media audiences are served best when a range of different institutions contribute to the media landscape.

The internet and ownership concentration

Certainly, there was much to celebrate at the outset of the internet's invention in terms of its potential to challenge the top-down nature of traditional media. Yet, Curran and Seaton suggest, the web landscape of today is increasingly commercialised, with large-scale traditional media companies having invested huge amounts of time and money to develop equally huge web presences. These companies, Curran tells us, had enormous assets: back catalogues of content, large reserves of cash

and expertise, close links with the advertising industry, brand visibility and cross promotional resources' (Curran and Seaton, 2010, 265). As a result, the natural advantages of media conglomerates meant that they were able to affect a sizeable web presence very quickly.

In 1996, the internet was a relatively advert free interface: fast forward 20 years and we barely register the presence of all those web cookies logging our browsing activity. Facebook mines our personal data so that we might be sold to advertisers. YouTube monetises user uploads, turning cat videos and vlogs into spaces that can be prefaced by adverts for soft drinks, cars and hair products. The web has become a place of commerce rather than a space to share and discuss. But, Curran argues, the web is still a contested space. Enough cyber mavericks exist, he suggests, to ensure that the world's digital networks have not been completely overtaken by major corporations just yet.

Concept 3: diverse ownership creates diverse products

The free market effect

UK government policy, Seaton and Curran argue, is responsible, in part, for the widespread domination of the media landscape by huge conglomerates. Jean Seaton points to the prevailing neo-liberal viewpoint of politicians who were in charge of media policy from the 1980s onwards, with both Labour and Conservative ministers championing a 'free market' media landscape. Free market neo-liberalism is intended to produce, in Jean Seaton's words, 'conditions of the greatest possible competition' (Curran and Seaton, 2010, 371), in which media audiences determine content, not politicians, and where companies that provide the most popular content are allowed to flourish without government sponsored restrictions.

Commercial media provision has exploded as a result of neo-liberal policy making. In 1980, just 300 weekly hours of television programming were broadcast, yet, by the year 2000, that number had grown to over 40,000 hours (Curran and Seaton, 2010, 246). The problem, Curran and Seaton highlight, is that without suitable controls, commercial media companies readily abandon commitments to public service broadcasting and content diversity. We might have more television content, they argue, but the pursuit of mass audience appeal has produced a landscape that is dominated by format-driven products.

Box 12.4 Think about it: the creeping commercialisation of the web

Do your online set texts provide evidence that the radical potential of the internet has been curtailed by commercial pressures?

Questions to test the level of commercialisation of online set texts

- Which parent companies make your online set texts – are they part of an established media conglomerate? Have producers partnered up with commercial organisations to make their product?
- Is the online set text financed, either wholly or in part, by commercial advertising? What is the potential effect of advertising on the content of the product?
- Does the set text openly, or even covertly, market products to its audience?

Questions to diagnose public service benefits of online set texts

- Do your online set texts invite commentary from its users? Is commentary designed to prompt debate?
- Do set texts give marginalised groups a voice?
- Do products foreground information over product sales?
- Are products designed to nurture an online community?

Media formats that are successful are replicated to deliver mass audiences. *The Great British Bake Off*, for instance, morphed into *The Great British Sewing Bee*, while the dominance of prime time talent shows such as *The Voice* and *Britain's Got Talent* have spawned a stream of shows that share remarkably similar formats. Channel 4, too, mines formats relentlessly – *24 Hours in Police Custody*, *24 Hours in A&E*, *Countdown*, *8 out 10 Cats Does Countdown*, etc. The need to produce mass audiences means that the television industry replicates rather than originates.

One might argue that the explosion of streaming giants such as Netflix has helped break the formulaic approach taken by terrestrial television broadcasters; yet, even here, the use of audience data drives Netflix commissioning processes. New content is routinely devised on the basis that storylines replicate the popularity of pre-existing narratives. Far from increasing consumer choice, media proliferation, in this sense, has given us products that lack invention.

Public service broadcasting as a counter influence to commercial media

Commercial media has not been allowed to dominate UK television and radio markets completely. The BBC, as a public service broadcaster funded through the television licence fee, operates without the

Box 12.5 Think about it: is the media dominated by format-driven products?

Curran and Seaton suggest that commercial media broadcasters copy rival products that are successful or rely on trusted television formats to deliver safe programming. Think about the following questions to test the truth of Curran and Seaton's arguments today:

- In what ways do the schedules of major broadcasters offer similar products during peak viewing slots?
- Can you think of some examples of television programmes/formats that have been successful and have produced copycat products as a result of that success?
- How far do you agree with the argument that streaming services like Netflix rely on a formulaic approach?

need to attract advertising revenue to fund programming. This guaranteed funding structure has garnered the criticism of many free market advocates, some of whom have championed a root and branch scaling back of the BBC to stimulate further commercial media expansion. Yet, the BBC remains ever popular – its reach and diversity securing enough public support to ward off any far-reaching or life-threatening reforms.

Curran and Seaton (2010) put forward the following four benefits that derive from the BBC's unique funding status:

- **Programming standards are raised.** Because the BBC is not part of a larger cross-industry conglomerate it approaches news with impartiality. The BBC's impartial approach also sets high standards that other broadcasters emulate.
- **High-quality minority interest programming is provided.** Without the need to make a profit, the BBC can serve minority audience interests through programming and scheduling. The BBC's commitment to the arts, for instance, is evidenced via BBC 4, while minority ethnic and regional audiences are engaged through the BBC Asian Network as well as BBC Wales with its heavy commitment to regional news and radio. (See Box 12.6 for more discussion on how BBC Radio creates appeal for niche audiences.)
- **It is a unifying organisation.** The BBC's focus is not trained on the advertising bonanzas achieved by targeting an ABC1 demographic. The BBC, as a public service broadcaster, is inclusive rather than exclusive.

Box 12.6 Revise it: BBC Radio and public service broadcasting

BBC Radio output provides an excellent illustration of the organisation's non-commercial remit to inform, educate and entertain. With 10 national radio stations and over 40 local stations, the BBC provides a range of niche and majority interest radio programming. Freed from profit-driven motives, the BBC can also deliver a diversity of content that would not ordinarily survive if it were funded through advertising.

Exemplar: Radio 4 and Late Night Woman's Hour (Edugas).

Radio 4 is one of only a few UK-based radio stations that are dominated by spoken word broadcasting. *Woman's Hour* is dedicated to a female listenership, while the show's evening spin-off, *Late Night Woman's Hour* (LNWH), targets a tighter third wave feminist niche audience with its politically charged debate format. Issues that you could relate to Curran and Seaton in an exam might include:

- **The programme's format:** listeners are offered a broadcast that focuses on a single topic, facilitating detailed and informative discussion.
- **Guest diversity:** Panellists are invited from a range of cultural, professional and academic backgrounds to promote a detailed consideration of a wide range of third wave feminist viewpoints.
- **Minority issue debate:** The show focuses on minority issues not normally covered in commercial media.
- **Choice of presenter:** Lauren Laverne reflects the educated, career-oriented thirtysomething niche audience of LNWH. This niche audience, importantly, could not be served by a mainstream media organisation reliant on advertising.

Further set text help is available for a range of products for all exam boards at www.essentialmediatheory.com

Table 12.1 Speak Curran and Seaton

Commercial media	An organisation that makes or distributes products for economic gain. Commercial media usually make products for entertainment purposes.
Horizontal integration	Ownership of subsidiaries that produce similar types of products.
Hysterical news values	Sensationalist news content used to drive mass market sales.
Mass market news	News designed to appeal to huge readerships, often critiqued for its lack of analysis or entertainment-driven values. Also known as news depoliticisation.
Media concentration/ media convergence	A term used to describe the reduction in the number of media organisations that produce products.
Media pluralism	A media landscape with a healthy balance of products made by different media company types. Typically these company types include public service broadcasters, commercial media and citizen-generated media.
Public service broadcasting	A media producer who is not reliant on advertising to fund production or does not make products for commercial gain. Public service broadcasting products usually seek to inform and educate their audiences as well entertain.
Vertical integration	Ownership of subsidiaries that enable a media producer to produce, promote and distribute products.

Table 12.2 Curran and Seaton: ten minute revision

Concept 1: *the media is controlled by a small number of companies that make products to create profit*

- Globalisation has concentrated media ownership into the hands of a few companies.
- Media conglomerates are horizontally and vertically integrated to maximise profit.
- Large-scale media producers rely on advertising to generate income.
- Advertising drives media companies to produce products that have mass audience appeal.

Concept 2: *media concentration adversely affects media content*

- The business function of the media industry takes precedence over its creative/public service capacities.
- Profit-driven media is softened to create mass audience appeal.
- Minority interest content is pushed to the margins of broadcast schedules.
- Free market competition produces format-driven products.

Concept 3: *diverse ownership creates diverse products*

- Curran and Seaton highlight the damage that free market ideologies have had on the media landscape.
- Public service broadcasting provides impartial news, serves minority audiences and champions national unity by offering inclusive rather than exclusive content.

Three theorists who might challenge Curran and Seaton's thinking

- **Clay Shirky:** argues that the media industry is increasingly driven by audience feedback systems rather than the top-down control of proprietors.
- **Henry Jenkins:** would acknowledge that Web 2.0 enables big business to exploit the web for commercial reasons, but would also argue that the internet retains the capacity to work as a social good and that online communities created via 'participatory culture' have the power to change the world for the better.
- **Steve Neale:** would critique the idea that media proliferation has resulted in a narrowing of product type or the dominance of formula-driven media. He would argue that audiences prompt producers to continuously adapt and finesse genre-driven material.

13 Regulation

Sonia Livingstone and
Peter Lunt

Sonia Livingstone and Peter Lunt's academic work constructs a critical analysis of the changing regulatory landscape in the UK over the last 30 years. Central to that analysis is an exploration of how the UK's approach to media governance has served the needs of audiences as both consumers and citizens.

Consumer-based regulation, Livingstone and Lunt tell us, is realised, first, through the creation of a media landscape in which audiences can choose the sorts of media content they can or want to watch and, second, by giving media producers the freedom to create products that those audiences choose to consume. A consumer-based regulatory framework, in short, seeks to guarantee audience choice and promote product diversity.

Conversely, a citizen-based view argues that the media ought to play a significant role in shaping society and its citizens – that television, newspapers, radio, etc. ought to educate and inform their audiences, while also performing a pivotal function in maintaining the democratic health of the nation that producers operate within. Governments and government policy, importantly, play a critical role in defining the kinds of content that the media ought to broadcast or publish in a citizen-oriented regulatory framework.

Crucially, in Livingstone and Lunt's view the media policies affected by successive governments over the last 20 years have worked in ways that have protected, by and large, the commercial interests of media producers.