

Media case study in friends tv show assignment



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Case Study Introduction The society of nowadays is filled with advertisements, messages, films, blogs, technology, etc. The meanings that they carry have to be transmitted to the audience through different media. (Branston and Stafford, 2006) It appears important for the receiver to analyse and understand the meanings carried by each type of medium. In order to do so, the different “ vehicles” used by media have to be identified. Different vehicle theories include: semiotics, genres, narratives, representation, audiences, etc. Ibidem) And while they all have to be gathered and related to form a medium, these theories have on their own signs to be interpreted by the viewer. Media has to construct meanings about the world in order to represent it appropriately or logically enough for the audience to understand, and make sense out of what they are seeing. (O’Sullivan et al. , 1994) Representations of the world have to be understood by the audience. It allows an easier and faster understanding of what media is trying to portray and by doing so saves time needed to achieve other goals o since the media has limits of time and space. (Wilson, 1993) For instance, T. V. hows, in order to save time and capture viewers in the story faster, resort to stereotypes “ There may be a shared recognition of the world as represented through familiar or dominant images and ideas” (O’Sullivan et al. , 1994) A good example of a type of media that uses representations as a way to help audience identify with the world presented on T. V. is the very popular show named: Friends. It debuted in 1994 through NBC and moved on to become one of the shows with the highest rate in television. It won multiple awards during its time on air until its end in May 2004. In 2002 the show won an Emmy for outstanding comedy series. (TBS. om, 2009) It had a big cultural impact, for instance, phrases from the sitcom <https://assignbuster.com/media-case-study-in-friends-tv-show-assignment/>

became common in American slang, and songs from the show became very famous around the globe. It is a sitcom that presents the life of six friends (3 males and 3 females) middle aged, middle class who live in New York. They live close to each other and spend a lot of time together discussing very different themes. They all have different personalities and different backgrounds but compliment each other comically. This case study will analyse through the theory of representations, the stereotypes presented by the female characters: Rachel, Phoebe and Monica. pic] The Representations

When referring to representations in the media, it is important to notice that stereotypes are present very often. Especially in a commercial T. V. show such as Friends, creators have to turn into cultural stereotypes in order for the audience to easily and quickly identify each role; who plays whom in a story and, in certain situations, justify their actions. " Within the media, limits of time and space plus the desire of achieving rapid audience recognition have obliged the stereotypical representations to be constructed and portrayed..." (Wilson, 1993)

The role of Rachel Green represents the rich bimbo girl. She comes from a wealthy background, her father, is a successful doctor able to provide her and her sisters with a fancy childhood. She has never worked, is not self sufficient, and as mention in chapter 12 of season 6 " The one with the joke" (Blinkx. com, 2000) she is always trying to please others. She is in many ways an exaggeration of a spoiled American girl. Rachel is dumb, lost, and she does not know what she wants. According to Wilson (1993) stereotypes have to be exaggerated or maximised, since there is a necessity for audience recognition.

If there is no recognition then it becomes a commercial failure. For this reason the character of Rachel is exaggerated. She cries over anything, she is afraid of commitment, irresponsible, and does not want to take care of anyone as much as she wants to be taken care of. But there is a necessity for her to form part of the group of friends. Her irresponsibility can be very funny, guys always want to date her because she is pretty. In a sitcom of its genre (comedy) the familiar is necessary and comfortable (Branston and Stafford, 2006) for this reason, someone has to play the pretty, spoiled one.

The sets of characters and values portrayed by Rachel involve in it a diversity that the audience can relate her to. Whether it means that they identify with her and her actions (for example, girls with good economic status), or see in her someone they know, or maybe even look up to her. On the other hand, the role of Monica Geller represents the controlling responsible one. Her character is the opposite from Rachel, obsessive-compulsive, and very competitive. She is probably the more mature female of the show.

She comes from a suburban middle class family, known for having overweight during high school, she is Rachel's best friend, but admire and envied her during youth. She likes to be in charge of everything, plans every detail and enjoys serving other. Her representation in the show is maximised, her obsession for order and cleanness is exaggerated, but this traits help the viewer to identify her and categorise her as the "mother hen" of the group. (Warnerbros. com, 2009) Although she was pretty the audience tends to forget this fact and relate her more with the need of a responsible one in the group.

As mention above, there is comfort in familiarity, in this case the role of Monica becomes funny when the audience relates her actions with reality, for instance, mothers cleaning the mess left by little children. She is referenced to in the chapter mention above as “ high maintenance” American slang to refer the fact that she needs a lot of attention and everything has to be done the way she likes it. She goes ahead and proves it by then forcing Chandler (her boyfriend) to learn a speech and mention that she is not “ high maintenance. What this scene is portraying is an irony that proves how embroidered stereotypes can be a useful tool in sitcoms since they are funny. By evoking irony, the media uses stereotypes and disguise them as jokes allowing the label to become somewhat acceptable and familiar. (Branston and Stafford, 2006) Finally, the role of Phoebe Buffay who represents the hippie one. An eccentric character, who enjoys from playing music but is not really good, she does not care what others think about her. Phoebe’s character is a very sensitive one who goes beyond to help others, she is not interested in conventional things such as marriage, babies, or money.

But rather she is concern with environmental, spiritual issues. With a troubled past, she became homeless at age 14 (Warnerbros. com, 2009). She is very dumb but knows how to play and have fun with others. The circumstances of this character are ironic and funny. Once again, creators of the show play with exaggeration of personalities and portray the obliged hippie New Yorker. Phoebe’s character is a clear example of how stereotypes are not always wrong (Branston and Stafford, 2006) , and they do portray

reality but in a magnified way. New York is a city known for its extravagant movements regarding animals, and vegetarianism among others.

So Phoebe played that side of New York which is radical. Conclusion The three characters above represent not only labels for people of their own circumstances but also they represent 3 very common stereotypes in which women can be categorised in the media; the sex object, the mother, and the friend. The three characters are also very different from each other going from the little princess, to the tough one, to the weird one. But in many ways these stereotypes are not always negative, they are not rigid or unchanging, and they help the audience to identify and differentiate the 3 characters. According to O'Sullivan et al. (1994) the media production is based on the need to please the audience. For this reason, if certain values or beliefs predominate in media output it will be due to the fact that society is sharing such same values and beliefs. In the case of "Friends" such conceptions of people from specific backgrounds in America are constantly presented in societies' beliefs and therefore portrayed with this specific characters in the show. Ideologies work through symbolic codes, (O'Sullivan et al., 1994) and because the media cannot speak directly to the audience it uses semiotics. These signs are represented with people through stereotypes.

It is important to understand and analyse the latter so that there is a better understanding of society and culture. People use stereotypes everyday to achieve a mental understanding of the society and the people they meet in their everyday lives. But even when stereotypes portray the real world in many aspects, it is important to notice that they are also often exaggerated and closed and they limit a viewer's point of view of a determined group or

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person. They can be funny and helpful but the media should understand that portraying a group of people using stereotypes can cause negative cultural impact.

Stereotypes should not become prejudices or send an erroneous message to the audience. When recurring to stereotypes, the media has to be very sensitive and take care of every detail as to portray people openly with no set rules and as accurate as possible. This was well achieved by “ Friends” T. V. show since characters evolve, acquire new characteristics their personalities changed and they all achieved their goals. References

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