

# Introduction to Media: Social Media

## Starter Task

1. Name as many social media platforms as you can  
(Current or outdated)
2. Create a list of pros and cons of social media

# Social Media

**Pros**

**Cons**

# Is social media dangerous to its users?

This is the core question for today's session.

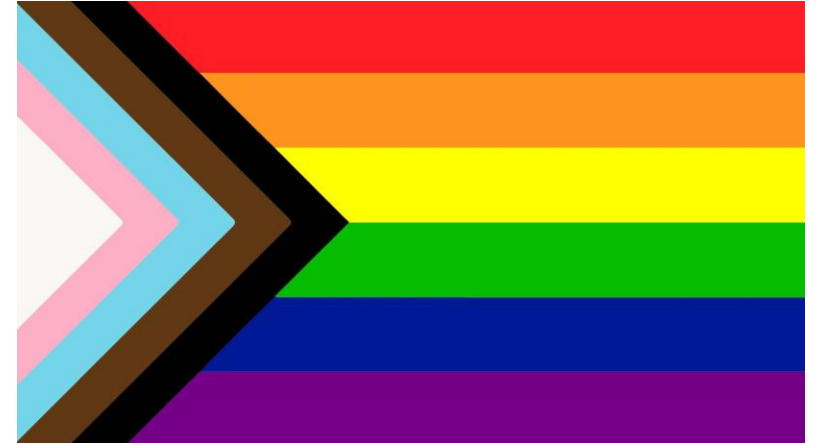
On your own, write a short paragraph answering this question.

Your answer just need to be your initial reaction to this question

Prepare to feedback

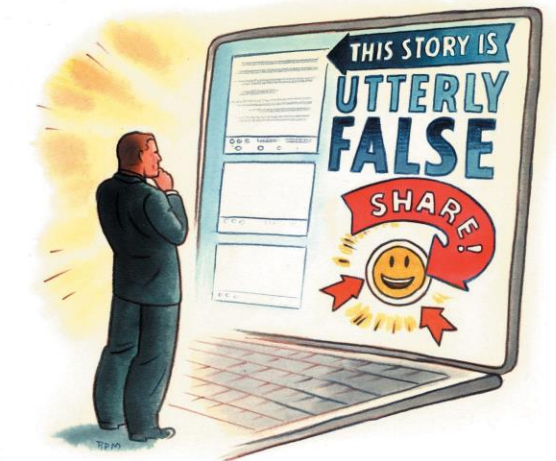
# Some positive examples of the influence of social media:

- Representation
  - Lots of minority groups have been able to have their voices heard, and find community.
- Action for change
  - Arab Spring protests (2010 onwards)
  - Climate protests
  - Feminist voices
  - LGBTQ+ voices
- Niche interest groups
- Any others?



# Negatives of Social media

- Effect on mental health and addiction
- Misinformation through fake news
- Hateful voices have a platform that reaches more and more people
- Controversy gets attention and therefore shares
- Given a rise to extreme opinions and animosity between users



# Case Studies

## QAnon (2017- present)

- Alt Right online community focused on false claims made by anonymous user “Q”
- Claims include those of satanic cabals running the government, Democrats involved in sex trafficking, antisemitic rhetoric, and other hateful content
- QAnon followers share and **repackage** these fake news stories so they gain traction
- QAnon has had a direct effect on American politics, notably making claims that the 2020 election vote had been rigged in President Biden’s favour, leading the the Jan 6<sup>th</sup> insurrection



# Case Studies

- Andrew Tate
  - Tate has recently shot to fame across social media platforms due to his hateful, misogynistic rhetoric.
  - Tate's content has been targeted towards men, typically right wing, and to teenage boys
  - Capitalising on a pushback against so-called "wokeness", Tate has created content regarding men's-rights 'activism' and pro-Trump content, calling himself the "Lord of toxic masculinity"
  - Tate presents himself as a wealthy playboy, though it has since been proven that the extreme wealth is all a show for his content
  - Tate's content has been removed from all major social media platforms for **hate speech**, though his content is still being shared and reposted
  - **Tate is also under investigation for the human trafficking of women and claims of sexual assault**

# Case Studies

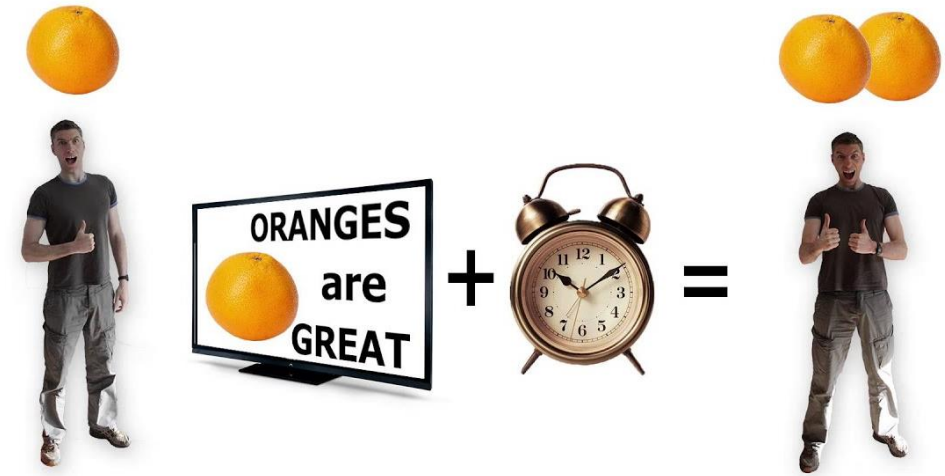
- Other figures
- Joe Rogan
  - Gives platform to controversial figures and spread misinformation regarding Covid
- Alex Jones
  - Conspiracy theorist that has recently been on trial regarding his claims that the Sandy Hook (2012) massacre was a hoax
- Jordan Peterson
  - Creates pseudo-intellectual content regarding men's rights 'activism', disguising hate speech as masculine self help
- Ben Shapiro
  - Political agitator that spread right wing propaganda and misinformation about the 2020 election as well as Covid
- Flat Earth Theory...

# What do they all have in common?

- All of these cases have gained traction due to social media
- Videos are shared both by those who support, and those who are outraged
- Lots of controversy means lots of attention
- So how are they **dangerous?**

# Cultivation Theory

- Cultivation Theory suggests that audiences are susceptible to manipulation when exposed to ideas over time.
- Ideas and opinions, much like crops, are **cultivated** over time
- Cultivation Theory suggests that if audiences begin to consume media with a certain point of view, then audiences will slowly begin to align with those ideas and values



# The Danger of the Algorithm

- Nearly all social media platforms, streaming services, advertising platforms and search engines use an **algorithm** to determine what to show to their users
- Ever watch one video on a random TV show, then suddenly your YouTube recommended is full of clips from that show? **That's the algorithm at work!**
- Furthermore, the more you watch of these videos, the more they are **curated** to you and you can be exposed to even more extreme views
- How does this link to cultivation theory?
- Are audience more likely to cultivate ideas now?



# The Passive Audience vs The Active Audience

## Passive

- This idea suggests that audiences are easily manipulated
- That audiences will just think what they are told to and can be moulded by the content they consume
- Cultivation Theory is a passive audience theory, as are many other theories we will look at later in the year

## Active

- Active Audience theories suggest that audiences do not just simply consume media, but are more discerning regarding what they consume
- Audiences are also to watch things critically
- This suggests that audiences are **media literate**

Which side do you think is more accurate?

# Is social media dangerous to its users?

- Let's return to this question
- Now write another paragraph answering this question.
- **You must** include at least one case study as an example from today's lesson
- **Achievers will** mention one of the theories we looked at in their response