Power Of The Media In The Truman Show

Peter Weir’s movie “The Truman Show” follows a man named Truman Burbank who lives in a “world” that revolves entirely around himself. Everything known to him including is not real and all the people he thinks he is friends with are merely paid Hollywood actors. Everything that occurs in his life is put on display for millions of people around the world to watch live. Truman himself knows nothing of the show but as he grows older he starts to question the reality around him and he desperately wants to break out from Seahaven.

‘The Truman Show’ can also be regarded as a commentary on the control that media puts on the society and how powerful that control can be. In nature, The Truman Show is a satire and touches on religion as one of its themes. The fittingly named “Christof” is a character with a God complex who uses ubiquity to create narratives for the viewers of the Truman Show to enjoy and improve the show’s ratings. Weir brings the viewers' attention to how far the media is willing to go to gain an audience. In that sense, the film is also a metaphor for the power that the media has and how it influences our lives.

Throughout “The Truman Show” one way in which media control is represented is through advertisements. As mentioned explicitly throughout the film, “The Truman Show” runs 24/7 with no commercial breaks. The show directors mention that the only way they make money is with product placement. Some of the most iconic moments in the movie are the ads within Truman's life: the cocoa powder, the shredder, the lawnmower.

When it’s time for the products to be advertised, characters like Meryl and Truman’s best friend Marlon, turn straight to the camera and showcase the item they are being paid to endorse. In these scenes, in order to increase the audience’s immersion and give the illusion that we are really watching “The Truman Show” like the ‘viewers’ in the film.

Some advertisements in the show are more subtle than others. The Truman Show includes a lot of minor details, such as the 'product placements' and other things that seem to hint or elaborate on the situation in Seaheaven. These minor details usually go into any “television shots” in the movie and are portrayed through posters or images in the background or are introduced with character interaction. This is once again a clever commentary on our society: profit made by product placement leading to the constant control of what we buy through the media. This might seem as brainwashing in a sense.

One of the most notable sequences in ‘The Truman Show’ is the scene where viewers for the first time get to observe the control centre of the studio. In Seaheaven, this is the moment when Truman interacts with Christof for the first time. In those scenes we see Christof directly picking the camera shots and the angles, choosing when to cut, queuing the music etc. The scene is the power of the media. This moment illustrates how through smart camera placement, editing and music. Media, in general, can make any moment appear not the way it really is/was, but the way they want it to appear, even in reality TV.

Truman’s meeting with Christof that was shown on TV was more melodramatic than the real encounter was. Christof, or the symbol of the all-powerful media, manipulates the viewer’s

feelings and tries his hardest to gain the emotional reaction he needs to achieve higher ratings. This seems like something any sort of reality TV would do to increase ratings and viewers' immersion into the show.

The film's style and tone also contribute to masking the truth from Truman. Several shots are shown where it seems hidden cameras are recording what he is doing (oval-shaped vignette shots and fisheye lens shots). This filming style of using hidden (to Truman) cameras, as well as point of view shots, once again represent the power Christof has over Truman’s life. It is proven that Christof, the show producer, can invade Truman’s privacy and in that way has the option to chose when to use his point of view to construct a narrative to entertain the audience watching ‘The Truman Show’.

Once again, this implies that the media has the power to construct narratives by choosing what to include and what not to include in a specific composition to achieve a response they seek from their audience.

In conclusion, it would be important to say that using cinematography, The Truman Show was able to add plausibility, suspense, humour, and distinction to the plot and that without the attention to detail that the film producers put into the cinematography, The Truman Show wouldn’t be as highly regarded as it is today.