



Getting to Know...

Component 2B:

Vogue and The Big Issue

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Teacher's Introduction

This resource has been written for the Eduqas Media Studies A Level specification (A680QS), with a specific focus on Component 2 Media Forms and Products in Depth: Section B: Magazines – Mainstream and Alternative Media – Option 3: *Vogue* (July 1965) (Conde Nast) and *The Big Issue* (Oct 17–23 2016, No.1227) (Dennis & The Big Issue Ltd).

As a 'Getting to Know' pack, this resource has been constructed to actively engage students with the source material through a range of stimulating, focused and entertaining magazine-style articles exploring different topics across the media frameworks and theories. Discussion tasks are included throughout to recap knowledge. At the end of the resource, we have also included a range of more challenging essay-style questions for students to test their learning.

The structure of the pack is as follows:

1. What Should I Know? – A brief overview of the key facts/information of both set products.
2. Getting to Know... *Vogue* and *The Big Issue* – 20 articles on a variety of topics (9 on each separate text, 2 comparative articles) such as the production background, aesthetics, key themes, cultural context. Here we have tried to focus on more niche aspects of the texts that may not have been covered by textbooks, in order to broaden students' understanding.
3. Show What You Know – 5 to 10 essay-style questions across a range of difficulty levels on the set products, complete with an answer section.

The aim of this resource is to provide variety for the students who may feel overloaded by textbooks and other learning materials with a solely academic writing style. The blend of informative content and entertaining presentation style will help not only to strengthen a student's knowledge of the texts, but also to foster a genuine interest in the texts.

November 2019

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What Should I Know?

Vogue

A brief history of the *Vogue* franchise

- Founded in 1892 by Arthur Turnure as a fashion and society magazine for women
- Bought by Condé Nast in 1909, who expanded the magazine's circulation, and strengthened the brand hugely across the United States.
- The magazine franchise expanded outside of the USA, and there are now 23 internationally in Britain, Italy, France, Spain, Thailand, Russia, and many others.

Key figure: Diana Vreeland

- Diana Vreeland became editor of *Vogue* in 1963, after previously having worked at *Harper's Bazaar*, another premium lifestyle and fashion magazine (and a direct competitor to *Vogue*).
- Vreeland was a Polish-American woman born into a wealthy family, and she was a part of the New York socialite scene long before she worked in fashion publishing.
- Vreeland was known to embrace the more vibrant, playful and colourful visuals of the 1960s as well as equally encouraging staff writers and designers to be creative.
- Under the helm of Diana Vreeland, the content of *Vogue's* articles and editorial photoshoots began to feature relatively more affordable and current clothing.

What's it all about?

What does this edition of *Vogue* actually contain?

- **Front-cover spread featuring a supermodel or celebrity** – Getting your face on the cover is a sign that you've truly made it, whether through fame or through fashion. The cover features Sophia Loren, a Hollywood 'starlet' actress of the era (July 1965). This was the first 'golden era' of mainstream global filmmaking – her equivalent today would be someone such as Natalie Portman or Scarlett Johansson.
- **Picture editorial section 'Picnics'** – The large double-page image spread was a feature of *Vogue*. These sections feature staged photographs based on a certain design theme (for instance, picnics) where the clothing, setting and composition have been carefully chosen. Each section includes a description of the clothes, their designers and where they can be bought in the UK.
- **Advice and lifestyle columns** – The magazine features columns from commentators relating to the *Vogue* lifestyle, such as the 'Money' column, where a journalist shares her own personal opinion on how to invest large amounts of money smartly, or columns relating to an event or a topic, but are short sections of personal opinion.
- **Adverts and advertorials** – A significant portion of *Vogue's* content is dedicated to advertising fashion and cosmetic brands, as well as sponsored advertorials. There is no charge for brands to post their own adverts, but *Vogue's* pages are highly valuable and desirable.

The Big Issue



A brief history of *The Big Issue* franchise

- *The Big Issue* was influenced by charities that employed homeless people to sell newspapers.
 - Founded in 1991, initially only sold in London.
 - Became franchised internationally from 1995, including Australia, lately branching into other countries like South Africa, Kenya, and a number of others.
 - The Big Issue Foundation is the charity which uses the profits from the magazine to help improve the lives of homeless people.
- As of 2016, the magazine was published weekly with an average circulation of 1.5 million copies and a cover price of £2.50.
 - Vendors buy directly from the company at half price and keep the remainder.

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This particular edition of *The Big Issue*

If you hadn't guessed by the whacking great '25 years' graphic on the front cover, this edition marks the quarter-centennial anniversary of the magazine. To celebrate and reflect on its impact, there are a number of infographics, articles and features all discussing the impact of the magazine.

- **Editor's letter** – a brief section from the editor about the 25th anniversary, and the magazine's goals for the future.
- **Letter to My Younger Self** – a section where a celebrity, politician or public figure writes to themselves as a teenager, offering an insight into their lives and thoughts.
- **Infographics** – facts and figures about the 25 years of publishing displayed in an eye-catching, colourful format.
- **My Pitch** – a page-long interview with one of the organisation's vendors, letting them tell their troubles, and other aspects of their personalities.
- **Classifieds** – a section for adverts, job listings, calls to action, and contact information for prospective employers.



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Getting to Know...

1. En Vogue – The Early History of the Magazine

Strange beginnings

Despite being known the world over as a women's fashion and lifestyle magazine, *Vogue* actually began life in 1892 as a newspaper targeted towards a male readership. Founded by wealthy businessman Arthur Turnure, it was aimed at the 'urbane man about town'. The paper was supposed to be a refined and sophisticated publication that focused on the finer things in life – specifically style trends and fashion – an ideal that remains today.

After a decade or so, a decision was made to ditch the male-readers-only approach and create a sexier product. However, the publishers were still adamant in only targeting the upper class.

Condé Nast

If it weren't for an American publishing magnate named Condé Montrose Nast, *Vogue* probably would never have expanded beyond the city of New York. In 1909, *Vogue* changed hands and was bought by Condé Montrose Nast, who managed to hugely expand the reach and profitability of *Vogue*.

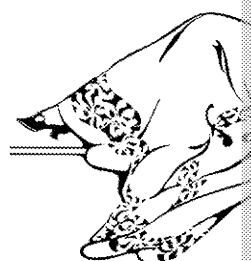
Over the next few decades, Nast introduced advanced modern printing techniques that helped to make the magazine one of the most high-quality printed texts on the market, with high production values.

Condé Montrose Nast died in 1942 but Condé Nast Inc. has gone on to become a major force in the publishing industry and still owns and publishes *Vogue* to this day.

Competition in 1963

The fact that *Vogue* is still a major player in the world of high fashion and lifestyle magazines is a testament to the company managed to weather the storm of intense competition. Let's look at the top spot in the cut-throat world of lifestyle magazines in the mid 1960s:

- **Woman** – a UK publication that had been running since 1937, but was skewed towards fashion, interest, gossip, and home décor, and was aimed at a more middle-class target audience.
- **Harper's Bazaar** – possibly the most credible threat to *Vogue's* dominance of the fashion magazine world. The magazine was also focused on style and fashion, marketed at the same affluent upper-class demographic as *Vogue*.
- **Elle** – born in France after the end of WWII, *Elle* was another major competitor to *Vogue* in the USA, with a similar target audience and the perceived added style credentials of being European.
- **Cosmopolitan** – surprisingly, *Cosmopolitan* began life three decades before *Vogue* but was focused on books and literature, eventually evolving into a style and lifestyle magazine for women. *Cosmopolitan* had (and still has) higher monthly circulation figures than *Vogue*, due to the much broader target audience and more diverse range of content.



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Readership/circulation figures in 1963

The exact stats about how many copies of *Vogue* were being flicked through in 1963 are hard to work from what we do know. The 1960s was one of the decades in which the print industry was at its peak in terms of popularity, and *Vogue* was a company with strong financial backing, a reputation for quality and a dedicated core target market.

The Pew Research Center, an American academic organisation that runs studies in the USA, has provided the estimated circulation numbers of all newspapers in the USA since the 1940s. The total of newspapers (weekday and Sunday editions) being sold every week was in the region of 4 billion.

It's not an exact science and these figures are for newspapers, not magazines, but it does shine through that 1963 would have been a strong year for *Vogue's* circulation figures.

Discussion Questions

- 1) Before being purchased by Condé Nast in 1909, what might have limited the appeal of *Vogue*?
- 2) Apart from print, what other forms of traditional media also existed in 1909?
- 3) Do you think *Vogue* would have survived without being bought by a parent company (such as Condé Nast)?

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2. Old Money – The Culture and Social Class that

With an illustrious history stretching back over 125 years, it's not a huge leap of faith to say that New York was a very different place when the first issues of *Vogue* hit the news stands of the city.

In American society of the time, New York was regarded as the centre of 'high society' and was home to an extraordinarily wealthy playboys and socialites of the upper class. Being the first major city on the east coast after traversing the stormy waters of the Atlantic, the east coast is home to the oldest cities in the United States. Cities such as Plymouth, Boston, Williamsburg, and others along the east coast were founded and well-established before the Declaration of Independence in 1776. Universities such as Harvard and Yale became prestigious and steeped in tradition, much like Cambridge and Oxford in the UK. In the US, where age came with wealth, power and heritage, and New York in particular was home to many of the country's elite.

Vogue, especially in the very early days, was the publication of this wealthy urban socialite. *Vogue* was for the people who wanted to know the cool, the latest, the fashion, the speakeasies (secret bars, originally bars from the days when alcohol was outlawed), the elegant places, the stars, the people who jetted off around the world.

The American upper class in 1963 and beyond

By 1963, society had evolved, as it inevitably does. The flappers and playboy socialites of the roaring twenties were long gone, and in their place were the Hollywood starlets (such as Sophia Loren, who features on the cover of the July 1963 issue) and the sun-drenched beaches of southern California on the USA's west coast. Modern celebrity culture had overtaken the idea of the silver-spoon socialite, and the East Coast was no longer the place to be.

By 1963, international air travel was feasible, but by no means cheap. In the days before you could get a £50 round trip to Lanzarote so long as you don't mind being wedged into a tiny seat right next to the toilet, holidaying around the world was a luxury solely enjoyed by the very wealthy – exactly the sort of people that *Vogue* wanted to appeal to. You can clearly see this in the feature spread of models living life to the fullest under the Egyptian sun, horseback riding with a shirtless dude, and enjoying a family picnic in the shade of a European forest. *Vogue* was for a crowd of young, wealthy Americans with few responsibilities and a lot of cash.

By this decade, both West and East Coasts were seen as being equally desirable for the rich. The West boasted the glamour of Hollywood, So Cal beaches and glorious sun, whereas the East offered tradition, prestigious colleges, and familiarity. Nowadays, there is still a split between the extremely wealthy, powerful 'coastal elites' and the regular populace of 'Middle America' but the distinct difference between the coasts no longer matters.

Socialite – a person who is very fond of socialising and partying, especially one who is more popular in the upper class.

Elitism – social-class discrimination against people in the upper class, especially those who are more than those in the middle class.

Elitism in this era of *Vogue*

We've gone over the broad strokes of what elitism is, but if this was a court of law, it might be thrown out for not having any concrete evidence. There's no smoking gun, but a column titled '12 Reasons Why Only Wealthy People Should Read this Magazine', but much of the content definitely smacks of snobbery.

- **The 'Money' column** – money and class are inextricably intertwined, especially in the US, which doesn't have an aristocracy (a royal family). If this column was about how to live on a tight budget, then you could say that it was targeted towards working- and middle-class people. The case. This is about investing in stocks, a luxury that someone on an average salary could not afford to do. But if, like one of the women whom Black refers to in the column,

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with and possibly lose, then you're going to be in the social elite. By the way, a reasonable amount, but in 1963 that's actually around £200,000 in today's money.

- **Picnic editorial** – this section opens with a Victorian painting of posh women on the grass. Elitist views are very dependent upon **tradition** and **heritage**, mainly because the upper class has been a dominant force in world history for centuries. Including this picnic could definitely be seen as *Vogue* drawing upon these associations of tradition to create an image as a prestige magazine.

Tradition, placing an importance on having wealth, and associating the ideal *Vogue* with wealthy, posh people (with no criticism of their connection to colonialism or exploitation) are aspects of the magazine that could most certainly be classed as being **elitist**.

Discussion Questions

- 1) Elitism could be said to show a binary opposition of **rich versus poor**
 - a. What other binary opposition is connected to this idea of **rich versus poor**?
 - b. Why could this binary opposition be described as imbalanced?
- 2) Why do you think sexism was more present in 1963 compared to the present day?
- 3) Why is elitism often connected with racist views? Consider the historical context of who is

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3. *Vogue*: Catwalk to Catalogues

Vogue's relationship with 'high fashion'

Considering that the very title of the publication comes from the French phrase 'la mode', it is not a coincidence that *Vogue* and the world of high fashion are inextricably intertwined.

Nowadays we have a much wider variety of sources of inspiration when it comes to fashion. People weren't scrolling through Instagram on their coffee break for style tips, they were flipping through *Vogue*. If you wanted a new outfit to wear on your next holiday, why not flip through the editorial features? Or the 'Heatwave' editorial for summer beach attire (designed clothing and accessories listed and priced, just in case you decided purchasing them was probably had the money to do because you were reading *Vogue*).

Representation of women in fashion

Beyond *Vogue's* relationship with the wider fashion world of modelling, catwalks, and exhibitions, women have been criticised – exponentially so in recent years – for being 'out of touch' with everyday people, especially in the beauty standards presented as being ideal. Considering that, from the perspective of an advertiser, models are essentially a marketing tool to sell clothes, the way in which women are portrayed and objectified in fashion is a contentious issue. Do these models represent an aspirational goal of 'beauty', or are they representative of how media and marketing often prey upon the insecurities of audiences to sell products?

Liesbet van Zoonen, a feminist theorist and academic, put forward the idea of how the female form is presented as 'spectacle', something presented for a (specifically male) spectator to observe and objectify like a sculpture in an art gallery. She also takes the position that this way of showing women in such a sexualised way in imagery and art is so pervasive in our society that even content that is supposedly marketed towards women still appeals to the male spectator. In contemporary issues of *Vogue*, the models are often featured in much more revealing outfits and suggestive imagery. Some could argue that this is hit and miss when it comes to the photographs of women; that women in films and television in the 1960s were much more overtly sexualised today, this is unusual. This restraint might be indicative of how *Vogue* is fashioned at a (presumed heterosexual) female audience where the physical attractiveness is aspirational rather than attractive – the intended audience is supposed to want to

'Heatwave Holiday' section

This section is probably the most sexualised depiction of women in this edition of *Vogue*. In the 1960s, values were more conservative when it came to women showing skin. So while it may seem tame to us as a modern audience, this would have been pretty spicy in 1963.

The third image, a full-page spread, features a slim Caucasian woman reclining on a white surface, her body outstretched and her legs angled into the camera lens with a subtle expression. Her blonde hair is styled in a classic 1960s fashion, while her wide eyes are lined with smoky eyeliner, and she wears a black sleeveless top. The back wall are two photographs of another female model in expressive poses.

The final image is another full-page spread of the same model; this time she is dressed in slim-fit white (or grey) trousers, and an elaborate hat. She sports the same hair and makeup as the previous shoot, as well as looking down the camera with the same neutral gaze. She leans against a wall, her chest and the other leg posed on her hip purposefully.

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You could make the argument that *Vogue* is a fashion magazine, and that this section depicts women in a way that is visually appealing for the female audience. Equally, you could argue that as the magazine is targeted at women, their depiction of the woman might not be about creating an aspirational image. However you personally view the section, it's clear that the model is still very much the focus of the images, and these choices have all been made by the producers of *Vogue*. The depiction of stereotypical feminine visuals such as make-up and wearing clothes that are revealing, signifies how *Vogue* was adding to the media representation of women in the 1960s.

Can fashion ever be non-objectifying?

So high fashion, fashion photography, and the world of modelling have a lot of issues when it comes to representing women in a way that doesn't sexually objectify them or perpetuate stereotypes. How, then, do modern creators undo this damage?

For a start, unlike in 1963, there are now models that don't fall into the traditional mould. Models such as Ashley Graham, Janina Lawrence, or Winnie Harlow, a Canadian model with vitiligo (where patches of skin lose all colour), are a few examples of successful models who challenge conventional beauty standards. But this progress has been very recent, and the industry is still under fire and criticism often, so whether that goal of representing real people (especially women) is ever completely achieved remains to be seen.

Discussion Questions

- 1) Argue the below statements on the representation of women in the July 1963 edition of *Vogue*.
 - a. *Vogue* **does** sexually objectify women
 - b. *Vogue* **does not** sexually objectify women
- 2) Why do you think the editors of *Vogue* chose Sophia Loren for the front cover?
- 3) Do you think this issue of *Vogue* represents a fixed or fluid representation of gender identity?

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4. Buy Your Way to a Better Life – *Vogue* and Consumerism

What is 'consumerism'?

On the surface, *Vogue* is about fashion, beauty, and living a certain lifestyle. But many of these characteristics are tied into the idea of *consumerism*.

Consumerism is an aspect of a **capitalist** society and can be summed up as the ideal that 'buying more things will make you happy', and also refers to how businesses and advertisers repeatedly convey this message to consumers through the media. But, of course, you will never reach the end goal of a perfect life through consumerism, as there will always be a new, fancier product released that makes you feel inferior and keeps the cycle of longing and spending going.

People in support of consumerism would claim that an economy where customers have access to a wide choice of products is beneficial to the general public. Many firms have to compete to offer the best product for a reasonable price, or risk failing to make a profit and potentially ceasing completely. Previously, in the earlier days of consumer goods, fewer major companies could control the market and charge whatever they wanted.

The advertising industry is a key component of a consumerist society. Without appealing adverts, how are the public going to know which new shiny thing they should spend three months' rent on so they can look cool until the Shiny Thing comes out? First, you have to create awareness or cultivate desire.

Nowadays, criticism of consumerism is much more prevalent in mainstream discourse than it has been pretty much restricted to people on the fringes of society (beatniks, artists, etc.) in the 1960s, the rules and regulations about what advertisers could claim about the benefits of their products are a lot looser than they are today. Contemporary adverts on television often use language like 'can make you feel...', 'contributes towards', for example) but isn't actually true. In 1963? Well, they could pretty much just lie.

Is *Vogue* consumerist?

On the surface, *Vogue's* ideology about appreciating 'the finer things in life' could be seen as a simple enthusiasm for visual beauty and **aesthetic** pleasure in life. But scratch this veneer away and you uncover that this is inseparably entwined with the idea of spending money and buying things. We live in a world where 'beautiful' things are generally the most expensive. Precious metals, gemstones, rare artwork, prime locations for houses, designer clothing, etc. are all deemed to be worth a lot of money because of their durability or rarity, and in turn become symbols of status and power of whoever owns them. Palaces, temples and castles throughout history were all lavishly decorated in gold and art for this very reason, as a display of wealth and importance.

Ultimately, *Vogue* presents an idea to its readers that wealth and buying products (clothes, make-up, jewellery) are status symbols and that they can make you feel happier and more important. Making use of the media process of **combination**, fashion magazines combine the clothes they are trying to sell with the imagery of happy, beautiful people to make you feel like you are partially responsible for this happiness you can see. They **conflate** the product with the lifestyle is an artificial construct that you can never really achieve.

Whether or not you personally agree with the ideology of consumerism, it's hard to deny that advertising creates a need but never really fills it.

Capitalism is an economic system where the means of production are privately owned and operated for profit.



Aesthetic refers to the quality of being pleasing to the senses, especially the eye, and the style or taste of an object or person.

Combination is the process of combining different elements or features to create a new one.

Conflate is to mix or blend together, especially in a way that is unrelatable or unrelated to the original purpose.

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Revlon Advert

Cosmetics are a huge part of *Vogue's* content, because your face needs to be as good as your clothing. This full-page ad is comprised of a stylised photo (or illustration) of a woman's face with make-up, with the lower half being filled with text shouting about just how great Revlon is. Amongst the text are full-colour images of the brushes, tubes, and other make-up products.

The language used is very emotive and expressive – ‘a great feminine art’, ‘dramatic and beguiling!’ – with a clear focus on beauty and sensuality. But equally, the advert encourages you to improve your own appearance with Revlon's products. ‘To make your own eyelashes all longer...’ is a strong example of how the advert combines the descriptive language of beauty with the imperative that you can improve your appearance by buying ‘Fabulash’.

The advert subtly creates an insecurity about the reader's own appearance, and offers a path to improvement. Of course, the path is to use Revlon's products, which are available in shops to buy these brushes and tubes. It's not to cry when you realise that nothing is perfect.

Discussion Questions

- 1) Do you think the Revlon advert appeals to a reader's emotions or their rational thoughts? Explain your answer.
- 2) Could consumerism exist without advertising? Explain your answer.
- 3) For a magazine such as *Vogue*, what effect do the adverts they choose to run have with their audience?

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5. Aesthetics and Design of *Vogue*

Typography

Typography is a subtle medium, and you often only consciously notice it when it is used poorly or jarringly. As *Vogue* is a printed publication, the editors will have a style guide for how text is to be formatted, what fonts are used for headings and body text, how images are captioned, and many other aspects.

Serif
flourish
style
being

- **Serif title 'Vogue' font** – the iconic title font has clear retro art deco influences such as having both thick and very thin lines with sharp angles. This font is still used the same to this day, and has become a key part of the art deco-inspired aesthetic.
- **Serif headline and body font** – much of the content on the pages of *Vogue* uses serif fonts. In modern magazines, there is far less use of serif fonts. In the appearance of text on the pages of *Vogue*, publications use sans serif fonts – fonts without the extra strokes at the end of letters – for large portions of the copy.

Imagery

As *Vogue* is a style magazine, imagery is often centred on the theme of traditionally feminine beauty. The front cover is a model's face with a distinctive make-up look, a bejewelled headdress, and an assortment of jewellery, all of which is linked together by a **cerulean** blue colour scheme.

The intention of the photographs is clear – they are staged and represent an aspirational lifestyle of affluence, and, naturally, beauty. Unlike a newspaper, where photos would be a secondary content, or a magazine such as *National Geographic*, where the photos are supposed to be educational, *Vogue* uses imagery to portray an ideal way of life. You could easily make the argument that the photos in a copy of the magazine are very similar in nature and intention to photos posted by influencers on social media.

Technical limitations of print media in the 1960s

If you've ever seen Steven Spielberg's 1975 film *Jaws* (and if you haven't, you definitely should), you have noticed that the famous shark is rarely seen on screen in the first hour of the film, building up the tension. But in reality, this was a happy accident that came about because the shark was broken and could not be used in the early stages of shooting. What does this have to do with print media? Well it goes to show that the form and content of many pieces of media are often limited by their technical and limitations, and *Vogue* is no different.

At the time of release in 1963, print media as an industry was well established. The technology for stamping ink onto parchment was made in the early 15th century, and over those several hundred years the technology had slowly become more refined and more cost-effective.

In the sixties, printing was still a mechanical process. Offices around the world would have been filled with the *clack clack zzzipp* of typewriters, and large-scale printing required a huge amount of hardware. Ink itself is a costly resource, being made up of a variety of chemicals and expensive to produce, and reproducing vivid colour was a difficult feat at the time. So, the fact that this edition of *Vogue* uses colour sparingly compared to modern magazines is a stylistic choice that was also a financial and technical choice. If the editors in 1963 decided to use as much colour and imagery as a modern copy of *Vogue*, the cost to produce it would be astronomical.

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Colours

The front cover is printed in full colour, something that would have been essential to compete with other similar prestige magazines. Newspapers were still printed in black and white, so it is a classy affair for classy people and only the best will do.

Vogue in 1963 didn't have a set colour scheme for front covers, and the colour of the Sophia Loren photo influences the colour of the title. The predominant colours are her skin tone, complemented by the bright (but not neon) blue of her headdress and a pale blue background that doesn't overpower or clash with the rest of the image.

Allow me to get very cynical for a moment, but you might have realised that there's no *Vogue* printed in colour consistently. You guessed it! It's the adverts! Advertising is a business, and it's not hugely surprising that these large organisations have spent a great amount of money on their ads stamped on the page in beautiful, vibrant colours.

You could argue that the cost of colour printing – an expensive technical thing to do at the time – was sparingly used to highlight the most **commercially important** aspects of the magazine. The stylish people in, and the cash from advertisers for full-colour spreads keeps the lights on for the next month.

Discussion Questions

- 1) What limiting factors to typography would exist in 1963?
- 2) As mentioned in the article, modern magazines typically use sans serif fonts for article titles. How has this convention become established?
- 3) Analyse the design of the front cover:
 - a. What does the image convey through visual and technical codes?
 - b. How have typography and design been used to create meaning?
 - c. How does this front cover compare to contemporary fashion magazines?

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6. The Writing Style of *Vogue*

Pulling back the curtain

Let me briefly take you behind the scenes of professional writing. As a writer, one has to do (alongside drinking copious amounts of coffee, stretching your wrists every 15 minutes and resisting the urge to throw your laptop in a river) is to follow a *style guide*.

A style guide is essentially a list of guidelines to follow to fit in with the *house style* of a publication. How you have no doubt been taught to write essays in an academic style (no slang, no contractions, no capitalisation, etc.) these guides help make the linguistic choices consistent across a publication. *Vogue's brand identity* is very carefully constructed, and naturally the use of grammar and vocabulary is different.

Specialised vocabulary

Language is not only a method of communication but it is also a powerful social tool. People can be distinguished by use of language – technical or specific terminology is used in the education of a profession. Doctors and medical professionals talk in very complex terms, lawyers and judges make use of a whole host of Latin phrases.

With *Vogue*, a magazine marketed at a specific social class and known for being 'exclusive', the **lexical** choices of the writers and editors also reflect a level of said exclusivity. The technical language of fashion and cosmetics is used (e.g. parasols, lace, complexion), but so are exclusive brand names (Fortnum & Mason, Otto Lucas, Revlon), all of which indicates a fashionista. Being 'in the know' about the best designers and brands can be a point of personal pride in high fashion, and this exclusivity of knowledge can be seen through these lexical choices included – if you don't, then you're not the reader that *Vogue* wants.

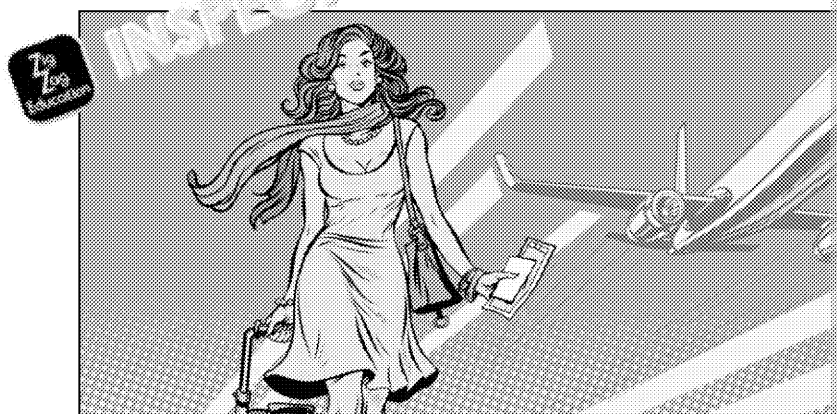
Lexical
vocabulary

The language of luxury and of the upper class

Vogue is all about style, luxury and comfort, and this is reflected in the choice of words used by their staff writers.

Equally, the 'Money' column, written by Sheila Black of the *Financial Times*, features a host of linguistic features that signify the upper-class target audience of the magazine. Aside from the content that talks about the best way to invest spare cash you have lying around your mansion, the writer uses 'one' as a neutral third-person pronoun ('Whether one's expectation...'). In contemporary usage, the use of 'one' is a linguistic feature strongly associated with the British upper class, and it is now pretty much only used by the Queen and by comedians doing impressions of her.

The 'one'
for using
pronouns
typical
aristocracy



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The 'Money' column

Let's carry on with taking a fine-toothed comb to the 'Money' column. For *Vogue* finance and economics might feel out of place, but the way that the author frames and their use of language brings it right in line with the luxury lifestyle ethos of the magazine. But this isn't a dry analysis of economic trends or an explanation of what the hell the terms actually are; no, this is sage advice on how ultra-wealthy people can wisely invest their money in art, bars and diamonds without having to stoop anything as low and un-glamorous as 'charity' or 'helping the poor'.

Writer Sheila Black opens with a short introduction of her experience with the question of how to wisely spend and invest large amounts of money. She mentions how she gets asked specific questions such as '... what can I buy with £500,000?' and how many of her friends have excess money but just leave it lying around in a bank account until they fancy buying something. This is much in line with that *Vogue* lifestyle of opulence and surrounding yourself with luxury.

These economic ideas are being discussed in very formal and sophisticated language aimed at an audience of university-educated women. Phrases such as 'wifely privilege', 'must be an intrinsic value' are examples of this, which are coupled with specific technical terms such as 'guarantor', 'dividend', and 'transactions'. *Vogue* is not an academic publication, but this exemplifies how language is used to appeal to its wealthy, university-educated target audience.

Discussion Questions

- 1) How does *Vogue's* tone of voice compare to that of *The Big Issue*?
- 2) Why does a consistent tone of voice matter for a publication when it comes to building a brand?
- 3) What social and cultural factors might affect how the writers and editors of *Vogue* use language? What factors have?

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7. Criticism of *Vogue*

Vogue (and the fashion industry at large) has been the subject of scrutiny and criticism for decades. In 1963, the general public had fewer outlets to voice their complaints and societal attitudes were less open and accepting than they are today. But criticism is a common phenomenon, and the issues that are being discussed now are nothing new either.

Lack of racial diversity

America in 1963 was forced to confront the ugly truth of how African Americans had been treated for centuries, and the civil rights movement, led by activists such as Martin Luther King Jr and Malcolm X, was campaigning for equality. The media, including publishing, was not a racially diverse place, and *Vogue* was no different. Despite editor Diana Vreeland's more open and less uptight (for lack of a better word) approach to editing the magazine, *Vogue* was still part of 'the establishment'.

Race and feminism theorist bell hooks might view *Vogue* in 1963 as an example of the *white supremacist patriarchy* that she posits exists in the Western world. In the same year in which men and women of colour were marching on Washington DC for their basic human rights, an upper-class white woman was the editor of a major publication.



Dr Martin Luther King Jr

In this issue, there are virtually no women of colour featured. The 'Picnic' editorials feature a white model in Egypt dressed in local clothing as a traditional boat floats down the Nile. The frame is a white man dressed in a suit, presumably a travel companion of the model. The man is an Egyptian man operating the boat who is clearly not the focal point of the image. The argument that the frequent use of 'holiday' imagery was a method of incorporating diversity while still using exclusively white models.

Vogue and its various international editions are still occasionally criticised for treating people of colour. *Vogue Italia* was accused of 'blackface' (i.e. a non-black person cosmetically darkening their skin) when model Gigi Hadid appeared on the cover with 'heavily bronzed' skin and mo

Impossible beauty standards and poor representation of women

Fashion has long been notorious for showcasing a very narrow selection of women, typically conventionally beautiful, especially with regards to how women are represented. Women having typically feminine facial features are presented as the 'goal'.

Critics outline that magazines such as *Vogue* present impossibly high standards of beauty. This representation is repeated so much, that the average viewer begins to compare themselves to the women they see depicted.

The adverts featured in the magazine also show a very stereotypical view of women. Two examples are the Cutex and Imperial Leather ads respectively.

- **Cutex** – here we see a woman with a naive femininity; a blonde model with pink lipstick, pink hair, and long blonde hair falls over her bare shoulder, and she clutches a flower in her hand. The quip in the text implies that the model is nude beyond the frame, and it sexualises her femininity. As femininity is very focused on conventional attractiveness, the colour pink (often associated with women), and make-up.
- **Imperial Leather** – here we see a woman, presumably in her 30s, with middle-aged features and a young child with a loving smile on her face. The neat hairstyle, the black jumpsuit, and the focus solely on the child (who is looking up to the light) presents a stereotypical image of a mother. There would be an expectation on the mother to raise the children instead of focusing on her appearance, and this is an idea that the advertisers are reinforcing through this image.

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Exploitation in the fashion industry

Vogue is a huge supporter of high-fashion designers, but the industry has been criticised for a variety of levels. Models have long been subject to intense pressure to be thin, which in turn has been connecting to a culture where eating disorders and drug problems are common.

Equally, many of the designers and fashion houses that *Vogue* has had close and long-term relationships with have been criticised for exploitation of workers, plagiarism of designs, and the use of unethical materials in their products. *Vogue's* open endorsements of these companies and the industry as a whole have also come under scrutiny and criticism. Vanity at the expense of the pain and suffering of others is a common theme.

Discussion Questions

- 1) On the front cover of the July 1963 edition of *Vogue*, Italian actress Sophia Loren is shown in a swimsuit.
 - a. How might audiences in the 1960s view this with regards to race and ethnicity?
 - b. How might contemporary audiences view this?
- 2) Do you think *Vogue* should be criticised for the actions of the fashion industry, or not? Explain your answer.
- 3) *Vogue* has been criticised for being *elitist*.
 - a. What does the term 'elitism' mean?
 - b. Why might *Vogue* be described as elitist? Consider how race, gender and social class are represented in the magazine.

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8. The Evolution of *Vogue*

Global franchising

Following on from 1963, *Vogue* (under the ownership of Condé Nast Inc.) has remained a key title in the fashion magazine segment, expanding into new areas and global markets.

The NYC-based original itself still remains, but now the American cultural institution has fractured into a number of international franchises, like McDonald's but much snobbier. In the 1960s, *Vogue* did not have the widespread global reach it has today but instead had built up a couple of very strong international versions.

- ***Vogue Italia* (1964 to present)** – the first offshoot of the original has become renowned for producing high-quality fashion editorials and shoots with some of the most sought after designers and models in the world. Italy has always been a place known for artistry and has produced some of the most well-known fashion houses (Versace, Gucci, Prada, etc.) in the world, which has been carried over into *Vogue Italia*.
- ***British Vogue* (1916 to present)** – the second oldest part of the *Vogue* franchise after the takeover by Condé Nast. *British Vogue* is much the same as the original, focusing on British fashion and society, as well as a larger amount of advertising content. Figures for the British offshoot clock in at around 220,000 per month.
- ***Vogue Australia* (1952 to present)** – despite the colossal distance, Australia has a close relationship to both European and American culture. *Vogue Australia* is the youngest of the brand, having been subsequently purchased by the Murdoch family's News Corp.

Teen *Vogue*

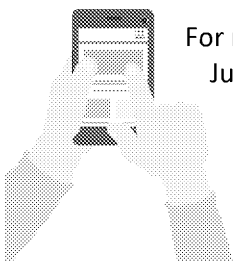
As well as aiming to appeal to different audiences internationally, Condé Nast has also expanded its target demographic to a younger market with *Teen Vogue*, which was first published in 1989.

Surprisingly, *Teen Vogue* has recently (since around 2015/16 following a major change in editorial staff) become renowned as an unexpected source of investigative journalism into a range of charged and controversial content, including stories on feminism, immigration, human rights and other news topics.

Teen Vogue also has a much larger presence on social media outlets than its adult counterpart, clearly indicating the younger demographic to which *Teen Vogue* is aiming to appeal.

Online content

Vogue, unsurprisingly, has also had to move with the times and increase its output. Many of the same stories and features are also now available online without a paywall, surprisingly, at least on a delay so that there is still an incentive to subscribe. Videos specially made by *Vogue* often showcasing behind-the-scenes footage of cover shoots, interviews, tutorials and more. Celebrities and models are the subject of many of these videos, which is hardly surprising given *Vogue* as a fashion and lifestyle brand.



For media outlets that transitioned onto the Internet, the pivot date is often unclear. In July 2019, the *Vogue Beauty* Instagram account faced heavy criticism and news outlets for a post that featured a photo of a model celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Manson family cult murders as being the start of new fashion trends. Had this been published in a magazine in the pre-digital era, it would have got away unscathed except for a few rage-filled

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Discussion Questions

- 1) Why do you think Condé Nast Inc. decided to expand the *Vogue* franchise into different countries? Consider the following factors:
 - a. Industrial and economic reasons
 - b. Audience appeal
- 2) Why has *Vogue* decided to produce videos as well as articles, considering the brand's history?
- 3) What changes in dominant social ideologies might have affected the popularity of *Vogue*? Consider the following:
 - a. Changes in attitudes towards social class
 - b. Changes in attitudes towards race and ethnicity
 - c. Changes in attitudes concern femininity



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9. *The Big Issue* as a Humanitarian Publication

If you were to ask a passer-by on the street about *The Big Issue*, chances are that they'd be able to tell you about *how* it's sold, but not *what it actually contains*. It's a bit of a media anomaly in that respect, where the method of distribution is much more famous than the actual text. It's sort of the equivalent of knowing what a cinema is but also having no idea what the hell a 'film' is.

Founded in 1991, *The Big Issue* sprang up in London as a result of John Bird and Gordon Riddock's attempt to improve the lives of London's many homeless people by providing them with an income while also bringing awareness to the problem. Gordon Riddock was co-founder of the clothing retailer The Body Shop, and had been involved with a number of charities. John Bird, on the other hand, had experienced the harsh nature of UK poverty himself.



Initially the magazine was solely sold in London, partly due to the fact that both are the capital, but also due to the city's huge number of rough sleepers and vulnerable people. In a metropolitan area of over 7 million people, it's no surprise that London's homeless population is the highest in the UK, but the percentage is also much higher than in the rest of the country. London alone has over 25% of all homeless people in the UK and Northern Ireland, compared to 16% of the total population.

But as the magazine's resources and network grew, it quickly expanded across the country in the following years. Eventually, the magazine became weekly as well as being sold in other parts of the UK, with The Big Issue Foundation being formed in 1995. Since then, international editions have been established in Australia, Japan and numerous African countries.

Vendor programme and anti-homelessness activism

The Big Issue's unique and well-known vendor programme offers homeless people the opportunity to work as sellers, buying the magazines at a reduced price and keeping the rest of the profit.

Although the publishers are eager to take on board and help as many vulnerable people as possible, a *Big Issue* vendor is still a job and the magazine has a list of rules about how to sell and what to avoid doing. Equally, it reserves the right to stop supplying if these rules are broken.

Conventional publications sold to the general public are sold via third-party newsagents, such as grocery stores, WH Smith, or newsagents, but *The Big Issue* eschews this and is sold directly on the high streets around Britain.

An important part of the foundation's ethos is that if you give money to their vendors, you are helping them. The idea behind this is that the people they are helping are not begging, they are valuable, something that is neatly summarised by the company's slogan, 'A hand up, not a hand out.'

Big Issue Invest

Awareness of a problem is valuable, but with action for change it becomes an empowerment. Big Issue Invest is arguably how the foundation is trying to bring about fundamental change not just in helping homeless people *now* but trying to combat the issue of rough sleepers in the first place.

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Started in 2005, this branch of The Big Issue Foundation has been injecting cash at charities and causes around the United Kingdom, as well as working in conjunction with the government to turn back the tide against homelessness.

Criticism

Nothing in this world is without flaws or blemish and *The Big Issue* is no exception.

The content of the magazine has been denigrated as trying to be like a conventional newspaper, saying that *The Big Issue* should be solely focused on anti-homelessness activism. Some critics claim that the magazine's content 'dilutes' the message the magazine aims to convey, or whether the more mainstream features help *The Big Issue* reach more people, is open to debate.

Some commentators have criticised some of the political attitudes of *The Big Issue*. John Bird was made a peer in the House of Lords in 2015. Bird has come out on the public record as a supporter of the Conservative Party. Some critics have claimed that this is 'hypocritical' and has led to a noticeable increase in homelessness since the Conservative government took office.



Discussion Questions

- 1) Why do you think that co-founder John Bird's political alignment as a supporter of the Conservative Party is off-putting for some potential readers? Consider audience psychographics in your response.
- 2) As a media company, what industrial factors might limit how much money *The Big Issue* can raise?
- 3) What does 'humanitarian' mean? How could *The Big Issue* be described as a humanitarian organisation?



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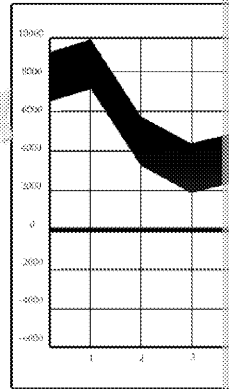


10. The Big Issue that is the Decline of Print Media

Print media has been fighting a losing battle since the Internet became cheaply available at the millennium. Across the world, people have been ditching the paperback and iPad, and newspapers have declined so rapidly that numerous publishers have had to even completely stop printing physical copies. Understanding this wider industry is key to understanding why the survival of *The Big Issue* hangs in the balance.

Why is print failing?

It's not just *The Big Issue* that is struggling, it is the entire industry of print media. But, after being so popular and reliable for almost four centuries, why is the old-fashioned printing press becoming a relic of the old world?



For a start, digital technology has not been a small development, it's something that already existed. In the early days of printing presses that stamped ink onto parchment, ingenious people would come up with some new piece of machinery that refined the process and shifted the goalposts a little bit further. But with smartphones which let you keep an entire library of magazines in your pocket, those goalposts no longer matter – this is a new game.

Unlike television or radio, where the methods of production have remained relatively stable, the way audiences consume it has radically changed, every single aspect of traditional media has moved onto computers.

Limitations of print media

Newspapers have existed since 1690, but for hundreds of years they had little to compete with. Other forms of media arose – television, radio, the Internet – the flaws of print became more apparent.

- **High cost** – producing printed media (books, pamphlets, newspapers, etc.) is expensive, especially for smaller, independent publishers/creators.
- **Resource-intensive** – a large amount of materials and machinery are needed to produce print media, etc.
- **Impracticality** – compared to a smartphone or tablet, a newspaper or magazine performs only one single function.
- **Complicated distribution methods** – physical copies have to be delivered to a physical location.
- **Lack of interactivity** – users can't interact directly with a newspaper, unlike digital content which has videos, links, comment sections, etc.
- **Cost to buy** – a huge amount of digital content is free to access while consuming print media like newspapers and magazines.

The risk-averse nature of print media

One of David Hammar's key assertions about major media companies – why they are so risk-averse. For a person, taking risks is part of being human and you do sometimes (and really stupid) but taking risks as a big business could see stock prices drop, redundancies, or even the whole company going up in metaphorical flames. For a long time, it's often the way to go, and publishing groups such as Condé Nast are likely to do just that.

Part of why traditional newspapers and magazines have been on the decline both in circulation and revenue is that their risk-averse strategies have been unable to adapt to the new digital age. They were not among the early adopters of the Internet in the late 1990s and early 2000s, so they were not able to get in from the ground floor and rake in those digital dollars.

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In 1963, *Vogue* would have also been **risk-averse**, given that it was an established brand from readers. If editor Diana Vreeland had decided to feature a black model on the cover of that edition, this would have likely resulted in controversy and a reduction in sales. It could have changed the title font to a more modern design of the era, or it could have got rid of all the art and devoted to full-page photography. It could have done many risky things because of its financial support, but it didn't. A *Vogue* formula had been perfected, and Vreeland

Does print media deserve to survive?

It sounds like a very melodramatic question, but it is one that has to be asked. If it were possible to create content with fewer restrictions using software, then why would any publisher ever bother

Of course, not everyone has access to smartphones or tablets and equally not everyone has the time to consume content. But is the personal preference of small segments of audiences enough to drive progress?

Like it or not, most of the world is in capitalist societies where companies and industries are run for the benefit of the government. This means that if they are successful then they can get as rich as they want without having to worry about any pesky government officials telling them what to do. On the other side of this is when an industry or company fails and dies. That's their own fault. So, in this regard, you could easily put forward that if traditional print media is failing because of new technology, then that's just the way it is. Who knows, perhaps print media will have a hipster renaissance in 20–30 years in the same way vinyl records did?

Discussion Questions

- 1) What environmental factors might be influencing the decline of print media?
- 2) What advantages does a printed copy of a magazine have over a digital copy?
- 3) Has the shift to digital technology been beneficial or not for smaller/independent creators?

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11. Is *The Big Issue* Countercultural?

You could take the stance that *The Big Issue* is a **countercultural** piece of media, one that takes a look into the under-reported and overlooked areas of British society that other media outlets often shy away from – or even intentionally cover up. But is it actually?

First of all, we need to dissect that term. From the theoretical perspective of Levi-Strauss, the concept of **counterculture** could be classed as being a **binary opposite**. In order to understand what counts as being counterculture, you first need to understand what is 'culture', i.e. you need to know the rules so you can then smash them with a sledgehammer.

Under-reported work

One major feature in this week's edition is the piece on a scheme to involve rough sleepers in a bakery in East London. The scheme's aim is to help select homeless people learn a valuable trade. The page is split between a large photo of two men with *Big Issue* vendor jackets enjoying a slice of cake in the bakery. The reporter, Adam Forrest, includes direct quotes from Graham, one of the vendors being supported by the scheme.

You could make the case that *The Big Issue's* regular reportage of stories and people that would be completely glossed over by mainstream media and society makes the magazine a countercultural text. It's going against the grain of the industry by not reporting on major news, political, celebrity fluff pieces and other conventional content, but by delving into the reality of homeless people's lives in the UK.

Criticism of the status quo

Countercultural movements and media are all tied together by one thing: a strong status quo. The hippie movement of the 1960s and 1970s rejected the straight-laced American society; punk rock was a searing, angry movement of young people disliking the 'you die' modern world; and today's counterculture groups have the Internet as a platform. Whether they were angry, or wanted to escape and be peaceful, these groups all challenge the fundamentals of the everyday world. Does *The Big Issue* express a similar rejection? Not really.

The Big Issue has a strong cause and ideology of a homelessness that underpins its calling for a complete overhaul or rejection of the world. It is more focused on exposing the problem in the twenty-first century and the tone is less of anger and more of insistence on change. Just look at the quotes from the people involved with the scheme:

'It really was a lovely cake and very nice of them to do it – good luck to them all' ... A chance to engage with something positive, learn new skills and hopefully work with Gates, operator of the Rise bakery scheme.

These hardly seem like bleak, pessimistic statements about the unending misery of

Countercultural
critical
mainstream

'the establishment'
used to
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Postmodernism

A lot of counterculture media and artwork is rooted in **postmodern concepts**. Postmodernism, as you know at this point, is a very broad term that incorporates a whole movement across art, literature, film, academia, and so on.

But there are some key unifying ideas and attitudes that link postmodern texts to one another, in particular that are relevant to *The Big Issue*.

- **Cynicism and scepticism** – questioning everything and being distrustful that a better life is a key part of the postmodern approach.
- **Rejecting ‘grand narratives’** – postmodernists reject all grand, overarching narratives about society (for example, ‘humans have improved the world through technology and progress in the universe’).

So, is *The Big Issue* a postmodern text? Well, overall, probably not. For one thing, it's not cynical in the stories it runs, and it presents them (such as the Rise Bakery stories) in a way which are both hopeful and positive (see the articles) and there is a clear undercurrent of hope.

The Big Issue doesn't reject grand narratives about life either. *The Big Issue*'s focus on housing and investment in housing and shelters could be seen as a narrative that ‘changing lives through action’ and that ‘charity can help those less fortunate’. The editor and writers see **things are possible** and for this reason it's safe to say that *The Big Issue* is not a postmodern text.

Whether or not you feel that the magazine is countercultural is up to you, but it's positive and hopeful tone and focus on stories about positive change means that it's **change than criticism**.

Discussion Questions

- 1) Could the concept of ‘being homeless’ be considered a binary opposition? Argue the following.
 - a. Homelessness **is** a binary opposition
 - b. Homelessness **is not** a binary opposition
- 2) If *The Big Issue* was much more critical of the government in its content, do you think this would change your response? Consider audience psychographics in your response.
- 3) What is a key concept integral to any countercultural movement?

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12. Analysis of 'Letter to My Younger Self: Grays (The Big Issue)

Who is Grayson Perry?

Grayson Perry is a British artist who has become notable not just for his prolific work in ceramics but also for his flamboyant cross-dressing and his exuberant personality.

Grayson Perry himself has featured in a variety of television programmes, often on the BBC, exploring the controversial topic of gender identity and clothing. Perry himself is an open transvestite, while also being married with a daughter, and this aspect of his identity is often being explored in his television work and writings.

Letter to My Younger Self series

Letter to My Younger Self is a series that has been run by the magazine for a while, and has featured politicians, musicians, broadcasters and other notable public figures.

The format of writing a letter of advice to yourself as 16-year-old is unconventional, and often elicits emotional responses, on a deeper level than a traditional interview. For example, a politician with a complicated relationship with his now deceased mother who was a '... complicated early beginnings of his experimentation wearing women's clothes, advises his younger self with his emotions, and talks about his reunion with his estranged father.

The decision to ask celebrities about their youth and the important life lessons they have learned has been to humanise these people. It can be hard to relate to celebrities and media personalities, but this series bares their flaws and the difficult parts of their lives. A more conventional newspaper or magazine might focus more on the news surrounding their personal life or maybe a thinly veiled plug for their new album, but this series focuses squarely on the human element.

The Letter to My Younger Self series could be said to draw upon the **star power** of celebrities as a theory of formatting. After all, this is one of the few parts of the magazine that features celebrities for everyday people. Unlike a dedicated celebrity magazine, the appeal for audience is that the format is relatable and allows them to connect with these people on an emotional level. The format on the front cover and social media marketing doesn't lead with the celebrities as being the main focus, so how much **star power** they actually have is open to interpretation.

Layout and typography

The layout of the article uses use of magazine conventions including:

- A large, stylised title making use of a stylised font in a different colour (red)
- Article content split up into two columns.
- The first letter of the article is much larger than the rest of the text, drawing the eye to the start of the piece.
- Bold topic sentences to split up the article into paragraphs, making it more easy to read for readers.
- Colour photographs with descriptive captions that are related to the article content, placed on the page in a way that makes them look like real photos on a physical letter, making it feel less like a magazine feature.

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An unusual typographical feature is how the by-line is much larger than on a conventional newspaper, as is the description below saying 'Colourful potter, textbook dad' as the by-line for Grayson Perry himself. This by-line is a hint to the fact that this story is about the writer rather than the subject of the article. The by-line is a part of the framework of the letter, and reinforces the idea that this celebrity is a person just like you.

Why would *The Big Issue* choose him?

The fact that he is an artist with a distinctive, flamboyant persona with an open attitude to life is what makes him definitely outside of mainstream society, despite his celebrity status. *The Big Issue* is interested in under-reported areas of life, and Perry's unique and unconventional public image is a perfect fit for the magazine.

Discussion Questions

- 1) What is a 'social norm'? Give an example and explain your answer. Are social norms grounded in tradition or are they created? Do you think they should be? Do you think they should be broken?
- 2) Could Grayson Perry's distinctive style of clothing and appearance be described as 'postmodernist'? How do you think postmodernists view social norms, attitudes and ideas?
- 3) Does Perry conform or subvert Gauntlett's theories about contemporary media and identity? How do you think he fits into Gauntlett's theory of 'feminist' media?

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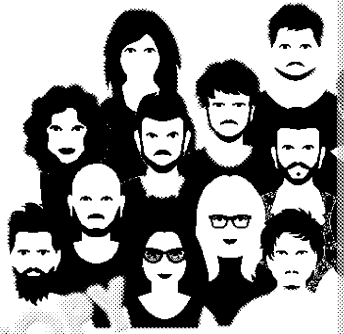
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13. *The Big Issue* and Audience Targeting

Demographics – who is buying it?

The demographics of *The Big Issue* are freely available to read on the organisation's website (<https://www.bigissue.com/advertising/>).



Unsurprisingly, the overwhelming majority of people (73%) purchasing the magazine fall into the ABC1 groupings of audience categorisation, with 41% overall being AB.

As a refresher, these alphanumerical ratings divide the UK population up into the defined way than simply saying upper, middle, or lower class.

- **A** – high-level professionals and managers
- **B** – middle-level professionals and managers
- **C1** – low-level professionals, supervisors
- **C2** – technically skilled workers
- **D** – partially skilled workers
- **E** – unemployed, pensioners, lowest-level workers

A huge chunk of its audience comes from the ABC1 grouping, professionals who are relatively-to-comfortably wealthy, something that doesn't seem extraordinary for them. People with less expendable income are unlikely to be able to spend money on discretionary items. They have to be very careful with money in order to survive.

Psychographics – why people purchase the magazine

For the intended audience, the main source of gratification they get out of *The Big Issue* is not the text but the actual act of purchasing it. They may know of the vendor personally, or they may be helping someone in need, and that the actual content of the magazine is an added bonus.

Compassion and empathy seem to be the primary emotional motivators behind why people buy *The Big Issue*. The fact that a majority of its audience are in the ABC1 categories – moderately to high income with mid-to-high salaries – might also indicate a degree of guilt or social responsibility. This can be summed up as *giving back to a world that has been kind to them but not kind to them*.

As well as emotions influencing people, ideology plays a key part as well. Anti-homelessness is a concept, and even though many people across the spectrum of political alignment are in support of reducing the number of people on the streets, not everyone shares the same psychographic factor that comes into play in who buys *The Big Issue* is the **desire** to help. The belief that the vendor programme is a workable method of achieving this.

Content

The actual content of a media text is a huge component of who it appeals to. A series about the life of Soviet dictator Josef Stalin probably won't be doing well at all with the audience of *The Big Issue*, and vice versa the number of pensioners playing six hours of Fortnite every day is likely to be low. With *The Big Issue*, you could easily argue that the content is an after-thought for people who are donating money to people in need and also getting a magazine out of it. If they're donating money has still gone towards helping a vulnerable person.

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Non-traditional marketing

As has been well established by now, *The Big Issue* doesn't advertise in a traditional conventional print or online adverts about the content of the magazine, it would be going against its purpose in the first place. It does, however, have a website with information about the magazine itself and the foundation's charitable actions (beginning with jumping off points to the Invest, Foundation, and Shop pages, the website is designed to inform and promote the cause. There are links to online articles, 'learn more' links about the magazine, and a promo for the latest physical copy being sold through its vendors. The site is probably a lot of money poured into it, but it is clearly designed to **complement the physical magazine**.

Occasionally, the charitable foundation will run publicity campaigns that are focused on the magazine's crusade against homelessness. *The Big Issue* also has an active social media presence, particularly Twitter, where it has approximately 51,000 followers as of August 2013.

Discussion Questions

- 1) Why do you think anyone buy a copy of *The Big Issue* every single week, instead of just occasionally? Consider psychographic factors such as beliefs, desire and ideology.
- 2) Why does *The Big Issue* focus more on raising awareness through publicity campaigns than advertising?
- 3) The figures that the magazine publishes divide the audience into ABC1 categories. Why do you think they are categorising by gender or age, for example?

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14. Bucking the Trend – Defying Industry Conventions

As briefly touched upon in the earlier article about *The Big Issue's* unique method, it is an oddity from an industrial perspective. In the incredibly competitive and cut-throat world of publishing, the companies operate with the same model that *The Big Issue* does.

The traditional chain of production in print media

- 1) **Production** – a magazine is put together by a group of writers, photographers and designers under the direction of an editor(s). Today this is all done digitally using computer software and then be printed at a press.
- 2) **Distribution** – printed copies are either delivered to newsagents (shops, news stands) or sent to subscribers' homes. Digital copies are not sold but are available to the magazine's website.
- 3) **Circulation** – circulation of physical copies comes from the fact they have to be sold to newsagents or subscribers. Digital copies might be subscription only or paywall protected.

The Big Issue does not operate conventionally – its staff writers aren't using feathery quills but the magazine does subvert the conventions of distribution and circulation. Instead of being distributed to its vendors (the homeless/vulnerable people who buy the magazine), the magazine is distributed to its vendors (the homeless/vulnerable people who buy the magazine) and vendors purchase a certain number from The Big Issue Foundation directly at a discount. This allows them to control the circulation by selling to the general public.

The power of conglomerates

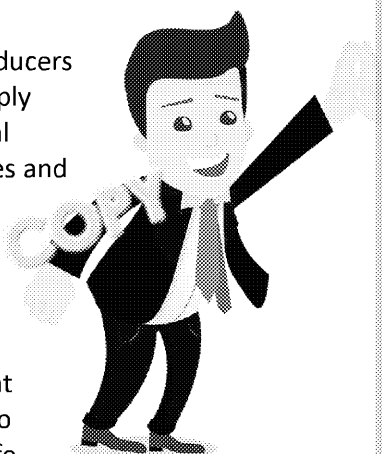
As well as diverging from the conventional method of production and distribution, *The Big Issue* is also unique by being a major title that is not owned by a major conglomerate.

Many magazines and newspapers are owned by *publishing groups*, often producing titles of a particular style or subject matter. Condé Nast Inc., the publisher of *Vogue*, is a prime example of a company specialises in prestige lifestyle and culture magazines such as *GQ*, *The New Yorker*, *Elle* and *Teen*. Famously (or infamously) the News International conglomerate, founded by the late Rupert Murdoch, owns a huge number of newspapers in multiple countries such as Australia, New Zealand, the UK and the USA. The Big Issue Foundation is a dedicated charitable organisation, and it does not own any other titles. In the print industry, this is an oddity, and it conveys the fact that the purpose of the magazine is to help homeless people.

Risk-averse business models

Early in the timeline of media as we know it, producers and creators of media texts had to take risks simply because it was new territory. But now traditional media industries are well-established. Companies and executives know what works and what makes money, and as result the need to innovate or gamble in any way has been washed away.

Theorist David Hesmondhalgh has put forward that the vast majority of media companies – what they produce and how – are driven by a desire to maximise their profits, while also playing it as safe as possible on the creative front. Disney is an easy target to criticise when it comes to this, as its films have been carefully constructed by a committee to appeal to every audience while being artistically, e.g. by remaking films such as *The Lion King* or *Aladdin*, media properties with a large fan base. This is a **risk-averse** business strategy.



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The Big Issue, on the other hand, is not risk-averse in the slightest for the following reasons:

- **Selling on the street** – employing homeless and vulnerable people to sell the magazine was a novel and untested method of distribution. It could have failed before it could ever get off the ground.
- **Stigma** – it's an unfortunate reality, but there is a stigma that surrounds homelessness in our society. This is part of why *The Big Issue* exists in the first place, and convincing people to buy something from a homeless person wasn't a scam or would fuel drug addiction. It was a large challenge and potential risk for the company.
- **Independence** – the foundation has been successful, but this has been without the backing of a wealthier company. *Vogue* is owned by a multi-billion dollar publishing group.

For all of these reasons, you can see how *The Big Issue* is a true underdog in the modern publishing industry. A company driven by activism instead of profit margins whose entire gimmick was to employ homeless people to sell magazines. However, the publication can weather the economic downturn and the sink the entire print industry remains to be seen, but it's a miracle that it stayed afloat.

Discussion Questions

- 1) Hesmondhalgh puts forward the idea of the 'commodification of culture' in the modern world.
 - a. What does the term 'commodification of culture' mean?
 - b. Do you think that *The Big Issue* is an example of this, or not? Explain your answer.
- 2) Is *The Big Issue Foundation* risk-averse or risk-taking? Explain your choice.
- 3) In 2012, the price of *The Big Issue* went up. Why do you think this happened? Consider the reasons.



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15. Aesthetic Breakdown of *The Big Issue*

The Big Issue, being a professionally made product and not something slapped together over the weekend, has a consistent visual style and brand image achieved through the

Typography

The use of typography in the magazine is rather conventional for a contemporary

- **Bold sans serif font for titles and pull quotes** – much larger font size compared to the contemporary appearance, and draws the eye to the title first.
- **Use of columns for body text** – article text is split into 2/3 columns, unlike a book or an essay.
- **Body font** – a smaller-sized font is used for the main body of the article, similar to that used by newspapers.
- **Headings** – the same font used for the body text is often used for headings to break up the rest of the article and divide the content into more easily digestible chunks.

All of these conventional typographical features help package the content of *The Big Issue* in a format for its target audience. After all, a magazine is supposed to be a more engaging read for a person than a 45-page academic essay about turnip farming in fourteenth-century

Graphics

The graphics and illustrations used in *The Big Issue* are very bold and minimalist, much like the brand's logo itself. The infographics pages, such as the 'Big Impact, Big Numbers' double-page spread, exemplify the **visual language** used, including the following features:

- **Simplified shapes and lack of superfluous details** – creates a modern look, focuses on key visual information.
- **One or two colours used for all graphics on a page** – creates a consistent style that is easy to read and follow.
- **Use of lines and dividers to separate information** – much like headings in the text, these lines help to clearly divide up the information on infographic pages.
- **Digital art style** – the illustrations and icons have clearly been made using software, as seen in the lack of pen strokes or imperfections that would be present in hand-drawn graphics.
- **Symbols and icons** – recognisable symbols, such as stick figures, to represent people and rectangles to represent books/newspapers.

Infographic pages use simplified shapes and a limited colour palette to present information and statistics in a visual and easy-to-read format. The graphics pages help to break up long pages of text and present facts and figures in a way that is otherwise difficult to read for a general audience.

Photography

Unlike *Vogue*, in which the full-spread photograph editorials and features have been very carefully constructed, *The Big Issue* uses images in a much more journalistic manner. Photographs are used in articles, helping to illustrate the words on the page. Grayson Perry's Letter to My Younger Self feature includes a grid of small photographs that relate to the memories he writes about, including a photo of him with his wife and daughter.

Like all media, the process of selection has been used by the editors to choose appropriate photographs that help to create the right mood. The homeless bakers article has an uplifting hopeful tone, so it's accompanied by a large photo of two men smiling with a cake coupled with a smaller group photo of smiling people surrounding another cake. Grayson Perry's Letter is matched up to a full-page photo of the man himself in a colourful dress and wig against a vivid yellow backdrop, a reflection of his personality and his image.

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Reasons behind these choices

Street newspapers have often had a reputation for being *amateurish* because of their appeal to the general public, print media sold on the street without affiliation to a newsagent or publisher, and cheaply made compared to conventional magazines and newspapers. So, for *The Big Issue* the decision to use aesthetic conventions of the genre, such as the use of clean digital fonts, headline fonts, and integrating photography into their articles, might be a way of improving their *image*.

Front cover

Where *The Big Issue* diverges from conventional magazines is its front covers. They do not have a format they follow – a masthead, a large main photograph and main coverline, secondary coverlines and photographs. *The Big Issue* on the other hand, makes its covers by mixing illustrations with photographs, using very large text that takes up the entire cover, and large photographs. The coverlines are smaller than those in a conventional magazine, and the '25 Years' sign, while the masthead remains in a conventional position at the top.

This issue's cover is a full-page digital illustration of a neon sign in the style of a celebration of the magazine's 25th anniversary in 2016. Admittedly, a mainstream magazine cover for a special edition, but for *The Big Issue* this cover isn't unusual. The phrase 'Homeless' is a powerful statement that signals the positive impact on the industry and homeless people, and 'Homeless' is an emotionally charged word that has associations with social change (French Revolution, Russian Revolution, etc.) against an oppressive system.

Discussion Questions

- 1) Why do you think the editors of *The Big Issue* might choose a bright and bold visual style? How often do you think they focus on issues to do with homelessness and related social causes?
- 2) *The Big Issue's* visual language uses a large amount of saturated bright red. Specifically, what products might this create a mental association with?
- 3) What are the effects (consider both audience response and semiotics) of the following design choices?
 - a. Bright colour scheme with red as a major hue
 - b. Use of simple cartoon-ish graphics
 - c. Headline/quote font with clean lines and angular shapes, and lacking in flourishes

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16. *The Big Issue* and Adapting to the Digital Age

Has *The Big Issue* evolved? Can it evolve?

The Big Issue hasn't decried the Internet as techno-witchcraft, but instead has embraced it, offering a digital subscription, as well as posting a portion of its content online on its website.

However, the problem still exists that if more people decide to subscribe online, this still inevitably sidesteps the vendors on the street. As their ethos that is stamped onto the front cover of every issue goes, 'A hand up, not a hand-out', and this means that the Foundation doesn't **donate** to its employees, partially because of the idea that having a job can help give vulnerable people a sense of purpose and direction.



From the perspective of *The Big Issue* Foundation, hopefully the move to offer both digital and print subscriptions will mean that it can **increase** its **total income** rather than leading to a migration of

Social media presence

So, the issue of whether or not to go paperless is a struggle for *The Big Issue*, but it is also an issue that the foundation can fully exploit is social media. *The Big Issue* has a strong presence on social network sites – primarily Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram – with posts and stories on its website.

Many newspapers, magazines, and online news sources have prioritised Twitter or Facebook, on the other hand, has been routinely losing users to other social media platforms. *The Big Issue's* page (as of August 2019) has 30,885 likes on Facebook, 50,600 followers on Twitter, and 24,100 followers on Instagram. *The Big Issue's* Twitter account, which has 50,600 followers (and is following 1,061 accounts).

Why is Twitter favoured by news sites / magazines such as *The Big Issue*?

- **Reach and engagement** – Twitter's retweet function is integral to the website, allowing users to spread content without the need for a huge initial audience. Unlike Facebook, where regular friends, anyone on Twitter can accrue a huge number of followers without needing anything of the sort.
- **Concision** – Twitter's 280-letter cap makes it ideal for social media managers as tweets.
- **User-base growth** – Facebook has been regularly losing users, especially following data breach scandals, with 15 million American users leaving it between 2018 and 2019.
- **Interactivity** – both Facebook and Twitter allow increased interactivity between users and the audiences, and are on a level playing field in this respect.

The magazine does also have an Instagram, but this is clearly not the focus for *The Big Issue* managers. *Vogue*, for which the photographical and aesthetic of the magazine are picture-centric platform, has 24,100 followers, whereas *The Big Issue* only has 2,400. Instagram is the most important of all social media apps, and a magazine focusing on stories/features can be popular on the site as a result.

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Discussion Questions

- 1) Why are other newspapers and magazines choosing digital distribution over traditional print?
 - a. Industrial reasons:
 - b. Audience factors:
- 2) Do you think potential readers of *The Big Issue* would support or oppose digitisation?
- 3) Create your own strategy for how *The Big Issue* could switch to digital copies **but not lose**

17. Editor's Letter Analysis (*The Big Issue*)

What is the function of an 'editor's letter'?

An editor's letter is a common feature across magazines and newspapers and is unique to print media – films and television programmes don't really have a direct equivalent (except for DVD commentary tracks or something along those lines). It allows an editor who often doesn't actually write articles – to speak directly, and personally, to the reader. It can act as a window into the editor's own thoughts or their take on the content of the issue, or give the reader a look behind the scenes of the magazine and its production.

What is the letter saying?

The letter is essentially a recounting of the last 25 years (a reflection on the work of the magazine, and aims for the future – all written by Editor Paul McNamee. McNamee has been Editor of *The Big Issue* since 2011 and remains in the role to this day, and has overseen the magazine's growth during periods between 2013 and 2015 when readership figures dipped.

The introduction makes a few quips about 1991, including a slight dig at Donald Trump (a 'publicist with a wild hair', the Cold War, and the fact that '... [the] Amazon was still a briefcase' briefly reminds readers of how the world has morphed in the last quarter of a century.

After this, the letter goes on to how *The Big Issue* started as a 'hand up not a hand out' and how it has been changing the world for the better, and how it had to fight against authorities who tried to shut it down. McNamee states that the magazine has '... changed the publishing world' by selling more than 10 million copies in how it has invested in improving conditions for homeless people.

The last section is a mission statement about what still needs to be done. McNamee states that it will fight to make the voices of vulnerable people heard, that it will fight the abhorrent policies of the UK and Europe, and that it will continue to use the magazine as a force for change and a platform for the strong, but slightly light-hearted, parting note of 'There is work to be done. This week, though, we shall have a little cake.'

Use of language

Every writer will have their own individual style of putting sentences together, with flourish and decoration or trim the fat and get straight to the point. Unlike a news article, an editor's letter is more personal, meaning their individual writing style is likely to shine through.

As McNamee is the editor-in-chief of the magazine, his letter is less likely to be reworked before being published. This is not to say that his writing hasn't been read and proofread, but it might allow him a touch more artistic licence.

- **Formal tone** – the use of conventional sentence structure and grammar, and the use of 'we will' (McNamee often writes 'we will' instead of 'we'll') conveys a serious tone, in contrast to the subject of homelessness and the foundation's activities.
- **Emotive language** – the letter is not a dry retelling of the facts, it is filled with a sense of pride and achievement in what the magazine has achieved, and how it has 'pulsed and grown', '... speak for those still ignored or cast aside', '... those who are not visible' are a few examples of how McNamee uses language to invoke a strong emotional response.
- **Active voice** – the continued use of the active voice creates a sense of action and achievement. 'we will', 'we have fought', 'we will agitate' clearly convey that McNamee is committed to his society through *The Big Issue*.

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Discussion Questions

- 1) What emotional response do you think the letter might evoke in readers, and why? How might this be influenced by the psychographic factors of people who buy the magazine?
- 2) How does the editor's letter relate to the content of the rest of the issue?
- 3) McNamee makes the claim that *The Big Issue* has changed the publishing world. Do you agree? Support your answer, referring to economic and industrial factors.

18. Worlds Apart – The Different Ways in which *Vogue* and *The Big Issue* Represent Reality

Is the media a mirror, or a mirage?

It's something that philosophers and academics have discussed for years and years – what is 'reality'? Well, without getting too bogged down in this theory and that theory, it's a fair statement to make that we each experience the real world through our own unique lens. Our experiences shape how we view the world, and how we live our lives. No one else can completely step into your shoes and see your reality, and vice versa.

So, when it comes to media texts, it's understood and accepted that how media products portray 'real life' is never going to be a pure, unfiltered reflection of absolute truth. Selection (choosing what content to include) and mediation (the process of altering and shaping this content) play a huge role in what a publication (such as both *Vogue* and *The Big Issue*) covers, and the use of different elements of form and content will also alter and shape this.

Varying Intentions

The intentions and purpose of a text are always something to consider when deciding 'What was made?', 'Why was this particular story chosen?', 'Why did the editor choose this?' – all tied together by that crucial adverb 'why'.

With *Vogue*, the answer of why the magazine exists is to promote a certain lifestyle for primarily wealthy American women, and also to promote products that can help them improve themselves. It espouses an idea that 'if you read our magazine, wear this new trend, behave this way at cocktail parties, you too shall be jetting off to Monte Carlo for Christmas.'

Vogue presents an idealised, and arguably elitist (discrimination based on social class) view of the world. In 1963, American society was incredibly volatile – the civil rights movement was in full swing, the Vietnam War was a bloody conflict that was either killing or displacing millions, and liberation movements were tackling rampant sexism. But *Vogue's* filter of reality kept all this misery and suffering behind, focusing only on beauty and luxury that only a small percentage of people experience on a regular basis.

The Big Issue, on the other hand, is the absolute polar opposite of *Vogue's* consumerist focus. Instead, it exists to be a way to help the most desperate group of people in Britain – the homeless – find a potential route out of homelessness. Equally, the magazine's content is focused on social issues (see the Counterculture article on page 24) on activism, as well as overlooked elements of British culture.

The Big Issue is not a news and current affairs organisation, but, compared to *Vogue*, it has a more journalistic content that takes an unblinking look into more troubling and distressing aspects of society. Equally, while the magazine does feature public figures and celebrities, it also focuses on everyday people. A recurring segment about its own vendors called 'My Pitch' in this edition features a homeless man who has been selling the magazine in London for years, but is coming homeless. The prominent image of Donato happily pitching to a potential customer, and the article about his life and how the magazine has helped him.

Ultimately, these two magazines, *Vogue* and *The Big Issue* are about as far removed as you can get. With 2,000 miles of Atlantic Ocean and 99 years between them, *Vogue* and *The Big Issue* represent different cultures, covering different subject matters, and with completely opposite intentions.

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Discussion Questions

- 1) What is the issue with describing a media text as 'accurately representing reality'? Consider who makes it.
- 2) Is it unconventional for a major magazine (such as *The Big Issue*) to feature everyday people? Why do the editors of *Vogue* choose to focus on celebrities and models in their content?
- 3) What media processes affect how a magazine presents a certain story? Also, how does this affect which stories are chosen and how they are told?

19. How *Vogue* and *The Big Issue* Use Advertising

Both of these two texts make use of advertising, which is really not a profound or surprising fact. Newspapers and magazines get a significant chunk of their revenue from the pocket of their readers. There is a huge contrast in how these two texts incorporate advertising into their content.

Vogue's approach – aspirational marketing and brand identity

In high fashion, brand names have serious clout. Gucci or Supreme, or an equally well-known brand, could drop a plain grey T-shirt, slap it with a logo and charge the same price as a pair of sneakers. *Vogue* is keenly aware of the almighty power of branding, and the companies it features are an example of that.

The Revlon **advertorial** from the 1963 edition is an example of how *Vogue* works in product tie-ins to its own brand. This advert is presented in a very similar way to the magazine articles, with columns of text about the makeup range peppered with a collection of colour photographs of the products.

Advertorials are very common in magazines, but legally have to clearly signpost that they are sponsored content to avoid getting slapped with a whopping great fine from regulatory boards. But they also show when a publication is willing to work closely with a brand. A close (and profitable) relationship with a key brand such as Revlon would be something that editor Diana Vreeland and the board of directors would be eager to maintain.

Much of *Vogue's* own content, such as the large pictorial spread about picnics, is essentially an advert in disguise for a certain lifestyle. The picnic section isn't a paid-for ad by a particular company, but instead it is filled with clothing and accessories that have been curated by a *Vogue* staff member and then artfully photographed. Naturally, if you want to achieve some replica of this picture-perfect life, then you can simply look to the edge of the page and find where to buy all these things to try to achieve that.

The Big Issue's approach

With *The Big Issue*, the purpose of advertising is more about survival. As a foundation funnelling into charitable outreach and investment into homeless shelters, etc. the business buying up real estate on its pages is mainly used to help fund the ongoing operations.

The fact that *The Big Issue* doesn't use aspirational advertising can be clearly seen in the way the page appeals from charities and causes. In *Vogue*, advertising is woven into the fabric of expensive goods and clothing that better your own life. Here, however, ad space is used to invite donations.

Let's quickly break down a selection of three different types of ads in the classifieds section:

- **University of York self-harm questionnaire** – this is a highly unusual classifieds ad for a service or product, or looking for donations. Instead, this is looking for people close to them to be anonymous participants in a study, run by the university. *The Big Issue*, being a magazine that does not shy away from controversial topics, has more interest for this ad than a more conventional publication.
- **Meaningful Chocolates** – this is an advert for both a product and a charity. People who buy these chocolates will be helping the cause of environmental protection. The chocolates are Fairtrade chocolate (Fairtrade being an anti-exploitation trade agreement made with cocoa farmers in developing countries).

Advertisement or source being sponsored or sponsored



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in impoverished countries are paid fairly) as well as being free from palm oil that has been linked to deforestation and environmental damage.

- **Socialist Party** – this small, simple ad with a red box filled with white text is a party’s anti-war, anti-capitalism, and pro-worker political stance, as well as a monthly newsletter. Considering how newspapers and magazines are either any belief/party) or having an affiliation with the major parties (Labour, Lib Dem) is an anomaly. Socialist beliefs are staunchly left wing, and the Socialist Party is not. *The Big Issue* is not a socialist organisation, but presumably is open to allow socialist adverts compared to mainstream magazines.
- **Other charity adverts** – interestingly enough, the classified section features adverts for charities, such as the Chain of Hope heart disease foundation and PACT, which is a conventional business which wouldn’t give exposure to competitors/rivals. The fact that it is supportive of other similar organisations highlights how the cause is the priority.

There are adverts sporadically mixed in the rest of the magazine as well, including the film *I, Daniel Blake* directed by Paul Greengrass. A film advert is hardly uncommon, but *I, Daniel Blake* didn’t receive a wide theatrical release or a hugely expensive marketing campaign. The direct criticism of the austerity (financial cuts to social welfare and benefits) that has affected the ill and vulnerable people and was well-received for this social commentary about the UK. This specific film was probably chosen by the foundation because *The Big Issue* is supportive of the conditions for homeless and vulnerable people in the UK.

Discussion Questions

- 1) Why do you think there are no charity adverts in *Vogue*? What emotional response would you expect?
- 2) What are some of the limitations of printed advertisements? What advantages does online advertising or *The Big Issue*’s websites, have in comparison?
- 3) Do you think *The Big Issue* is an example of consumerist media? Explain your viewpoint in relation to the social context.

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Show What You Know

Below are a number of practice essay questions. Have a go at answering them using the knowledge you have gained.

- 1) *Vogue* as a publication has been described as 'elitist' by some critics. What does the content of the July 1963 edition you have studied either support or undermine? Consider the social and cultural context in your answer.
- 2) Is there any overlap in audiences between *Vogue* and *The Big Issue* despite their very different subject matters and presentation, and, if so, why? Consider factors such as demographic/profile of audience targeting, audience theories and audience categories in your answer.
- 3) How and why does *The Big Issue* differ from more conventional magazines? Consider industrial factors and theories in your answer.
- 4) How does the aesthetic of *Vogue* create or alter meaning? How have imagery, typography and other semiotic elements been used to construct a particular brand identity?
- 5) Can any aspect of either *Vogue* or *The Big Issue* be described as being postmodern? Choose one of the two magazines, and explain your answer relating to postmodern theories.

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Answers

1. *En Vogue* – The Early History of the Magazine

- 1) The fact that the content was specific to New York and was only distributed in the city.
- 2) Other forms
 - a. Advertising
 - b. Radio
- 3) This is up to interpretation but student's answer should relate to the limited product *Vogue* had before 1909.

2. *Old Money* – The Culture and Social Class that *Vogue* was born from

- 1)
 - a. Good versus bad
 - b. This is imbalanced because being rich is perceived as being better than being poor.
- 2) Elitism was more prominent in 1963 because society was more restrictive, less diverse and more class-based societies.
- 3) Elitism is often connected to racism, as the wealthy elite in the Western world have been from the upper class and would have been almost exclusively white.

3. *Vogue*: Catwalk to Catalogues

- 1)
 - a. *Vogue* presents female bodies as being a spectacle, as van Zoonen describes in her representation, as women are shown as being objects of beauty to sell clothes.
 - b. *Vogue* does not sexual objectify women as they are shown as being beautiful by their make-up instead of their bodies. In 1963, *Vogue's* intended audience of primarily women negotiated/preferred reading of the depiction of women.
- 2) Sophia Loren was a hugely famous celebrity at the time who would have represented the stylish lifestyle that *Vogue* editors would want to associate with their magazine.
- 3) *Vogue* represents a very fixed and rigid depiction of traditional femininity – jewelled, zero alternative view of gender, which would be expected in 1963.

4. *Buy Your Way to a Better Life* – *Vogue* and Consumerist Society

- 1) It appeals to a reader's emotions, as it appeals to a desire to be beautiful / feel more confident.
- 2) Consumerism could not exist without advertising as companies would not be able to get the public to buy their products without adverts and marketing.
- 3) The adverts and brands in a magazine could be seen as endorsement which connects the reputation of *Vogue* itself.

5. Aesthetics and Design of *Vogue*

- 1) Typography was limited by the fact that the magazine was written via typewriters, which limited the font choices.
- 2) Sans serif fonts both look more modern in their design and are easier to read.
- 3) Front cover analysis:
 - a. The visual elements of the blue headdress, dress and make-up create a calming mood but also a sense of luxury and exoticism. The pose of the model – looking at the camera with a slight smile of poise and beauty. The shot is a close-up, which creates a sense of intimacy.
 - b. The 'Vogue' text has been coloured similarly to the model's headdress, as has the 'Zig Zag' logo in the top right corner. The use of lower case for the article descriptions creates a casual atmosphere. The 'Vogue' title is eye-catching and commanding.
 - c. The front cover is much more simplistic compared to modern magazines, with no photographs, headline or pull-quotes. This places priority on the title and on the brand.

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6. The Writing Style of *Vogue*

- 1) *Vogue's* tone of voice is very formal, upper class and exclusive, whereas *The Big Issue* is inclusive.
- 2) A consistent tone of voice across different editions of a magazine means that an audience can identify with it, helping them to buy, helping to grow a core market.
- 3) The social context of its intended audience being middle-to-upper class, well-educated, and the language used would be formal and of a high level of complexity.

7. Criticism of *Vogue*

- 1) Audience perspectives
 - a. An audience in 1963 would probably not see any issue with this decision.
 - b. A modern audience may potentially view an Italian woman wearing Turkish clothing as a fashion statement but not necessarily offensive.
- 2) This answer is subjective
 - i. A case could be made that *Vogue* financially supports the fashion industry and therefore employment.
 - ii. Alternatively, you could argue that there is a distance between *Vogue* as a magazine and a technology review magazine isn't responsible for the exploitation of workers.
- 3) Elitism questions
 - a. Elitism is the belief of the superiority of the upper class / aristocracy, believing that wealth and social status are virtues that make someone a good person.
 - b. *Vogue* depicts wealth and beauty as being the pinnacle of existence, and favours an exclusivity towards poorer people.

8. The Evolution of *Vogue*

- 1) Franchising
 - a. More copies would have to be produced in America and then shipped internationally, leading to higher production costs.
 - b. Audiences outside of the USA may want to read magazines that are more focused on local fashion trends in their own countries.
- 2) Video content online is hugely popular, and having its own unique video content could be a competitive advantage.
- 3)
 - a. More people are opposed to elitism and the upper class of society than in 1963, and elitism is less common.
 - b. Racial diversity is more accepted by mainstream audiences, and backlash against the (mis)representation of minority groups is more common and more effective.
 - c. The view of femininity is less narrow and constrained than in 1963, and there is a more diverse depiction of more realistic and diverse representation of female appearance.

9. *The Big Issue* as a Humanitarian Publication

- 1) For potential buyers, Bird's affiliation with the Conservative Party might put them off as a Conservative psychographic category – may conflict with the ideals of the Conservative Party, and they might not buy through buying a copy.
- 2) A media company could finance the production of media texts (e.g. magazines) and then donate the profits to charity.
- 3) Humanitarian refers to social activism and charity that aims to help all people, regardless of background. A vendor programme helps by giving vulnerable people a source of income, and the fight against homelessness.

10. The Big Issue that is the Decline of Print Media

- 1) Ink and paper production both create pollution and contribute towards climate change.
- 2) A physical copy can be used without the Internet (useful for places such as public transport).
- 3) Beneficial, as it means that anyone can publish work online for a fraction of the cost of print. As on blogs or social media. Audience members can become media creators because of the ease of access.

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11. Is *The Big Issue* Countercultural?

- 1) Binary oppositions
 - a. Homelessness as an idea is directly opposed to the idea of having a 'home', i.e.
 - b. Homelessness is not a binary opposite because it is not a theoretical concept, a
- 2) Being more openly critical of the government would alienate potential readers who have political ideals of the government.
- 3) Rejection and/or criticism of the norms, beliefs, and systems of society.

12. Analysis of 'Letter to My Younger Self: Grayson Perry' (*The Big Issue*)

- 1) A social norm is a culturally reinforced convention or tradition, such as shaking hands or you should work a 9–5 job. Social norms are constructed by society and aren't based on
- 2) Postmodernists reject existing structures of ideas and values, and Perry's rejection of the 'male' clothing could be seen as an example of this postmodern approach.
- 3) Gauntlett puts forward that deconstruction of masculinity and femininity in modern media. Perry's representation of a trans man who cross-dresses proudly is a definite example of this.

13. *The Big Issue* and Audience Targeting

- 1) Someone might routinely buy the magazine because they are motivated by their political beliefs instead of by emotional reasons such as guilt.
- 2) As a charity, spreading awareness of its cause to the public is more likely to help it than selling the magazine itself.
- 3) Social class is more relevant to *The Big Issue*, as homelessness is a social issue strongly associated with poverty instead of gender, race or age.

14. Bucking the Trend – Defying Industry Conventions (*The Big Issue*)

- 1)
 - a. Commodification of culture is the transformation of artworks, etc. into products for sale.
 - b. *The Big Issue* is not an example of this, as it was always created with the aim of being a piece of art.
- 2) *The Big Issue* is risk-taking because of how it distributes copies outside of shops, with
- 3) Inflation means that money becomes less valuable, so prices increase. *The Big Issue* has managed to match the rate of inflation in the UK.

15. Aesthetic Breakdown of *The Big Issue*

- 1) To make the stories and content seem more upbeat and inspiring, instead of upsetting
- 2) For a UK audience, the red colour scheme might remind them of the 'red top' tabloids on their front cover.
- 3)
 - a. Elicits a feeling of energy and positivity because of the connotations of the colour red.
 - b. Helps to visualise textual content, conveys an informal tone.
 - c. Conveys a professional and contemporary atmosphere, appears decisive, conveys a sense of purpose and aesthetic.

16. *The Big Issue* and Adapting to the Digital Age

- 1)
 - a. Digital content is much cheaper to produce and distribute, requiring far less resources.
 - b. Digital copies are more convenient and accessible for readers using smartphones.
- 2) This is open to interpretation, but answer should focus on the fact that buyers of the magazine are the vendors.
- 3) An example strategy could be that the vendors sell tickets with codes that allow buyers to buy the magazine.

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17. Editor's Letter Analysis (*The Big Issue*)

- 1) It might evoke a sense of pride and happiness. The psychographic desire to help fight pride from reading about the positive effects the magazine has had.
- 2) Much of this week's copy is centred on the 25th anniversary and what the magazine has achieved.
- 3) This is up to the student's own belief but they should refer to the fact that:
 - i. *The Big Issue* is the most successful publication sold on the street, being franchised in many countries.
 - ii. The level of production quality is much higher than that of its competitors.
 - iii. The foundation has been successful in raising awareness and campaigning.

18. Worlds Apart – The Different Ways in which *Vogue* and *The Big Issue* Represent Reality

- 1) Media is made by people with their own beliefs and life experiences, which influence their choices. The process of selection, combination and mediation means that the end result is always a constructed reality, not reality itself.
- 2) It is unconventional, as celebrities are more marketable and draw. *Vogue* focuses on a luxurious lifestyle of the rich, famous and beautiful, hence the focus on celebrities and high fashion.
- 3) Selection, combination and mediation. The editor's ideology influences which stories they are included. Positively or negatively they frame the story depends on the beliefs and values of the editor.

19. How *Vogue* and *The Big Issue* use Advertising Differently, and Why

- 1) A charity advert in *Vogue* would create a huge contrast between the rich lifestyle being advertised and the upsetting realities of the world. It may evoke a response of guilt in the readers, and this is not in line with *Vogue's* content.
- 2) Print adverts are static, can't be interactive, and can only be vaguely targeted at an audience. Digital adverts, on the other hand, are interactive, can incorporate audiovisual media, and can utilise algorithms to be far more precisely targeted at an intended audience.
- 3) This is up to the student's own decision but answer should refer to the function of advertising in a charity organisation, and how this relates to consumerism being profit-driven.

Show What You Know

1) Elitism in *Vogue*

- i. Elitism is a form of class-based discrimination that favours the wealthy, the powerful and the elite.
- ii. Elitism is also tied to racist and sexist ideas, as the global elite have historically been predominantly white and male.
- iii. *Vogue's* content is focused on a lifestyle of luxury – the idea of luxury is tied to wealth and status. 'luxury' with expensive items or places.
- iv. Many of the fashion designers that *Vogue* showcases are extremely exclusive and expensive. As a result, the clothes featured are often stocked in high-end stores such as Fortnum & Mason, which are not something middle- or working-class people can regularly buy, meaning that these clothes are inaccessible to the readers who aren't wealthy.
- v. The cover star is a celebrity, someone from a world of privilege, wealth and fame, and *Vogue's* choice of a celebrity as cover model indicates that the magazine places importance to celebrity and power.

2) Overlap of audiences

- a. *Vogue's* audience:
 - i. *Vogue* is strongly targeted towards a female market, given that the magazine is primarily focused on fashion and lifestyle content specific to women.
 - ii. Its target demographic is wealthy, well-educated women, primarily in older age categories with high disposable income, and are unlikely to be able to afford the clothes *Vogue* features.
 - iii. From a psychographic perspective, an interest in fashion/beauty is essential, and a desire to improve their own life, so it matches with the lifestyle *Vogue's* content.
 - iv. Uses and gratifications – they likely use the magazine for escapism (as it presents a world of luxury and glamour) and as being a *Vogue* reader could signal to others that they are fashion-conscious.

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- b. *The Big Issue's* audience
- The Big Issue's* readers are predominantly (around 70%) in the ABC1 segment of predominantly middle-class professionals with skills and disposable income.
 - Psychographic factors may be a motivation to help the vendor personally, a feeling to help the cause of fighting homelessness.
 - They are less likely to buy the magazine for the content itself than for the act of purchasing a copy.
- c. Overlap
- The overlap between *Vogue's* and *The Big Issue's* audience is demographic – that of middle-class professionals.
 - Apart from this, their interests, motivations and reasons for consuming the resource and the overlap is limited.
- 3) ***The Big Issue* differing from industry norms**
- a. *The Big Issue* diverges from the magazine industry in the following ways:
- Conventional magazines sell to the customer by being distributed to shops or other outlets. *The Big Issue* sells on the street directly to the public through its vendors.
 - The Big Issue* is not a for-profit media company, but instead is a charity that sells to vendors, who are often homeless or vulnerable.
 - Hesmondhalgh states that major media companies and industries are risk-averse. *The Big Issue* Foundation is a large organisation that is based on a risky premise of hiring vendors on the street, and any profits are invested in improving society.
 - The Big Issue* still sells most copies physically through vendors, because this is an established and existing, meaning it can't transfer to digital downloads to the same extent as other magazines.
- 4) **Aesthetic of *Vogue***
- a. The visual language of *Vogue* is centred around traditional feminine beauty, luxury and glamour.
- Photoshoots of models posing against scenic backdrops or in a studio with props to make the model's appearance and clothing seem desirable for its audience.
 - Imagery of beautiful young women in exotic holiday destinations enjoying their freedom and luxury, implying a level of wealth and status.
 - The typography uses serif fonts, including for the *Vogue* masthead, which creates a sense of tradition and is reminiscent of printed literature / books.
 - Rich, full colour is used for the front cover to convey that the magazine is a premium product.
- 5) **Postmodernism question**
- a. ***Vogue***
- Vogue* represents women and beauty in a particular way (slim, European features, traditional feminine characteristics and roles).
 - This pattern of representation has been repeated by *Vogue* (and other magazines) over time, blurring the boundary between real beauty standards and constructed media representation. This relates to Baudrillard's idea of **implosion**.
- b. ***The Big Issue***
- Open to interpretation, but the student should refer to the fact that *The Big Issue* is a charity, not a profit-making text.
 - The Big Issue* magazine **supports 'grand narratives'** such as 'change being possible through hope', 'hope is beneficial' and **rejects postmodernist attitudes of scepticism**.
 - If the student chooses an advertisement, they may relate to ideas of implosion. The links are clearly made and explained.

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