

Eduqas A Level Unit 10 Close Study Products Student
EDUQAS Component 2 Section C
The Online Age
Media Forms and Products in Depth
Language, Representation, Audience, Industry and Contexts

This is the Workbook for use with **EDUSITES Eduqas SET PRODUCTS UNIT 11 A Level MEDIA STUDIES**. All of the notes refer to the content of this unit of work. They are designed to help you create a useful set of notes to help you with understanding the ideas covered in this examination, to support you in your Home Learning and be a clear revision aid in your preparations for the final examinations that you are required to take. You need to always keep in mind the examination board Assessment Objectives that your work is to be assessed with.

Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of:

- the theoretical framework of media, contexts of media and their influence on media products and processes.
- Analyse media products using the theoretical framework of media, including in relation to their contexts, to make judgements and draw conclusions.
- Create media products for an intended audience, by applying knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework of media to communicate meaning.

Create products for intended audience and evaluate communication of meaning

- Demonstrate K&U of theoretical framework – *the Key concepts*
- Contexts of media products & production
- Analyse products by application of the framework/concepts/context

Lesson 1

Copyright ©

All rights reserved. Permission granted to reproduce for educational use within the subscribing school only. Copying or lending of any part of this document in any form or by any means to external bodies and / or individuals is prohibited.

Teacher's Standards

Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.

This paper is all about your ability to write fluently and with a clear structure about the issues raised by the set products.

This paper is about ideas, the set products are there as a means of providing supporting evidence that upholds or challenges the theoretical models you have studied.

Each product is the product of an era.

You must combine a close and detailed analysis of the online products with an understanding of how these products reflect the world that created them, the practice of the industry that constructed them and the audience that consumes them.

Learners will study the role of media industries in shaping media products, as well as considering the way in which both mass and specialised audiences are targeted and addressed. Relevant and advanced theories will inform study of the set products and learners will reflect critically upon these theoretical perspectives. Learners should continue to develop their ability to use relevant subject-specific terminology in this component.

- Analyse critically and compare how media products, including products outside the commercial mainstream, construct and communicate meanings through the interaction of media language and audience response.
- Use and reflect critically upon a range of complex theories of media studies and use specialist subject-specific terminology appropriately in a developed way.
- Debate critically key questions relating to the social, cultural, political and economic role of the media through sustained discursive writing.
- Construct and develop a sustained line of reasoning which is coherent, relevant, substantiated and logically structured in an extended response.

Through an in-depth study of two contrasting online products, learners will look at the role played by social media channels and websites in the media today, exploring the way in which these convergent media platforms increasingly overlap, as well as investigating the potential that they offer for self-representation. The changing relationship between media producers and audiences will be considered here, as

Copyright ©

All rights reserved. Permission granted to reproduce for educational use within the subscribing school only. Copying or lending of any part of this document in any form or by any means to external bodies and / or individuals is prohibited.

Teacher's Standards

Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.

learners will examine the idea that media consumers have now become producers who regularly and actively participate in the creation and dissemination of media content online.

To make the approach and strategies clear, I will offer examples/exemplars applied to one of the option pairings. These more detailed examples should enable you to see how the tasks and exercises set in these lessons look/work when applied to the other EDUQAS online set products.

For most of these lessons I focus the examples/exemplars on the pairing of:

Zoe Suggs aka Zoella & Attitude

In each lesson there will be indications as to how these can be adapted to the other products

- This does not imply that one pairing is 'easier' than another.
- This does not imply that there is any preference by the board or your examiner.
- The selection is simply for consistency.

If you have selected this pairing this does not imply that the work is done for you, these ideas are starting points for your own application of your own knowledge and learning and understanding that has been developed during your course of study.

Lesson 2

Online, social and participatory are an integral part of the contemporary media landscape. The growing cultural significance of online platforms is evident in the number of subscribers that YouTubers like *Zoe Sugg and JJ Olatunji/KSI* attract, and in the amount of web traffic that the websites of online newspapers and magazines generate. Through an in-depth study of two contrasting online products, learners will look at the role played by social media channels and websites in the media today, exploring the way in which these convergent media platforms increasingly overlap, as well as investigating the potential that they offer for self-representation.

- The changing relationship between media producers and audiences will be considered,

Copyright ©

All rights reserved. Permission granted to reproduce for educational use within the subscribing school only. Copying or lending of any part of this document in any form or by any means to external bodies and / or individuals is prohibited.

Teacher's Standards

Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.

- The idea that media consumers have now become producers who regularly and actively participate in the creation and dissemination of media content online.
- The impact of digitally convergent media platforms on media production, distribution and circulation will also be explored, as learners study an online magazine produced for a minority group, considering the way in which digital platforms can be used to reach specialised audiences.
- These set products can be seen to demonstrate significant emerging developments in the media, reflecting the ongoing impact of technology on media language and audience interaction.

The blog has gone through many changes. For a short time, the video version of a blog was termed vlogging but both terms have tended to be replaced with the catch-all title of *influencer*.

An influencer is viewed as someone who makes their living at least in part from a regular series of thoughts/demonstrations/journals produced by the participant themselves and made available as a mass media product via a hosting platform – most usually *YouTube*.

The rise of the influencer is a key area of modern media. The influencer is – *often mistakenly* – held to be someone who has no institutional ties that might make them susceptible to commercial pressures shaping their message or ideas. They may already be a success in popular culture areas of music or film or fashion (*Taylor Swift; Zendaya*) but their use of social media provides the ability to talk directly to their followers.

As with many such products, there is some debate as to the origins of the format and its evolution even though much of this has only been over the past 10-15 years or so.

The video diaries of Adam Kontras are the most cited origin – a series that traced his move to Hollywood seeking a career in film. The videos were really a supplement to the more detailed written blogs that he posted, but earned widespread acceptance as being the first true vlogger.

Copyright ©

All rights reserved. Permission granted to reproduce for educational use within the subscribing school only. Copying or lending of any part of this document in any form or by any means to external bodies and / or individuals is prohibited.

Teacher's Standards

Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.

Despite some success that gained early traction of the format, vlogs still lived on the individual sites of creators with RSS feeds and email being the primary modes of distribution. The vlog space lacked a dominant hosting platform.

The launch of *YouTube* in 2005 sparked the explosion in vlogging and vloggers as did the availability of inexpensive video cameras that could be '*flipped*' to showcase the vlogger and their talk to camera. The conventions of the vlog – the vlogger talking direct to camera; home/bedroom location; basic lighting; personal content – are attributed to the *Lonely Girl 15*

The format of *LonelyGirl15* became the template others followed — *vlogger/hosts shot up close and personal, speaking directly to the camera; often shot in informal location such as a bedroom or mocked up garage/studio; vlogger leaning in as if speaking directly to the audience as to a friend.*

YouTube stars (soon known as *YouTube influencers*) leveraged the format to build audiences numbering in the millions.

Vlogs caught on for the same reasons blogs did — they provided an outlet for passions, expertise, and personalities. The format constructed deeper and more personal connections between creator and audience.

Key *YouTube* influencer vloggers created brands that with a vast popular audience. In doing so, it shaped and sustained the template that later vlogs would follow.

Lesson 3 Genre conventions

Genre is an industrial process:

- To guarantee **pleasure and meaning for the audience.**
- To **offset financial risks of production** by using successful formats

The intended audience find pleasure in difference and repetition - *recognition of familiar elements and the way those elements are linked or the way that unfamiliar elements might be introduced.*

Genre is what readers believe the product to contain based on prior knowledge of similar products.

It provides **a template for construction of messages and content and assumptions about the audience to be targeted.**

Copyright ©

All rights reserved. Permission granted to reproduce for educational use within the subscribing school only. Copying or lending of any part of this document in any form or by any means to external bodies and / or individuals is prohibited.

Teacher's Standards

Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.

To the audience, **genre identifies a pleasurable formula** providing engagement and understanding.

Lesson 4 Conventions

The Home page or splash page of an influencer/site is a key element in its success. It assures regular audience by informing them of the content and style and used to attract new or casual audience by promoting such content and style.

A key element in this is the title and the way it is constructed –*font choice, colour, the use of graphics*. The title is synonymous with the brand, in many ways it is the brand and, as such is carefully thought out, rarely altered, and fiercely protected.

The title and associated graphics and logos are what is called the MASTHEAD

Lesson 5 Media Language

Zoe Sugg is one of the most successful of the original wave of vloggers and influencers. Originally using the brand name Zoella, from 2009 until 2019 she attracted a massive social media following on Facebook and Instagram and in particular her YouTube channel with a following of more than 10 million subscribers interested in her ideas and reviews of products in the fashion, beauty and lifestyle ranges.

The success of Zoella enabled Sugg to branch into a range of other forms of merchandising, increasing the scope of the potential influence she has over her target audience.

In 2019 she ceased to create content as Zoella, instead using the brand, Zoe Sugg. Her new channel has 5 million subscribers and features insights into her life – her marriage to influencer Alfie Deyes and as a mother to two young children.

Lesson 6 industry

Zoe Suggs and JJ Olatanji are a long way from the original idea of the media as a place for all to create and share ideas. The work of *Curran and Seaton* sees the online space has become a place where large conglomerates dominate. Rather than widening access to platforms the internet has instead strengthened the dominance of

Copyright ©

All rights reserved. Permission granted to reproduce for educational use within the subscribing school only. Copying or lending of any part of this document in any form or by any means to external bodies and / or individuals is prohibited.

Teacher's Standards

Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.

those pre-existing cultural industry giants finding new ways to market their content and exploit new audiences.

Zoe Suggs has partnered with major supermarkets and other partner fashion brands. KSI is estimated to earn over £12 millions pounds a year from his online persona. KSI has always been open of his objectives to create material wealth, his followers subscribing to the ambition of materialism and making money.

Zoe Suggs whilst acknowledging her affiliates is less open about her objectives being wealth. She talks of wanting to be open and to share her happiness with subscribers.

In postmodern culture, society has become so reliant on the world and images of media products that we have lost all contact with the real world. Audiences struggle to tell the 'real' from the image of the real in such products. More than this, reality has begun to imitate the model blurring any distinction between the two.

Successive media products raid existing media products and copy their narratives. The sense of the image being real is reinforced by this saturation of similar messages – images of images, a succession of images that appear real, so that life comes to resemble a room of mirrors: all reflection and no defining sense of what is real.

He sees media images as highly controlled; the make-up; styling; lighting; etc. construct an image that is not true to reality. However, the audience, seeing such images believe them to be 'real' cementing the image in the audience mind until people and events represented are soon seen only as the image.

Both Zoella and JJ Olatunji are interesting as products. They represent a brand rather than any genre. Although staying close to fashion and lifestyle, both foray into wider areas.

Both are interesting as a study of influencers. Unlike traditional or conventional celebrity brands they construct an audience based simply on authenticity and relatability.

We can see this in their use of direct address to camera and a use of language designed for their audience of young women/young men. KSI uses street slang and dialect and mixes in references to computer gaming. Both use members of their

Copyright ©

All rights reserved. Permission granted to reproduce for educational use within the subscribing school only. Copying or lending of any part of this document in any form or by any means to external bodies and / or individuals is prohibited.

Teacher's Standards

Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.

family or friends or celebrities to evolve a sense of family and of audience involvement in their lives.

Both have run into issues of their videos or social media being offensive – Zoe for comments regarding overweight people ‘fat chavs’ and homophobic comments. KSI for racist and homophobic comments. Rather than ‘cancelling’ them, these appear to have furthered the idea of the unpolished and thus natural relatability of their brand. Both have issued apologies via their social media – KSI even presenting videos of himself watching old material and reacting to his mistakes.

Both attempt to construct an identity for their brand that builds a strong relationship with their audiences by appearing ‘authentic’. They attempt to do so by distancing themselves from the trappings of traditional **celebrity culture: they strive to appear** relatable, rather than idealised. They attempt to make their own personal success achievable to anyone.

As a student of the media, we should be aware that this idea of ‘authenticity’ is just as **constructed** as any other media product.

The static computer camera, domestic *mise-en-scène* and edgy banter are designed by Zoe Suggs and KSI to create the impression of ‘reality’ and construct their persona as which is in essence their brand, a thing to be commodified.

Lesson 7

We must consider the REPRESENTATION OF Zoe Suggs/JJ Olatunji, the people they are shown with, the products endorsed, the settings inhabited.

- *Each* invites a study of **the extent to which they embody and reinforce stereotyping.**
- Zoe Suggs representation as Zoella was and is **central to the creation of her brand.** Critics argue that *she trivialises female gender identity through how she represents herself and her world* across the online, social and participatory forms she uses,
- Investigate: *interests, concerns, friendships, values and beliefs.*
- What sort of *critical reception* does each have?
- How fair are the criticisms and positive endorsements?

Copyright ©

All rights reserved. Permission granted to reproduce for educational use within the subscribing school only. Copying or lending of any part of this document in any form or by any means to external bodies and / or individuals is prohibited.

Teacher’s Standards

Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.

Reception theory there are **referred, negotiated and oppositional** understanding to the ideas in media products.

This involves understanding who the audience are and constructing a profile of the demographics and psychographics of this group.

From this we can make informed assessments of how they might respond to the style, content and tone of your selected online product. How far you believe they reflect the way the audience are likely to think (most often we can assume that they align in taking the preferred reading presented by the vlogger).

Each production team considers the likely appeal of the brand to their target audience. In this way we can apply Hall's ideas to each element of narrative, content, values, representations, and the mode of address.

You must use your products to explore how they do this.

- *Consider representations – the tone of representation of ideas and presenters/hosts and events and mode of address most often stress how the product is relatable to an audience seeking a product that reflects a sense of self and identity (Blumler & Katz)*
- *Consider the content – is it selected to be challenging or reinforcing of ideas the audience have of themselves?*

Dominant/intended meaning:

This is often seen as the 'intended meaning', the one that the producers of the product wish/believe most of the audience will take. In this, the audience accept the intended meanings and ideology of those representations the product appears to endorse or to criticise .

In online, this would be the way ideas of gender and family (Suggs) and ethnicity and masculinity (KSI) are represented. The influencer/vlogger relies on constructing shared ideas of such matters that pull subscribers back to the site. Such attraction is desirable to affiliate brands seeking to commodify the subscriber experience by offering goods that may be seen to be part of such an identity.

Negotiated meaning:

the audience accept some part of what they see as the intended meaning but reject others.

Copyright ©

All rights reserved. Permission granted to reproduce for educational use within the subscribing school only. Copying or lending of any part of this document in any form or by any means to external bodies and / or individuals is prohibited.

Teacher's Standards

Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.

Some may be interested in the depictions of the life and ideas but accept that some elements are designed for commercial gain.

Oppositional meaning:

the audience reject the intended meaning and so formulate their own interpretation.

The sense that the content or the identity is seen as false, one exploiting whatever qualities the original site may have had.

The contemporary world is saturated by media. The media has evolved to become significantly more diverse, more complex and more ‘*interactive*’.

Because of this pervasive influence, the ways in which we form and construct our identity has fundamentally changed. Rather than identity being a ‘*birth right*’ – *something determined by one’s social position and conditions of life* – identities have, under media’s powerful and repeated influence, become diverse and fluid.

Contemporary culture provides a diverse range of ‘*symbolic resources*’ – *images and signs* – that we use to construct identity and to define our own lifestyles.

The formation of identities is therefore seen not as an inexorable process of socialization, but as a process in which individuals are active, selective and self-aware

Lesson 8 Contexts

Although A Level Media rarely gives focus to his work, modern media theories are underpinned by the work of Michael Foucault. It was Foucault who during the sixties coined the term ‘*Archaeology*’ to describe his approach to studying history. For Foucault, the Archaeology Model is about *examining the traces and forms left by the past to better understand what he termed a history of the present.*

Foucault’s work influenced all those theoretical models now widely accepted to analyze contemporary media products by accounting for the active influence of past products and past representations. Foucault believed analysis must consider more fully how these have contributed to the shape of such products today

In simple terms, the past shapes the present and without understanding the past we can never fully understand current media products .

Vloggers have become monetised – the ability/capacity to evolve a clearly defined audience into consumers that can be bought by commercial marketers to be sold to.

Copyright ©

All rights reserved. Permission granted to reproduce for educational use within the subscribing school only. Copying or lending of any part of this document in any form or by any means to external bodies and / or individuals is prohibited.

Teacher’s Standards

Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.

Each vlogger will – depending on their interests and their audience – have the capacity to construct different types of audiences for different ranges of products. *Zoella* and *MannyMua* have each constructed a cosmetics/lifestyle/fashion audience etc.

On a simple basis, the more views a YouTube social media post has, the more subscribers/followers which leads directly to larger advertising revenue streams in YouTube’s pay-per-view advertising deals.

Today, vlogging and online media has grown in technological sophistication – vloggers extend their reach by convergence onto other social media platforms, supplementing their primary channel/platform by linking their sites to a strong presence on Twitter feeds and Instagram uploads – both of which give widespread access to intimate candid snapshots such as the thoughts and reflections of Alfie and Zoella in the set products.

Amazon and Spotify construct similar ideas of a personalised service to their customers through landing pages and promotion of products or artists based on our personal search history – they appear to ‘know us’ and appear to offer helpful and useful ideas to guide our media consumption and pleasure (Cycle of Profit and Pleasure Model). YouTubers and vloggers construct similar relationships with audience subscribers by constructing an artifice of personalisation through offering content that gives audiences the idea that we have an intimate and deep perspective on their lives

*Online Influencers translate audience interaction and subscription into advertising opportunities. Today they are **market influencers** using crafted **trusted content** and carefully cultivated fan bases to create advertising opportunities through **product placement**.*

*They encourage their subscribers to share the content because they need audiences to promote their stories as part of the **viral distribution** of their brand. These audience led networks act as a conduit to larger views and larger profit.*

*By exploiting the decline in traditional media distribution, they have created new **mediated distribution systems carefully crafted to not only** engage new fans but to in turn transform them into messengers, links in the ever-expanding chain of views*

Copyright ©

All rights reserved. Permission granted to reproduce for educational use within the subscribing school only. Copying or lending of any part of this document in any form or by any means to external bodies and / or individuals is prohibited.

Teacher’s Standards

Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.

and profit. In this sense we can begin to further explore and understand and their page set ups that are designed to assist ease of content sharing

Influencer marketing is where products/brands seek to gain positive recommendations from a small group of those known to have influence in the actions and thinking of a larger target market.

Identifying those individuals who have influence over potential consumers, they shape a series of marketing activities around these influencers who are paid to make recommendations that will shape the behaviour of their followers. The advertising industry has used this for decades in celebrity endorsements – paying celebrities to promote their products and services. However, influencers is a wider group, often those with no skill or talent beyond the fact that they have attracted a large social media following

The basis of this theoretical model is the 1940s model known as Two-Step Flow, an idea developed in "*Personal Influence*" by Lazarsfeld and Katz in 1955 and in "*The Effects of Mass Communication*" by Klapper in 1960.

- **The heavy use of current on-trend platforms of Snapchat, Instagram and YouTube. The demise of the Facebook and X pages that Suggs had relied on. Suggs has not posted on Facebook for five years.**
- **Their youth and the youthfulness of guests or co-presenters.**
- **The deliberate ‘amateur’ aesthetic – wobbling camera, clunky edits, single shot takes. These imply a prosumer feel, that they do not employ editors or production team. These production values suggest authenticity especially to an audience used to media saturated perfection. They relate back to the origins of bedroom vloggers like Lonelygirl 15.**
- **The content – the narrative – features activities associated with the demographic. Relatable connections of gaming, take-aways, spots and blemishes, the antics of babies, shopping etc.**
- **A light tone – they are rarely serious or lecturing. They are light-hearted and chatty.**

Copyright ©

All rights reserved. Permission granted to reproduce for educational use within the subscribing school only. Copying or lending of any part of this document in any form or by any means to external bodies and / or individuals is prohibited.

Teacher’s Standards

Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.

- **The mode of address features youth slang and terms.**

The idea that we understand gender through **discourse** – *the narrative and spheres of action presented in the media products we consume*. Van Zoonen holds that the media's repeated use of stereotypical images reinforces what are felt to be the dominant societal views. She feels media producers use these as they feel it offers greater chance for the commercial success of their products.

In producing meaning and representations in mass media product forms, women are often objectified (viewed/valued as passive sexual objects).

Van Zoonen emphasises the need for such mass media products to present gender as socially and culturally constructed, the idea that gender ideas vary depending on the cultural and historical context.

Van Zoonen holds that in the modern media market, ideas of gender are expressed in more diversity on the internet.

Judith Butler's model of performativity argues that **gender identity** is not something we are born with, it is something we acquire through the everyday **performance** of gender roles established in mainstream society.

Gender is constructed through the performance of socially learned behaviours rather than being expressed by them. Gender is essentially a repetition of acts associated with the male or female – like a learned theatrical role. In the modern era, actions appropriate for men and women have been transmitted to produce a social atmosphere that maintains and legitimizes a seemingly natural gender binary whereas *Butler believes that gender and sexual identity cannot be categorised into such a simple **binary system**.*

*Feminist critiques of mass media tend to have a sole focus, that of challenging the dominant mainstream hegemony for its *patriarchal* and sexist representations.*

Hooks model of **Intersectionality** states that such a focus is too narrow, rather we should explore how systems of oppression overlap. She argues (like Butler) that rather than a singular identity (femininity) an individual's sense of self is constructed from a variety of overlapping identities - *gender, race, social class, sexuality, etc.*

Intersectionality argues that oppressed groups should work together against all forms of oppression rather than focus on one.

Copyright ©

All rights reserved. Permission granted to reproduce for educational use within the subscribing school only. Copying or lending of any part of this document in any form or by any means to external bodies and / or individuals is prohibited.

Teacher's Standards

Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.

Gilroy's model of The **Black Atlantic** is used to imply his view that Western black cultures rather than identifying as Afro-American or Afro-English are in fact their own ethnic group – **the Black Atlantic** – that blend elements of different African, American, Caribbean, and European cultures.

Gilroy's ideas assert that in a post-colonial world, the old colonial history exerts a powerful influence on attitudes to ethnicity of both white and black ethnicities that retain an assumption of the superiority of white western cultures and white identities. Such mainstream media tropes often require a submerging of black and ethnic identity to conform to the hyperreality constructed by media.

Lesson 9 Test

Lesson 10 Online

The online site should be analysed in terms of:

- **composition** of the images, positioning, layout, typography, language and mode of address
- **genre conventions** of websites must be studied, and the genre approach should also include reference to the content of such lifestyle vlogs and websites
- **Narrative** in the context of online material can refer to the way that the images and the selection of stories construct a narrative about the world – one which is likely to be ideological

Gilroy's ideas assert that in a post-colonial world, the old colonial history exerts a powerful influence on attitudes to ethnicity of both white and black ethnicities that retain an assumption of the superiority of white western cultures and white identities. Such mainstream media tropes often require a submerging of black and ethnic identity to conform to the hyperreality constructed by media.

Attitude is a commercial media product but could also be seen as fulfilling a public service through its ideological style of reporting and its involvement in social campaigns. The website also demonstrates **the way that traditional print publishing institutions have developed their reach through new technology and convergence.**

Copyright ©

All rights reserved. Permission granted to reproduce for educational use within the subscribing school only. Copying or lending of any part of this document in any form or by any means to external bodies and / or individuals is prohibited.

Teacher's Standards

Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.

- Attitude's web and social media sites show **how institutions respond to changes in consumption**
- The use of digital platforms to **expand the output and reach of the products** demonstrates how institutions have responded to the impact of new technology

Lesson 11 Language Mode of Address

In looking at **language in online** we are interested in **the way that the** sites and vloggers addresses audience. We are aware that the images, graphics, font, layout, and colours construct the way that audience 'feel' about a product/site but clearly, as online vlog or lifestyle site, the words used are of massive importance. You will have studied similar elements and effects in GCSE English [*alliteration; direct address; etc.*] and there is an expectation that you will be able to apply some quite developed knowledge to your analysis of the connotations of language use on covers and features pages in the set products

Lesson 12 Identity

Binary opposition is a *model of culture in which two theoretical opposites are strictly defined and set off against one another*. It is the in the contrast between what appear to be two mutually exclusive ideas, such as on and off, up and down, left and right or good and evil that we learn more about each than by seeing them in isolation. A heroic figure is more easily understood to be heroic when we see them pitted against a villainous figure. It is in the extremes of contrast that better understanding of meaning is established in the audience mind.

As a structuralist, Levi-Strauss, shares the idea of **Propp** and **Todorov** that cultural products are understood by their patterns and structures rather than consideration of context.

In online sites selected for study, we see ideas of values expressed in terms of those things that are oppositional. The content is designed to align the audience with a viewpoint on the figures or ideas presented. This may be in the selection of images, the strapline or links to other views on the subject on the site.

The magazines we read or the films we watch provide information about ways of living which all of us actively integrate into our relationships and lifestyles.

Copyright ©

All rights reserved. Permission granted to reproduce for educational use within the subscribing school only. Copying or lending of any part of this document in any form or by any means to external bodies and / or individuals is prohibited.

Teacher's Standards

Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.

Not only is this in the sense of acting upon ideas or behaviour pronounced upon by influencers on social media but in the manner that the particular representation of characters on TV – their ideas, beliefs, values, actions - help us refine our own identity. **This ties into Blumler & Katz Social and Self-identity and surveillance.**

This concept of **the constructed identity** is similar to **Bandura's** social learning theory who argues children adopt behaviour from role models in media products.

The online products address all four elements of the model. The posts address each element – entertainment in the projects and brands involved in; social issues (lifestyle); personal identity (gender); and views on the news or presentation of events held to be of significance.

Followers flick through socials each day, possibly motivated by surveillance, a desire to stay informed about the world, or looking for diversion from their routines. We should remember that as well as a sense of connection to the tribe, the need to check notifications and stay connected can lead to feelings of anxiety about their own lives.

- **Representation** is a key element in understanding the meaning of any media product. Representation essentially is the way that people, places, objects, ideas and values are presented in a media product and the impact this has both on constructing our ideas of what society is like - what we value and believe in - and in sustaining current ideas of how we see the world around us and our own place in it. Our identity.
- **Representation theory** focuses attention on stereotypes because repeated use of images and ideas trains society as to how we regard notions of beauty, age, gender, nationality, ethnicity etc. The constant and repeated use of stereotypes is often referred to as *media saturation*.

How lifestyle sites represent content (*what they believe to be of importance, interest and value to their subscribers*) has a cumulative impact on audience sense of their own identity. When viewed as part of the context of the images of all the other media products that surround us, lifestyle sites help establish values and ideas: what the era believe to be images of *desirability; what is fashionable or stylish; what it*

Copyright ©

All rights reserved. Permission granted to reproduce for educational use within the subscribing school only. Copying or lending of any part of this document in any form or by any means to external bodies and / or individuals is prohibited.

Teacher's Standards

Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.

requires to be admired and accepted; what it means to be a woman, to be a man; to be young, to be old; to be British; to be white, to be black; to be Western etc.

The EDUQAS case study options of *Attitude* and *gal-dem*, offer images and articles presenting a set of values for the audience to buy into.

The most common representations in examination tasks tend to be of identity – *what it is to be a woman, what it is to be a man, to be of a specific ethnicity*. This can often lead to very predictable answers, so in your research you should make the effort to offer ideas beyond more common notions.

Ethnicity and gender are common representations in examination tasks, and the EDUQAS products tend to suggest there is much in the material for such tasks to be effective. As each option involves a site focused on concerns of gender identity we can focus on conventional ideas of gender and explore how these products challenge such tropes.

- You must be able to identify what these representations are.
- The extent to which they are stereotypes or challenge existing representations.
- Be able to show you understand the connotations of such representations.

Lesson 13 Representations

The *zeitgeist* is a very useful term to apply in the study of products from any era, particularly if the product is one from the past where we can talk with a little more certainty as to its component parts.

The German translates as '*spirit of the age*'. We use it to mean those ideas that seem to dominate the mood of a particular epoch or period. This includes all things social and political and economic but specifically cultural. The ideas and values and beliefs that shaped how people thought and behaved.

Time of the Tribes (1996) argues that conventional approaches to understanding cultural groups in society is wrong. He contends that what we think of as **mass culture has disintegrated** and that today social and ***cultural identity is through fragmented tribal groupings, organized around the catchwords, brand-names, and sound-bites of consumer culture.***

Copyright ©

All rights reserved. Permission granted to reproduce for educational use within the subscribing school only. Copying or lending of any part of this document in any form or by any means to external bodies and / or individuals is prohibited.

Teacher's Standards

Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.

For Maffesoli, **identity** is shaped by cultural elements of music videos, gaming, films and pop culture, rather than religion or politic ideologies.

He cites *sociality* - simply being-together in everyday life. Out of this sociality, evolves our sense of 'self'. This is how youth subcultures are formed which are ***interstitial, transitive and temporary***. In his model, new forms of social media facilitate and expands such fragmentation.

These communities of shared taste are “*not on the lookout for some distant, abstract and rather irrational sense of utopia, but instead seek a fragmentation into small interstitial utopias experienced...everyday*”.

Rather than just selling the qualities of a product, brands marketing now shows them taking a stance on social issues and public debate. This shift in advertising is a result of the changing media landscape. Viral content and social media platforms allow brands to reach global audiences. By taking a strong stance on a particular social issue, instead of interrupting social debate, brands position themselves to join such conversations inevitably aligning themselves with populist 'woke' points of view.

Media products reflect values or ideologies, though audiences may not be aware of this. An example might be products where solving problems with force is seen as acceptable - EG: the *Fast and Furious* series – and reflects a certain cultural ideology – *an eye for an eye; crime doesn't pay*.

The media is a successful carrier of ideology because it reaches such a huge audience. In studying media products, we can consider the dominant ideologies of a society and explore the implications of these on how we live.

When studying media, you should look to find the dominant or underlying ideology that is represented and consider whose values are represented and which groups - *and their associated values and beliefs* - are not. The online choices are products that in some way attempt to offset the mainstream values present in the majority of media products.

Understanding ideologies of media products enables answers to have much more depth and evolves the ability to discuss connotations with greater confidence in the statements that you make.

Copyright ©

All rights reserved. Permission granted to reproduce for educational use within the subscribing school only. Copying or lending of any part of this document in any form or by any means to external bodies and / or individuals is prohibited.

Teacher's Standards

Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.

Ideology is the extent to which media products contain and communicate particular ways of looking at the world, a set of values and beliefs that it is assumed audiences share.

These may be the general values of society - *such as the importance of human life or attitudes towards crime and punishment*. It might be specific values that only certain groups in society might share - *such as different political views about society like capitalism, communism; or ideals such as vegetarianism or anti-nuclear*.

Lifestyle products clearly speak to the wider social values, but within this may then speak to specific sections of society that share its values about the world.

On a simple level, we might see that some online lifestyle products – *those like Zoe Suggs and KSI aimed at fashion and cultural trends* - tend to focus on material objects, the idea that happiness comes from looking a certain way or through possessing certain clothes, cars, or other material goods. They place a value on physical looks and help to establish the defining accessories of a modern lifestyle.

Other lifestyle sites – *such as those of Attitude and gal-dem* - offer a different set of values, such as awareness of gender or ethnic identity, social activism, or heritage.

An ideology is a world view, a system of values, attitudes and beliefs which an individual, a group, or society holds to be true or important; these are the shared ideas of a culture or society about how that society should function.

Ideologies that are held and told to us by important social institutions - the church, the law, education, government, and the media itself - are called dominant ideologies.

Dominant ideologies are ideologies or beliefs that we live by in our day-to-day lives and often do not question – they have become 'natural, common sense' things to do. This acceptance effectively dissuades people from rebelling against these beliefs and keeps a sense of stability in society.

Dominant ideologies, amongst many other things, include our beliefs about gender roles, the economy, and social institutions such as marriage.

Consumerism has been a dominant ideology in the western world since the industrial revolution. Consumerism is the view that a person has more worth in society if they

Copyright ©

All rights reserved. Permission granted to reproduce for educational use within the subscribing school only. Copying or lending of any part of this document in any form or by any means to external bodies and / or individuals is prohibited.

Teacher's Standards

Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.

have more material possessions, and that we are made happier by consuming more goods.

Copyright ©

All rights reserved. Permission granted to reproduce for educational use within the subscribing school only. Copying or lending of any part of this document in any form or by any means to external bodies and / or individuals is prohibited.

Teacher's Standards

Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.