

# Glossary of key terms

**Agenda setting** The theory that the media have a powerful and influential role in telling politicians and the public what they should be thinking about.

**Ambiguous/Ambiguity** A sign with several possible meanings which could be confused.

**Augmented reality** Technology combining computer-generated images with the user's physical environment.

**Austerity** Government policies that reduce spending on public services so that the country does not have to borrow so much money.

**Avatar** A picture, icon or character that represents a digital media user, e.g. a game-player.

**Bias** A prejudice for or against a particular group or individual. Biased reporting in the media may be demonstrated by tone or style but also by selection or omission. A newspaper story may be biased not because of what is included, but by what is left out. Bias can be innocent, for example a bias for tea and against coffee, but in media studies it usually refers to unfair or irrational practices.

**Brand** An identity or representation of a product, which distinguishes it from its rivals. These are obviously commercial products. Although an individual person, Zoella can also be thought of as a commercial product.

**Carriage costs** DAB radio stations do not usually own their own transmitters. They have to pay a monthly sum of money for a DAB transmission service. It can be very expensive.

**Cerebral pleasure** Pleasure of the mind rather than the body.

**Clickbait** Eye-catching web content or headlines designed to entice the viewer to click on a link to a web page with questionable value.

**Cold opening** A short scene that occurs before the opening credits or titles, which hooks the viewer into the characters, the situations and possibly the story.

**The Cold War** The name for the stand-off between the world's two superpowers, the USA and the Soviet Union, from the end of World War II in 1945 until the collapse of Communism in 1989.

**Computer-generated imagery (CGI)** The use of graphics software to generate still or moving images. CGI is often associated with animation and special effects in blockbuster film but is increasingly being used to enhance conventionally shot sequences in advertising and television.

**Concentration of ownership** The process that results in a small number of corporations or individuals taking an increasing market share, usually by takeovers (buying other companies) or mergers (joining forces with other companies).

**Conglomerate** A combination of two or more businesses owned by one parent company.

**Connotation** Meaning by association. As you grow up, in your culture you learn that many signs have meanings that are not obvious or direct. For example, the word pig can connote greed or dirtiness or arrogance, among many other connotations. Signs often have different connotations for different groups of people.

**Content provider** Any company or organization that makes material for television viewing on any platform. For example, ITN (Independent Television News) makes news programmes for ITV, Channel 4 and Channel 5.

**Context** Used in two ways in media studies:

- 1 The immediate surroundings of something, like the other words in a sentence providing a context for each individual word.
- 2 The wider social, cultural, political or historical circumstances of a media product or process.

**Continuity editing** Most films and TV dramas are filmed and edited to try to hide the editing, so that the audience doesn't notice the cuts between shots. Actions and visual style need to continue smoothly from one shot to the next. This way the audience can get lost in the narrative and not think about the film-making.

**Conventions** Established rules or shared understandings are used in media products as 'the way we do things'. Conventions are more likely to be taken for granted than formally stated.

**Convergence** There are two ways in which we use the term convergence in media studies.

Firstly, it refers to the ways in which media industries converge through takeovers and mergers.

Secondly, it refers to media forms merging together as a consequence of digital technology.

**Copy** In the context of newspapers, copy is the written or printed material as distinct from photographs, cartoons, graphics or any other visual material.

**Cultural hegemony** The process of making people see the beliefs and values of the most powerful group as being natural and common sense.

**Data mining** Turning raw data into useful information.

**Demerger** Happens when a large corporation is broken down into smaller independent companies.

**Demographics** Demography is the statistical study of populations, so a demographic variable is one of the sections or categories into which a population can be divided. These include age, ethnicity, gender and social class.

**Demonised** Making someone or a group of people seem as if they are evil.

**Denotation** The straightforward, obvious or literal meaning of a sign. For a word it would be a dictionary definition of that word. A photo of you simply denotes you. A denotation has no hidden, subtle or underlying meanings.

**Depth of field** In photographic or video terms this is the distance between the nearest and furthest points from the camera that are in focus.

**Deregulation** The reduction or removal of government regulation in a particular industry such as radio or television. Usually, this is done because of a belief that competition will improve quality and choice for consumers.

**Diegesis** The world of the characters in the story. Information available to any of these characters is diegetic, information only known to the audience is nondiegetic.

**Diffused audience** Diffused means to spread over a wide area or between a large number of people. A diffused audience is large but scattered.

**Diversification** Occurs when a media company branches out to offer services in more than one media form, for example when a magazine publishing company buys up a radio station.

**Docudrama** A genre that combines fiction with real events. Real people and actual events are recreated in a docudrama.

**Dominant cultural values** The beliefs held by the majority of people in society about, for example, what sort of behaviour is right or wrong, acceptable or unacceptable. These beliefs are so strong that they seem 'just natural', but if they are not constantly reinforced they can break down.

**Dominant signifier** On a page or a poster or in a photo containing a number of signifiers grouped together, the dominant signifier is simply the most important (usually the largest) of these signifiers.

**Editorials** A statement of the newspaper's position on a topic, often written by the editor. 'Editorial copy' is anything in a newspaper other than advertising.

**Ellipsis** In film and video editing, ellipsis is the omission of a period of time. The audience is expected to work out what has happened from the context.

**Encoding/decoding** This model of communication claims that media products contain various messages that are encoded using different media codes and conventions. The ways in which audiences decode these messages depend on their social context. The decoded messages may not be the same as the encoded messages.

**Essentialism** The belief that men and women are fundamentally different in terms of their skills, preferences and behaviours.

**Establishing shot** A type of shot that fulfils the narrative function of locating the action in space. For example, a television news report about UK politics may begin with an establishing shot of the Houses of Parliament.

**Fake news** Information that appears to be genuine but is untrustworthy, misleading, false and/or damaging.

**Feminist theory** The belief that women and men should be given equal rights, but that society is currently structured so that women are not equal to men.

**Focus group** A group of people, usually with common characteristics, assembled to discuss a particular product, issue or campaign in order to collect in-depth information. Focus group discussions are often led by a facilitator who guides the discussion or poses questions.

**Foley sounds** These recreate the diegetic sounds of important actions on screen but are created by foley artists in a studio – named after pioneering Hollywood sound-effects artist Jack Foley. Even footsteps as the actors walk are usually recreated and added afterwards. Foley artists watch an edit of the film as they work to make sure their timing is right.

**Folk devil** The person or group that is the focus of a moral panic.

**Fragmentation** The process of breaking something down into smaller parts. A fragmented audience may be very large but the individual members have no connection with each other and use many different devices.

**Freemium** A business model, especially used with internet content and mobile games, that offers basic services, or the basic game, free of charge, but more advanced or special features have to be paid for.

**Greenlight** The stage in the process of film development when funding has been agreed and shooting can start.

**Hierarchy** A system with different levels based on rank, size or importance.

**High definition (HD) and ultra-high definition (UHD) TV** Standard definition (SD) television is gradually being replaced by HD television (at four times the resolution) and the next generation of UHD and 4K (eight times SD resolution) television sets are available. UHD and 4K TV adds other technologies that increase the clarity, definition and colour range of images. Making programmes in UHD has many implications for media language. The quality of the image is so high that viewers are able to interact with their television sets, for example in sports coverage, by panning and zooming within the images to pick out a particular piece of action. UHD television is much more expensive to produce, so it is likely to be used to create material that can be used many times, for example natural history and science programmes.

**Horizontal integration** The acquisition of other companies at the same level of the supply chain (for example, making media products) in similar or different sectors of the market.

**Hybrid** A genre that combines two or more pre-existing genres to create a new category.

**Ideology** A shared sets of beliefs and ideas about what is right and what is wrong.

**Immersive** An experience that completely draws in the audience or user by enabling them to interact with the product.

**Intellectual property** Ideas and designs that are copyright to a company or individual. For example, the characters and narratives in Marvel's Universe are the intellectual property of Marvel and Disney, which owns the Marvel subsidiary.

**Interactivity** Two-way communication in which the participants both actively engage in the process.

**Intertextuality** A feature of texts (media products) that borrow or quote from other texts.

**Left wing** Political views that support social equality, fairness and the duty of society as a whole in order to support those who have difficulty supporting themselves.

**LGBTQ+** Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer and others.

**Low brow** Used, often rather insultingly, to describe examples of culture that are simplistic and undemanding. In contrast, anything described as **high brow** is usually an example of culture considered intellectual and demanding.

**Masthead** A publication's name or title in a distinctive form, usually placed at the top of the front or cover page.

**Media brief** A document setting out what is needed within a media product. It is usually written by a non-media company, such as a manufacturer who wants to advertise their goods, explaining what they want the media products (in the Spofaze brief, the adverts) to achieve. It is used by their chosen media production company to make sure they get the message and the details right.

**Media consumption** Audiences and individuals are often described as consumers of media. Media consumption is any engagement with the media by an individual or audience.

**Media literacy** The possession of the range of skills needed to gain access to, critically analyse and create your own examples of media in different forms. GCSE Media Studies is a good way of developing your media literacy.

**Media pack** Contains information for potential advertisers.

**Media synergy** The co-production and/or copromotion of a related set of media products or services all developed in-house by a large media corporation.

**Mediation** The selection and omission of information when creating a media product.

**Merchandise** With regard to films, these spin-off products linked to feature films can include toys, clothing, posters, books, games, food and other items that bear the film's brand.

**Millennials** People who reached young adulthood at the start of the 21st century – the turn of the millennium.

**Mise-en-scène** All the elements chosen by producers to make up the content of images, including codes such as location, lighting, non-verbal communication (NVC), props, accessories, etc. are often referred to as the mise-en-scène. It is a French term meaning 'put in the scene', which emphasises the idea that elements are included deliberately to communicate specific meanings.

**Mode of address** Involves the style and tone of a media message's presentation; not so much what is being said but the way in which it is said. Formal/informal, direct/indirect are examples of modes of address.

**Model** A model seeks to capture an idea or concept in a simplified form, often as a graphic or diagram.

**Monetisation strategy** The proposed method for making an income from a product.

**Monopoly** A situation in which one company totally dominates a sector of the market place. There is no competition, leaving customers with no choice to buy elsewhere.

**Montages** A technique of putting together fragments of still or moving images and/or sounds from different sources to create a meaningful sequence. Often used to compress time.

**Moral panic** The impact on society when the mass media play an active role in stereotyping a person, group or issue as a threat to the accepted norms, values and interests of society.

**Music beds** Both radio and advertising use music beds in the background, to evoke an atmosphere or mood. The term usually refers to instrumental pieces that are relatively low in volume, allowing other sounds to be heard clearly above them.

**Newsworthiness** Relates to a topical event that is considered sufficiently interesting to the public to be worthy of reporting as news. News media will judge the newsworthiness of an event by applying their own set of news values. These may differ. For example, the *Daily Mirror* sees human interest stories as more newsworthy than *The Times*.

**Niche audience** A niche audience is smaller and more specialised than a mass audience. To target a niche audience or market, then, is to attempt to design a product that is perfectly suited to a particular group of people.

**Non-exam assessment (NEA)** Referred to by some people as coursework. You have to carry out this work during the course itself, rather than during an exam at the end of the course. However, the tasks are still set by AQA. Your NEA work is first marked by your teacher and is then sent to AQA who will moderate the marks.

**Objectivity** Information that is based on facts and analysis or scientific reason. Objectivity is based on observable and measurable evidence. Objective views are often backed up by statistics. Something claimed to be 'objectively true' will be supported by hard evidence.

**Ofcom** Ofcom regulates TV, radio, video-on-demand, phone and postal services. Ofcom promotes competition, protects the interests of consumers and enforces the rules that apply to different communication sectors.

**Oligopoly** A market that is dominated by a few companies that control the supply of the products or services. There is very little competition within an oligopoly as the companies tend to cooperate with each other by keeping prices high.

**Op-ed** Short for 'opposite the editorial page', these are written by named columnists and do not necessarily express the newspaper's official position.

**Paralanguage** How we convey meaning through aspects of speech other than the words we use – such as speed, rhythm, tone, volume and hesitation.

**Patriarchy** A system or society in which men are all-powerful and women are excluded from positions of influence or responsibility. Patriarchal attitudes are the views and beliefs that justify this inequality.

**Paymium (or paidmium)** A business strategy for apps that combines a low initial price with in-app purchases.

**Paywall** A website with a paywall is fully or partially restricted to users who pay a subscription.

**Photo-story** In newspaper journalism, this is a story that is more newsworthy because of the presence of an interesting photograph. Prime Minister Theresa May's meeting with other European leaders (October 2017) would have been newsworthy anyway, but the powerful image on the right, taken from video footage, made it even more so. It was used by almost every UK newspaper and many others around the world.



**Polysemic** A sign or message that can have many different meanings.

**Pressure group** An organised group of people which tries to influence government policy in a particular area or in support of a particular cause.

**Propaganda** Using the media to promote a biased viewpoint, usually for political purposes.

**Protagonist** The main character in a story. The protagonist is actively opposed by another character: the antagonist.

**RAJAR** Radio Joint Audience Research is jointly owned by the BBC and commercial radio. Its job is to measure the number of people listening to radio and the types of radio they listen to. The website [www.rajar.co.uk](http://www.rajar.co.uk) is a great source of information if you are doing any research into radio audiences.

**Record labels/companies** Businesses in the music industry that fund and coordinate the production, distribution and marketing of music in return for a share of the profits.

**Royalties** Payments paid to performers and songwriters when their music is played on radio (or television or video games).

**Running story** This is a story that appears in two or more consecutive editions of a newspaper or for two or more days in other news media. If a breaking story has this potential, journalists may say, 'this one will run and run'.

**Segmentation** The breaking down or subdivision of a large group into identifiable slices or segments. Each segment is defined by something all members have in common, such as the same age group.

**Self-regulation** When media industries set up and pay for their own regulatory bodies. Unlike statutory regulators, these do not have legal powers, but they rely on companies within the industry to accept a code of practice. Examples include IPSO (newspapers and magazines) and the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA). The ASA covers press, broadcast, film and internet advertising as well as posters and leaflets. There are various codes for different media produced by the Committee for Advertising Practice. The overall aim is 'to make every UK ad a responsible ad'.

**Semiotics** The use and study of signs, sign systems and their meanings. Also known as semiology.

**Serif and sans serif** A serif is a small decorative line added to the letters of certain typefaces, as shown below left. Sans means without, so sans-serif typefaces, as shown below right, don't have these features.



**Skyline** A line of text, with or without a coloured strip background, that runs across the top edge of a magazine page, poster or other print product. It contains important information to appeal to the audience.

**Social cohesion** The tendency for individuals in society to bind together with shared views, beliefs and behaviour.

**Social construction** The belief that masculine and feminine behaviours are constructed by society and not by nature.

**Social fragmentation** The tendency for individuals and groups within society to split apart because they have few values or beliefs or behaviours in common.

**Social groups** Two or more people who share a common sense of identity.

**Social realism** A film genre that deals sympathetically with everyday issues and problems faced by working-class people. Typical themes of social realist films include unemployment, poverty, homelessness, prostitution, drugs and the effects that these have on people's relationships.

**Spin** A form of biased communication used by advertisers, marketers or politicians to present someone or something in a very positive or very negative light. Experts in spin are called 'spin doctors'.

**Statutory regulation** Statutory regulators have legal powers to control the industry for which they are responsible (a statute is a law). For example, Ofcom is the UK regulator for TV, radio, video-on-demand and phones. It sets rules and enforces them in these sectors.

**Stereotyping** The reduction of a social group to a limited set of characteristics or preconceived ideas.

**Subculture** A group with beliefs or values that differ from most people in the wider culture to which it belongs.

**Subjectivity** Information that is based on individual interpretation or opinion. It can be clouded by bias, values or beliefs. Subjective views may not be backed up by scientific proof or hard evidence, but they can still have great value in opening our eyes to a deep understanding of something that is not measurable such as humanity, love or grief.

**Subscription video-on-demand** SVOD is the same as VOD but is only available to paying customers. Amazon Prime Video is an example.

**Target audience** Producers of media products always have in mind an intended audience, often defined by age, gender or social class. The product is fashioned to appeal to the specific wants and needs of this group, a process called targeting the audience.

**Time-shifting** The viewing of a broadcast programme at a time of the viewer's choice rather than at the time of transmission. This may be achieved by home recording, downloading or steaming.

**Transition (editing)** The joining together of two shots. The most common type of transition is the **cut**: an instant shot change between the two shots. Others are **crossfade** (or **mix** or **dissolve**), in which one shot gradually merges into the next. Digital editing can also achieve many special effect transitions. A **fade in** is a transition between a blank screen (usually black) and a shot. **Fade out** is the same in reverse.

**Transmission** A broadcast programme on television or radio. A live transmission is broadcast simultaneously with the event actually happening.

**UK independent films** Films made without any financial or creative input from the 'big six' American studios which also pass the cultural test for 'Britishness'. The individuals and companies producing these films make up the UK independent sector.

**Unique selling point (USP)** The factor that makes a specific product or service stand out in comparison to other similar products. The USP of a community radio station could, for example, be that it plays music by local artists or that it features news about the local area.

**User-generated content (UGC)** Any form of content (video, blogs, digital images, audio files) created by users of an online system, made accessible to others via social media. Most newspapers have online versions which invite contributions from readers. Unlike the print edition, there is no restriction on the space available for this material. Contributors of user-generated copy are almost always unpaid and are sometimes known as **citizen journalists**.

**Vertical integration** A strategy that involves bringing supply, production, distribution and sales together into one unified company.

**Video-on-demand** VOD is television content that can be watched at any time the viewer chooses. BBC iPlayer is an example.

**Virtual reality (VR)** Technology that simulates a three-dimensional world, often enabling users to interact with it.

**Visceral pleasure** A type of audience pleasure that is like a physical experience

**Vlogger** Person who makes video blogs, for example via their own YouTube channel.

**Watershed** The period after 9.00 p.m. and until 5.30 a.m. when television broadcasters may schedule more adult material that could be harmful or unsuitable for viewing by minors (under 16). Premium paid-for services such as Sky Movies do not have to operate a watershed but must be PIN protected with a security code.

**White paper** A document intended to start a discussion that will lead to change.