

Subject specific vocabulary

The following subject specific vocabulary provides definitions of key terms used in our GCSE Media Studies specification (8572). Students should be familiar with and gain understanding of these terms.

Active audience

The theory that media audiences engage with or interact with media products by contributing, participating or creating their own meanings. See Reception Theory and Uses and Gratifications.

Advertising Standards Authority (ASA)

The ASA is a self-regulatory body set up by the advertising industry. It covers press releases, 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.

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 or a media product with several possible meanings which could be confused.

Anchorage

The text (copy) that fixes (anchors) an image and its meaning.

Antagonist

In a plot, the character whose function is to disrupt the protagonist – often, but not always, a villain.

Archetype

An original on which many copies are based. Often used in relation to characters in fictional works. Examples include the rebel, the mother figure and the villain.

Audience

The people who consume a media product by watching, listening and reading it.

Audience positioning

The technique used to persuade the audience to interpret a media product in a particular way.

Augmented reality

Technology combining computer-generated images with the users of physical environment.

Austerity

Government policies that reduce spending on public services so that the country doesn't have to borrow as much money.

Avatar

A picture, icon or character that represents a digital media user – eg a game-player

BARB

Broadcasters' Audience Research Board – the organisation that measures and collects television viewing data in the UK.

Bias

A prejudice for or against a particular idea, place, 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's included, but what's left out.

BBFC

British Board of Film Classification – responsible for deciding the age classification and censorship of all films and video content released in the UK.

Big close up

A camera shot which focuses on the face or close detail of the body. The closest type of shot is an extreme close up (ECU).

Binary opposition

The contrast between two ideas or concepts, such as good/evil, male/female. Usually the contrast causes conflict that drives the narrative.

Blockbuster

Films usually produced by Hollywood studios with very large production budgets.

Brand

An identity imposed on a product or range of products in order to encourage consumer awareness and loyalty. Individuals with a high media profile, such as Zoella, may also cultivate their own brand.

By-line

The printed line of text in a newspaper/magazine that names the writer of an article.

Camera movement

The way the camera is moved during filming to add depth, interest and variation for the viewer, such as pan and track.

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 which can be very expensive.

Censorship

The controls and regulations that exist about media content. Censorship powers can be held by governments or regulatory bodies.

Cerebral pleasure

Pleasures of the mind rather than the body.

Citizen journalists

Non-professional people who post news and other information to social media, blogs, vlogs and websites.

CGI

Computer-generated imagery is the application of computer graphics to printed or moving image media. The term CGI commonly refers to 3D computer graphics used for special effects in film sequences.

Click bait

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

Code

A communication system which includes signs, rules and shared understanding. Examples include the English language, non-verbal codes, print codes and editing codes.

Cold opening

A short scene occurring before the opening credits or title sequence, which hooks the viewer by plunging straight into the story. Also known as a cold open or teaser sequence.

Colour palette

The suite of colours that are used in the creation of media texts, such as websites and magazines, to reflect a brand and appeal to its audience.

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.

Commercial broadcasting

Privately owned media broadcasting of television and radio programming.

Concentration of ownership

Refers to the number of organisations or individuals who control ownership of the media. Fewer stakeholders hold increasing shares.

Conglomerate

A media conglomerate is a large corporation that owns a large number of media companies, such as television, radio, internet, publishing – giving the conglomerate control in the market.

Connotation

The meanings of a sign or media product that are made by cultural association. These are often the deeper or underlying meanings. For example, images of a sunset in a film may connote ending or closure.

Consumption

The act of using media products by watching, listening to or reading them.

Content provider

Any company or organisation 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

We use this term in two ways in media studies.

1. The immediate surroundings of something, ie a news photograph on the front page of The Times.
2. The wider social, cultural or historical circumstances of a media product or process.

Continuity editing

The most commonly used type of video editing used in post-production – predominantly used to establish a logical and linear coherence between shots.

Conventions

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

Convergence

The coming together of technologies and institutions to create a new product or media experience.

Copy

1. The written material, as opposed to images, that features in a media text.
2. A positive stereotype that reinforces the positive qualities of a person/type of person.

Cover price

The price printed on the cover of a printed media text.

Close up (CU)

A common camera shot that tightly focuses on a person or object.

Crane shot

A camera shot that is taken from above the ground high on a crane (also known as a jib).

Cross-cut

An editing technique used to establish that action is occurring at the same time.

Cross-head

Words used as a title or sub-heading to break up text in a newspaper or magazine.

Cross media ownership

This describes any company whose assets include two or more media forms. For example, Bauer owns magazines and radio stations.

Cut

A simple editing technique. One shot ends and another begins, with no transitions or effects added.

Cultural hegemony

The process of making people see the beliefs and values of the most powerful group as being natural and common sense. Also known as cultural imperialism when applied to the power that one country's media has over other countries.

Data mining

Turning raw data into useful information. Often used in relation to the huge volume of data supplied by users of social media.

Date line

A line that shows the date that a media publication/article was written/first published.

Demerger

Separating a large corporation into two or more smaller organisations.

Demographics

1. The characteristics and make-up of a sample of the population, eg age, gender, nationality.
2. The literal or surface meaning in a media text.

Demonised/Demonisation

Making someone, something or a group or a group of people seem as if they are evil.

Denotation

The literal or surface meaning of a sign or media product.

Depth of field

In photographic or video terms, this is the distance between the nearest and furthest points away from the camera that are in focus.

Dialogue

Words spoken by characters in media products such as films or television dramas.

Diegesis/Diegetic

These terms to the world of the characters in a story. Information available to any of these characters is diegetic. Diegetic sound includes all speech, music and any other sound which can be heard within the world of the characters. See also non-diegetic sound.

Diegetic sound

Actual sound from the world of the film, whether on or off screen.

Diffused audience

To diffuse means to spread something out over a wide area or amongst a large group of people, so a diffused audience is large but widely scattered.

Digital (platform)

Digital media is any media that can be created, viewed and distributed digital devices.

Deregulation

The reduction or removal of a government regulation in a particular industry such as radio or television. Usually, this is done in the belief that increased competition will improve the quality of the service provide more choice for consumers.

Desensitisation

The idea that continuous exposure to violent or disturbing media content can leave audience members indifferent to real life events.

Desk Top Publishing

Desk Top Publishing (DTP) software allows the user to create printed media texts with various page layouts and designs

Distribution

The ways in which media products are made available to audiences either physically or online.

Diversification

This occurs when a media company branches out to offer services in more than one media form, for example when a magazine publishing company buys a radio station. See also, cross-media ownership.

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 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.

Editing

Post production techniques involving arranging, revising and/or removing written, audio or video content for audience consumption.

Editorial

A statement of a newspaper's position on a topic often written by the editor.

Editorial copy

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 in the missing period from the context.

Encoding/Decoding

This model of communication claims that media products contain various messages that are made (encoded) using various codes and conventions. The ways in which audiences make sense of (decode) these messages depend on the social context of the audience member. The decoded message may not be the same as the encoded message.

Enigma

A narrative device in the form of a mystery or puzzle that is not immediately resolved. An enigma is a way of hooking the audience in to the story.

Essentialism

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

Establishing shot

A type of camera 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.

Ethics

The principles and standards that are upheld in broadcast media, film and the Internet.

Ethnicity/Ethnic

These refer to large groups of people with a common or shared identity or heritage in terms of, for example, culture, religion, language and sense of history.

Eyeline match

A film editing technique that makes the audience feel that they are seeing what the character on screen is seeing.

Fade

In video editing post-production, a fade is the transition to and from a blank image.

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.

Flashback

A scene in a moving image that is set in an earlier time than the main story. A technique more rarely used is the flash forward.

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

Named after pioneering Hollywood sound effects artist Jack Foley, the diegetic sounds of important actions on screen are re-created by artists in a studio. Foley artists watch an edit of the film as they work to make sure their timing is right. Even footsteps as the actor's walk are usually recreated and added afterwards.

Folk devil

The person or group that is the focus of moral panic.

Form

The various formats that media texts and products come in, such as newspapers, magazines and films. Each media form will have its own set of codes and conventions.

Font

The style and size of text characters on the printed page or screen.

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.

Framing

The amount of information in a scene revealed to the audience by choice of camera shot.

Franchise

A media franchise is a collection of linked media products derived from single original source. James Bond and Marvel Comic Universe are examples of film franchises. In business, including the media industries, a franchise is the authority given by a government or company to an organisation which is then permitted to make certain products or offer certain services.

Freelance

A person who is hired by different companies to work on particular projects. Freelancing is common in many areas of the media.

Fremium

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.

Focus

Focus is an example of a photographic code. Deep focus allows all the detail of the image to be clearly seen. Shallow/narrow focus will draw attention on one part of the image with surrounding detail blurred. The distance between the nearest and furthest points from the camera that are in focus is called the 'depth of field'.

Gatekeeping

The way in which information is filtered by the media before it is prepared for publication, broadcast or distribution.

Genre

A way of describing texts which share recognisable characteristics, eg men's magazines, TV crime dramas or first-person shooter games.

Globalisation

The process that has seen international flows of trade, business, media and cultural products become speedier and more intensive.

Greenlight

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

Guerilla marketing

The focus of guerilla advertising or marketing is on the creative, the imaginative, the unexpected – something that will generate a social buzz. Based on low-cost unconventional tactics which aim to capture the attention and interest of consumers.

Headline

The text, usually in larger font, at the top of a page or article in a newspaper or article, indicating what the content is to the reader.

Hegemony

The dominance in the media of a particular social group. For example, in the UK, middle class people dominate the media workforce.

Hierarchy

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

High definition (HD) and ultra-high (UHD) TV

Standard definition (SD) television is gradually being replaced by HD television (four times the resolution). The next generation of UHD and 4K television (eight times the resolution) sets are available. UHD and 4K TV add 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.

Home page

The first page of a website that a user will access at a web address. The home page usually contains navigation links to the other pages of the website.

Horizontal integration

Companies who acquire other companies operating in the same sector.

House style

The overall design style of a newspaper, website or magazine. This might include font, colour scheme and layout. The house style sets a product apart from its competition and makes it easily recognisable to its audience.

Hybrid

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

Icon

In semiotics, an icon is a sign that physically resembles the thing it stands for (compare with symbol).

Ident

Short for identifier – can be a short visual image shown on the screen in between television programmes, signaling the channel that is being watched, or an audio 'call sign' to identify a particular radio station/programme.

Ideology

A shared set 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.

Impress

A self-regulatory body for the UK press (alternative to IPSO).

Institutions

The organisations that create and distribute media texts, such as the BBC and News International.

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.

Interactive media

Interactive media allows the user/consumer to take an active involvement in the media text, even by contributing to it.

IPSO

The Independent Press Standards Organisation is the independent regulator of the newspaper and magazine industry in the UK.

Jingle

A short and catchy piece of music or song/slogan used to promote a product, used particularly in advertising and on the radio.

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

Lighting

Lighting is a photographic code which can add dramatic effects to images. Lighting can be high key (everything brightly lit), low key (a lot of contrast between light and shadow), or natural (trying to look 'like real life').

Linear model

A model which sees media communication flowing along a straight line from Sender who sends a Message to a Receiver

Links

Clickable text or images that take users to different pages of a website.

Logo

The visual image used to identify a product, brand or company.

Low brow

Used, often rather insultingly, to describe the examples of culture that are simplistic and undemanding. In contrast, anything described as highbrow 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 page 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 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 the 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 co-promotion of a related set of media products or services all developed in-house by a large media Corporation.

Medium/mid shot (MS)

A commonly used camera shot. Typically it will frame the subject from the waist up or show some background detail in the shot.

Mediation

The process by which a media product represents an idea, issue, event or group of people to the audience. 'Mediation' suggests that this process always changes the perception of whatever is represented by the media.

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.

Merger

A combination of two media companies into one – usually to gain more power and influence in the market.

Message

The content of a media product; the meanings it communicates.

Millennials

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

Mise-en-scene

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 this scene' which emphasises the idea that elements are included deliberately to communicate specific meanings.

Mock-up

A rough plan of how the layout of a page of printed media will look.

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. For example, the linear model of communication.

Monopoly

A situation in which one company totally dominates a sector of the marketplace. 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.

Multi-media

Technology that enables sound, video, text and graphic images to be used in the same media production.

Music beds

Both radio and advertising use music beds in the background, to invoke an atmosphere or mood. Usually refers to instrumental pieces that are relatively low in volume, allowing others sounds to be heard clearly above them.

Narrative

The way in which a story or a sequence of events is put together. Narrative organises chains of events telling us why, when and where things are happening. A simple narrative structure is equilibrium, disruption, recognition of disruption, attempts to restore equilibrium, new equilibrium.

News values

Ways in which media companies will assess and categorise news stories and decide on their newsworthiness. Each media publication will have its own news agenda and set of news values.

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 in 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/market

A relatively small segment of an audience with specific tastes and interests.

Non-diegetic sound

Sound that is neither on the screen or features in the 'world of the film'. Typically, non-diegetic sound will be sound effects or background music added to create mood and atmosphere.

Non-verbal communication

Non-verbal communication/codes (NVC) are all those that do not include spoken or written language. Clothing, facial expression and body movement are examples of NVC.

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 and the companies tend to cooperate with each other by keeping prices high.

Op-ed

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

Opening sequence

The opening section of a film/television drama. Often this is action-packed and ends on a cliffhanger. Opening sequences are also used to introduce key characters or to establish settings.

Ownership

The companies who own the companies that produce and distribute media texts.

Panning

A camera movement in which the camera stays in one position (usually on a tripod) and sweeps around horizontally from left or right

Paralanguage

How we convey meaning through aspects of speech other than the words we use. Examples include speed of delivery, rhythm, tone, volume and hesitation.

Passive audience

Passive audience theories stress the power of the media to directly influence the ways in which audiences think or behave.

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.

PEGI

Pan European Game Information – the organisation that judges what the age ratings should be for games. Produces guidance for consumers (mainly aimed at parents) so that they can decide if a game is suitable.

Photographic codes

Techniques used to add meaning to images. These include lighting, framing, composition, camera position, lens type, focus and length of exposure are all photographic codes.

Photo story

In newspaper journalism, this is a story that is more newsworthy because of the presence of an interesting photograph.

Pitch

An outline of an idea for the creation of a particular media product.

Platform

The technologies, software or apps that allow media producers and consumers to interact, such as social media.

Plot

The way in which a story is fashioned before it is told. Story events are organised and planned, perhaps by withholding key pieces of information from the audience in order to 'keep them guessing'.

Point of view (PoV)

A camera shot that allows the audience to see from the viewpoint of an individual character.

Polysemic

A sign or message that can have many different meanings.

Preferred reading

The interpretation of a media text that the producers intended the audience to have.

Prejudice

Preconceived ideas or opinions that have no basis in reason or evidence. Some stereotypes and representations are prejudiced.

Pre-production

The work, planning and research that is done on a media product before the actual production begins.

Pressure group

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

Primary research

Original and new research that is carried out to answer particular questions or issues.

Prime time

The times of the day when radio and TV audiences are expected to be at their highest.

Private sector

This comprises all those companies which are not owned or controlled by the state but which are run for profit.

Producer

The people who plan, coordinate and create media products.

Product

Any media text can also be called a media product.

Product placement

A marketing technique in which products or mentions of products are embedded within, for example, a film or a television show.

Propaganda

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

Props

Short form of property. Objects that appear on screen or stage.

Protagonist

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

Psychographic

Marketing and advertising often categorises consumers using psychographic variables: different psychological categories that are linked to aspirations, lifestyle, personality or spending habits.

Public sector

Companies that are owned or controlled by the state. The BBC is an example of a media organisation in the public sector.

Public service broadcasting

Television and radio programmes that are broadcast to inform, entertain or educate the public, without trying to make a profit.

Qualitative research

Qualitative research is used to explore and gain an understanding of audience opinions and motivations.

Quantitative research

Quantitative research is the collection of numerical data and statistics.

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. Their website rajar.co.uk is a great source of information if you are doing any research into radio audiences.

Realism

The use of codes and conventions to make a media product seem realistic rather than contrived.

Reception theory

These are theories of the media audience that see audiences as 'active' because they make their own meanings out of the messages received from the media. The meanings we make out of media products is just as much influenced by who we are as by the content of the message, according to reception theory.

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.

Regulation

Rules or sets of standards that are expected to be adhered to. Regulatory bodies oversee that this is being done by media companies.

Representation

The way in which the media 'represents' people and the world around us.

Royalties

Payments paid to performers and song writers 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'.

Secondary research

Secondary research involves the collation and analysis of research that already exists.

Segmentation

The division of audiences into segments and categories.

Self-regulation

This occurs 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).

Semiotics

The use and study of sign, 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. Sans means without so sans serif typefaces don't have these features.

SFX

Special Effects. Graphics techniques that are applied to moving images to create specific effects.

Shot

A single image taken by a camera, or a single take of video footage.

Sign

Anything that expresses meaning is a sign. Examples include written or spoken words, an image, a sound, a gesture or an item of clothing.

Signposting

The technique of establishing what the location of a scene is from the beginning. For example, a hospital drama might be signposted by audio of medical equipment or ambulance sirens.

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 printed product. It contains important information to appeal to the audience.

Slogan

A catchy, eye-catching and memorable phrase, often used in advertising.

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, values and beliefs 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 media/networking

Websites, platforms and apps that enable users to communicate with other people across the world.

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'.

Sponsorship

A marketing technique involving the funding or support of, for example, a person, media product or event in order to increase exposure for a brand or product or service.

Standfirst

A term used in print and website design which refers to introductory material, usually appearing immediately after a headline and often distinguished by a different typeface.

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 pre-conceived ideas.

Storyboard

A visual representation and plan of how a moving image scene will be shot. Typically includes a sketch of each frame, camera movements, edits and timing, etc.

Storyline

Another word for plot.

Strapline

A cross-column subheading, usually found in newspapers, magazines and websites, that emphasises part of an article or advert.

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 an 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.

Subscription broadcasting

Any platform/broadcaster that offers access to its content for a subscription.

Symbol

A sign which doesn't physically resemble the thing it stands for. Words are symbols because they don't look like the idea or object that they stand for. The red white and blue tricolor flag is a symbol of France.

Synergy

Where two or more media products are linked for commercial purposes, eg a film and a video game based on the film.

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.

Teaser

A form of trailer that 'teases' the audience about a forthcoming film. Often meant to intrigue, teasers are typically short and aimed at perking interest.

Tilt

A camera movement on a vertical axis. The camera, usually tripod mounted, is angled upwards or downwards.

Time shifting

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

Titles/title sequence

The opening credits of a television programme or film, including the title but often including information about key personnel and snippets of the product.

Tracking

A camera movement in which the camera itself is moved alongside or towards the subject.

Trailer

A short advert for a forthcoming film. Usually adhering to a particular set of codes and conventions, trailers might include highlights from the film and information about the stars of the film.

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.

Treatment

A short outline of an intended media production. This might include written descriptions, sketches and mock-ups.

Typography

The design and arrangement of written material for a printed page or screen.

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

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)

User generated content (UGC) is any content created and distributed on a particular platform by a user of that platform.

Uses and gratifications

A theory associated with Blumler and Katz that audience members seek out and actively *use* media products to *gratify* different sorts of need.

Verbal codes

These include any examples of written or spoken language.

Vertical integration

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

Video-on-demand (VOD)

VOD is television content that can be watched at any time the viewer chooses. BBC i-Player is an example.

Viral marketing

A method of marketing which encourages media consumers to share opinion and information about a media product on the internet and on social media.

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.

Vlog/Vlogger

A video blog or video log, usually shortened to vlog, is a form of blog that uses video rather than written text.

Voiceover

A segment of narration that is added to a broadcast with the speaker not seen on screen.

Watershed

The period after 9pm and until 5.30am 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 offer PIN protection with a security code.

Video Standards Council (VSC)

Responsible for age rating of video games in the UK using the PEGI system. Also provides information and advice to gamers, parents and schools.

Wide angle shot

A camera shot which gives the viewer access to the whole scene. Called a long shot in film.

Zoom

Movement of a camera lens to make a subject seem closer (zoom in) or more distant (zoom out).

Specifications that use this resource:

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