

## KEY TERMINOLOGY:

**Mass audience:** large group of people, not individualised.

**Specialised audience:** smaller/narrower group, defined by factors such as age, socio-economic group or interests.

**Target audience:** the specific group of people that a media product is aimed at.

**Consumption:** how a media product is used or experienced by an audience e.g. watched/ listened to/ played etc.

**Response:** how audiences react to a particular product.

**Active audience:** selects media to consume for a purpose, interprets/ responds to/ interacts with media products.

**Passive audience:** not active, e.g. accepts messages in media products without question.

## KEY CONTENT:

**How and why media products are aimed at a range of audiences, for example:**

**Small, specialised audiences:** producers can target a very specific group to try to guarantee an audience for the product e.g. a specialist magazine might target people with an interest in gardening or heavy metal music.

**Large, mass audiences:** producers can reach more people, and possibly make more profit, by appealing to a mass audience. These products might include, for example, popular or 'universal' themes/ ideas, or include representations of different social groups to appeal to a wide range of people.

**Apply it...** identify which of the set products are aimed at a mass audience and which are more specialised.

## KEY CONTENT:

**How media organisations categorise audiences:**

Media producers categorise audiences in order to target their products more effectively. They often use a combination of demographic categories (e.g. age, ethnicity, gender, socio-economic group) and psychographic factors (e.g. interests, lifestyle and values).

**The ways in which media organisations target audiences through marketing:**

Marketing is very important in appealing to and reaching the target audience for a product. Increasingly, digital technologies and social media platforms are used to target audiences. Media organisations might make **assumptions** about the target audience, e.g. that people in a certain age group and income bracket might share similar values/beliefs that are conveyed in the marketing.

**Apply it...** select one of the set products you have studied and research the marketing materials. Make notes on the ways in which these target the intended audience.

## WHERE WILL I NEED TO STUDY/ APPLY AUDIENCES?

**COMPONENT 1: Section B**

**Question 4 will assess knowledge and understanding of audiences in one of the forms studied:** newspapers, radio or video games.

**COMPONENT 2: Section A**

**Question 2 will assess knowledge and understanding of media industries, audiences or media contexts in relation to the television topic studied.**

**COMPONENT 2: Section B**

**Question 4 will assess knowledge and understanding of media industries, audiences or media contexts in relation to the music videos and online media products studied.**

**COMPONENT 3**

Learners need to apply knowledge and understanding by creating a media production for an intended audience.

## KEY CONTENT:

**The ways in which audiences may interpret the same media products very differently:**

Media products are polysemic (communicate multiple meanings), so different people are likely to find different meanings in the same text.

**These differences may reflect both social and individual differences, e.g.** the time/ place in which a product is consumed; a person's age, upbringing, education, where they live, their values and beliefs etc. E.g. *audiences might have very different interpretations of the confrontation between Luther and Madsen in the set episode of Luther.*

**Apply it...** choose a set product and consider how different audiences (e.g. older and younger age groups, or people who live in different countries) might interpret it in different ways.

## KEY CONTENT:

**The social, cultural and political significance of media products, including:**

**The themes or issues they address:** media products often explore topics of current interest and importance, e.g. social issues relating to health or the environment, or political issues such as Brexit.

**The fulfilment of needs and desires, e.g.** for information, entertainment, artistic inspiration, sense of identity etc.

**The functions they serve in everyday life and society:**

The media fulfil many roles in society, e.g. reporting news/ factual information, discussing/ debating important issues, exploring aspects of human experience, providing entertainment and popular culture.

**Apply it...** identify the key themes and issues that are addressed in some of the set products you have studied. Think about how these themes reflect current social or political issues.

## THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES AND CONTEXTS:

**Active and passive audiences:**

In the past, audiences were assumed to be passive, with the potential to be negatively affected by media products (e.g. if the product contained violence). More recent theories argue that individuals actively choose, engage, respond to and interact with products.

**Audience response and interpretation:**

how audiences react to media products, e.g. they might respond in the way the producer intended (e.g. by agreeing with the viewpoints in a product), or question/ disagree with the intended meaning.

**Apply it...** consider how these ideas apply to the set products you have studied, e.g. through examples of audience interaction or actual responses.

**Blumler and Katz's Uses and Gratifications theory:**

States that audiences actively select media products to fulfil particular needs, or pleasures:

**Information:** to find out about the world.

**Entertainment:** pleasure of diversion/ escapism.

**Personal identity:** they can relate to the characters/ situations/ values and beliefs in a product.

**Social interaction:** pleasure of discussing products with others.

**Apply it...** consider how the Uses and Gratifications theory applies to all the products you have studied.

Other perspectives, e.g. Stuart Hall's Reception Theory (preferred, negotiated, oppositional readings) or the Effects Debate, may also be studied.

**CONTEXTS: Historical, Social, Cultural, Political:**

How products reflect the context in which they were made in terms of audience consumption.

How audience responses to/ interpretations of media products may change over time.

## APPLYING AUDIENCES: PRACTICAL TASKS

- Research task:** look at a range of magazine covers (e.g. online). Identify the target audience for each and make notes on the methods used to appeal to this group.
- Imagine you are creating a **magazine** in a genre of your choice for a young adult audience. Think of a title, a strapline and a topic for a feature article that would appeal to this audience. Consider how you would need to change your ideas if you wanted to appeal to an older audience.