

Year 10 Media Knowledge Booklet

Term 4

Name:

Class:



Knowledge Booklet - GCSE Media Studies – Term 4

1. Advertising
2. Radio

Advertising - Big Questions:

- What are the key terms and conventions in relation to the topic of print and audio/visual advertising?
- How do adverts target and gratify specific demographics?
- How are adverts constructed to appeal to targeted audiences?
- How can Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) be used to explain the effectiveness of adverts?
- How is narrative, USP and ESP used in advertising?
- What are the key elements of the history of the advertising industry and how do they help our understanding of social, cultural and technological contexts?
- How are adverts regulated and who regulates them?
- How are groups represented differently in adverts (eg. How does the representation of gender or ethnicity differ between certain adverts?)
- How do the set products (Quality Street, NHS 111) appeal to audiences?
- What are the contextual factors surrounding the set products?

SET PRODUCTS:

- **QUALITY STREET PRINT ADVERT (1956)**
- **NHS 111 PRINT ADVERT (2023)**



Use 111

If you need urgent medical help but you're not sure where to go, use 111 to get assessed and directed to the right place for you.

Call, go online or use the NHS App.



ADVERTISING: KEY CONCEPTS AND TERMINOLOGY

Deconstructing Constructing

Graphics
 Slogan/Strapline
 Product endorsement
 Typography
 Campaign
 Hard sell
 Soft sell
 Rule of thirds
 Synergy
 Colloquialism
 Imperatives
 Stereotypes
 Advertising awareness
 Copy
 Demographics
 Target market
 Anchorage
 Cross-platform
 Alliteration
 Brand image
 Brand recognition
 Connotation
 Denotation

Target audience
 Demographic
 Core buyer

 Social class categories:
 A,B,C1,C2,D,E

Physical platforms:

Newspaper
 Magazine
 Billboard
 Ambient media
 Stunt media
 Sales promotion
 Flyer

Digital platforms:
 Banner
 Floating adverts
 Pop-ups
 Sponsors
 Clickbait
 TV adverts
 Radio adverts
 Mobile advertising
 Social networking
 Viral adverts
 Vlogging
 Email
 Niche market (small,
 specific audience)
 Exposure
 Production value

Image

Photographic codes

Camera Shots:

- High Angle
- Over the Shoulder
- Long Shot
- Establishing Shot
- Mid Shot
- Low Angle
- Extreme Close Up
- Close Up

Mise en Scene:

- Setting
- Colourisation
- Lighting
- Camera angles
- Camera movement
- Editing
- Pose
- Facial expression
- Hair and make-up
- Costume
- Positioning
- Framing
-

Iconography

Polysemic image (an image with several meanings)

Theory

Uses and Gratifications

Theory:

- Entertainment
- Information
- Personal Identity
- Social Interaction

Gerbner's Cultivation Theory

Mulvey's Male/Female Gaze Theory

Narrative (story line)

Narrative Theory

Todorov's Narrative Stages

Propp's Character Theory

USP – Unique Selling Point

ESP – Emotional Selling Point

VALS – Values, Attitudes and Lifestyle

EXEMPLAR EXAM QUESTIONS:

- Explore how the *Quality Street advert (1956)* uses Media Language to appeal to audiences (10).
- Explain how the *Quality Street advert (1956)* has been influenced by historical, cultural and social contexts (10).
- Compare the ways in which the *Quality Street advert (1956)* and the *NHS 111 (2023)* advert are constructed to appeal to audiences (25).
- Compare the representations in the *Quality Street advert (1956)* and the *NHS 111 advert (2023)* (25).

Quality Street print advert (1956)

Component 1: Exploring the Media

Focus areas:
Media language
Representation
Media contexts

PRODUCT CONTEXT

- *Quality Street* sweet tin made by Mackintosh.
- Originally created in 1936, inspired by the name of a play by J.M Barrie.
- In the 1930s, only the wealthy could afford chocolate boxes but the creator Harold Mackintosh aimed to sell them at a more reasonable cost to appeal to working families. By the 1950s, when this campaign started, society was in a post-rationing period where luxuries were once again becoming an acceptable part of grocery shopping.

PART 1: STARTING POINTS – Media language

Historical context

The icons of the *Quality Street* brand were two characters from the Regency era of British history. In the Regency era, Britain went through a period of elegance with regard to Fine Art and Architecture. The Regency era could also be compared to the 1950s for its significant social and cultural development. Between 1811 and 1837 the country was under the rule of Prince Regent and developments in technology (e.g. the steam-powered printing press), fashion and architecture were mirrored by a population boom. These similarities can be compared to England in the 1950s.

Social and cultural context

The 1950s saw a change in “high culture”, a time where fine art, decadence and theatre that had previously only been accessed by the upper classes

and those with money were now going to be made more affordable to the mass audience. The Conservative Party’s 1951 election campaign was spearheaded by the slogan “Set the People Free”, and this supported drastic change as entertainment and arts became more accessible and affordable.

Consider how media language creates and communicates meaning:

- **Structure and design of the advert:**
 - » anchorage of the gold frame – connotations of a halo effect around the man and the product
 - » typical triangular geometric **composition** of the poster to help secondary anchorage of the product
 - » product takes central **framing**.
- **Typography** is strong, forming the bottom third of the poster, and the strong purple colour stands out to draw the consumers’ eyes to the name.
- Hand-drawn, artistic nature of the design, with a rich **colour palette** of primary and secondary colours, links to the post-war consumerist culture.
- **Persuasive language techniques** such as alliteration, emotive language and superlatives are all indicative of a well-read educated audience; further enhanced by the bold, serif font styles connoting richness.

Consider how media language creates narratives:

- **Connotations** of the female characters being dressed similarly to the sweets that are shown close-up on the bottom third of the poster.
- Inference of a **dilemma** can be investigated at two levels:
 - » male ‘hero’ choosing between two ‘damsels in distress’ (Propp’s theory)
 - » females choosing the chocolate (see Representation section for discussion on female stereotyping).
- **Costume** and dress of male character indicating

the formal nature of his dilemma; connotations of a higher class and richer society.

- **Patriarchal** narrative, which is part of a range of similar adverts of this time.

Consider intertextuality:

- The characters in the gold frame, Miss Sweetly and Major Quality, are part of the **brand Identity** of the product since 1936.
- The characters are symbolic of the Regency era of British history referenced by the dress codes of the characters in the gold-framed picture at the back of the advert.

Possible areas for further investigation:

- The advert is part of a **campaign** from this time that uses a similar design. The brand identity of Major Quality and Miss Sweetly goes back to the origin of the product in the 1930s, so it is interesting to look at how their advertising has developed with these characters:
http://www.nestle.com/media/newsandfeatures/quality_street_75

aspiration. The two female characters appear to be of a lower class than the man in the suit, and the man in the suit is of a lower class than the two characters in the gold frame. The item that brings all these classes together is the product in the centre of the image.

Consider the representation of gender:

- The image suggests a **male dominated society** with regards to 'choice' – he is in control of the product and is centrally framed. This links to Mulvey's male gaze in relation to the framing (**feminist theoretical perspective**). The male character anchors the audience's eyes to the product which has significant phallic symbolism.
- The dress code relates to the modern working businessman who may be the 'provider' of the brand.
- The women have two **stereotypes** being relied upon in the advert: firstly, that of their need for chocolate, a common and very traditional stereotype that still exists today, and secondly their subservient body language to the dominant man. The implication is that to be successful you will need to be romantically led by a man.
- There is also a secondary and **deeper analysis** here – a sense of manipulation with the women distracting the man through romance to access the 'prize' that is the product in the gentleman's lap. This advert could be seen to be representative of the way in which society was moving at this time.
- The **historical** representations of the Regency characters show typical strong feminine colours, and the showing of flesh for Miss Sweetly, and the formal uniform dress of Major Quality signify importance and power in their own relationship.

PART 2: STARTING POINTS - Representation



Social and cultural context

Gender roles in the 1950s were remarkably different to the present day and it is important to consider the advertisement in this context.

The product itself was designed and planned for working families and the imagery is very aspirational of a higher class which links to the post-war era in Britain. Much of the branding indicates that the product was symbolic of elegance and

Consider the representation of age:

- To discuss the representation of age, it would be important to make a comparison to a similar advert in this campaign with a much older couple in two chairs (see above).
- This advert is purposely for the young to middle aged adults (25–40), and the **target audience** could see themselves in the characters in the main section of the advert.

FACTSHEET: NHS 111 Help Us Help You (2023)



NHS

Use 111

If you need urgent medical help but you're not sure where to go, use 111 to get assessed and directed to the right place for you.

Call, go online or use the NHS App.

111 Help us help you

- The NHS 111 Help Us Help You is a national campaign launched in December 2022. It was created for NHS England by M&C Saatchi London and distributed by the UK Government's Department for Health and Social Care.
- The campaign is funded by NHS England and HM Government, and it is a public health campaign with no commercial aspect to it at all.
- The multi-channel campaign seeks to encourage people to use the NHS 111 service when they have an urgent but not life-threatening medical need. The campaign promotes the NHS 111 service and how people can call 111, go online or use the NHS App to get assessed and directed to the right service for them.
- The primary target audience for the campaign is all adults, as anyone can have an urgent care need, but The Department of Health and Social care specified that there should be more investment targeting young people under 35, and parents of children aged 5-12 years.

PART 1: STARTING POINTS – Media language

Social and cultural contexts:

- NHS 111 helps to ease the burden on emergency services, by reducing the number of people unnecessarily calling 999 or going to Accident and Emergency (A&E), ensuring that emergency services can focus on more critical cases.

- The overarching campaign, launched in 2022, was to tackle a lack of understanding about the NHS 111 service, and as a result the adverts aim to educate and inform people, highlighting how the service can be used and for what ailments.
- In a post-Covid society, NHS England wanted the public to contact NHS 111 first in order to help NHS services maintain social distancing and ensure that patients receive the correct care, in a timely and safe way.
- Colour is an essential element of any brand's identity. Research shows that the public strongly associate the NHS with the colours blue and white.

Consider the codes and conventions of media language and how media language influences meaning:

question.

The dominant image encourages the audience to engage with the brand's message:

- A long shot of a father sat on his sick daughter's bed, which is located in an NHS Urgent Treatment Centre (UTC). Conventionally, for a public health campaign, none of the models are famous, in order to target ordinary adults, who would be able to identify with this scenario.
- The father's slippers, neutral grey top and jeans along with the daughter's stripy pyjamas and fairy lights are all used to construct a sense of familiarity and connection with the audience.
- The father's concerned facial expression, posture and reassuring arm gesture, could convey protective care. This in combination with the daughter's neutral facial expression, costume and position in bed suggest her sickness and need for care.
- The dominance of the father in the image suggests he is the Proppian hero of the

narrative, on a quest to find help for his sick daughter. With this Proppian lens we could also see the NHS framed as the helper, aiding the hero on his quest by providing the 111 service on his tablet.

- The background setting of the UTC is constructed with the use of props typical of a medical waiting area, including a reception desk with a leaflet rack, wipe-clean beam seating, a clock and signage. The grey walls, heavy duty carpet and LED downlights connote a clinical workplace; professional and trustworthy. This setting also serves to make the daughter's wooden bed and colourful bedding look brighter. The contrast between the two is purposeful and highlights the universal theme of family care, which helps the NHS 111 service feel more approachable, specifically among parents of 5-12 year olds.
- The UTC background is a core part of the brand's identity and illustrates one of the many services the public can access via 111. The same image is used across other products in the campaign, with the foreground image changing.
- Across the main image is the campaign's tagline "Get to the help you need", which is used across the campaign for consistency and recognition. The use of the imperative "get" and direct address "you" reinforces the public health genre of the advert, as it calls on the target audience to take action and access the app, online or phone 111.
- The body copy uses simple, clear language to explain what NHS 111 is and why it's important to use it. The language is direct and concise, ensuring that even those with low literacy can understand the message. This accessibility is crucial for promoting engagement with the NHS 111 service with all adult audiences.
- This accessibility and clarity is echoed in the choice of sans-serif font for the typography used across the tagline,

website and main title.

- The consistent use of the NHS blue (Pantone: 300) in the logo, the written codes and the UTC signage create a sense of cohesiveness conventional in adverts and links the advert strongly to the NHS brand identity.
- A muted, soft colour palette is often used in healthcare advertising to evoke trust, calmness, and reliability. In this advert, these colours help reinforce the message that NHS 111 is a supportive and trustworthy service.
- The triangle in the bottom right hand corner is suggestive of the warning signals used on highways, which connotes urgency and the importance of the number. The designers are using the icon of this well-known warning sign in order to grab the audience's attention.
- In the top left of the advert is the official logo for the UK government "HM Government" and in the top right is the NHS logo; the use of both reinforces to the audience that the advert is not for commercial gain, but to raise awareness of a public service.

Consider the relationship between technology and media products:

- In addition to physical posters and pull up displays, the advert was created to run across digital display, social media and search engines. The written codes ".go online or use the NHS app" in combination with the central model using a tablet reinforce the digital nature of this advert, which is targeting young people under 35 and parents.
- The campaign's brief specified "engagement with organisations to reach disabled audiences, with alternative formats, including British Sign Language (BSL) versions which include details of contacting 111 using the NHS 111 BSL interpreter service and text relay." This

awareness of diverse audiences and the importance of accessibility is reflected in the choice to include a model with a hearing aid.

PART 2: STARTING POINTS – Representation

Consider the social and cultural significance of particular representations:

- The campaign's agenda is to encourage parents to use NHS 111 services. In order to do this, they construct a positive representation of a concerned father at his sick daughter's side.
- **Stereotypically**, men aren't seen as emotionally nurturing, but this campaign seeks to **challenge these stereotypes** and recognise the emotional and practical role men play in the domestic sphere. We can see a man actively seeking the "help" that his family needs, which is reinforced by the large written codes framed around him.
- The advert represents the idea of **health literacy** by showing the father as a responsible, pro-active figure, and it encourages parents to be informed and take appropriate action. By representing the father as a decision-maker in his daughter's healthcare, it emphasises that seeking advice through NHS 111 is an intelligent, responsible choice, not just an emergency measure.
- The processes of **selection and production** have been carefully considered. This advert, like others in the campaign, seeks to specifically target global majority audiences in the UK, so the choice to represent a Black family is significant.
- Black men have been an **historically underrepresented** group, particularly in health campaigns. Studies show that representation in health advertisements is crucial for improving health outcomes;

social groups who are left out may not feel the message is directed at them and as a result they may not benefit.

- The child's female **gender** is constructed through her plaited pigtails and the dominant use of the colour pink; a colour **stereotypically** associated with girls.
- The child's youthful **age** is reinforced with the use of props and costume, in combination with her look to her dad, which suggests her illness and dependence.

Consider how the representations reflect the social, cultural and political contexts in which they were produced:

- The father represented as the primary caregiver challenges the **dominant ideology** that mothers are always the primary caregivers. However, this reflects contemporary **societal norms** in the UK; studies show that fathers' involvement in parenting has increased from less than 15 minutes a day in the mid-1970s to three hours a day during the week, with more at the weekend (Fisher et al, 1999). The shift in fathering roles can be seen as a response to changing family structures, such as the rise in dual-income households and single-parent families.
- The child is wearing a hearing aid and reflects the recent increase in the representation of the deaf community in the mainstream media.
- The models in the background are represented wearing face masks and working behind plastic screens, which reflects the social distancing procedures in health environments post-Covid.

Consider the ways the media represent the world, and construct versions of reality:

- The advert successfully constructs the **'real'** world of the UTC with the use of a set, lighting, props and costumes. Additionally, the child's bed is constructed

realistically too with age-appropriate bedding, fairy lights and a rosette.

- Interestingly, the advert constructs **verisimilitude** in relation to the two separate scenarios it depicts (the UTC and the child's bedroom) but seen as a whole we are not meant to believe the daughter's bed is in the UTC. Instead, the **combination** of the two represents how accessing NHS 111 on the tablet is a way of accessing the UTC.
- The non-diegetic text "Get to the help you need" framed around the model's head also reinforces the constructed nature of this advert but serves a greater purpose to push the target audience to take action when they or their family need it.

Homework 1:

Annotate the advert below. Consider advertising terminology as well as camera angle and mise-en-scene terms. How has it been constructed to appeal to audiences?

Date Due:



Homework 2:

Learn the following advertising terminology for a review quiz in lesson:
Hard sell, Soft sell, Synergy, Anchorage, Connotation, Denotation, Niche Market, Polysemic Image, USP, ESP.

Date Due:

Homework 3:

Annotate the advert below. Consider advertising terminology as well as camera angle and mise-en-scene terms. How has it been constructed to appeal to audiences? How are representations constructed?

Date Due:



Desert Island Discs

Component 1: Exploring the media

Focus areas:

- **Media industries**
- **Audiences**
- **Media contexts**

INTRODUCTION

Desert Island Discs is a radio show on **BBC Radio 4**. It was first recorded in 1942, making it one of radio's longest running shows. It is aired on Sunday mornings and generally repeated five days afterwards. It is also available as a **podcast**; during Kirsty Young's tenure as presenter, the 'listen again' function became available online. According to YouGov, it is popular with 44 percent of the British public, and known by 69 percent ([Desert Island Discs popularity & fame | YouGov](#)). The premise of the show is that guests imagine that they are cast away on a desert island. They are given a copy of the Bible, or another chosen religious or philosophical text, *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*, then asked to choose eight audio recordings, one book and one luxury. This provides an opportunity for a retrospective of the guest's life.

PART 1: STARTING POINTS – MEDIA INDUSTRIES

Learners must develop their knowledge and understanding of the following aspects (content taken from the specification):

- **The nature of media production, including by large organisations, who own the products they produce, and by individuals and groups.**
- **The impact of production processes, personnel and technologies on the**

final product, including similarities and differences between media products in terms of when and where they are produced.

- **The effect of ownership and control of media organisations, including conglomerate ownership, diversification and vertical integration.**
- **The importance of different funding models, including government funded, not-for-profit and commercial models.**

The BBC

BBC Radio 4 is a national radio station produced and run by the BBC. The BBC as a media organisation produce a variety of television programmes for national and regional UK audiences. In addition, the BBC produce several national and local radio programmes for audiences in the UK, including both music and speech broadcasting. *Desert Island Discs* is an example that blends these two aspects.

The BBC is an established **global media organisation**. BBC World Service television, radio and digital content can be accessed in over forty languages and the BBC's online content is available to users around the world through, for example, the BBC website (www.bbc.com).

Public service broadcasting

The BBC describes itself as 'the world's leading **public service broadcaster**' (www.bbc.com/aboutthebbc). Its remit is "to act in the public interest, serving all audiences through the provision of impartial, high-quality and distinctive output and services which **inform, educate and entertain**". *Desert Island Discs* is clearly an example of entertainment, but it could also be seen as

informing and educating listeners through the cultural texts referred to and the issues raised by the guests' life stories.

The BBC's Public Purposes as stated in its Royal Charter are:

1. To provide impartial news and information to help people understand and engage with the world around them.
2. To support learning for people of all ages.
3. To show the most creative, highest quality and distinctive output and services.
4. To reflect, represent and serve the diverse communities of all of the United Kingdom's nations and regions and, in doing so, support the creative economy across the United Kingdom.
5. To reflect the United Kingdom, its culture and values to the world'.

Desert Island Discs could be seen as fulfilling these criteria in several ways. In 2019, a panel of industry experts voted it the greatest radio programme of all time ([Desert Island Discs 'greatest radio show of all time' - BBC News](#)), illustrating its perceived quality and creativity. The programme is iconic and distinctive, recognisably part of the **Radio 4 brand**. 'Castaways' are automatically given a copy of *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare* and popular choices of authors include Jane Austen and Charles Dickens, which all contribute to reflecting UK culture and values. The current presenter, Lauren Laverne, is from Sunderland, and the previous presenter, Kirsty Young, is Scottish, representing 'the diverse communities of all of the United Kingdom's nations and regions'. The format also allows for a diverse range of guests from different nations and regions within the UK.

Desert Island Discs can be seen as a typical Radio 4 programme as the channel is described by the BBC as 'the home of intelligent speech, journalism, comedy and drama' (www.bbc.com).

Funding

In terms of funding, the BBC, and therefore *Desert Island Discs*, is financed predominantly through **public funding** in the form of the **licence fee**. This must be paid by all households in the UK for access to all television channels, as well as services such as streaming and downloading via, for example, BBC iPlayer. This funding model supports the BBC's Public Service Broadcasting remit, meaning the BBC is not driven by the demands of advertisers or the political agendas of private owners and shareholders.

However, the BBC does also have commercial subsidiaries, one being BBC Studios which is a production company that creates British content to be sold to **global audiences**, often working collaboratively with other commercial organisations. It aims to maximise revenue from existing BBC content by creating, for example, spin-offs from popular shows. In this sense, the BBC could be seen as a **conglomerate**, as it is a **parent company** with **subsidiaries**. It is also a **vertically integrated** company, containing **production, distribution and sales divisions**. From its origins in broadcast radio and television, over time it has also **diversified** into digital and online content.

In 2023, the BBC announced that *Desert Island Discs* would henceforth be made by BBC Studios, moving from the BBC's public service division to its **for-profit** arm. The intention of this change was to increase revenue from the show by aiming it at listeners outside the UK. This is in the context of a significant drop in listening figures for Radio 4 at the time. ([Desert Island Discs to move to BBC's for-profit division in bid to make money | Desert Island Discs | The Guardian](#))

The BBC needs to justify its public funding and compete with the many commercial broadcasters in the contemporary international **multi-channel environment**. It must aim to cater to both UK and global audiences, whilst still fulfilling its Public Service Broadcasting remit. There has,

therefore, been considerable ongoing debate about the future of the licence fee in the contemporary age of multi-channel, subscription and on-demand services. Opinion polls have shown a lack of public support for this funding model and there have been many high-profile critics and opponents. The existing Royal Charter expires in 2027, and the current Labour Government (2025) are considering replacing the licence fee with an alternative form of funding, as it does not generate enough income to support the BBC and is seen as unfairly affecting poorer people.

In this context, *Desert Island Discs* is an important **flagship programme** for the BBC. Its format makes it relatively cheap and easy to produce, but it generates high listening figures and so is cost effective.

Content taken from the specification:

- **The impact of the increasingly convergent nature of media industries across different platforms and different national settings.**
- **How the media operate as commercial industries on a global scale and reach both large and specialised audiences.**
- **The functions and types of regulation of the media.**

Convergence

The existence of the *Desert Island Discs* page on the BBC website, and the availability of over 2400 previous episodes as podcasts, reflect the **convergent** nature of the radio industry. The BBC has invested heavily in BBC Sounds, its on-demand audio streaming service. The app was launched in 2018, with the aim to 'reinvent the BBC for a new generation' ([BBC Blogs - About the BBC - Introducing the first version of BBC Sounds](#)). This enables *Desert Island Discs* to extend its audience beyond the traditional, **more specialised, Radio 4 audience**, encouraging new, younger listeners to the programme, as well as making it available to **global audiences** in this way, creating greater

overall **reach**.

The importance of this to the BBC as a media organisation is clear: "this [2023] has been another record breaking year for BBC Sounds with the number of plays having grown year by year by almost 50 per cent with some of the most listened-to programmes on BBC Sounds coming from BBC Radio 4, including *Desert Island Discs*." ([I've listened to Desert Island Discs for 80 years - but Lauren Laverne has made me switch off](#))

Regulation

The BBC is **regulated** by **Ofcom** and all its radio programmes are required to meet Ofcom's regulatory requirements. The nature and style of *Desert Island Discs* means it rarely receives complaints that would go to Ofcom. The producers **self-regulate** prior to broadcast to make sure each episode meets Ofcom criteria.

PART 2: STARTING POINTS – AUDIENCES

Learners must develop their knowledge and understanding of the following aspects (content taken from the specification):

- **How media organisations categorise audiences.**
- **How and why media products are aimed at a range of audiences, from small, specialised audiences to large, mass audiences.**

Audience

Given the longevity of the programme, it can reasonably be assumed that the core audience is an **older demographic** who have listened to it over a number of years. The *Desert Island Discs* audience is also reflective of the Radio 4 audience, which has been criticised for being overly middle class and White ([Am I bowvered that Radio 4 is too middle class? No! | Radio industry | The Guardian, BBC Radio 4 'too middle class and London-centric'](#)). The White, middle class audience for *Desert Island Discs* can be seen through the guests' most popular choices

of music artists from 1942 to 2011, who are all White classical music composers ([BBC Radio 4 - Desert Island Discs - Facts and Figures](#)). Similarly, in a 2011 poll of listeners' choices of music artists, the selections were overwhelmingly White ([BBC Radio 4 - Desert Island Discs - Your Desert Island Discs results](#)).

The format of the show does, however, give it the potential to appeal to a wide audience. It is a simple, easily understood and universally appealing idea. The inclusion of a different 'castaway' each week allows for a variety of guests to be included, from different genders, ages, ethnicities and backgrounds, again broadening its appeal. Some guests are famous or celebrities, whereas others are less well-known but are recognised in their fields of, for example, charity, science, philanthropy, sport, arts, politics or business.

The choice of presenter is a key way of aiming the product at a particular audience. There have been several presenters to date, but the current presenter is Lauren Laverne, a former singer in an alternative rock band and longstanding radio DJ. At forty-six years old, Laverne is younger than the average audience member. This is a clear strategy for aiming the programme at a **younger demographic** in order to build a sustainable audience for the future.

Content taken from the specification:

- **The role of media technologies in reaching and identifying audiences, and in audience consumption and usage.**

Technology

As discussed in the media industries section, *Desert Island Discs* can be accessed in various ways. Older listeners are more likely to listen live via radio as the programme is broadcast, whereas a younger audience would be more inclined to access the podcast through the **BBC Sounds app**, other podcast platforms, or the **BBC website** on mobile phones, laptops or other devices. These **on-demand services** allow audiences to choose how, when and

where they engage with the show, potentially increasing their enjoyment.

- **The ways in which people's media practices are connected to their identity, including their sense of actual and desired self. The social, cultural and political significance of media products, including the themes or issues they address, the fulfilment of needs and desires and the functions they serve in everyday life and society.**

Pleasures

Desert Island Discs offers listeners a range of pleasures, **fulfilling various needs and desires**. Some listeners may enjoy hearing guests' music choices, whereas others may be more interested in finding out about their life stories. Guests often disclose quite personal or private information about themselves and their backgrounds, which allows audiences to feel a privileged sense of connection, sympathy or admiration. The actor Jamie Dornan, for example, discussed with clear emotion the impact on him after his mother's death, a life event to which listeners could relate to and which many found very affecting. The programme can make listeners laugh or cry but is uplifting. Although the guests change for each episode, the presenter remains consistent, creating a rapport with the audience.

Radio as a medium is often thought of as having a soothing effect. It is listened to rather than watched and can therefore form a background to people's daily lives, perhaps in the kitchen whilst cooking, at bedtime, or in the garden. For some listeners, it is a form of company. Older listeners, who have aged alongside the programme, may feel a great affinity with *Desert Island Discs* and find it comforting in its familiarity and warm, friendly tone.

- **How audiences may respond to and interpret media products and why these interpretations may change over time.**

Audience response

A younger demographic is clearly likely to respond differently to *Desert Island Discs* from audience members that have been loyal listeners for some time. It may be perceived by younger audiences as boring and staid, rather than comfortable and familiar. Ethnicity and class may also affect audience response, with some disliking the programme's perceived middle class, White, London-centric feel, as previously mentioned.

Content taken from the specification:

- **Theoretical perspectives on audiences, including active and passive audiences; audience response and audience interpretation.**
- **Blumler and Katz's Uses and Gratifications theory.**

Uses and gratifications

Audiences may be actively involved with *Desert Island Discs* by, for example, **interacting** with the programme's webpage or social media, discussing it with friends and family, or participating in polls. In terms of Blumler and Katz's **uses and gratifications theory**, we could suggest audience members listen for various reasons:

- for **entertainment/diversion** from their everyday lives – the programme often includes humour and highlights lives quite different from those of the audience
- to be **informed or educated** about issues raised by the guests and their histories
- for **social interaction**, discussing episodes with family or friends or by contributing to the conversation on Twitter or Facebook
- for **personal identity**, to compare their life experiences with those of the 'castaways'.

PART 3: STARTING POINTS – MEDIA CONTEXTS

Historical contexts

Historical contexts have affected the broadcasting of *Desert Island Discs*. The first episode was recorded during World War 2 and aired on the Forces Programme. It was removed from the airwaves after the war in 1946 but returned in 1951 to the Home Service in time for the Festival of Britain. In 1967, it transferred to the newly formed Radio 4 and has continued there ever since, becoming a **"heritage" show** and national institution.

Social, cultural and political contexts

Although the format of the programme has not fundamentally changed over its lifetime, there have been some changes that reflect the **contexts** in which it is made. For its first forty-six years, *Desert Island Discs* was presented by men, reflecting the dominance of men in society and culture at the time. Subsequently, there have been three female presenters, including the current one. This illustrates **changing gender roles** in society and the increased visibility of women in the media after several waves of **feminism**. There is now a section within the *Desert Island Discs* Collection on the website entitled *Motivational Women*, further supporting this idea.

Similarly, more Black and ethnic minority guests, such as the footballer Ian Wright and the poet Claudia Rankine, are now featured on the programme in comparison to the almost exclusively White guests of earlier years. This reflects contemporary **multiculturalism** and the greater awareness and recognition of the contributions of people of colour to culture and society.

The issues raised in the programme have arguably become more controversial over time, with Norman Mailer requesting marijuana as his luxury item in 1979, Sue Lawler asking Gordon Brown if he was gay in 1996, Yoko Ono mentioning abortion in 2007 and Morrissey discussing suicide in 2009. These controversial episodes have often become talking points, illustrating the impact of *Desert Island Discs* on society and culture.

Although the programme is not explicitly political, it does reflect **political contexts** by featuring politicians of the time, such as Boris Johnson, Theresa May, Nicola Sturgeon and Keir Starmer.

Finally, the **cultural influence** of *Desert Island Discs* can also be seen in the production of *The Island*, a six-part Radio 4 comedy set on the fictional island featured in *Desert Island Discs*, where celebrities are cast away, aired on Radio 4 from February 2025.

