**MediaEdu Sample MS4 Exam A\* Response**

*Answer* **three** *questions in* **2.5 Hrs.**

*Answer* **one** *question from Section A and* **two** *questions from Section B.*

*Use a* **different** *media industry for each answer.*

*Complete the box below to indicate which* **media industry** *you will use for each question you answer.*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Section** | **Question Chosen** | **Media Industry**  **E.g., Newspapers, Advertising, Television** |
| **A** | 2 | Film |
| **B** | 2 | Advertising |
| **B** | 3 | Magazines |

*For each answer, you should use examples from the three main texts studies*

**SAMPLE A\* RESPONSE**

**A2. How do your chosen texts use genre conventions?**

* **Star Trek**
* **Fish Tank**
* **Slumdog Millionaire**

I have chosen three films that reflect a **mainstream** blockbuster, an **independent** British social realist film and a British film that was UK/US collaboration in that it was eventually distributed by Fox Searchlight and Pathe.

Star Trek is a film that is **hybridised** in terms of **genre** to appeal to a broad target audience. The intentions of Paramount were to move away from the gendered, male **stereotypical** target audience of loyal fans of the science fiction **franchise** and **genre marketing** was one way of achieving this. The conventions of science fiction and action are very much apparent but the **iconography** is less obvious in terms of how we are presented with emotive representations of James T Kirk’s birth in the opening 15 minutes of the film followed by q subsequent scene of Kirk as a tearaway, but vulnerable child in less classic science fiction imagery (lasers, spaceships, technology) - scenes do, however clearly recognise an audience who expect to see these elements. In terms of action **conventions** during battle scenes **fast paced editing** is used, **high production values** are evident (costume, GGI, set design, star marketing) and the film has a **single stranded three act structure** with sub plots and there are clear **binary oppositions** of us and them.



**Science Fiction conventions** are apparent – Star Trekis rational and theoretical about the real world (Science) but subjective and imagined (Fiction). It reflects the classic **narrative theme** of human beings’ response to changes in science and technology, **escapist** but predictive and potentially possible. Star Trekcombines the **sub genres** of Space Fantasy *(Star Wars),* Alien Worlds *(Alien),* Time Travel *(Dr Who)* and Mental Powers *(Men in Black)* - the group are on an important quest, a mission has gone wrong and there are **mythical qualities** to the characters and emotional storylines, all classic conventions. The **‘What If?’ narrative** underpins the text with the Aliens (Romulans) arguably representing in metaphor the fear of the unknown. Saturated distribution, high production values, obsessions with technology and key **Space Fantasy iconography** (Spaceships/Lasers/Futuristic Weapons/Teleporting etc.) reveal further Science Fiction Conventions.

Fish Tan*k* is a critically successful, independent **Social Realist film** that follows clear **genre conventions**, but as with many social realist films e.g. *Vera Drake, Happy Go Lucky* develops the **genre template** to offer strong**, pluralistic representations**. Traditionally original 1950s Social Realism has male authorship and male central protagonists in films like *Room at the Top* and *Saturday Night, Sunday Morning* and in recent years *This is England, Looking For Eric* and earlier in the 1990s *The Full Monty.* In terms of form and style **genre conventions** are represented within the mise-en-scene – natural lighting, grainy resolution, symbolic weather, on location shooting and use of hand held camera all **encode realism.** The central protagonist is frustrated, angry and alienated.

Mia is a classic social realist protagonist who is **aspiring** for a better life – she sees herself in a spiral that she cannot escape from. Set in in a working class, urban area it conforms to genre conventions although like some social realist films of recent years moves away from tth northern stereotype. The film is a gritty, raw interpretations of everyday life and can be labelled a **‘Kitchen Sink Drama’** with a morality tale (common use of domestic locations). As well as the visual iconography Fish tank also explores key **narrative themes** in depth such as single parent families, social class, alienation and notions of difference. Like many independent social realist film it received **critical, not commercial success** and had **limited**

****

**distribution** as a result of its independent status. **Low production values** are common in these types of films as is a relatively unknown cast encoding realism (Michael Fassbender is well known for his film work while KierstonWareing is known for her television work. Bleak, **open ended narrative outcomes anchor** the genre conventions.

In Slumdog Millionaire we see in Jamal a male, frustrated **central protagonist** who is aspiring for a better life, again classic social realism but this time hybridised with romance, thriller and elements of Bollywood. Danny Boyle consciously uses these genre conventions to market the film and encode a feel good factor appealing to a wider target audience than an independent social realist film like Fish Tank could not hope to do. A romantic narrative underpins the film in the relationship between Jamal and Latika which targets a **female skew** and moves the target audience away from the narrow stereotype of social realist films. Their love is one of the **narrative arcs** that links the film in terms of narrative outcomes and the narrative involving Jamal’s brother Salim adds another thriller/gangster dimension – key scenes suggest the conventions of a thriller from chase sequences in the Mumbai slums to Latika herself being pursued and eventually being forced into prostitution and ‘imprisoned’ as the wife of a gangster boss.



These gritty, urban representations however ensure both social realist conventions are adhered to but are also a useful backdrop for representing crime, corruption and the gangster culture. Key narrative themes include social class (Jamal is not expected to be successful in the show because of his poor background) which anchor the social realist elements while issues of corruption, family values, poverty and oppression are also foregrounded crossing **genre boundaries**. In a male gendered narrative women are often represented in a conventional, traditional way (Latika is **framed for the male gaze** and is Jamal’s ‘prize’) which anchors the **gangster connotations** and arguably traditional thriller conventions. The Bollywood conventions are used for the purpose of marketing the film more globally, particularly in the Indian subcontinent which despite the recent more **mainstream, crossover of Bollywood** (*Monsoon Wedding, Bride and Prejudice*) is a genre consumed mainly in India. References to Bollywood include the host of ‘*Who wants to me a Millionaire*?’ who is a known, successful Bollywood actor and the actual host of the show in India shown in flashback arriving in the scene where the young Jamal dives headlong into a toilet to be able to see his hero. The narrative outcome is also celebrated by a Bollywood dance routine paying homage to the genre.

There are however, enough visual representations to evidence a base genre of social realism including **de-saturated colours** - **the colour palette** is yellow and brown symbolising the poverty and difficult living conditions in the slums; the city of Mumbai is not shot in an aspirational way. Mumbai forms an ideal setting to an initially bleak narrative which includes Jamal’s journey/torture, his ‘lost love’, Mother’s brutal death and ultimately his Brother’s death. These **narrative moments** themselves could evidence a storyline straight from a more conventional thriller which Boyle the Director has worked on before. Typical to a contemporary social realist film that is **distributed** by a major studio (Fox) was an upbeat **non diegetic soundtrack** with positive moral closure/resolution and higher production values than independent social realist films.

**B2. Explore the impact of digital technologies on your selected industry.**

* **Lynx Attract – Unleash the Chaos**
* **Phones 4 U**
* **Talk to Frank**

Digital technologies have has an impact on every media industry but in particular have allowed the powerful and influential advertising industry to exploit and manipulate images, sound and text using new techniques in the **language of persuasion**.

The 2011-2012 Lynx Attract – Unleash the Chaos advertising campaign comprised a **digital teaser campaign** followed by a more traditional **above the line campaign** including high production value television adverts Lynx Chaos Island and Lynx New York Chaos. The entire campaign was funded by Unilever and **sequenced by advertising agency** BBH (Bartle, Bogleand Hegarty) apart from the teaser campaign which was developed by TMW advertising agency who specialise in digital campaigns and **online interactive social engagement** and participation. Their clients include Sony, Infiniti and Nissan. Unilever were able to fund what became one of the most innovative approaches to digital advertising which helped to create **enigma** and **encode brand identity.**



In January 2012 TMW **seeded** on YouTube and Facebook **a viral advert** called Chaos on the Buses which made full use of the aforementioned social media technology by spreading **hype** about an already established brand (Lynx have had a number of more traditional advertising campaigns in the last 20 years). The whole idea of using YouTube and Facebook recognised the **global reach** of both networks and maximised the potential for the adverts becoming part of **popular culture** before being advertising to more mainstream, mass audiences – timings are crucial to any campaign and starting with a lower production value digital teaser made logical sense bearing in the mind the young **demographic** of the target audience. Lower production values still enable Lynx to use familiar brand images allowing for **audience identification** through **cultural capital** and linked with the **primary target audience** as high end internet and social media users. Initially the narrative enigmas meant audiences were questioning the viral with its familiar sexualised content appealing to a **mainstream, C1, C2, D 16-30, white, urban, target audience** but this time with also a female skew as the product is aimed at men and women. Use of CCTV itself within the advert referenced the whole idea of **interactivity** (audiences were interacting with an advert that uses surveillance technology) with clear **intertextual references** to older Lynx advertising with the key protagonists being stereotypically good looking.

This was then followed up by a Facebook App – ‘Chaos Watch’ where users were given a map of UK to identify ‘chaos’ encouraging further interactivity and hopefully **convergent links** to the website where audience further followed their ‘viral trail’ via blogs. Convergent, interactive links with Facebook were crucial to ensure the brand was talked about across a range of **platforms**. Once on the Lynx website Unilever could use the full force of their brand to ensure that links were to the entire campaign, including the audio visual television adverts and everything interactive.

As a further extension to the campaign digital technologies were also used in cinemas with interactive adverts screened before *The Dark Knight Rises* which again has a similar target audience and is also a film that itself used **viral marketing** – the format again followed similar conventions to previous **hegemonic** ‘sexist’ Lynx advertising with mainly male audience cheering for the woman they prefer on the screen. Interactive sound activated the cinema advert before the screenings and the audience controlled this by the sound level of their cheering. Towards the middle of the campaign with adverts still being shown in the media Unilever released a ‘Thank You’ film called The One Millionth Lynx Effect which thanked fans for reaching a million **hits** on Facebook which only served to further the hype of this particularly successful campaign. Lynx used digital technologies to link with a primary**, active, youth audience**.



Phones 4 U launched a 2011-12 campaign entitled ‘Missing our deals will Haunt You’ with the whole campaign costing £5.2m and comprising two second teaser adverts in television advertising breaks, a press and radio campaign, digital virals on YouTube and online marketing via an interactive zombie game. The campaign was sequenced by Adam and Eve advertising agency (London) who are a Creative Ad Agency with mainly **blue chip clients** on their books.Their viral YouTube film secured 600,000 hits deliberately targeting a stereotypically younger (16-34) demographic who are into new technology although previous interactive campaigns had targeted an even younger audience with a top end in terms of age of 24. The interactive zombie advert classically used tense, non diegetic music common to the horror genre which built to a climax using intertextual references to existing texts such as the *Blair Witch Project* and *Carrie.* This, and other television adverts suggested that Phones 4u acknowledged the effect and impact of digital technologies but decided on two high production value television adverts to spearhead this campaign. The viral advert was important in that it spoke to the younger target audience but was aware that often it is parents that purchase mobile phones for their children.

The viral advert was used as a teaser before the launch of the **cross media campaign** and allowed audiences limited access to content, thus creating an enigma. The horror theme was used along with the tagline “Missing our deals will haunt you” and unlike the television adverts were not complained about. The television adverts were given a post 7.30pm rating by **Clearcast** and ultimately give a Kid’s X Certificate. Due to the very nature of viral advertising and digital mediums the early communications in this campaign were not subject to **regulation** which is often a key difference between advertising using digital mediums and advertising using more traditional media. Later in the campaign towards the end of 2012 (Christmas) Phones 4u launched as new social media campaign to build on the viral and reportedly spent a six figure sum on the marketing. It is based around a Facebook competition and gives consumers the chance to win hundreds of prizes by pulling virtual crackers with their Facebook friends. **Market research** suggested that the campaign was an immediate success with sales up 50%.

Talk to Frank is a long running advertising campaign sponsored by the UK government and the National Drug Education Service. The format of the campaign in 2011 concentrated on high production value television adverts in the hope that the next step for audiences



affected by the representations would be to go to the website – this was crucial, and fundamental to the campaign with success measured in terms of website hits/impressions. As the primary target audience are 11-18 logically a digital campaign would make sense but the campaign was also speaking to a secondary target audience of parents, teachers and carers. The independent advertising agency Mother sequenced the campaign but the National Drug Education Service are responsible for the website – **shock advertising** was used in the television campaign while the website, [www.talktofrank.com](http://www.talktorank.com) was interactive to enable the user/consumer to have his or her questions answered but also to find out more information and to talk to someone who was able to help.

The website used the iconic, recognisable font of ‘Frank’ to create brand identity and linked with the television campaign and developed interactivity by making use of **rhetorical questions** such as “Who is Frank?” “Are you under the influence?” and “Worried about a friend?” Live chat and e mail contacts ensured that the user who may not wish to speak to someone can use an interactive, digital media to benefit from the campaign. YouTube was also used with all television adverts like the original ‘Pablo the Drugs Mule’ (2009) commercial seeded on this medium to ensure viral hype and **talkability**. The advert became known in part as a result of this **digital distribution** but also ensured the campaign, in particular ‘Pablo’ became part of popular culture. David Mitchell was drafted in for the non diegetic **narrative voice over** and the **mise-en-scene** encoded social realism using a de-saturated colour palette and black and white photography, low key lighting, urban settings and bleak, isolated environments. This was of course **hybridised** with comedy through the voice over and **connotations** of south American culture through the use of music.

**B3. What are the audience appeals of your chosen texts?**

* **Take a Break**
* **Big Issue**
* **FHM**

Take a Break magazine is a weekly, women’s gossip magazine published by Bauer. It is read by primarily by a white, working class, mainstream, C2, D and E target audience and as such the magazine follows the conventions of the genre in terms of **audience expectations** which include **narrative content** focussing on celebrity gossip. Audiences enjoy **voyeuristic** ‘upskirt’ paparazzi photographs of celebrities and intrusive before and after images of



celebrities who are built up only to be put down again. **Models of audience reception** can apply to the way Take a Break attracts its audience - voyeurism is at the heart of audience appeals with consumers enjoying notions of ‘the look’, seeing celebrities who they may have used to, or still see as **aspirational** in uncompromising positions or emotional situations. Cheryl Cole is a perfect example of this – she has been often been represented as a ‘Geordie Girl Made Good’ but also more commonly as the victim, and normally the victim of men from Ashley Cole to Simon Cowell. Body size, body shape and body image are mainstays of the magazine as the audience scrutinise every blemish on a celebrities’ face or body caught by the paparazzi. Weight seems to be a stereotypical obsession within the covers of the magazine as it panders to stereotypical female obsessions with this area. Clothing and costume are also a key appeal – what celebrities wear is catered for by Take a Break and described in minute detail.

In terms of theory both the **Two Step Flow** and the **Uses and Gratifications** Theory apply with readers very much influenced by the celebrity and their opinion (Two Step Flow) but also evidence a range of audience appeals under the umbrella audience theory, the Uses and Gratifications Model. This model suggests audiences are **active** but clearly they are also **passive** in Take a Break, often influenced by narratives about celebrities to the point that it begins to affect their own lives. The models of active consumption include Diversion where audiences escape from their own lives into the ‘extraordinary’ lives of the celebrities and personal relationships where audiences discuss the content of the magazine with other readers of like mind, often using social networking mediums. Personal Identity allows the reader to think they are getting close to the celebrity by identifying with them personally as if they know them – this **myth** is carefully constructed by the magazine in terms of how the reader is addressed, use of **juxtaposition**, use of language and layout. Finally, Surveillance gives audiences information on the movements and lives of celebrities, thus enriching the life of the reader with ‘knowledge’.

The Big Issue has a primary, professional but socially aware, **Guardian reader, ABC1 carer and aspirer target audience**. They are both male and female, multicultural, urban and city living commuters, 25-45 often recognising charity, visiting art galleries and lead an organic, liberal lifestyle. The secondary target audience are C2, D and E carers and reformers, family orientated, urban and city living, 35-65. As such, and with the nature of The Big Issue as a Social Business/Entertainment hybrid the audience receive emotional fulfilment (charity giving) and this feel good factor is a key appeal. Buying the magazine satisfies the audiences’ need to ‘want to help’. Surveillance (using the Uses and Gratifications theory) provides information both entertainment based and on wider social/political narratives.

Articles are written in an **elaborated language code** reflecting the ABC1 target audience and this in turn assumes a level of intelligence and **cultural capital**. Readers enjoy the balanced, objective semi formal **mode of address** that both explores serious issues but examines cultural reference points familiar with the reader. Articles and stories assume some prior knowledge and understanding e.g. American politics (Presidential debate) – October 8th to 14th 2012 edition and the reader likes the idea that he/she has that shared opinion. These **shared ideological beliefs** e.g. ironic adverts for Dick Sapphire (lectures on how to make money written by **left wing** comedian Rory Bremner), articles on health care, education and politics deliberately target the reader’s political conscience.



The magazine has a reactionary, controversial approach and arguably rebels against **dominant mainstream culture** despite the founder John Bird’s own political allegiances revealed on BBC1’s Newsnight. It has more independent feel (even the adverts do not follow mainstream conventions – National Book Tokens, Let’s Trek for Children, Safer Medicines..) which the audience again can relate to. The reader is not the type of reader who would embrace **mainstream culture** and the idea of ‘independence’ is a key appeal.

Audience identification is very much the core of the relationship between the Big Issue reader and editorial copy – not just with issues affecting the homeless but also with celebrities they are familiar and also human interest stories that reflect the realism of their own life. There is a ‘guilt’ aspect to walking past a Big Issue vendor but a fulfilment with purchasing the brand. This is not to say that the magazine does not cater for the stereotypical, liberal interests of an ABC1, liberal, left wing target audience including articles on art, culture and occasional mainstream film.

FHM is a men’s lifestyle monthly magazine. In this regard, voyeurism again and the sexual objectification of women is a key appeal. **Laura Mulvey’s theory of the male gaze** applies as a significant audience appeal is models or celebrities in a state of undress. This escapist content is anchored by a ‘bar room’ informal mode of address where readers are led to believe they are part of an male club – the idea of shared lad’s culture is important to the reader and FHM attempts to fly the flag for old fashioned **hegemonic cultural stereotypes** in a changing world. FHM makes the reader feel they are actively **resisting pluralistic culture**. Masculine put downs and challenges are common as the magazine seeks to constantly remind the reader of their traditional gender identity.



Alongside the female representations as a key appeal are aspirational male representations where celebrities such as Ryan Reynolds and George Clooney are shown to readers as an idealised version of masculinity. Male representations are normally iconic whether in the field of sport, entertainment or technology. ‘Man of the Year’ reinforces this appeal with a better than average chance that the target audience could not come close to the degree of success represented. The iconic males often appear in advertising images for fragrances like Hugo Boss or Beckham, Watches, (which very much seems to saturate **advertising copy** in Men’s Magazines) Clothing Ranges and Computer Games. With FHM the high end branding will be just within the reach of the reader but not as high end as other up market magazines like *GQ*.

FHM speaks to the audience in the **first person** with other stereotypical male preoccupations referenced including technology and ‘machines’ whether cars, motorbikes or boats. The idea of power, speed and elegance is seen as a key appeal for a target audience who are **16-35, primarily male, C1, C2 and D, mainstreamers and aspirers**. The audience of FHM has in terms of age and social class come down over the years and the magazine now appeals more to the younger reader on a much less ‘sophisticated’ level than it used to. The older target group would very much be the secondary target audience who think FHM still looks good on the coffee table’. The FHM target audience does however think they are a cut above *Loaded, Nuts* and *Zoo* with some respect for the feminine form and some cultural capital in terms of their knowledge of the Men’s Magazine genre. As with most Men’s Magazines the target audience are fiercely heterosexual and wear this as a badge as it is worn as a badge by the magazine. They tend to be more urban and city living with some disposable income reflected by the cover price (£3-90) and advertising copy. As with Women’s Magazines and male readership there is still estimated (NRS – National Readership Survey) to be a 15% female readership to magazines like FHM.

The audience appeals of FHM are on one level obvious but on another more complex – applying Blumler and Katz’s 1974 Uses and Gratifications theory diversion (escapism) and personal identity and even personal relationships would apply. Personal identity would be from the recognition (hailing) of themselves within the **discourse** including letters, stories and personal accounts from readers. Personal relationships would stem from the convergent ability to share and comment on these representations in convergent blogs, social networking sites or any form of digital media that offers the opportunity of being involved in an interactive narrative about the magazine. Challenges and put downs also encourage this interactivity.