Leap into Media:

Inspirational tasks for Y11 and Y12

EMC
Publications

Task 3

*Teen Vogue'*s Cross Platform Strategy

The article for this task is taken from *MediaMagazine* 70

'Teen Vogue: Three Ways the Magazine Slayed the Move from Print to Online'

Exploring the article

■ Read ***Teen Vogue*: Three Ways the Magazine Slayed the Move from Print to Online** (*MM*70), by Georgia Platman.

■ Answer the following questions, drawing on the article for information and ideas.

1. How does *Teen Vogue* differ in digital form from how it was launched as a print publication in 2003?

2. What was at the heart the magazine's strategy to boost its reach and readership after switching to digital?

3. What tone of voice does the magazine use? How is this likely to appeal to its target audience?

4. In what ways does *Teen Vogue* achieve its aim of 'disrupting the conversation'? What examples does the article draw on?

5. What is *Teen Vogue*'s approach to diversity and sub-cultures? How does this fit in with its overall strategy?

6. What is the magazine's aesthetic (its look)? Which element of design do you think is most important to this aesthetic? Colour? Typeface? Logos? Images?

Teen Vogue's social media platforms

Teen Vogue uses each of its social media platforms – Facebook, Instagram, Twitter – in different ways.

- Read the coverage from each platform over the past 24 hours.
    - » https://twitter.com/TeenVogue
    - » https://www.instagram.com/teenvogue/
    - » https://en-gb.facebook.com/teenvogue/
- What different techniques do writers use on each platform to encourage clicks? You should think about:
    - » How the same story is presented across different platforms
    - » How readers interact (shares, likes, etc.)
    - » How each platform uses language – how much, tone, formality etc.
    - » How each platform uses images
    - » Any other techniques that are platform specific.

- Now look at the *Teen Vogue* website. What do you notice about how it is laid out, the order in which it lists articles, the way it uses headlines, its use of images, and so on? You should focus on the homepage to do this.
- Finally, think about other online magazines or newspapers you may have studied or read. Do they use social media platforms to present their information in different ways? A good example would be how *The Guardian* newspaper uses Instagram to share its news stories.

Sharing on social media

- Choose a story from *Teen Vogue* that has only recently been published. Imagine you have been given the task of spreading the story across the magazine's multiple online platforms.
- Design and write the copy for a series of posts for Facebook, Twitter and Instagram (or TikTok and Snapchat if you're looking for an extra challenge). Use the techniques you identified earlier in this task.

Researching branded content and brand identity

- If your school has access to the *MediaMagazine* subscription site, then read Delphine Chui being interviewed for the Careers Download feature. She creates digital branded content for several magazine titles published by Hearst (*MM*70, p.64). You can do this activity without this feature, but it will add to your ideas.
- Look at *Teen Vogue's* video page and the content it shares on social media. Identify examples of branded content?
- Look for videos or series that are entertaining but also selling or promoting products and think about how effective they are at promoting both the product being advertised but also the magazine's brand identity.

Georgia Platman analyses the success of this teen magazine brand.

3 Ways the Magazine Slayed the Move from Print to Online

Condenast.com

Since it has been online-only, articles have been written by and about almost every subculture and ethnic minority imaginable. The magazine uses shorthand for various communities, making the assumption that its audience needs no explanation for LGBTQ, Latinx, POC, WOC, QPOC, because they too are progressive Americans on the side of social justice.

Teen Vogue magazine was never meant to ruffle feathers. It was launched in 2003 in the United States as the younger sister of the internationally famous fashion magazine *Vogue* and it offered pretty generic fodder for young women: what to wear to prom; how to get the perfect nails; anti-aging beauty regimes; celebrity red carpet looks. But as the publication moved deeper into digital, it welcomed younger writers and editors who gradually shifted the brand's voice, turning it into a rather different beast. The strategy was wildly successful and it has since become, as per its own tagline, 'The young person's guide to conquering (and saving) the world', with a far broader audience than teenage girls. Indeed the magazine claims to have over 8 million unique users across its many platforms each month. Here are a few ways it achieved online domination Teen Vogue-style.

Find Your Platforms

Teen Vogue, the magazine, wound down its print operations over a number of years, going from monthly to quarterly and then online only in 2018. The publishing industry has long struggled to navigate a profitable way to keep print magazines and newspapers alive in the face of digitalisation and the proliferation of online news. Those at the helm of *Teen Vogue* saw that teenagers were increasingly getting all their news from their phones – more specifically, social media – and decided to throw its weight behind online publishing instead.

However, going exclusively online had its risks; essentially it was becoming a 'free' product for its users and would have to rely even more on advertising to maintain itself and to retain

advertisers; a website has to retain and grow its readership. Luckily for *Teen Vogue*, its savvy young digital team knew exactly how to do that. They upped their social media game, making sure they were present on more platforms, creating more shareable video content and devising headlines and teasers that proved irresistible. The strategy worked and it got them the clicks they needed to pull in advertisers and survive in the competitive digital landscape.
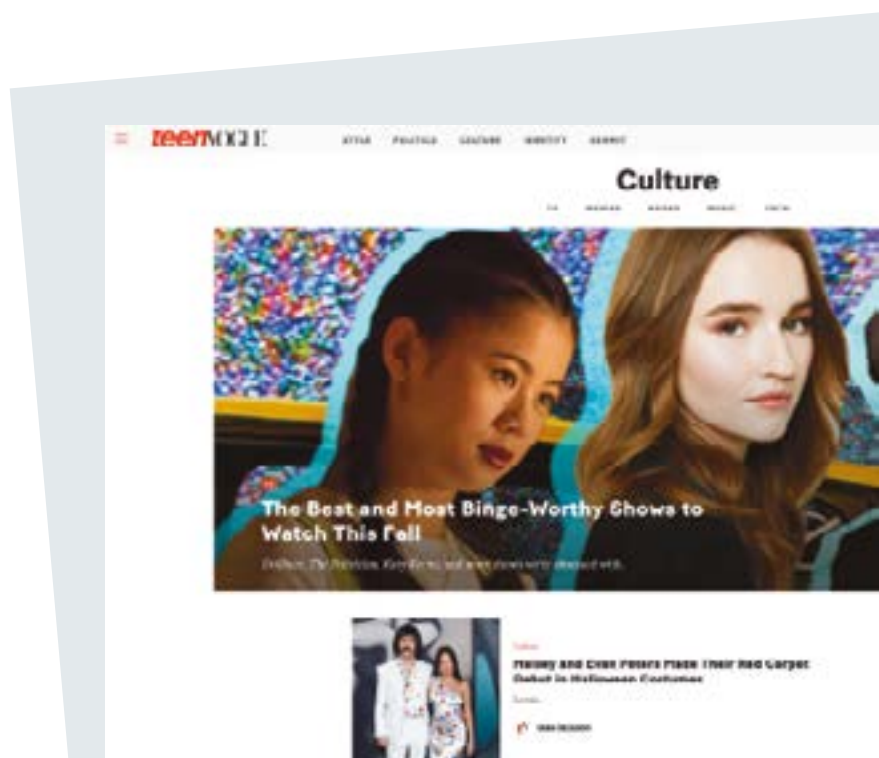
Find Your Voice

Teen Vogue strives to be 'the premiere destination for the young and unapologetic' and uses a direct mode of address: it speaks directly to its readers like a friend. Its tone is gossipy yet political, opinionated and alert to social injustices or 'woke' in the parlance of its readership. The magazine sees itself 'disrupting the conversation' and having its voice heard in the very adult world of current affairs, opinion-makers and commentators.

The most famous example – the moment when the magazine broke out of its niche mould and made the world sit up and take notice of its new strategy – was with the article, 'Donald Trump Is Gaslighting America'. It came out at just the right time to go viral, after the 2016 presidential election but before Trump was inaugurated. It received 30,000 shares on Twitter and helped the magazine get millions more social media followers: from 2.7 million unique visitors in 2016 to more than 9.2 million in 2017!

Unlike other news outlets, which strive for neutrality, *Teen Vogue* has no qualms about saying what it believes. Recent headlines have included: 'It's Okay to Have a Crush, but Dating Your Teacher Is Wrong', and, 'AOC Is Right: Climate Change 'Hits Vulnerable Communities First". Why does this work in terms of getting our attention? Imagine if those headlines were more traditional: 'Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez: Climate Change 'Hits Vulnerable Communities First". *Teen Vogue*'s version lays its
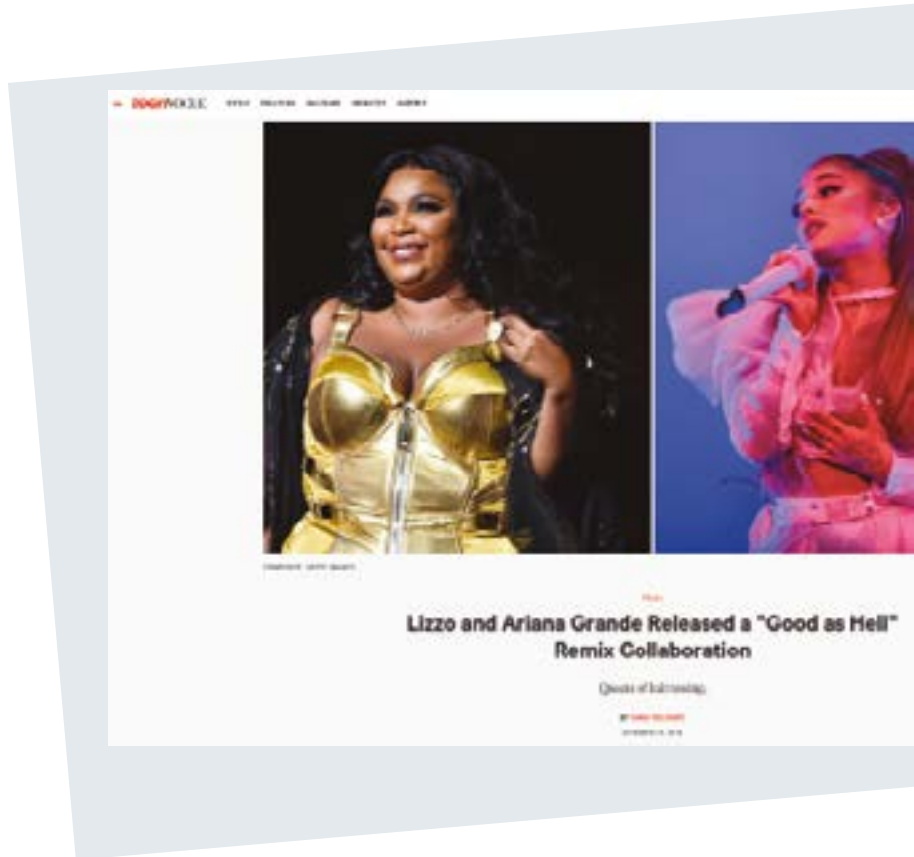
Lizzo and Ariana Grande Released a "Good as Hell" Remix Collaboration

Its tone is gossipy yet political, opinionated and alert to social injustices, or 'woke' in the parlance of its readership.

The two words together create the idea that youth and style are inseparable, but also that reading *Teen Vogue* will teach you how to be ready for the sophistication and style of the adult world.

Behind the Scenes of Ariana Grande's Teen Vogue Cover Shoot
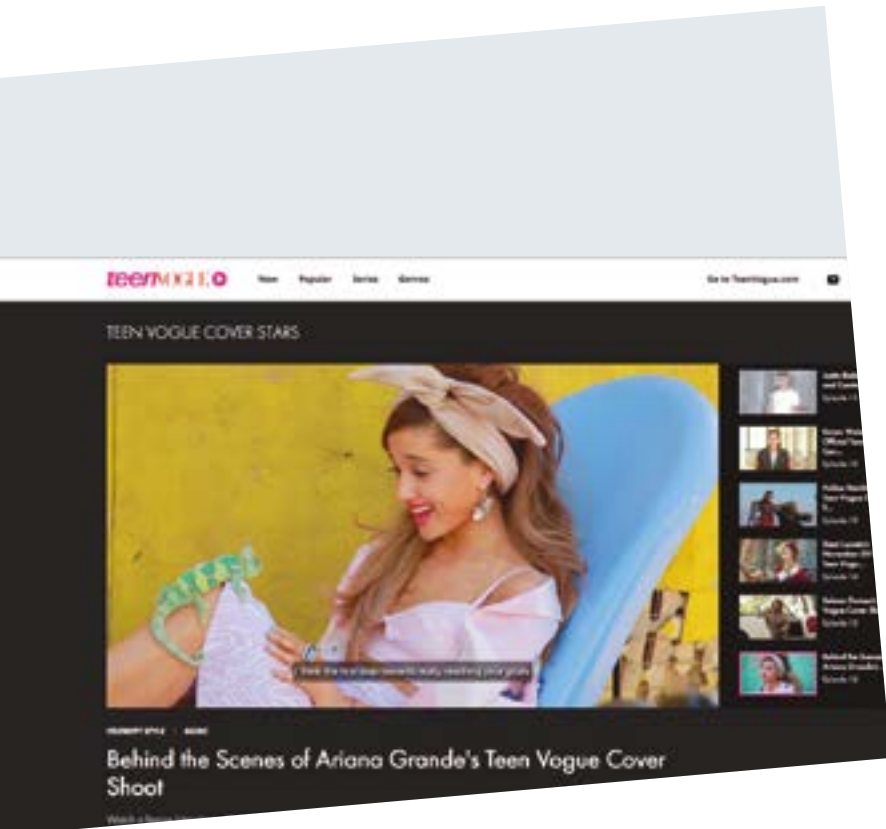
cards on the table and makes assumptions about its readers: it assumes we know the nickname for the young senator whose strong opinions regularly make waves in US politics, it assumes we care about climate change and it assumes we care about vulnerable people. Because it makes such a strong statement, 'AOC is right', it provokes a strong reaction in its readers: we are more likely to click or share in solidarity, or in disgust.

Pronouns have become powerful tools in *Teen Vogue*'s vocabulary, with I, you, and we becoming key to talking to their audience. Whether it's used

to make you want to read a personal exposé – 'When I Started Dating Women I Thought Misogyny Would Be Gone. I Was Wrong' – make you feel part of the in crowd – 'Rihanna's Only Airport Luggage Was a Mini Bag, and We Need Her Packing Secrets' – or make you feel like the website is giving you something exclusive – 'Here's Your First Look at Dollface, Kat Dennings' New Comedy About Friendships' – the personal pronouns certainly encourange engagement.

While other magazines have used slang and new language before, *Teen Vogue* has made its readers understand that it is not only talking the talk, it is walking the walk when it comes to diversity of voices. Since it has been online-only, articles have been written by and about almost every subculture and ethnic minority imaginable. The magazine uses shorthand for various communities, making the assumption that its audience needs no explanation for LGBTQ, Latinx, POC, WOC, QPOC, because they too are progressive Americans on the side of social justice. This audacity has seen *Teen Vogue* prosper with young people (who do not need to be patronised) where other, more traditional women's magazines have failed. With pride, it constantly challenges stereotypical representations and champions diverse voices and looks.

Find Your Style

Teen Vogue's aesthetic is deceptively simple, but a brief analysis of the media language it uses tell us a lot about the brand and how it wants to present itself. One way the brand is unconventional is in terms of gender expectations and the use of colour. Girls' magazines traditionally used a lot of 'girly' colours: soft pastels and a lot of pink. *Teen Vogue* could not be further from that. The logos for the website and the brand's social media pages use a simple

Identity

50 People Shared the Best Advice Their Therapist Has Ever Given Them

Selena Gomez Explained How Falling in Love for the First Time Can Be "Toxic"

How to annotate a webpage

It's useful to know lots of website terminology so that when you're writing about online content, you can be specific. (Tip: When analysing a website, make sure you have any ad blockers turned off so you can see all the content!)

- *Teen Vogue* follows standard website codes and conventions.
- The home page consists of a header, body and footer.
- The header contains the magazine's logo and the main menu, as well as a collapsible menu bar (which contains the four main sections of the website plus social links) and a search bar.
- The body contains five featured stories followed by a highlighted content bar with the most-read 'trending' stories, and next comes every story the magazine publishes in reverse chronological order in a simple list. There are plenty of banner ads and internal links.
- The website's footer has social links, a copyright and date stamp, and some extra links to video content, a newsletter signup option, and corporate information. In using a conventional structure for the website, *Teen Vogue* allows its content – that is, its stories – to shine.

HEADER

BODY

FOOTER
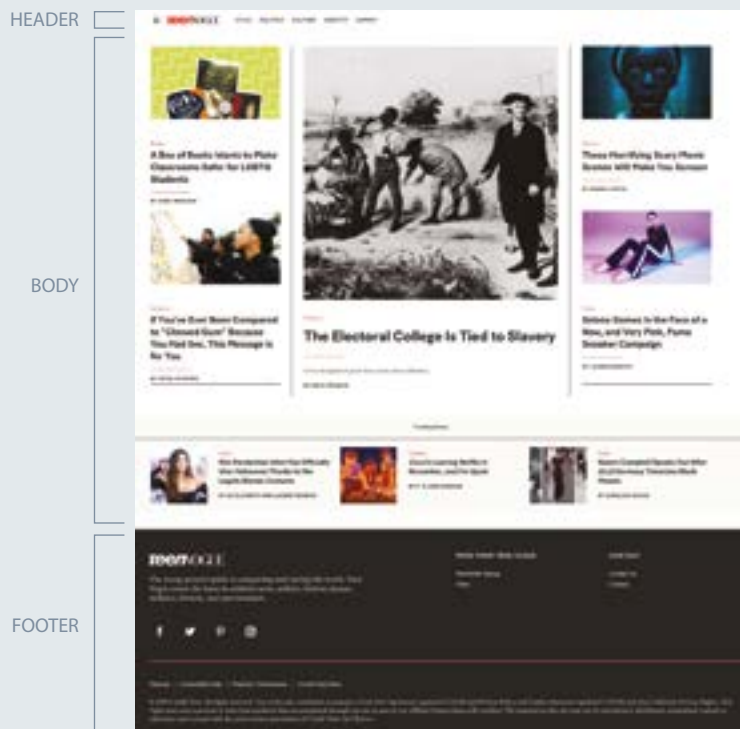
Analysis: Because readers are not confronted with an unconventional website layout, they can easily navigate to the story they want and the editors can choose featured stories to direct us to. Following web codes and conventions therefore makes the website as accessible as possible to try to capture a broad audience to attract more advertisers to bring in more revenue.

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palette of red (with its connotations of passion and love), black (connoting maturity, timeless elegance, Parisian glamour), and white (simplicity, purity). The logo is different on the website compared with TV's social media platforms.

The typefaces used for the logo are also significant. 'Teen' is in a bold, lowercase italicised sans serif font that looks excited and energised, while 'Vogue' is in the same stately, thin serif uppercase font that the grown-up version of the magazine uses. The two words together create the idea that youth and style are inseparable, but also that reading *Teen Vogue* will teach you how to be ready for the sophistication and style of the adult world. On Facebook, YouTube and Twitter, the logo is round, as per the conventions of those platforms. The black has gone and the logo is in white lettering on a red background. The red is slightly pinker than on the website, making it less demanding. The word 'Teen' sits proudly above 'Vogue', giving the idea that when it comes to social media, young people are now on top.

Here to stay?

With the constantly shifting landscape of the internet, *Teen Vogue*'s current status as a publication with its finger on the pulse is far from guaranteed. But what is clear is that, via its forward-thinking move online, its convention-breaking content and aesthetic, and its use of cross-platform convergence to broaden its audience, it has earned its place in magazine history.

Georgia Platman is a writer, copy editor, filmmaker and media teacher based in London.