



Topics: **Close Study Products (CSPs)** **Context** **Ideology** **Industry** **Newspapers**

The Guardian Newspaper

by Di Naylor

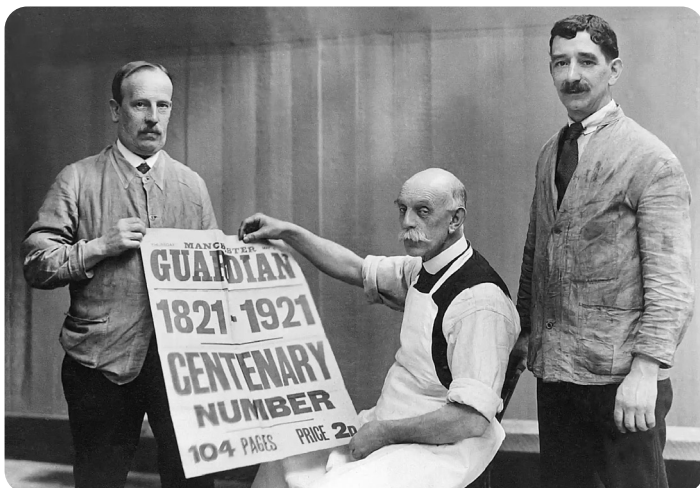
This **Media Studies Factsheet**:

- Provides information on the newspaper's historical, social, institutional, and economic context.
- Offers an analysis of *The Guardian's* media products.
- Links industry and audience theories to the product.
- Presents a case study of a news story in relation to industry and audience.

The study of *The Guardian* newspaper entails knowledge and understanding of its institutional structure and strategies to target a national and global readership, as well as its position within the newspaper industry. The study of the digital presence of *The Guardian* is an important context for analysing the position of newspapers in the contemporary media landscape. *The Guardian* is an AQA close study product, but this Factsheet offers an approach to a newspaper close study that can be applied to other newspaper titles.

Industry Context: Who Owns *The Guardian*? Then and Now

The Guardian has a long history. It started out as the Manchester Guardian in 1821 before changing its name in 1959. Its founder was John Edward Taylor, a journalist who, along with other Manchester businessmen, funded the newspaper's creation after the 1819 Peterloo Massacre, in which eighteen people died and 400-700 were injured when cavalry charged into a crowd of around 60,000 people who had gathered to demand the reform of representation in parliament. This event outraged Taylor and others, so they wanted to form a newspaper that held governments to account.



The Guardian is now owned by *The Guardian Media Group* (GMG), which also owns *The Guardian Weekly*, *The Observer*, and other media businesses. GMG is a global media company whose parent company is the Scott Trust Limited. The trust was originally created in 1936 to “secure the financial and editorial independence of *The Guardian*” and to “safeguard the journalistic freedom and liberal values” of the paper from “commercial or political interference.” *The Guardian's* ownership pattern was designed so that no individual could benefit from the profits of the newspaper or have total control over it.

Each newspaper has its own institutional biases, values, and political persuasions. This is part of a free press in Britain. Each news institution is “free” to write stories that put forth their views on any given subject, but they must not print lies or fabrications because they may be sued or referred to a regulator. In *The Guardian's* case, they have formed their own regulatory board with *The Financial Times* and are not regulated by IPSO. They are the only British national daily to conduct an annual social, ethical, and environmental audit since 2003, in which they examine, under the scrutiny of an independent external auditor, their own behaviour as a company. For example, they have been criticised for their coverage of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, for which they commissioned an audit. You can read the outcome of this self-regulation here:

<http://www.theguardian.com/values/socialaudit/story/0,,1931205,00.html>

Social audit

Editorial

Fairness: Israel - Palestine

The Guardian

The Israel-Palestine conflict is perhaps the most controversial aspect of our editorial coverage. It comes under closer scrutiny than any other topic, with every word we publish being studied by self-appointed monitors on both sides.

We get criticised by Palestinian interests for what we write, but this is heavily outweighed by supporters of Israel, who often mount orchestrated waves of complaint to the paper. So how do our values of honesty, cleanness [integrity], courage, openness and a sense of duty to the reader and the wider community stack up in this complex arena?

The Guardian is also the only British national daily newspaper to employ an internal ombudsman (called the “readers’ editor”) to handle complaints and corrections.

Activity 1

Access the Scott Trust board members and read their bios:

<https://www.theguardian.com/the-scott-trust/2015/jul/26/the-scott-trust-board>

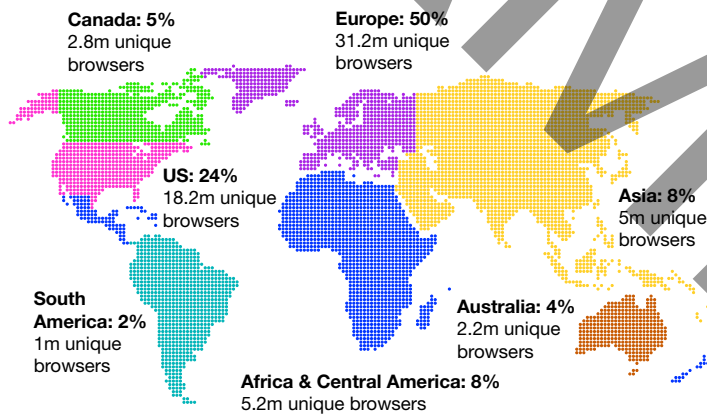
Is the board diverse in terms of race, gender, age, and experience? Discuss why this might be relevant.

What is it? Who is it For? What Does it Do?

The Guardian is a centre-left, quality, British broadsheet, national UK newspaper. The demographic of the readership is 86% ABC1. Fifty-four percent of *The Guardian* readers are male, and the average age of the print reader is 54. The people who read the newspaper and online are interested in left-leaning politics and social issues, mainly social progressives [reformers] psychographic. The circulation for the newspaper is 3.2 million monthly, and the digital readership is 18.4 million. This compares favourably to other quality newspapers in the UK.

The Guardian is also online and is now the 3rd largest individual newspaper website in the world, delivering news to over 62 million unique browsers worldwide every month, with almost two-thirds of these coming from outside of the UK. *The Guardian* has a global reach; therefore, its content reflects this.

Distribution of Global Unique Browsers

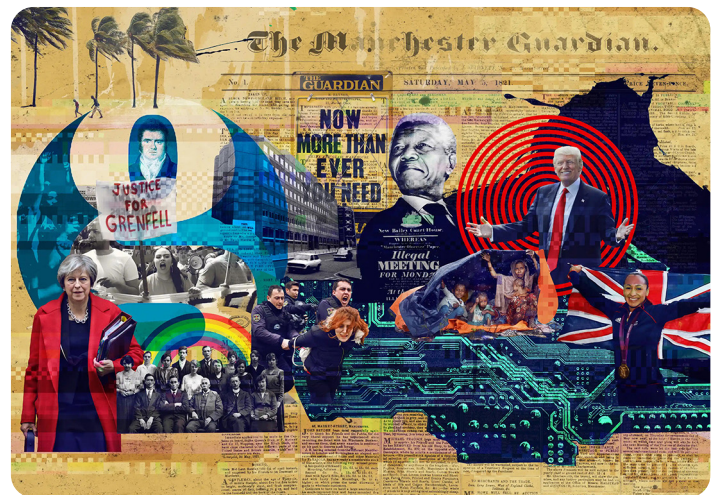


Both the newspaper and the website aim to follow the institutional values of the newspaper, which are as follows:

Guardian Media Group is a global news organisation that delivers fearless, investigative journalism – giving a voice to the powerless and holding power to account. Our independent ownership structure means we are entirely free from political and commercial influence. Our values determine the stories we choose to cover – relentlessly and courageously.

The Guardian's tone, style, and content are shaped by their values. They are a quality newspaper that adopts a formal tone. In the past, their final manual typesetting editing was not as sharp as other newspapers, which led to it being called *The Grauniad*, a mocking joke on its name. Nowadays, *The Guardian* is a highly respected global newspaper that has had some major journalistic scoops, such as investigating Uber for breaking laws, playing a role in the BBC documentary that accused Tim Westwood, a famous DJ, of sexual misconduct, and covering stories about cyberstalking and equipment shortages in Ukraine during the war.

The Politics of *The Guardian*



Key Term

Centre-Left: Can be described as “working within the established systems to improve social justice”. The centre-left promotes a degree of social equality that it believes is achievable through promoting equal opportunity.

The Guardian adopts a “critical friend” approach to political parties that share their centre-left political values, such as The Labour Party, The Liberal Democrats, and The Green Party. However, to maintain integrity, they stop short of fully endorsing any one party. Although the paper declared its support for the Liberal Democrats in the 2010 general election and their desire for electoral reform, it then switched back to the Labour Party for the 2015 election. That endorsement continued for the elections in 2017 and 2019 when Jeremy Corbyn was the leader of the party. *The Guardian* provides opposition to more right-wing political papers, such as *The Daily Mail*, *The Telegraph*, and *The Times*.

How Does it Target National and International Audiences?

According to *The Guardian's* advertising information, its audience is a “global audience [that] is affluent and well educated with a passion for the arts, literature, film, sports, and travel. They are frequent visitors to the site and value its investigative journalism and trustworthy approach to international news coverage”.

International Audience Profile

- 79% men / 21% women
- 89% degree educated or above
- Average age: 44
- 34% are expats
- 66% are daily visitors to the site
- More than 1 in 4 earn €58k+ (in Europe, or \$100k+ in the rest of the world)
- 26% have £100k+ in savings and investments
- International business people, who have budget responsibilities and who travel frequently
- More than 1 in 4 are C-Suite or director level
- 42% are responsible for budget expenditure at work
- 61% travel on business (73% of these take 3+ business flights a year)

The Guardian Online

<https://www.theguardian.com/advertising/audience1>

The Guardian has 4 editions of the online newspaper that target different country demographics. They select and write stories according to the news values of that day for each country. They employ journalists in each country and freelancers who can write opinion pieces or investigative articles. For more information on news sources, see **Media Studies Factsheet 212 Understanding the Industrial Process of News.**

The site is separated into sections for ease of selection. These are:

- Headlines
- Newsletters
- Take Part
- Culture
- Opinion
- From the UK
- Most Viewed
- Spotlight
- Climate Crisis
- Explore
- Lifestyle
- Editorials and Letters
- Around the World
- Sport
- Tip us Off
- In Pictures
- Video

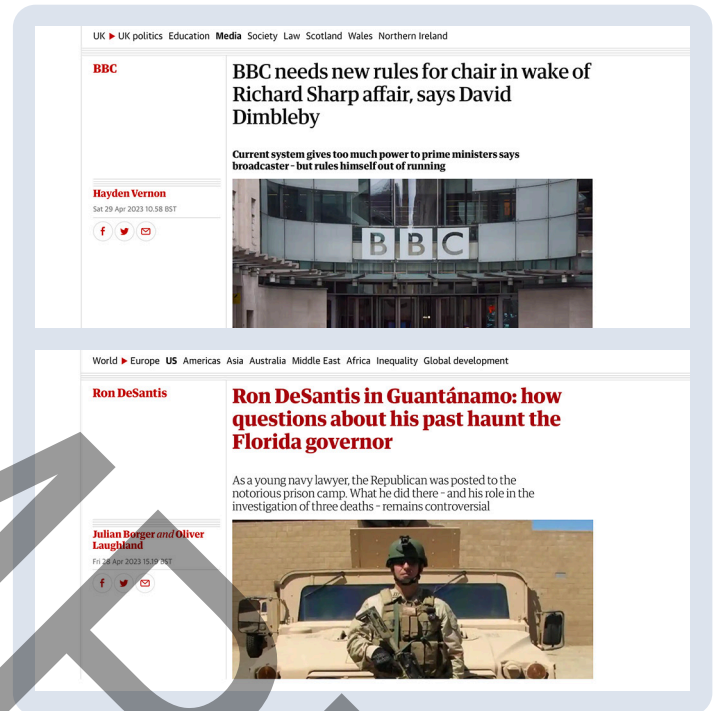
It is a huge website that could appeal to individuals beyond the established demographic. The political and institutional values impact how they run *The Guardian* as a business as well as the content on their newspaper/site.

International Editions

The UK edition on April 29th leads with a story about the resignation of the BBC Chair Richard Sharp, who allegedly provided a “secret” £800,000 loan to former Prime Minister Boris Johnson. This is a hard news story because the BBC is expected to maintain impartiality and remain free from government influence, suggesting a failure to fulfil this role. Stories that expose corruption are appealing to *The Guardian’s* audience and position them to question the legitimacy of the BBC.

The BBC’s free news model directly competes with *The Guardian’s* business model, and stories like this could undermine trust in the BBC, potentially leading people to be more inclined to pay for the quality journalism offered by *The Guardian*.


The April 29th US edition leads with a story about Florida’s Republican Governor Ron DeSantis and his time as a lawyer for the state in Guantanamo Bay, the prison for suspected terrorists. The article presents accounts from researchers and individuals who were there, creating bias against him without making direct accusations. This story would appeal to the audience because it investigates a centre-right politician, which opposes the political ideologies of the readership and aligns with their viewpoint.



Activity 2

Using the first page of the website for the day, identify from the headlines what type of stories *The Guardian* publishes for their audience: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk>.

Provide a short analysis of the stories and how they exemplify *The Guardian’s* institutional values and why they would be of interest to the audience.

Story Focus	Example	Institutional values Interest to the audience
Politicians and potential corruption		
Big business power		
War		
Race, Diversity, multiculturalism		
Ecological issues		
Social issues such as housing, poverty, cost of living	<p>'Heartbreaking'; private care homes accused of failing UK children due to closures</p> <p>Staff warn vulnerable children may be harmed as they struggle to find placements after 28 homes given deadline to shut by chain</p> 	<p>The article starts with “One of the UK’s largest for-profit care chains has been accused of failing dozens of vulnerable children by shutting 28 residential homes, with staff warning they are struggling to find placements for all the children”. This is a story that involves business and their failure to help the vulnerable in society, in this case children. This could generate anger in the readership because it highlights an injustice of the actions of the company. They have also received information from a “whistleblower” revealing that the children will have to be moved – this provides the gratification of insider knowledge for audiences and could help them understand the social context more.</p>

The Guardian's Funding Model

In a struggling economic climate, news institutions are finding it hard to adequately fund quality journalism. However, *The Guardian* has several ways in which it funds its journalism. The site delivers free news with no paywall:

- The sale of the print newspaper – although it is clear that print news is declining rapidly and the costs associated with print make it less profitable and attractive to advertisers.
- Digital subscriptions – the newspaper offers a range of packages to suit different economic groups.
- Patron support with exclusive offers.
- Traditional advertising.
- Philanthropic partnerships such as with The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Despite the decline in physical copy newspaper revenue, subscription to *The Guardian* makes up more than the advertising revenue. *The Guardian's* digital edition has increased in readership to over a million recurring subscribers, and digital revenues account for two-thirds of total revenue. International revenues are at £79.9 million.

Activity 3

Access the award-winning articles and read some of the award-winning journalism.

Find evidence of *The Guardian's* values (Page 1) by identifying aspects of the articles that support them:

<https://www.theguardian.com/gnm-press-office/2022/dec/16/guardian-wins-at-the-british-journalism-awards>

Activity 4

The Guardian's advertising Lab is a way for the news institution to create advertising content in their newspaper for brands that align with their values as a company. Recent campaigns include Tena, Levi's, Visa, and PayPal:

<https://advertising.theguardian.com/labs/projects>

Read about Guardian Labs and access the campaigns to identify how they worked in synergy with brands to promote the products as well as raise awareness about issues.

In Guardian Labs, we apply the highest standards of quality to the content we create for brands.

With that ambition - aligned to world class storytelling, multimedia and data - we create commercial content that our readers love.

Our work is thought-provoking, funny and persuasive. It sits prominently on all of our owned channels. And it generates spectacular results for clients.

[See our projects →](#)

Activity 5

Read the article "A mission for journalism in a time of crisis" by the Editor-in-Chief Katharine Viner.

The Guardian may state it's free from commercial influence, meaning it won't write stories that favour businesses or institutions because they pay them to do so. However, they are still a commercial operation and have to fund journalism and all the other running costs for the newspaper and the website. This costs money.

Consider how *The Guardian* is funded and how this helps them stay free from commercial influence.



Case Study: The Guardian and the Cotton Capital Commission



Guardian owner apologises for founders' links to slavery

Scott Trust to invest in 10-year programme of restorative justice

Anna Mohan
Community affairs correspondent

The owner of the Guardian has issued an apology for the role the newspaper's founders had in transatlantic slavery and announced a decade-long programme of restorative justice.

The Scott Trust said it expected to invest more than £1m, with a million dedicated specifically to descendant communities linked to the Guardian's 19th-century founders. It follows

independent academic research commissioned in 2020 to investigate whether there was any historical connection between chattel slavery and John Edward Taylor, the journalist and cotton merchant who founded the newspaper in 1833, and the other Manchester businessmen who founded the trust.

The Scott Trust Legacies of Enslavement report, published today, revealed that Taylor, and at least one of his partners, had links to slavery, principally through the cotton manufacturing firm Galden & Taylor, and the cotton merchant company Shute, Worth, Taylor & Co, which imported vast amounts of raw cotton produced by enslaved people in America.

Researchers from the universities of Nottingham and Hull were able to identify Taylor's links to plantations in the Sea Islands, along the coast of South Carolina and Georgia, after reviewing an invoice book showing that Shute, Worth, Taylor & Co received cotton from the region, which included the names of some plantation owners and enslavers.

Another of the Guardian's early financiers, the West India merchant Sir George Phillips, co-owned the Success sugar plantation in Hanover, Jamaica.

He unsuccessfully attempted to claim compensation from the British government in 1835 for what he

regarded as the loss of his human property, which was 186 people. His partner, however, successfully claimed £3,000 for his in compensation, which, according to the most conservative estimate, is worth approximately £200,000 today.

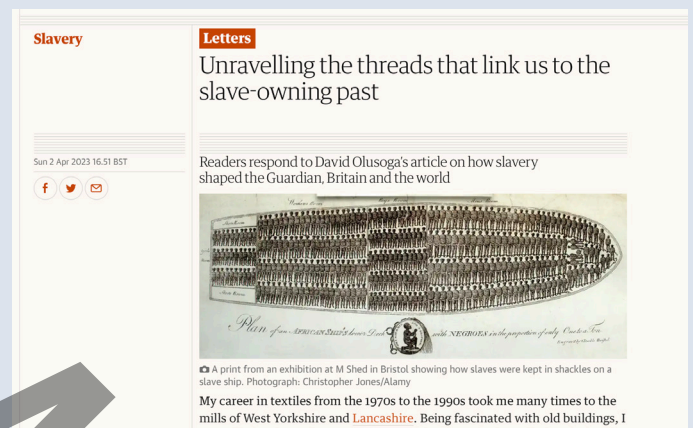
Alongside an apology "to the affected communities identified in the research and surviving descendants of the enslaved for the part the Guardian and its founders had in this crime against humanity", the trust also apologised for early editorial positions that served to support the cotton industry, and therefore the exploitation of enslaved people.

The restorative justice fund will support projects in the Gullah-Geechee region - the

COTTON CAPITAL SPECIAL REPORT
'This awful history must reinforce our determination to expose racism, injustice and inequality'
Katharine Viner
Editor-in-chief
Journal →



<https://www.theguardian.com/news/ng-interactive/2023/mar/28/the-cotton-thread-guardian-founders-slavery-john-edward-taylor>



<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/apr/02/unravelling-the-threads-that-link-us-to-the-slave-owning-past>



As well as revealing the findings of their commission, the paper utilised a more magazine-style aesthetic in the telling of this story. The news site's visual design has evolved over the years, with animations, font styles, infographics, and photojournalism. There is also interactive content, with "Have your say" areas on news stories.

"The Cotton Capital" is investigative journalism, coupled with what amounts to a historical autobiography of the newspaper. It is a fascinating read that utilises a range of literary techniques to tell the story of the newspaper's past.



<https://www.theguardian.com/news/ng-interactive/2023/mar/28/slavery-and-the-guardian-the-ties-that-bind-us>

Activity 6

Read about the outcomes of the report:

<https://www.theguardian.com/news/2023/mar/28/the-guardian-and-slavery-what-did-the-research-find-and-what-happens-next>

Listen to one of the Scott Trust board members and journalist David Olusoga talk about the investigation:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SfpKDkJrH_s

Applying Some Audience and Industry Theory

Both the newspaper and the online website provide the gratifications [Blumer and Katz] of information, surveillance, and entertainment. Some aspects of the opinion page could provide identification with similar groups, and shared values unite some of the online community. This could be seen in the letters that responded to the “Cotton Capital” story. *The Guardian* is also encouraging a model where subscribers get involved with news-making, and this breaks down the gatekeeping model that news institutions use. That is not to say that *The Guardian* does not employ traditional methods of news sourcing; they actively advertise for people to come forward with stories the paper might be interested in.



<https://www.theguardian.com/help/ng-interactive/2017/mar/17/contact-the-guardian-securely>

There can be pleasure in seeing the values reflected in the media products you consume, but this could also have a negative effect by creating an echo chamber of ideas. Of course, audiences are free to reject or negotiate what *The Guardian* writes about as well. Loyal readers are more likely to accept the preferred readings of articles without looking for other sources, and this could strengthen political leanings, as well as shape opinions around social issues.

The daily engagement with the newspaper could enhance a reader's cultural capital [Bourdieu], giving them insight into the world beyond national borders. This reinforces both a national and global view of issues at any given time. The selection and mediation of news stories reflect *The Guardian's* values of social progressiveness, and investigative journalism is something that Curran and Seaton would argue fulfils an important civic duty for people because the stories challenge power. The structure of *The Guardian* has been designed so that not one person can benefit from editorial control. While ultimately the remit of the editor-in-chief, the content of *The Guardian* is a collaborative effort between trust members and journalists.

Exam Hint

The Guardian and *The Daily Mail* are the current close study products for AQA Paper 1, Section B, and should be studied using audience and industry ideas. While the questions target those aspects of the theoretical framework, you should provide some clear examples from your CSPs that exemplify your theoretical ideas.

Essay Question

“Media audiences do not simply consume media content anymore.” Focusing on the newspapers you have studied, to what extent do you agree with this statement?

In this question, students would be expected to argue for and against this idea. This could be done through an explanation of audience theories that argue whether audiences are passive or active. The students should provide evidence from their close study of news institutions that exemplify these ideas. A range of terminology relating to audience and industry should also be used.

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