

**NAME:****GROUP:****Total score _____ /25****TASK 2 – TRUE AND FALSE****Points (_____ / 10)**

Here is an article about technology and cultural taste. Read the text carefully. Then read statements 1-8, decide whether they are TRUE or FALSE and mark the correct option (X) in the space provided, as in example 0. Write the FIRST FOUR WORDS of the sentence which justifies your answer in the space provided, as in example 0.

Only answers in which both the TRUE/FALSE and the FIRST FOUR WORDS of the sentence which justifies your choice are correct will be considered valid.

Answers must be based exclusively on the information in the text.

Has technology changed cultural taste?

The Internet has had a dramatic impact on pop culture. Every day, bands blow up through social media, YouTube stars emerge, bloggers sign book deals and wannabes strive for their big virtual break. In this fragmented digital universe, there is a seemingly endless audience for new ideas and becoming a “celebrity” is within anyone’s grasp.

But the challenge faced by those working in the creative industries is how to harness this energy and spin it into something real. Technology offers the chance to improve audience engagement, offer better customer service and generate innovative ideas. But it can only truly alter taste once it has impacted on how culture is produced and consumed – and once we all become comfortable with the new realities and working practices it creates for us.

The past decade has seen incredible change: the creative industries have opened up in new and exciting ways and there is the sense that anyone can participate (as long as they have something worth saying). This extension of the conversation beyond the experts is a seismic shift that has registered across the creative industries from media – where the readers become the creators – to theatre, where the audience become part of the production.

As Dick Penny, director of Watershed, a cross-artform venue and producer based in Bristol, says: “technology allows people to choose between a more traditional, passive experience and a more active, participatory interaction ... it’s amazing how regimented we have become in our cultural habits. Take theatre for example: you buy your ticket, have a drink, find your seat, sit, the lights go down, you know it’s time to be silent. Companies such as [immersive theatre pioneers] Punchdrunk have turned those conceits on their head. Rather than devaluing the traditional approach, it just shows there is another way of doing it.”

Opportunities and threats

Another significant change is the freeing up of the means of production. It has never been easier to at least attempt to make your creative dreams come true. Shrinking costs have created a wealth of opportunity, but sometimes it’s hard to convey that sense of excitement to those at the top of traditional media industries. One constant thread throughout my own career as a journalist has been the sometimes thankless task of educating print hacks about the possibilities of digital.

Where you see an opportunity, your superiors all too often see a threat. The idea that the audience has gained control of the conversation, or at least has the opportunity to influence it through comments and clicks, is anathema to traditional editors convinced of the superiority of their own curatorial decisions. “But, we’re the experts,” they splutter, while projects such as Guardian Witness empower thousands of users to document real world events in real-time, seamlessly blending the newspaper experience with the digital experience. This is storytelling in the modern age: immersive, engaging and immediate.



The digital audience is more fickle: we have multiple subscriptions to magazines and newspapers; we leave a spray of comments on different websites. But that just means titles have to work harder on getting and keeping readers, with subscriber benefits, content extras and a sense of added value. What's fascinating is the speed at which digital media insurgents such as Vice – which began as a provocative pop culture magazine and is now famed for its youth-focused video output with more than 150m monthly users – are becoming part of the media establishment. Vice was named media company of the year at the 2014 British Media Awards, with the judges citing its ability to "disprove the myth that digital content needs to be short-form or throwaway to be successful."

Creating a broader context

As the YouTube generation matures, their hunger for hard news is proving just as healthy as that of their pre-internet parents. The only thing to have changed is the method of delivery and the ability of the audience to join the debate. As Vice's co-founder Shane Smith told The Guardian: "Young people, who are the majority of our audience, are angry, disenfranchised and they don't like or trust mainstream media outlets. They're leaving TV in droves, but music and news are the two things that Generation Y in every country are excited about and interested in."

It's worth noting that technology has improved access to culture and in doing so, created a broader context. In terms of music – the industry perhaps most transformed by technology – this means that the opportunity for music junkies to indulge their obsessions has never been greater. "When I was growing up, all that was available to me was the local record shop or the odd radio show," says Penny. "My son has just started university and his attitude to culture is completely different. He has grown up with access to any music he chooses and has an encyclopaedic knowledge. If he finds a band he likes, he will trace all their influences and listen to all those bands too. There is a library of culture that is readily available to young people, which my generation just didn't have."

But with this sense of cultural enrichment and depth comes a feeling of information overload and the need to filter out the noise. It's this that has triggered the rise of the online curator, propelling bloggers and vloggers such as beauty queen Zoella, 24, to internet stardom. With her first book, *Girl Online*, due out in November and an audience estimated to be 26 times that of the circulation of *British Vogue*, Zoella is a key example of what the advertising world call a "crowdsourced people's champion" – one who earns hundreds of thousands of pounds a year and is paid by brands such as Unilever to connect with the ever-elusive 18-30 demographic.

Lessons for the arts

What can cultural organisations and mainstream media learn from these youthful tastemakers? Their rise is attributed to technological advances that enable interaction and accessibility – the increased importance of trust among digitally savvy consumers and the intimate connection that exists between vlogger and viewer. Ways that institutions can look to replicate that is through live-streaming events, behind-the-scenes video blogs and "masterclass" clips from big names associated with the venue or company.

So has technology changed cultural taste? It's clear that the way we consume, create and think about culture is constantly evolving, as it has throughout history. New forms of media always spark some moral and intellectual panics. The printing press, newspapers, paperbacks and television were all once denounced as threats to consumers' brainpower and moral fibre.

It's not technology shaping taste, but the human desire to connect, share and evaluate culture. Technology provides the tools but it is still society that shapes taste.

Adapted from: <http://www.theguardian.com/culture-professionals-network/2014/oct/31/sp-technology-cultural-taste-youtube-vloggers-vice>

**ANSWER GRID**

| | STATEMENTS | T | F | Examiner's use only |
|--------------|--|----------|----------|---------------------|
| Ex 0. | Becoming famous is something anyone today can attempt. First four words: In this fragmented digital | X | | ✓ |
| 1. | The fact that anyone can be part of the creative process is nothing new. First four words: | | | |
| 2. | In the digital world, there is room for conventional users, and for those who want to have a say. First four words: | | | |
| 3. | Traditional journalists are embracing the possibilities of the digital format. First four words: | | | |
| 4. | Once rebellious media companies are now joining the system. First four words: | | | |
| 5. | Users of digital news media have created a rift between newspapers and digital news sites. First four words: | | | |
| 6. | In order to be successful, digital media offers perks to their wavering audiences. First four words: | | | |
| 7. | Younger generations are more knowledgeable about music, than previous ones. First four words: | | | |
| 8. | Generation Y are equally interested in music and news. First four words: | | | |
| 9. | Information overload was a catalyst in the emergence of online curators. First four words: | | | |
| 10. | Young tastemakers depend on their followers' confidence for success. First four words: | | | |



KEY

| | STATEMENTS | T | F | Examiner's use only |
|-------|--|---|---|---------------------|
| Ex 0. | Becoming famous is something anyone today can attempt. First four words: In this fragmented digital | X | | ✓ |
| 1. | The fact that anyone can be part of the creative process is nothing new. | | X | |
| | First four words: The past decade has; This extension of the | | | |
| 2. | In the digital world, there is room for conventional users, and for those who want to have a say. | X | | |
| | First four words: As Dick Penny, director | | | |
| 3. | Traditional journalists are embracing the possibilities of the digital format. | | X | |
| | First four words: One constant thread throughout | | | |
| 4. | Once rebellious media companies are now joining the system. | X | | |
| | First four words: What's fascinating is the | | | |
| 5. | Users of digital news media have created a rift between newspapers and digital news sites. | | X | |
| | First four words: “But, we’re the experts,” | | | |
| 6. | In order to be successful, digital media offers perks to their wavering audiences. | X | | |
| | First four words: “But that just means” | | | |
| 7. | Younger generations are less knowledgeable about music, than previous ones. | | X | |
| | First four words: He has grown up | | | |
| 8. | Generation Y are equally interested in music and news. | X | | |
| | First four words: They’re leaving TV in | | | |
| 9. | Information overload was a catalyst in the emergence of online curators. | X | | |
| | First four words: “It’s this that has” | | | |
| 10. | Young tastemakers depend on their followers’ confidence for success. | X | | |
| | First four words: Their rise is attributed | | | |