Set Front Cover



Industry

The Big Issue LTD is an independent magazine company and is not part of larger conglomerate. They partner with Dennis Publishing to print the magazine. The magazine operates on a Not-For-Profit basis, using any excess revenue to support homeless people.

The magazine **isn't sold through conventional means like shops, as you see most magazines do, but sold through vendors which are often homeless people or people living in poverty. Street vendors purchase copies of The Big Issue for £1.50 each and sell them on for £3 each. The street vendors are free to use that money to support themselves- the goal is to give homeless people a legal way of making money.**

When setting up the magazine they *needed to secure external funding and secured a front from The Body Shop*- Gordon Roddick (one of the founders of The Big Issue) was married to Anita Roddick, who is the founder of The Body Shop. Handily, *The Body Shop granted them £50,000 to start the magazine until it became a self-sustained module.*

Industry (cont)

After the success of The Big Issue, they wanted to do more and more to help people in need, so they have diversified into other areas. In 1995, they diversified into more direct support with **The Big Issue Foundation- providing homeless people with training, workshops, information on how to get support with various issues such as mental health, domestic abuse, housing.**

In 2005, they **diversified further by setting up The Big Issue Invest, which is a financial fund available for charities and small businesses, individuals with ideas for businesses that perhaps have been turned away from other investors due to impoverished backgrounds. TBII are able to provide funds to people with business plans.**

In 2016 they **diversified into retail with their own online shop, including a range of synergetic merchandise. All of that money goes back to helping the needy.**

So the Big Issue is an **example of a product and company that is NOT all about profit and power, but instead giving back to the community, making it very different to most magazines in the market.** Many brands with similar ABC1 audiences choose to place adverts in the print magazine and on the website and this increases the revenue for The Big Issue- **they reserve a lot of space for adverts about charities and other community projects but do sometimes go into the more expensive areas for that ABC1 audience. **. The *producers collaborate with celebrities for cover photos, interviews and even invite some to be guest editors for an issue.* This draws in pre-sold fans of those celebs. This includes David Bowie, Robert Downey Jr.

Industry (cont)

Sometimes they even have collective editions, they work with celebs to create special editions of the magazine which makes it feel more exclusive. This encourages readers to buy multiple copies to try and collect them.

The Big Issue worked so well as a **Not-For-Profit magazine in the UK that many international versions were created- Japan, Australian and Ireland are just a fraction of where they branched out.**

So **despite remaining an independent niche magazine, it has become a globally recognised brand.**

In general the magazine industry has suffered due to the decline in people buying print magazines, choosing instead to get information and entertainment online instead. They have moved into digital distribution, working with Zinio (a massive company that distributes thousands of magazines online). Zinio **allows customers to purchase one digital copy of a magazine or subscribe to 12 months upfront. The option to "try" one edition of the magazine gives audiences a taste of the magazine without a long-term commitment.**. **Digital distribution also helps to target audiences who are online regularly, those who don't have a vendor locally, and those who are avoiding paper copies for environmental reasons. It also helps them to reach a global audience as Zinio distributes to over 174 countries.**

The **revenue from digital sales is used to support vendors.**

At the **height of their success in the early 2000s, their vendors were selling 300,000 a week**- however, the magazine industry has suffered massively as more and more people are choosing online content instead of print content.

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Industry (cont)

As of 2011, they were "only" selling 125,000 copies a week and so they decided to redesign and relaunch The Big Issue in an attempt to boost sales. The magazine **started to feature a lot more content about political and social reform.** They also **featured more celebrities including as regular columnists.**. The **rebranded magazine had a slightly higher cover price in an attempt to help vendors make similar money from potentially reduced sales. In a world where other magazines' sales continued to plummet, the sales of The Big Issue did eventually pick back up.**

Representation

The set page of The Big Issue **clearly represent values and ideologies of magazine and publishers.**

Their pages **represent homeless people in a positive and sympathetic light because supporting the homeless is their main goal as a magazine.**

- Homelessness -

The letters page features various letters. One titled "celebrating vendors" refers to **homeless vendors of the magazine as "inspirational" and "friendly".** The use of personal stories and first-person perspectives **helps readers to understand and sympathetic with homeless vendors**. This page **represents a typically underrepresented social group.**

The **reference to the weather creates a representation of homeless people as being brave and strong. The representations aren't all positive though, they do include some more gritty details of homeless culture, like being included in drugs, alcohol, and even violence. This creates a seemingly realistic representation of homeless life for vendors and doesn't attempt to make the vendors seem perfect.**

The representations of homelessness are not idealised.

Representation (cont)

Left-wing ideologies are clearly represented on the pages, as they talk negatively about Margaret Thatcher, talk about the conservatives closing down libraries, the history of terrible unemployment due to their laws and legislation- it's clear that the magazine **paints a reasonably negative picture of the Conservative government.**

They talk about how the conservatives were planning to hold a memorial for Margaret Thatcher, the suggestion in the letters is that the funding for the memorial should be used to build libraries, clearly demonstrating an anti-Thatcher, and therefore anti-conservative ideology. They also speak about Trump and negatively represent, which makes sense as Trump is the US version of Thatcher - ties into the magazine's left-wing ideologies.

- Gender -

Looking specifically at the **Sky Westworld advert, it represents men as powerful, successful and important, etc. This is a reasonably stereotypical way of representing men in the media.**

There's an article called **"so... why don't the homeless just go home?", and they interview a variety of heads of different organisations- every single person is male, which suggests that men are these ones that get the top jobs in the companies- the lack of inclusion of female bosses in the interview might reflect the context that women are less likely to be hired for managerial jobs. It continues to represent men in positions of power and status.**

The **A-Team advert for Blu-ray DVD is also male-dominated, and constructs a macho representation of men. All of the artwork is by male artists- all set pages are dominated by men. This could be because the writers of the big issue are primarily male, but may also reflect the fact that men are more likely to be made homeless than women, so their focus might be on creating more positive role models for men.**

Representation (cont)

"We made history, didn't we?" spread looks at the two male founders of The Big Issue, also both male, from a low-angle perspective that makes them look more powerful. They use aggressive adjectives like "hard-nosed" and "tough"- **the use of masculine and powerful adjectives creates a macho image of the founders-** obviously the magazine is going to create strong representations of its own founders.

**It adds to this stereotype that men aren't emotional people and are mentally tough, "no nonsense".

Multiple images of men in positions of power (e.g. the feature of film heroes and villains - Captain America & Terminator)**

There are **other representations of men in positions of respect, such as The Dalai Lama with a halo past his head, suggesting something to be worshipped. John Lydon and Sir Alex Ferguson being referred to as "Legends" and Paul Weller "The Modfather" (play on Godfather), Andy Murray as "-Champion", Danial Radcliffe as "Star". The article creates the idea of these men being ultimate role models and the top in their field.**

Joanna Lumley and Vicky McClure are just referred to as an "Actress", not "Legend" or "Champion" or "Star" like the men represented. It seems that women in this article are not described in such an idealised and revered way.

Whilst David Bowie was of course rich, successful and powerful, he also challenged traditional ideas about masculinity in many ways. He was, alongside is music, known for his androgynous looks and for wearing makeup and not being afraid to experiment with clothes, costume, shoes, makeup, etc. He's very much someone who didn't care about gender norms, so **there are some moments in The Big Issue, by featuring Bowie, that challenge gender stereotypes.

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Representation (cont)

This is further reinforced by featuring Grayson Perry, who like Bowie, wasn't afraid of defying gender norms. **The representation of** Grayson Perry is counter typical as it shows a man comfortable with expressing his more feminine and creative side by wearing dresses and makeup**. He talks about his experience and uses terms to express his sexuality such as "transvestite", so this adds a **more modern and diverse representation of masculinity that is often not seen in mainstream media products**. However, he does talk about "still watching war films" and expressing a wanting "to be a jet pilot" at 16, with a plan to join the army, so **some aspects of him are presented in a more traditionally masculine way. This makes the representation of masculinity quite complex and not one-dimensional**.. There are **some representations of women that challenge gender stereotypes, such as women in positions of leadership, especially in the political sphere, like Theresa May and Nicola Sturgeon.**

Some articles **represent women as educated and respected in their fields, providing a countertype to many mainstream representations of women. Representations of women being quite strong and powered, counter typical of what you'd see normally.**

The **woman on the Turn2Us charity advert stating "money was tight when my husband became terminally ill" suggesting women can't cope financially once their husband has passed away, a very stereotypical representation of women relying on men financially.**

As an "alternative" magazine it makes sense that they do include some articles that challenge traditional stereotypes of gender, sexuality, etc.

Typical readers of The Big Issue are more likely to be left wing, have liberal, alternative points of view, so it makes sense for the magazine to include these representations on their pages.

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