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Supervisor: Dr. Irene Gammel
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Marketing Music and Movies to Teen Girls in the 21st Century
Major Research Paper Proposal
Communication and Culture Programme

Introduction

My Masters Research Project will be exploring marketing practices targeted towards teenage girls, specifically focusing on those for musical artists and films in the 21st century. I will be examining how elements such as female friendship and feminism, compulsory heterosexuality, and belonging or categorizing ones identity are used in marketing campaigns as well as in the content itself to appeal to the teen girl demographic. This demographic is very profitable and there is a large draw to not only create content for teenage girls but to find ways to market to them directly. I will examine if and how the rise of social media has shifted marketing methods and the advantages and disadvantages of various social media platforms for marketers, advertisers, and the artists themselves. In addition to exploring the marketing campaigns themselves as well as the content they are advertising, I am considering exploring how teenage girls respond to these methods and whether their generated responses and critical discussions or lack thereof shift the methods of marketing.

My main focuses will be on marketing music and musical artists, on films, and on the intersection of both. Not only are both of these areas highly relevant to contemporary culture and discourse, but they are industries in which artists and texts aimed towards teen girls bring in a huge amount of revenue. Music marketed towards teenage girls is an interesting point of

discussion because it involves not only selling the music and the music videos but the artist themselves, and various social media tactics are used in order to do so. There are different methods used depending on the origin, musical genre, and gender of the artist, so this leads to a great deal of variety and points of exploration and discussion. The popularity of major blockbuster movies based on Young Adult novels make film an interesting and particularly relevant note of focus as well. The combination of marketing to existing fans, to new fans, and with the inclusion of a full universe for teenage fans to immerse themselves in makes movie marketing campaigns massive and expansive. Additionally, the combination of music and film—including young stars doing soundtrack songs and concert movies—may be an interesting point of exploration as well. Some of the musical artists I plan on exploring in the course of this research project include Fifth Harmony, Shawn Mendes, and Taylor Swift. These are artists who are currently very successful in the mainstream market who specifically target teenage girls as their demographic. I plan on exploring films such as the *Divergent* series, the *Twilight* series, *The Fault in Our Stars*, and *Paper Towns*. These films have been massive successes within the past ten years and are all based on Young Adult novels marketed towards teenage girls.

Objectives

My objectives in this research are to explore marketing campaigns directed towards teenage girls and question the reasoning behind the methods used. I want to discover the similarities and differences between various marketing practices and which ones are most effective, or at least why they are considered to be the most effective. I also want to unpack the inherent assumptions and biases behind many of these marketing practices. Additionally, I want to discover how the increase in use of social media has changed not only the marketing practices but the assumptions and purposes behind them, the texts, and the consumers themselves. I hope to outline the

marketing practices in detail to perhaps find what is the most effective, what is not, and how the methods could be more inclusive or alternatively more expansive.

Much of the research in this area is less about the specific marketing practices and more about the text itself or of fandom. While these are both fascinating points of exploration and indeed relevant to my research, I want to focus on what works in between those two areas. My questions include: How is the text or artist sold to the fan? What methods are chosen and why are they chosen? Which methods are most effective and which are not? Are non-effective methods continuously employed anyway? Are all marketing campaigns and practices accurate and full representations of not only the text and/or artist but of the demographic they are selling to? Are they meant to be? These are all questions I feel need further discussion and which I am interested in looking at specifically.

Research Methods

I will be using mixed methods in my research. I will be doing some textual analysis of music and film texts targeted towards teenage girls in order to note similarities and differences in themes and structure. I will also be doing analysis of marketing campaigns including major interviews, articles, press releases, and other information provided on social media. I will be choosing specific artists and films to examine their use of social media including Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and Tumblr during major promotional periods. I am also interested in finding consistencies between the marketing campaigns, analyzing key terms and repeated language and imagery used, perhaps to turn into qualitative information. I will be reading feminist academic texts about this topic and using it as framework and support for my arguments as well as points of discussion and theorizing. Additionally, because it has become such a

popular point of discussion in less academic circles, I would like to look at non-academic articles and videos and compare and contrast their approach to the topic, particularly comparing viewpoints from different age and gender brackets. While I will be choosing specific artists and films to explore, I may also choose a text that intersects between music and film as a larger and more focused case study.

Some of the theoretical framework I am interested in using in this research is contemporary feminist theory and media/marketing theory including the work of theorists Judith Butler, Laura Mulvey, Jean Baudrillard, Linda Scott, and William Merrin. Natalie Coulter's work on tween girls will also be very helpful, particularly her explanation of the definition and separation of the tween from the child, and discussion of marketing practices that can be compared and contrasted to teen-directed methods. In regards to feminist theory, I would like to explore if and how this marketing and the texts being advertised contribute to constructing a definition of ideal and acceptable femininity. Additionally, I will use feminist theory to question why texts that are marketed to teenage girls are so often mocked and devalued, and how the patriarchal cultural hierarchy that constructs these texts and how marketing can perpetuate this. In order to discuss this topic, I will require engagement with marketing and media theory as well. I will be using a basis of how marketing functions, its intent, and its methods in order to properly analyze my findings.

Timeline (2015-2016)

January 10: Research and Annotated bibliography completed

February 15: Data collection from promotional campaigns and social media completed
Writing of chapters in progress

March 1: Draft 1 to Supervisor

March 30: All revisions completed

April 1: Draft to Reader 2 (following approval by Supervisor)

April 30: All Revisions completed and Submission to Programme

NB: The timeline is based on the assumption that Readers will have 2 weeks to comment and provide feedback following each draft submission. The full and polished draft requires the approval of the Supervisor before it will be submitted to Reader 2.

Selected Bibliography

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- Coulter, Natalie. *Tweening the Girl: The Crystallization of the Tween Market*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2014.
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- Malik, Farah, "Mediated Consumption and Fashionable Selves: Tween Girls, Fashion Magazines, and Shopping." *Counterpoints: Seven Going on Seventeen: Tween Studies in the Culture of Girlhood*. Vol 245 (2005): 257-277
- Marshall, P. David. "New Media-New Self: The Changing Power of Celebrity." *The Celebrity Culture Reader*. Routledge: New York, 2006. 634-644.
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