

Merchants of cool



Shopping Consumerism Merchants of Cool More than all cohorts in the past, contemporary teenagers and youth are not free to produce a genuine culture for their own. Rather, their expectations and desires are rigorously studied by marketers, hyperbolized and sold back to them in a diabolical response circle. The present day teenagers and youth are independent and have money; their lives are the center of attention by the cooperate America. That is the principle of the PBS Frontline documentary “ The Merchants of Cool”, which makes an alarmingly undeniable case for the alteration of teenage culture by its immense commercialization.

This film discovers the contemporary teenagers’ culture and their standpoints on themselves and their parents. In order to target the teenagers, companies explore the teenager’s tastes and preferences, perspectives, and their aspirations to identify what they desire. Needless to say, as according to the film “ Merchants of Cool”, companies survey the symbiotic association between the present day teenagers and the media, as they depend on the other for their identity (Merchants of Cool, 2001).

Marketing happens to all people at all time, and no individual is invulnerable from its influence and free from its reach (Ewen, 1976, p. 36). The absolute size and purchasing power of the contemporary teenagers creates a windfall of inexorably insistent brand messaging that is both omnipresent and goes to extraordinary lengths to hold on to the most significant canon in convincing this demographic segment. The “ Merchants of Cool” notes that teenagers are the hottest demographic in United States.

Marketing to the youth is a challenging task and not as easy as it sounds.

Marketers have to seek ways to seem real: authentic to the lives and perspectives of teens and to be cool to themselves (Ewen, 1976, p. 1118). In

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essence, they seek the next trendy thing and have implemented approximately anthropological strategy to examine the youth and their every move. Ewen (1976, p. 124) notes that the creation of a fancied desire is significant to the contemporary marketer. The youths have the need to experience self-conscious perspective and a marketer should focus on this. A marketer can identify this need through examining the youths' behavior and ways of life (Ewen, 1976, p. 128).

The “ Merchants of Cool” (2001) delineates a response circle in which marketers carry out comprehensive ethnographic studies of teens to identify what's fashionable, and then augment it and nosh it back to them through media managed by fewer hands. Eventually, this not only impacts but also generates the culture it is examining. Mark Crispin Miller asserts that what this system does is to study the teenagers and keep them under observation to identify what will push their buttons and dins back to them persistently and ubiquitously. In addition, Rushkoff denotes that this system is “ one enclosed feedback loop”. For instance, MTV was for long identified as the trendsetter of teen cool. To counteract this, MTV started an outstanding teen study campaign by visiting the teens at home to identify their interests and examine their lives.

This “ Merchants of Cool” film introduces viewers to the “ mook”, and the “ midriff”, the characters that MTV and other companies have resolved to use in order to attract the teenagers. The “ midriff” represents the character hurled to the teenage girls (Merchants of Cool, 2001). This is the highly sexualized and world fatigued pervert character that is highly used in other television films. On the other hand, the “ mook” represents the male teenage typified by his rude and immature behavior. In order to attract the

teenagers, the companies have to appeal to the two characters such as MTV who generated programs such as 'spring break' in order to appeal to the "mook". This is in line with Horkheimer and Adorno's concept of the culture industry where an individual is an illusion manipulated by authority.

Works Cited

Ewen, Stuart. *Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of the Consumer Culture*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976. Print.

Merchant of Cool. "Merchants of Cool." PBS: Public Broadcasting Service. N.p., 2001. Web. 28 Oct. 2012.