

An analysis of the sony digital camera market



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The science of marketing adheres to specific and targeted ways of communication, all of which are designed to sell particular products, services, or ideas. Some of the most important considerations are brand, usage, benefit, and, at the receiving end of all the efforts is the consumer.

The person, or group of people, for whom the product and message are for is defined as the primary consumer or target market. However, there is often a segmentation caused by the product's versatility, or the primary consumer's capability for purchase—bringing into the scene the secondary market. Sony, the global brand synonymous to quality and innovative electronics, has revolutionized the digital camera industry through continuous offerings of products to suit specific markets. The technology currently enjoyed on a consumer level—the use of a camera with a computer through a serial cable—was introduced by Sony in 1996 via its CyberShot Digital Camera.

Since then, the Sony CyberShot has been re-introduced through an impressive lineup of makes and models, with its signature technology applied to mobile phones and computers. As of February 2008, the trailblazing Sony CyberShot Digital Camera has been made more powerful at 13.4 megapixels (Bellis, 2008). To track the development of the Sony CyberShot through the last decade would bring to the fore several vital observations: (1) consistent in carrying the latest technology in digital photography, (2) new features promote better photographs and convenience, and (3) sleek and trendy product designs (highvibe, 2007).

While these product equities address consumers of various socio-economic segments and needs, the clear target of the Sony CyberShot's mass marketing is the youth—specifically young females. From ages 13 to 25, the

inclination for social validation of this consumer group creates the need for tools that would keep up with their collective behavior.

The advent of social media marketing confirms this even more, and the accessibility of a digital camera proves essential. Take 18-year-old Julia, a high school senior, who is active in various school organizations and interacts with many people her age. She has active accounts with social networks like MySpace, Facebook and Friendster, and has a need to update her friends with her latest photos. She usually hangs with different groups of people, and is invited to a lot of parties.

On top of that, she looks forward to important events like prom and graduation, and makes sure she documents each occasion. These are all opportunities that require having a digital camera handy, as it is expected for Julia to want to upload all her photos on the internet, to share with her friends. Julia also maintains a blog, where she relates her daily life, and is a repository for the photos she takes. The video function of the Sony CyberShot is also a prime requirement, so she can create fun videos that she can show on YouTube, for all her friends to see. With the different models of the Sony CyberShot available in the market, Julia would most likely choose the most portable, that may come in her favorite color; and it would be of no surprise if all her friends had exactly the same kind. With her allowance and salary from her after-school job, Julia may be able to afford a Sony CyberShot. She can even do this online, as it has been recorded that electronics have gained a 26% growth in online sales year over year (Knight, 2006).

However, this camera may still seem pricey for a young girl, and this is where the secondary market comes in. Julia's mother Carol may be on the lookout for the perfect graduation gift for her daughter—and a digital camera is one of her best options. Carol is a working mom, and values the time she has outside of her 9-to-5 job; this is the time she spends with her family. An understanding of her daughter's needs, as well as Julia's own prodding, will convince her to purchase a Sony CyberShot easily.

An in-depth consideration of the product's features and usage may lead Carol to decide that it is the best brand to give as a gift, one that her daughter would truly appreciate. Apart from that, Carol would probably note that she could actually use the camera herself—so why not get two? Mothers like Carol have a stronger need to keep records of family events, from vacations to birthdays, so the Sony CyberShot marketing campaigns may also target women of Carol's psychographic, with a leeway to increase price points in exchange for ease of use and convenience. But this niche marketing strategy employed by Sony CyberShot is not without its kinks. The 2005 advertising campaign, clearly addressing women, may have gone beyond acceptable boundaries and has delved into the sexist terrain. By limiting its message to "leave an impression", in reference to the effect of having a Sony CyberShot camera, sounds too simplistic for a technical product. Add to that the high-fashion images applied to the ad and one gets the "impression" that females would not bother themselves with the serious features of the latest camera model to hit the stores.

It appears that women would not be concerned with its price, quite expensive at \$500, and would only care for the fashion statement the

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product lends (Collins, 2005). In the end, it cannot be denied how Sony has been successful at product awareness and marketing of the CyberShot—the continuous demand for newer models is testament to this claim. And while there are women like Julia and Carol, whose needs have been answered by this already minuscule gadget, the Sony CyberShot will enjoy prime position in the digital camera market.