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Selling the Beat: Hip-Hop Culture and Product Branding Among Young Adults

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SELLING THE BEAT: HIP-HOP CULTURE AND PRODUCT BRANDING AMONG
YOUTH

By

Brandi R. Fields

B.A., Southern Illinois University, 2010

A Research Paper
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Master of Science Degree

Department of Mass Communication and Media Arts
in the Graduate School
Southern Illinois University Carbondale
August 2014

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RESEARCH PAPER APPROVAL

SELLING THE BEAT: HIP HOP CULTURE AND PRODUCT BRANDING AMONG
YOUNG ADULTS

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Brandi R. Fields

A Research Paper Submitted in Partial

Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Science

in the field of Professional Media and Media Management

Approved by:

Dr. Kavita Karan, Chair

Graduate School
Southern Illinois University Carbondale
March 28, 2014

AN ABSTRACT OF THE RESEARCH PAPER OF

BRANDI FIELDS, for the Master of Science degree in PROFESSIONAL MEDIA AND MEDIA MANAGEMENT, presented on MARCH 28, 2014, at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

TITLE: SELLING THE BEAT: HIP-HOP CULTURE AND PRODUCT BRANDING AMONG YOUNG ADULTS

MAJOR PROFESSOR: Dr. Kavita Karan

The foundations of the urban community were established through the movements, rhythms and lectures of those previously associated with the population. Hip-hop gives truth to the idea that youth are impressionable and serve as trendsetters of the future. Hip-hop artists function as the success story of a sector where little opportunity is afforded to large imaginations. Marketers, record label executives and brand managers have decoded the anatomy of a musical artist and are dissecting the many ways to promote the hip-hop artist outside of his original identity. This research explores the marketing and advertising strategies used to support the artist as a brand and create revenue within the young adult target audience. A case study on Beats Electronics was performed to display the use of product marketing with an urban culture background. A quantitative study was conducted using a convenience sampling distribution method through Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. 116 responses were collected and analyzed based on participant's knowledge of the hip-hop culture and artists, consumer shopping habits and knowledge of Beats Electronics. Research indicates that product quality and branded artist promotions are key factors in young adult product purchasing decisions.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my family, whom without them I would not have been able to accomplish such achievements thus far. There were numerous trials and tribulations throughout this process and I owe all of my success to those closest to me.

To all current and future Mass Communications scholars, may you continue to thrive in an ever-changing industry and may your dreams carry you as far as the eye can see. Turn your visions into reality.

Lastly, my research efforts are dedicated to my aunt, Tracy M. Stubblefield. Your presence was felt throughout this entire experience and I could not have completed this journey without your spiritual guidance. Your beat will forever live on.

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To my fellow graduate colleagues, thank you all for allowing me to lean on you when times seemed unbearable. We have truly become a close group of individuals in just a short amount of time. I wish you all nothing but success and happy endings in whatever the future holds for you.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Over the past three decades, hip-hop has continuously transformed into a thriving industry of cultural adaptations and fashion statements. Musical artists belonging to this specific genre are largely responsible for the growth of products and persuasion of consumers within this market (Nance-Nash, 2010). As an African American woman aspiring to enter the world of media promotions and brand management, I find it necessary to examine the inner workings of the urban community through the lenses of marketing strategists.

The birthplace of hip-hop can be traced back to New York's South Bronx district. In 1973, Kool DJ Herc, a Jamaica native, introduced the unique blend of sounds and movements we recognize today as hip-hop during a dance party. His unique turntable skills and ability to create "breaks" between duplicate record sounds created a dance craze and buzz within the community. This movement quickly resulted in the creation of "breakdancing", one of the four elements of hip-hop (Blanchard, 1999). Blanchard discusses the foundation of rap and the concentration of rhyming ability and story telling. Typically, the skill level of Disk Jockeys was determined by their ability to mix record tracks while delivering messages to the audience simultaneously. The role of the emcee, defined as one who speaks over a beat (www.urbandictionary.com), was to creatively develop ways to entertain audience members through vocal interaction with the DJ and transitional periods between songs. Through the use of artistic rhetoric, the emcee later progressed into the rapper (Blanchard, 1999). The historical evidence of rap and the practices of what can be detected in the present day yield one of many

common connections: The presence and lyrical content of the emcee has the ability to directly relate, capture, and influence the behaviors and mannerisms of urban encompassed adolescents.

This study is based on the key marketing strategies and techniques used to influence the audience of hip-hop culture. It focuses on major brands that have made remarkable impressions on hip hop culture and continue to expand their identity by relating to the inner-city population. It further examines the products by Beats Electronics and its use of marketing strategies. Beats products that include headphones and speakers are fashion statements and “cool” commodities with intentions to tap into the interests of today’s youth through their favorite artists. With the use of a literature review and quantitative research, I intend to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What are popular genres of music and music artists that young adults follow?

RQ2: How do young adults perceive hip-hop culture today?

RQ3: What factors influence the kind of new and old electronic devices that young adults use when listening to music?

RQ4: How influential are advertisements and celebrity endorsements in the purchase of electronic goods/music?

RQ5: What is the relationship between Beats Electronics and the hip-hop culture from the consumer’s perspective?

The significance of this research can be traced back to as early as the 1970s when hip hop and rap first showed major potential in the marketing industry,

transitioning from sidewalk beats and rhymes to a money making branded industry. As the culture spread, marketers realized that artists could provide more behind the scenes instead of in front of a microphone (Price, 2006). Since then, hip-hop has continued to show growth and potential and brand managers and marketers are constantly forced to develop new techniques to reach the audience attached to this market sector. Music and all things associated with a specific musical genre shift frequently, and because of this, executives must be able to adapt and create innovative strategies that present competitive and loyal brand management. The role of the consumers throughout this process is a key component. Brands commonly persuade the consumer in more ways than one and something as simple, yet complex as the design can make or break the success of an item. Branding has the potential to change personality, style, and the mindset of consumers, which we have seen time and time again (Wilson, 2011).

Fairly new to the electronic device industry, Beats Electronics has positioned itself as one of the leading premium audio companies in today's market (Sanburn, 2013). The company effectively utilizes its pre-established urban association and superior acoustic technological advances to create products servicing cultures globally. This case study on Beats headphones is just one example of how a product can mean so much more than its title.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The idea of a brand has shifted over the past 15 years. According to Frith (2013), a brand is a relationship between company and customer that secures future earnings by securing preference and loyalty. Brands are not only the identifying factor of a product; they are also strategic components that hold value and experiences for the consumer. Recognizing, building and expressing the precise idea of a brand are the responsibilities of the branding agencies (Karan, 2013). The Brand Management Model is a holistic approach to infusing design with the marketing and branding process. The model consists of four key factors: concept generation, design strategy, procurement, and implementation (Guzman, Moll & Montana, 2007). 28 Spanish companies known for their designing structure were interviewed and surveyed in order to produce a model incorporating branding and design management. All of the companies are supported by the Spanish Federation of Promotion Design and served as valuable assets to the model creation process. Qualitative research through Guzman's (2007) research suggests that while all firms include design in the communications strategy, the priority level of design differed. The newer companies infused design as a strategic tool right from the beginning in the creation process. The older companies relied on design as an added value to their already established business strategies. Consistency in branding is essential to the understanding of the company through the consumer's perspective (Guzman et al. 2007).

Visual branding is an important aspect to maintaining the stability of any brand. Visual branding consists of a brands shape, color, materials, finish, typography,

packaging and composition. Each of these components communicates the values of a company and consumers can often tell the personalities of their favorite brands based on these identifying factors. A business logo is the core of visual branding. Logos are known for adapting throughout a company's history. A logo may not change in color often, but has shown to gain simplicity over time. As designing within the market becomes more modern, logos must also stay current to retain the consumer's attention (Frith, 2013).

Frith (2014) identifies 5 types of brand ID's: Wordmarks, letterforms, emblems, pictorial marks, abstract marks. A wordmark brand is one that can stand unaided and convey messages to the consumer strictly through the company logo or product name. The colors are bold and give the company meaning. Google has positioned their company using wordmark branding. Letterform branding is defined as a unique design using one or more letterforms that act as a mnemonic device for a company name (Frith, 2014). Letterforms are meant to capture the consumer's attention using only a single letter that can be quickly associated with the company. UPS uses letterform branding and has maintained this concept for many years. Emblems are used when a company chooses to be connected with a pictorial figure. The mind has the ability to capture images for an extended length of time, especially if they are reoccurring visuals. BMW not only uses their signature three letters, but also contain blue and white propellers as part of their trademark. Pictorial marks have similar intentions as emblem branding, but contain a certain amount of style and simplicity that makes them instantly recognizable. Apple is a perfect example of a logo that has established it's brand well enough that they are able to gain popularity even after reducing the structure of their

logo to its simplest form, which we see today. Lastly, abstract marks can be thought of as symbols in a sense that they create the motive and strategy of a company. We notice the symbol of a company and after viewing numerous ads for the business we gain the ability to relate the symbol to the company's message. Both Nike and Target stand firmly on the foundation that their symbols have played a major part for their reputations (Frith, 2014).

As brands evolve over time, it is essential that managers maintain stability and heritage of that brand. It is also important that brand extensions carry the legacy of the parent brand and that there is little to no confusion for the consumer. Research shows that Brand Extension Authenticity (BEA) and its relation to the parent brand influence the success of the brand extension in the marketplace. There are four dimensions identified in BEA: maintaining brand standards and style, honoring brand heritage, preserving brand essence, and avoiding brand exploitation. Brand managers are continuously making efforts to better understand the consumer reaction toward BEA. Research by Carvella, Nguyen and Spigglet (2012) on BEA focuses on identifying the elements that define successful brand extensions. Logistic regression analysis was used to examine the decisions of 240 randomly selected men and women who are presented with two smart phones, both belonging to leading brands. One brand is labeled utilitarian ("made for work") and the other labeled hedonic ("made for fun"). BEA research shows that participants are more likely to choose hedonic brands over utilitarian based on style and brand history (Carvella et al. 2012).

Consumer-brand engagement (CBE) is a fairly new concept on the relationship-marketing scene. The CBE efforts are aimed at defining a link between the brand and

the consumer. The intentions of brands are often to establish interaction, shared values, and rewarding experiences for the consumer. Research has been directed toward developments of the CBE model and how it is conducted and achieved by leading industry executives. Six marketing managers and seven communication professionals were interviewed using theoretical sampling methods to understand executive perspective of consumer-brand engagement. Through three coding phases of the Grounding Theory Analysis, results indicate that both marketing managers and communication professionals view CBE as a multi-dimensional concept consisting of emotions, sensorial pleasure, interaction, and brand experience. Embracing the complexity of consumer-brand engagement posed somewhat of a challenge to participants (Briaghi et al. 2012).

Employer branding (EB) is used as a competitive advantage for many employers. It is said that the success of any organization depends heavily on the value of the talent it possesses. Organizations are now investing in ways to improve their perception amongst employees so that they can attract the best in the industry. Research focuses on better understanding what employees are valuing within a company in terms of the branding process and association. Employees are said to respond higher in a working environment where they feel their needs are being met. Both current and prospective employees of organizations were sampled to develop such results. Key factors studied were interest value, social value, economic value, developmental value, and application value. Of all the surveyed categories, economic and social value as it pertains to employee branding resulted to be the most favored employee interest (Biswas and Suar, 2013).

There are levels to effectively connect a brand to the consumer, which have been displayed through previous research. Guzman (2007) discussed the essentials to design creation and execution through the use of the Brand Management Model and its four key factors to consider: concept generation, design strategy, procurement, and implementation. Frith (2013) identifies the significance of visual branding as an aid to marketing the corporate message of businesses. Visual branding includes: shape, color, materials, finish, typography, packaging and composition. Brand Identifications are also contributing factors to the visual acceptance of companies. Wordmarks, letterforms, emblems, pictorial marks and abstract marks are all concepts used to deliver company positioning. Brand Extension Authenticity, outlined by Carvella (2012), describes the importance of brand heritage and the four dimensions of BEA: maintaining brand standards and style, honoring brand heritage, preserving brand essence and avoiding brand exploitation (Carvella et al. 2012). The Consumer-Brand Engagement (CBE) model distinguishes the various concepts of the model in relation to the Grounding Theory Analysis conducted by Briaghi (2012): emotions, sensorial pleasure, interaction and brand experience. Lastly, research through Biswas and Suar (2013) indicate that the employee is a direct reflection of the company and acknowledges that the success of any organization depends heavily on the talent it possesses. Employees are said to respond higher to social and economic values of an organization (Biswas and Suar, 2013).

Hip Hop was once an outlet and a voice for the troubled youth of the Bronx. The Hip Hop Culture consisted of U.S. born blacks, first and second generation Latinos, and those of Caribbean origins. Urban, rural, and suburban communities of all ages,

religions and classes across the globe were represented. During the mid 1970s, Hip-hop entered into a transition period when DJ Afrika Bambaataa (Kevin Donovan) exposed this unique culture to the nation by providing a space where people could perform their talents freely. Once revealed to the world, hip-hop came to be seen as a lucrative investment and no longer an authentic craft of the Bronx streets. Artists were no longer artists. They were now brands and their connection with the youth would be forever altered (Price, 2006).

Hip-Hop was not always about making money and selling the most merchandise. Artists at one point in time performed to speak for those who could not speak for themselves. These days the number one goal for many rap and hip-hop artists is to be the best in the business. The biggest names in hip-hop today are Jay-Z, P. Diddy, Lil' Wayne, Akon, and Dr. Dre, all who are considered to be "Brand Masters". Artists are now taking on multiple money endeavors, dominating not only record sales but also digital downloads, touring, films, TV shows, endorsements, books, and clothing. Attaching their name to these outlets has proven to be very lucrative. Artists are now a brand amongst consumers and material statements and appearances have overshadowed winning over the crowd for lyrical skills (Nance-Nash, 2010).

The hip-hop artist, before fame and fortune, originates from a community of beats rhymes, unique fashions, and struggle. These components are considered to be the roots and foundation that give meaning to the individual as they transition into the artist. This factor alone provides a sense of obligation to the artist, the obligation to accurately identify with a demographic and serve as a representative for the unheard voices. They carry the idea of being viewed as a political and social advocate for their generation and

generations to come. This notion is commonly referred to by those associated with hip-hop culture as 'repping'. The way an artist 'reps' his city determines their identity among those whom they are speaking for. This is considered the most crucial and valuable fan base. The acceptance of fellow community members ultimately determines an artists' acceptance among those less familiar with their background. The lyrics found in the content of songs produced by urban artists are declarations from the artists to the public. These declarations would be meaningless without the support and backing of the community to assure that the artists yields authenticity (Moss, 2013).

'Swag' is also a term used in the urban community and defined as 'the things that define a person's character; how someone goes about things; the way someone sounds when they talk; what they say when they say it; style of their movement; the lasting impression you have of that person. In summary, swag is the identity of the artist within the community streets, which if accepted, will provide credibility and acceptance in the marketplace. 'Swag can be self-proclaimed or "borrowed" from another artist. This takes place when artists collaborate with other artists on music productions. When an established artist joins forces with an up-and-coming performer, the benefits flow in both directions in terms of consumer acceptance. The new artist appears as if he is good enough to work with the best, while the more established artist shows that he is willing to help his fellow community members gain success. As their fan base expands, every item in the market that is linked to their name increases in value as well (Moss, 2013).

Branding of companies, artists and hip-hop when combined has proven to be a successful marketing strategy simply because they combine cultural and societal norms and connect communities across the globe. Research conducted by Senior Lecturer

Jonathan A.J. Wilson (2011) of the University of Greenwich displays how hip-hop branding seamlessly interjects itself into global societies creating ways for individuals to associate their identities to trends around the world. An Expert Delphi Study, defined as a method by which a consensus of understanding can be reached in a wider context, was performed as a way to discover an in-depth understanding of how consumers model their appearance against that of hip-hop and products on the market. “Hip-hoppers”, people who associate with the hip-hop culture, are influenced by brand references found in the content of musical artists’ lyrics and videos. When an artist is emitting positive energy while using or promoting specific brands and products, the hip-hopper then adopts the brand as their own with the expectation that the purchase will leave them with a gratifying and rewarding sensation. Findings also show that the potential of hip-hop as a marketing strategy not only creates a boost among young consumers, but also drives brand executives to become more creative in their approach to brand development. The innovative, diverse, and global track record that hip-hop has delivered over the years has sparked increased desire amongst marketers to continue building and improving upon a foundation that was created by artists of the streets (Wilson, 2011).

Joseph (2004) points out that most of the time, rappers are not being compensated for wearing or verbally supporting a specific brand. The argument that many advertisers face is whether or not they are deceiving the young consumer. When young adults view their favorite hip-hop artist wearing a specific clothing line, they assume that it is a brand of value and acceptance by the artist. As long as a celebrity shows product support, that is all the justification a consumer requires. This however, is

assuming that rappers are truly wearing their desired attire. But what if an artist was forced to dress in specific apparel? Rappers often rhyme about things they enjoy and items they prefer. It is only after a company has received this “free” publicity that an artist may be offered an endorsement deal, in which case an artist agrees to wear specific company attire in return for a paycheck. An establishment may also seek out an artist based on his ‘street credibility’. If sales numbers increase among the public, image is ideal to hip-hop, and life experiences are dramatic, artists are prime targets for marketers everywhere (Joseph, 2004).

The most lucrative tool for record labels and advertisers to utilize when collaborating is the music video. Companies are not interested in the traditional advertisements. It is likely that the young target audience does not spend much time, if any at all, dissecting the importance of an ad and therefore has become a waste of funds from a marketing perspective. Product placement within a music video is the easiest way to get companies noticed by young consumers. Music videos receive non-stop airplay on networks such as BET and MTV, which are highly frequented by young adults. Music videos, however, were not always the advertisement of choice. In the beginning, many companies were resistant to using hip-hop artists and their videos as an avenue for sales mostly due to institutional racism. Popular companies were not keen to the idea of acknowledging the success of black people, but eventually accepted once realizing the growth and potential of music video product placement. There is a see and want concept to this method. Once a person sees something, they immediately want it. Companies and record labels have mastered the art of shooting a TV ad in a video while using the number one brand of all, the artist (Joseph, 2004).

The content within the music video is also a key component to the product placement strategy. There are specific “go-to” items that marketers push. These items are: phones, Cars/SUV’s, video game devices, alcoholic beverages among others. Russell Simmons and Run-DMC were the first to increase the awareness of a product through a music video. “My Addidas” brought a failing shoe company back to life after Run-DMC publicly validated the sport clothing and shoe line. Addidas were the first name brand that hip-hop made popular.

Russell Simmons, the 2013 Adweek Brand Visionary and hip-hop icon, began using simple branding tactics such as fliers for promotion within the college atmosphere. That was in Queens during the ‘70s. At 55, Simmons is continuing to connect with the urban community and his success stems from understanding how to brand a product with “coolness”. Hip-hop is to be viewed as an art form for everyone, not just the black community. The execution of urban marketing strategies should reflect its universal image. Simmons was able to see the potential of hip-hop as a global business and since then, has increased the growth of his empire tremendously. With a 40 percent stake in Def Jam Recordings, a clothing line, financial initiatives with Visa, and a news site focusing on the urban business market, Russell Simmons has marked the path for inner-city marketing strategist worldwide (Beltrone, 2013). The key is to stay current in every sector of the market where there is a potential for hip-hop to thrive. The young audience is one that is vibrant and more importantly, the urban audience is one that has transitioned into a time where race is not a factor. Branding agencies must be able to tap into every nationality that hip-hop has inspired in order to increase revenue returns.

Sprite was at one point in time just another unidentifiable lemon-lime clear soda. Throughout time, they have been able to create a new name for themselves while still managing to keep the same taste within. Sergio Zyman, Coca-Cola consultant, was able to transform Sprite to become a more distinguished brand amongst the younger generation. In 1992 Sprite was given more attitude and style, a mix that would prove to be successful with the urban teen and African American audience. They developed the slogan “Image is nothing. Thirst is everything. Obey your thirst” and from that point on, Sprite repositioned their image and was a leading brand for rappers such as Curtis Blow and Heavy D who were targets for the urban markets. Sprite was able to prove that image prevailed over content in this industry (“A Campaign to Remember”, 2000).

Rapper Busta Rhymes released his hit single “Pass the Courvoisier” in 2001 without signing any deal or endorsement contracts with Allied Domecq, the manufacturer of Courvoisier. The song’s main chorus line contains the word “Courvoisier” and was played 97,000 times on radio stations across the country. There was also a video to accompany the song which aired on hit networks BET and MTV a total of 600 times. In the video, both Busta Rhymes and rapper P. Diddy can be found drinking the cognac, dancing with provocative women, and socializing at large scale parties. Stephanie DeBartolomeo, the brand manager for Courvoisier expressed her gratitude for the free advertising when U.S. sales for the beverage climbed to double digits immediately after the song’s release. Rhymes mentioned that although Courvoisier is not his favorite alcoholic beverage, it provided a catchy hook that his fans would enjoy (Roberts, 2002).

In a case study done on the use of celebrities of branding fragrances by Datamonitor (2007) shows that public opinion toward celebrities could directly impact the sales of products they endorse. Celebrity endorsed fragrances is a very common practice within the fragrance market. However, this trend had taken a decline over the years due to the consumer assumptions. A celebrity's demeanor on and off the camera easily determines their credibility among the public. Marketers are continuing to discover that once a fragrance is branded with a famous figure, from that point on sales are dependent upon public perception (Datamonitor, 2007).

Sean "P. Diddy" Combs has proven himself as one of the more successful rappers turned businessmen in the industry. His resume consists of four successful albums, record producer, actor, and CEO and founder of Bad Boy Worldwide Entertainment Group. He also has shown strength in the clothing merchandise market through his clothing line "Sean John", so tackling the fragrance market only seemed fitting. In 2004, Combs signed a deal with Estee Lauder to begin releasing his "Unforgiveable" fragrance line. In 2006, "Unforgiveable" for men was released and shortly after in 2007 "Unforgiveable" for women debuted. While the men's line delivered successful numbers, the women's line, meant to be an innovative initiative, took some controversial feedback from consumers. To promote the fragrance, Combs released promotional advertisements of himself and a female model striking sexual poses with the intentions to deliver the message that the women's fragrance is a compliment to the men's line. The sexual ads were not easily acceptable with some consumers and were perceived as women once again being viewed as submissive and weak against the men. It did not take long for damage control to intervene on P.Diddy's behalf. During the

product launch party for “Unforgiveable” for women, his public relations camp marketed the event as “the hottest event of the year” and booked a list of celebrity guest appearances. Due to the heightened attention that the launch party received, Combs quickly won back consumers and sales for the women’s line increased shortly after. Estee Lauder, along with other high-end companies that agreed to merge business plans with celebrities, learned that celebrities are not shielded from the negative impacts of public perception (Datamonitor, 2007).

Celebrity perception is not the only factor impacting fragrance sales. At present the market is becoming viewed as too saturated and no longer elitist. Studies are showing that the level of fame and popularity no longer matters and companies are making it fairly easy for any celebrity to cut business deals. Between 2001 and 2006, the US fragrance market was hard hit and large companies were discovering that consumers were no longer buying the celebrity fragrance pitch because of the overwhelming amount of celebrities introducing new lines. Consumers are viewing celebrity fragrance lines as commercial rather than sophisticated top of the line aromas (Datamonitor, 2007).

Luxury brands associated with big name celebrities is the equivalent to a good time within the hip-hop sector. Rappers look to famous brand names for lyrical inspiration because it is what they can identify with, which in turn presents a connection between an artist and a fan. The lavish life is not promised to everyone. Urban consumers are distinguished as products of poor environments. It is the artist who provides the fantasy and represents the fame, which can be accomplished even if you come from the slums. Company’s are acknowledging the pedestal that the youth and

young adults are putting rap artists on, and are more than willing to provide the flashy chains, clothes and cars needed to set the tone for their product. Karl Lagerfeld was one of the first marketers to fully understand the potential of the hip-hop industry. As a designer for Chanel, he made a bold move to present his models wearing thick gold chains embedded with the Chanel logo and sneakers down the 1991 runway show. Soon after, numerous luxury designers were following suit showcasing their models wearing similar attire associated with the urban culture. Louis Vuitton, Gucci, Prada, and others were transitioning from the sleek and modern style to a raw and edgy approach. Executives realized that this strategy informed the Bronx and other deeply rooted urban communities that pricey materials are not only exclusively for the white population (Roberts, 2002).

Artists are no longer solely looking to produce good music. They are making every effort to support any and everything that will provide them the foundation needed to become rising entrepreneurs of the industry. Ludacris began his career as rapper of the south speaking to the streets of Atlanta. Today, his net worth is an estimated \$75 million acquired from his breakthrough acting career, record label, and restaurant. He also owns a fragrance line and headphones entitled "Soul" by Ludacris. Queen Latifah was once known for being the hardcore rapper to represent women everywhere. Now, with her involvement in television and film, being the spokesperson for Pizza Hut and Cover Girl, and owning her own production company, her net worth is approximately \$60 million. Many have disassociated the former female rapper with music and see her now as a fresh positive face on the big screen. Nicki Minaj made a quick transition from rap newcomer to industry leader, taking part in business ventures such as Mac

Cosmetics, owning her own clothing line, and signing endorsement deals with Beats by Dr. Dre. She holds an estimated net worth of \$45 million. Some artists who have even left the music scene for many years still seem to use their persona among consumers to boost their forgotten status. Lil Jon, a rapper not known for his lyrical skill, but his wild behaviors, collaborated with Donald Trump to become one of celebrity apprentices finest contestants. Once he regained relevancy, he was able to produce energy and wine beverages, and iPhone applications (Gray, 2014). He is proof that even after declining album sales and continued hiatus from the musical world, consumers will often remember an artist for who they once were, and relate all of their future endeavors to that character.

The transitions of hip-hop culture and artists were discussed throughout the previous references. The background of hip-hop is comprised of historical beats, rhymes, fashion and movements intended to uplift the inner-city youth and bring awareness to less fortunate communities (Moss, 2013). It was the moment that hip-hop was introduced to the world that it's value and potential was exposed. Artists and record label executives discovered new ways to explore and dissect the urban market through endorsements (Nance-Nash, 2010), product placements through music videos (Joseph, 2004) and structuring the artist's identity to align with the target audience (Moss, 2013). Artists provide the idea that a lifestyle filled with money and lavish merchandise is obtainable and feed on a generation that provides capital to their industry established brand.

CHAPTER 3

BEATS ELECTRONICS

The headphone experience for consumers is continuously shifting, as new innovative technologies are adapted over time. Quality headphones date back as far as the 1930s, with the company Beyerdynamic claiming to have given birth to the first dynamic headphones in the 1950s (Bodhani, 2011). The first high-fidelity headphones still commonly used today are the Dynamic Telephone 48s. Musical enjoyment was just one characteristic the headphone possessed. Aviation relied heavily on the development of noise elimination features and electronic headphones became replacements for telephone tubes. Listening devices have increased globally in popularity, which resulted in an annual market boost of \$415m. In a market analysis report produced by NPD, sales for premium headphones between 2009 and 2010 increased by 3.5 percent. As music accessories progress, consumers are willing to spend more in return for expected quality. Technology, mechanics, noise-cancelling features, and Bluetooth capability were all factors contributing to the success of the headphone (Bodhani, 2011).

Rapper Dr. Dre and music producer Jimmy Lovine founded Beats Electronics (Beats by Dre) in 2006. Jimmy Lovine was a former record producer and the current chairman and CEO of Interscope Geffen A&M records and is known to many as the “audio geek” (Bruno, 2010). Beats Electronics is a high-performance and sound transmission company that manufactures audio devices providing an imitation of studio quality sounds. The flagship retail store is located in the New York City Soho district where each new product is initially released. This location is ideal for the company as it

is easily accessible to their young target audience, who frequent the store during after school hours. It is also fitting to reside in New York, the birthplace of hip-hop. Beats Electronics is the creator of the popular Beats by Dre headphones. They are widely respected and seen as fashion statements among all generations. According to Sanburn (2013), consumers have begun to wear the headphones as more of an accessory rather than a listening device. Beats has expanded their production line with new releases such as the Beats Pill with Bluetooth capabilities and Beats Audio, which can be found in the newer Chrysler model stereo systems, smartphones, and HP laptops. The company has rapidly evolved into a way of life for the musically and not so musically inclined. The design of the headphone is very distinguished. They are oversized, different from the more traditional ear bud, and include only a single cord stemming from one side of the headphone. The design's intentions suggest a tangle-free, surround sound experience. The price of Beats Electronics is on the higher end, ranging from \$250 - \$350. The price contributes greatly to the consumer feeling as though they have made a quality purchase. To their peers, consumers are also seen as making a high-end trendy fashion statement worthy of following. Many electronics companies such as Sony and Bose have often tried to mimic the style and design of the oversized Beats by Dre headphones. Beats continue to provide consumers with a premium sound experience through headphones, ear buds, speakers, phones, laptops, and car audio systems. Beats also explored entering the digital music space in 2013 (www.beatsbydre.com).

Beats products are distributed around the world in participating stores and online. If potential customers do not have access to one of the following purchase outlets, the

company has customer service representatives available by phone or email. The Beats store is located on 67 Greene Street New York, NY 10012. The most common places to find Beats products are at Best Buy, Apple Store, GameStop, Target, and Wal-Mart.

Beats Electronics is very active in maintaining their corporate social responsibility efforts throughout communities everywhere. In 2012, they launched their “Show Your Color” campaign during the Olympics allowing athletes to show expression through custom-made Beats headphones. This quickly turned into an ambush marketing initiative when Beats distributed custom headphones to numerous Olympic teams without paying a sponsorship fee. As the campaign grew, consumers began to take part in the movement as well. Beats supports individuality and emphasize the importance of each individual whether they are a kid in the suburbs or an athlete performing on a world level. The success of this campaign is due to the fact that the company was able to use ESP’s (emotional selling propositions) and USP’s (unique selling propositions) to connect with their target demographic, young adults within the urban community (www.beatsbydre.com).

Beats by Dre is a major advocate for the fight against AIDS. Campaign RED was developed by the company to bring awareness to AIDS prevention and education in an effort to create an AIDS free generation by the year 2015. The company also encourages the importance of technological education development. On May 14, 2013, Dr. Dre and Jimmy Lovine donated \$70 million to the University of Southern California for technology educational programs. The money was used to build the Jimmy Lovine and Andre Young Academy for Arts, Technology and the Business of Innovation. To show environmental support, Beats Electronics joined forces with Ekocycle, a

movement of leading brands to manufacture smart, innovative, and environmentally efficient products through the use of recycled content. The Ekocycle initiative was able to unite leading musical artists and companies such as Will.i.am (William Adams) and Coca-Cola to boost recycling habits and sustainability among young consumers using products that they were able to relate to, which were made of recycled materials (www.beatsbydre.com).

Beats products are mainly promoted through product placement, celebrity endorsements, and co-branding. The promotional efforts of the company spill over into popular culture due to the eye-catching colors, quality and special features within each product. Beats also take advantage of marketing tools such as social media, television advertisements, magazines, and in-store promotions. While no publicity is bad publicity, they produce their best consumer feedback from outlets such as Facebook and Twitter according to a sales marketing specialist of the company. Beats social media pages are the most common place for consumers to receive information on new product releases, promotions and even customer reviews on products they may already own or have intentions on purchasing.

The visual brand of Beats can be broken down into two categories: Internal brand design and external brand design. The internal visual brand contains logos, fonts, colors, websites and social media presence. The Beats by Dre logo was developed in 2006 and is a unique resemblance of a headphone. It is a lower case letter “b” within a circle and serves as the company’s supersign. Bodytonic Music, a music/blog website and music label, have been using a similar logo since 2002. Bebo, a social networking site, also uses a comparable logo and has been doing so since 2005. Currently, the



Figure 1. Beats Products

Bebo website is down for new management. The font of the Beats logo is unknown, but is closely related to the font style "Comfortaa". Beats uses Avant Grade Gothic as its primary text font on all written communications as well as Arial as a secondary font. Red, black, and white are their three primary colors along with several secondary colors. The secondary colors are used primarily on advertisements in both print and video. There is also some use of secondary colors located on the Beats website. The website is a true representation of the brand, promoting the use of social networking with hash tags such as #WIRELESS, #URBEATS, #BEATSARMY. The external visual branding is comprised of the store presence, advertising, brand integration, and the consumer shopping experience. The store has a clean, classy environment displaying products in protective glass cases. The displays present the products as if they are priceless fine art pieces.

Beats Electronics is known for collaborating with musical artists such as Lady Gaga, Nicki Minaj, Eminem, and Robin Thicke. Not all of these artists have a hip

hop/rap background, but they all have been exposed to the genre. Dr. Dre set the platform for the Beats image through his career reputation and association with music industry greats. He has successfully diversified his products to not only meet the needs of hip-hop enthusiasts, but also to fans with musical interests that are significantly opposite of the urban community preference. He has effectively made it cool for the average person to spend over \$300 on listening devices. Expensive headphones have become the hottest trend in consumer electronic purchasing.

According to the NPD group, a leading global market research group (www.npd.com), the sales for headphones in the U.S. that cost over \$100 increased by 73 percent year-over-year in 2012. 43 percent of all headphone sales are comprised of premium devices only. It is also likely that consumers who purchase premium headphones are likely to own an average of 2.3 pairs due to the satisfaction of the product. In 2012, Beats by Dre was able to grasp 63 percent of the high-end headphone market (\$100 and up). This profit earned Dr. Dre \$110 million (Sanburn, 2013).

The Beats by Dre initiative to push the sale of expensive headphones was not always seen as a glorious idea according to Sanburn (2013). Many executives viewed this idea as a major risk among consumer purchasing being that the expected target audience was not likely to spend \$300 for headphones. Ben Arnold, an industry analyst for the NPD group, believes that much of the success of the premium headphone market is due mainly to the rise of tablets and smartphones. Most people are no longer using the radio as their only means to listen to music. Technology today requires the use of headphones, especially in public settings. Beats founders were not only able to

tap into the needs of consumers to receive music through quality ear pieces, but were also able to meet the needs of music producers and artists who work hard for their music to be consumed in the correct manner, with studio quality (Sanburn, 2013).

It is evident that Beats Electronics did not gain their success through sound quality alone, but also through promoting the headphones as a fashion accessory fit for any attire. Beats headphones symbolizes the importance of music and fashion within the consumer's life and wearing a pair of these pricey headphones has become equivalent to wearing your favorite pair of sneakers or sporting a t-shirt with your favored artist on the front. While the initial company strategy was to apply all of the elements needed to produce a hit record and simply apply it to the marketing of headphones (Bruno, 2010), Beats Electronics has made it clear that they do not want to be considered as merely a headphone company. They are continuously moving and innovating with the nature and culture of the industry, producing what the consumer wants, while at the same time expanding their brand. When asked about the future endeavors of the Beats enterprise, CEO Luke Wood stated "In the music business, you put out a record when it's done, and that's kind of how we look at our product (Sanburn, 2013). In this study we will examine whether the strategies used by Beats electronic has an impact on the youth in their interest in music, hip hop culture and buying behavior.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODOLOGY

We found the technological and cultural factors that have impacted the music industry and the marketing strategies used by Beats electronics to reach these audiences with their products particularly the headphones. We study how the key marketing strategies and techniques used to influence the audience of hip-hop culture and to expand their identity by relating to the inner-city population. It further examines the products by Beats Electronics and its use of marketing strategies. Beats products that include headphones and speakers are fashion statements and “cool” commodities with intentions to tap into the interests of today’s youth through their favorite artists

RQ1: What are popular genres of music and music artists that young adults follow?

RQ2: How do young adults perceive hip-hop culture today?

RQ3: What factors influence the kind of new and old electronic devices that young adults use when listening to music?

RQ4: How influential are advertisements and celebrity endorsements in the purchase of electronic goods/music?

RQ5: What is the relationship between Beats Electronics and the hip-hop culture from the consumer’s perspective?

Methodology- A survey method was used to collect the data from the target audience. In an attempt to better understand the perceptions of young consumers to products associated with the hip-hop culture and particularly the Beats products, an

online survey using the Google Docs program was conducted, which served as the primary quantitative research method.

To successfully execute this survey, I was required to complete a Human Subjects Research form through Southern Illinois University Carbondale. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services requires that all projects involving human subjects be reviewed to ensure that the participants' rights, privacy, welfare, and civil liberties are protected (ospa.siu.edu). Obtaining the following information from an individual requires screening:

- a. Data by intervention or interaction with the individual
- b. Identifiable private information

Data collection tool – A questionnaire comprising of 25 questions was constructed to answer the five previously mentioned research areas targeted around the perception on music and how the young adults respond to urban advertising. The survey link was distributed using a snowball sampling method through three social networking sites: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram. Participants were instructed to complete the survey by following the provided link. Upon activating the link, subjects are given a disclosure notice to review stating that the survey is voluntary, will take approximately 10 minutes to complete, all information is confidential, and who to contact with questions and concerns regarding the study. Questions pertaining to demographics were placed at the end of the survey to ensure that all essential answers were submitted first in the event that participants exit the survey early.

Sample:

The target audience and primary demographic group for Beats Electronics ranges between the ages of 16-25, both males and females, all races, with an education no higher than a high school diploma. This survey was intended to target the same demographic group, with the age ranging between 18-26. A younger audience is the result of the attention-getting advertisements, celebrity and hip-hop artist's endorsements and trendy styles of the company. The secondary demographic group comprised of men and women between the ages of 26-35, all races, with an education no higher than a bachelor's degree. This group is believed to be the buyers for the primary demographic group and are not as easily influenced by flashy and bold marketing tactics. The survey remained active from February 18, 2014 – March 19, 2014. During that time period, 116 responses were collected and analyzed.

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS OF SURVEY

Socio Economic Profile of Respondents:

The respondents comprised of 116 members of which 56 percent were of African American/Black (non-Hispanic) descent. 68 percent were females and 51 percent were single. Below, figure 1 shows that the study was successful in reaching the target audience of young adults between the ages of 18-26. 31 percent of the participants were between the ages of 18-25, while 28 percent were between the ages of 26-35. .

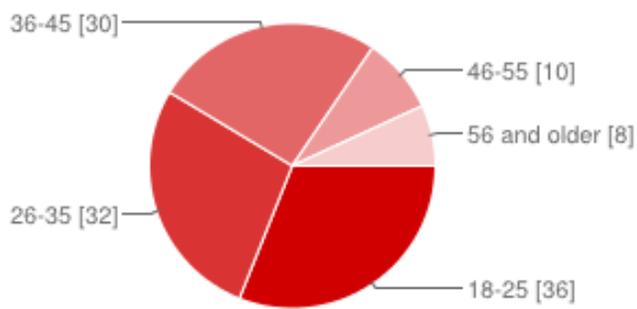


Figure 2. Age Group of Respondents

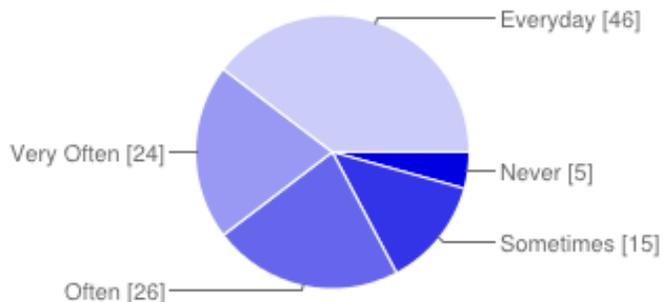


Figure 3. Frequency of Listening to Music

40 percent of respondents reported listening to music everyday, while the others listened often or sometimes. Only a marginal less than 5 % did not listen to music at all. We can assume that the majority of the surveyed audience is in some way or another confronted with musical impressions throughout their daily routines.

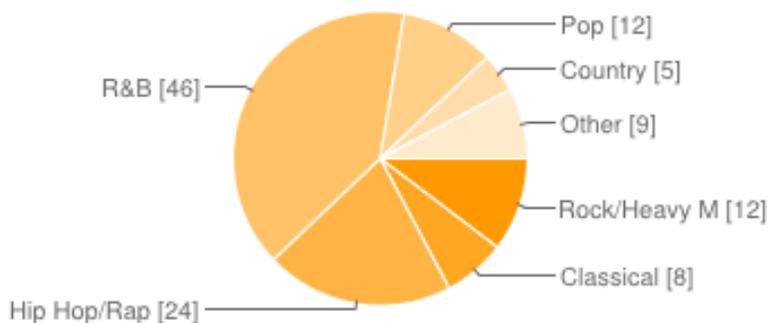


Figure 4. Preferred Genre of Music

Previous research shows that most consumers who associate themselves with hip-hop culture display interests in musical genres associated with that lifestyle, r&b, hip-hop and rap. In figure 2 we notice that 40 percent of respondents prefer listening to r&b, while 21 percent are in favor of hip-hop/rap music.

To better understand the awareness of consumers in terms of celebrity endorsements, subjects were asked to identify specific artists associated with the Beats Electronics brand. The selected musical artists were: Nicki Minaj, Dr. Dre, Robin Thicke, Justin Bieber, and Lady Gaga. 33 percent of respondents were most familiar with rapper Dr. Dre, followed by 31 percent being extremely familiar with Eminem and Robin Thicke.

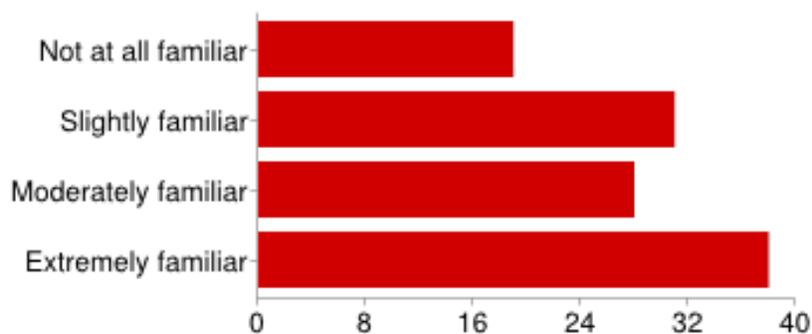


Figure 5. Familiarity of Dr. Dre

Both Eminem and Dr. Dre have together been the industry giants for more than 15 years, with Eminem taking lead in the representation of Beats by Dre headphones. In March 2013, Robin Thicke released his single “Blurred Lines”, which was accompanied by a music video proudly endorsing the Beats brand. Survey results support the idea that product/celebrity association translates well with consumers. Immediately following this question, subjects were asked to identify musical artists who were not mentioned. Common artists named were Beyoncé, Jay-Z, Kendrick Lamar, and R. Kelly. All of these artists belong to the hip-hop and r&b genres.

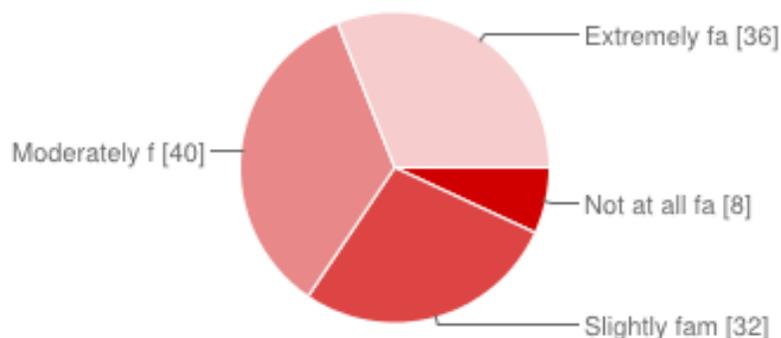


Figure 6. Extent of Familiarity With Hip-Hop Culture and Music

Due to the fact that most respondents prefer music related to hip-hop and r&b, as seen in the results in figure 5. 31 percent of respondents acknowledged that they were extremely familiar and 34 percent were moderately familiar with hip-hop culture and music. A low seven percent were overall unfamiliar with the culture.

Subjects were then asked about all things that they associate with the hip-hop culture. This question was intended to gain an objective and subjective understanding of the position of hip-hop culture in today's society, even from the perspectives of those who possessed no knowledge of the lifestyle. Results show that shared ideas of what hip-hop culture means include "thug-like" behavior, clothes and fashion, music, drugs, jewelry, violence and ghetto. Very few respondents related the urban culture to positive attributes and were mostly negative. This directly relates to the next question presented to participants asking, "what do you think is the impact of hip-hop culture on youth?" Most responses centered around the culture having a strong impact on youth. Notable responses include:

"Very impactful. Often creates an unrealistic lifestyle ex. (body image "big butts tiny waists", rich gangsta, violence, drug use".

“Today, hip-hop culture has evolved into a more commercial culture that impacts youth in style, trendy verbiage, materialism, beauty and body images”.

“...Once a hip-hop artist endorses a product, the sales of that product typically sky rocket... I’m sure many of the hip-hop artists support community organizations/non-profit organizations, but it is rarely spoken about or publicized.”

“Hip-hop artists are in the drivers seat. These kids want to live the video and live the life that they see and/or hear.”

As we can see, the majority of respondents agree that hip-hop culture impacts today’s youth in more ways than one. This is the behavior that marketers are grasping and internalizing for product branding and distribution through the artists.

For further analysis, subjects were asked about their shopping, habits, electronic use, and awareness of Beats Electronics. In particular, respondents were asked which factors were most important to them when making purchases. Results show that 38 percent rely heavily on the quality of a product to persuade their purchases.

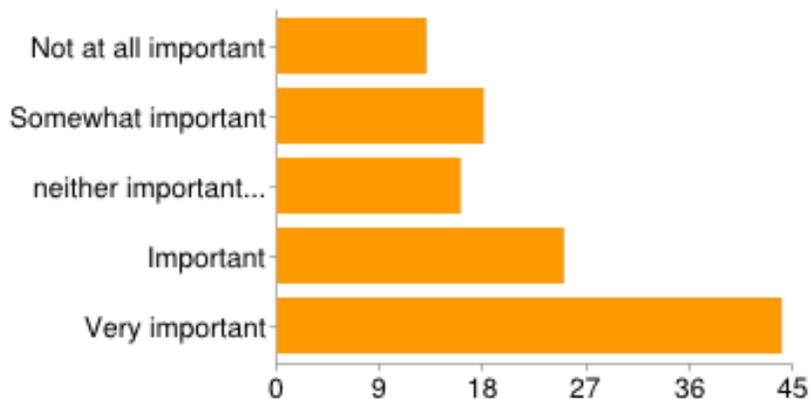


Figure 7. Importance of Product Quality

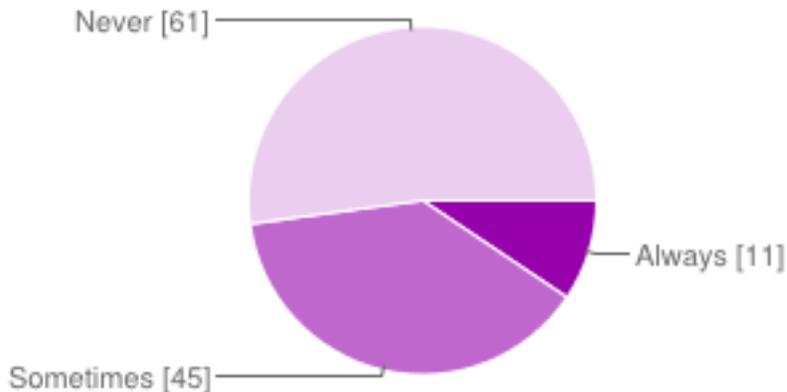


Figure 8. Importance of Celebrity Endorsements.

Figure 7 shows that 53 percent of respondents stated that they are never influenced by celebrity endorsements. Below, Figure 8 displays 28 percent claiming that the brand of an item is important depending on the product. Only 7 percent found the brand to be very important.

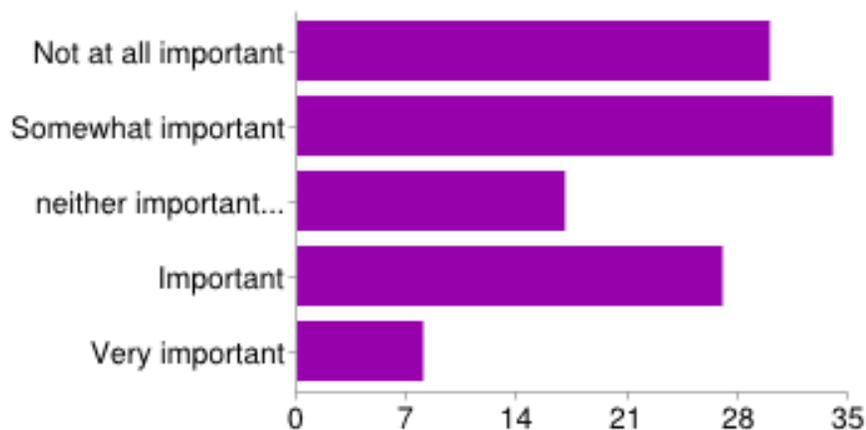


Figure 9. Importance of Product Brand

The survey is centered on Beats Electronics and therefore, subjects were questioned about their perceptions of the brand. Only 17 percent currently own a Beats

product and 34 percent would like to own one of the company's products. When asked why participants did not own any Beats products, most of them replied that the brand was overpriced and not within their budgets. The associations that come to mind most among participants when asked to describe Beats headphones were that- the brands are colorful, loud, expensive, and big celebrities.

Celebrities mentioned include Dr. Dre, Nicki Minaj, Eminem, Kanye West, and a host of professional sports players. The musical artists mentioned all belong to the hip-hop genre and three out of the four have endorsed Beats. We can assume that professional athletes were most identifiable with the brand simply because they are often seen wearing the headphones before and after competitions. It should also be noted that athletes are not required to wear the headphones, this is simply free publicity for the Beats company.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

It is evident that hip-hop culture has made a lasting impression on the branding and marketing industry of musical products and, in future, we can expect that techniques will continue to evolve throughout the years. At present, companies are investing in practices to promote products through the Brand Management Model (Guzman, 2007), visual branding and logo design (Frith, 2013), brand identification (Frith, 2013) and Brand Extension Authenticity (BEA) (Carvella et al. 2012). Companies are also enhancing ways to connect with consumers through consumer-brand engagement (CBE) strategies concentrated on the needs of customer needs and experiences (Briaghi et al. 2012).

Since hip-hop culture's introduction into the marketing scene in the 1970's, the genre has evolved from a platform for urban community members to voice their opinions and concerns through lyrics and beats, to an opportunistic business endeavor for musical artists to promote the true brand, themselves. Celebrity artists in collaboration with record executives and advertisers are using marketing strategies such as endorsements, films, TV shows, books and clothing lines to self promote (Nance-Nash, 2010). Joseph (2004) indicates how advertisers utilize the power of an artist's music video and lyrics as a means for product placement and awareness. An artist is first and foremost a brand, which is determined by their rhythmic sound, speech content, movement and wardrobe (Moss, 2013). Their level of success is critically dependent on audience perception and connectivity to the "streets", or the people who define hip-hop culture.

The emergence of Beats Electronics has provided a new outlook on premium merchandise within the audio device market. The Beats camp successfully promotes the importance of audio and fashion as a combination package and expands their product beyond the target audience of young adults between the ages of 18-26. Beats products are generally promoted through product placement, endorsements and co-branding (Bruno, 2010). While most electronic consumers were not likely to spend such large amounts on headphones, Beats was able to gain customer approval by establishing brand loyalty through high quality studio sounds and effective visual brand design and color usage (Sanburn, 2013). Their products serve as accessories for the wardrobe attire of young adults and emit a status level of exclusivity (Bruno, 2010).

When applying previous research studies to today's market trend, it is noticeable that Beats Electronics utilizes strategic components of the Brand Management Model (Guzman et al. 2007). Dr. Dre and Jimmy Lovine applied concept in the beginning stages of the Beats development, foreseeing the potential of consumers consuming studio quality sounds. The design structure of the company was centered on the traditional oversized headphones with a modern day makeover. The use of bold hues allowed for Beats to uniquely distinguish itself in the market as fashion forward. A combination of the letterform and pictorial brand ID's was used within the design "b" shaped as a headphone (Frith, 2013). The company's ability to create atmospheres of audio luxury through leading electronic retailers displays effective consumer brand engagement techniques (Briaghi, 2012). Through the evolution of Beats Electronics, we have seen the company expand across cultures to not only suit the hip-hop community, but also to identify itself as a diverse brand that compliments any character and style.

Their reputation is inviting and remains true to the promises of premium sound for the musically and non-musically inclined, a significant display of brand extension authenticity (Carvella et al. 2012).

The data from the survey revealed stimulating facts on the interest in music and the types of genres listened to by young respondents and awareness of the Beats products. When asked about the impressions that come to mind of Beats Electronics products, over 50 percent of respondents agree that price and celebrities are directly related to the company. 34 respondents reported belonging to the urban community and 40 percent preferred listening to the musical genre of rhythm and blues (r&b). 71 percent of the 166 respondents do not currently own any Beats products. When asked why, the replies were mainly directed toward the extreme price ranges of most of the products. While the majority of respondents did not own any Beats products, 21 percent plan to own one of the devices and 37 percent expressed wanting to own one of the products. The target audience has shown to shift with culture, making it essential that marketing executives are also able to adapt to this incessantly evolving generation.

There were very few limitations to this study that should be mentioned. I would first like to note that time was a factor throughout this process. This study was planned and executed over the course of one semester and a half. The research survey was active for a period of one month and one day. With additional time, a more extended literature review would have been performed along with an in depth combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods. Another restriction one might consider is the broadness of the target audience. Hip-hop is by no means as secluded as it once was in the 70's. The culture and music spans across the globe, reaching all ethnicities

and age groups. I believe findings would be more effective if each individual culture was examined against hip-hop impressions and marketing techniques. How do various cultures perceive hip-hop and does that directly effect how branding companies are promoting their products?

In the future, I plan to further expand the study focus on audience perceptions of specific groups to study the differences based on gender and race. I might also explore the avenues of other musical genres as it relates to hip-hop and possibly identify signs of integration used in product branding.

According to Wilson (2011), when an artist is emitting positive energy while using or promoting specific brands and products, the hip-hopper then adopts the brand as their own with the expectation that the purchase will leave them with a gratifying and rewarding experience. After researching articles and the understanding the behaviors of young consumers through a survey, it can be concluded that the marketing efforts by executives through product branding are undoubtedly driven by the need to connect the inner relation between consumers and artists. To find the link between the two means that you will have officially branded the artist not only individually, but also through the images of their past and present, which are represented by the young adult. The young adult is the symbol of where the artist is derived. The artist is the symbol of what the young adult foresees within his own path of growth and development.

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APPENDICES

Appendix - A

Selling the Beat: Hip-Hop Culture and Product Branding Among Young Adults

Questionnaire

Hello,

My name is Brandi Fields, a graduate student of Southern Illinois University Carbondale. I am conducting research on hip-hop culture and product branding among young adults. It would be greatly appreciated if you could take approximately 10 minutes to complete the following questionnaire. Personal information is not required and responses will remain confidential. Cumulative data will be used for analysis. Participation in the study is voluntary and each participant is free to withdraw from the survey at any time. Questions about this study can be directed to Dr. Kavita Karan, School of Journalism Professor. Email kavitak@siu.edu. Phone (618) 536-3361. I can be reached via Email bfields@siu.edu. Phone (708) 369-3376. Thank you for taking the time to assist me in this research.

This project has been approved by the SIUC Human Subjects Committee. Questions concerning your rights as a participant in this research may be addressed to the committee chairperson, Office of Sponsored Projects Administration, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL 62901-4709. Phone (618) 453-4533. Email siubsc@siu.edu.

1. How frequently do you listen to music?
 - a. Never
 - b. Sometimes
 - c. Often
 - d. Very Often
 - e. Everyday

2. What is your preferred genre of music?
 - a. Rock/Heavy Metal
 - b. Classical
 - c. Hip-Hop/Rap
 - d. R&B
 - e. Pop
 - f. Country
 - g. Other _____

3. How familiar are you with the following artists, indicating one of the following: familiar, slightly familiar, moderately familiar, extremely familiar?
 - a. Dr. Dre _____
 - b. Nicki Minaj _____
 - c. Eminem _____
 - d. Justin Bieber _____
 - e. Lady Gaga _____
 - f. Robin Thicke _____

4. What are some things that you associate with Hip-Hop culture and music?

5. How familiar are you with Hip-Hop culture and music?
 - a. Not at all familiar
 - b. Slightly familiar
 - c. Moderately familiar
 - d. Extremely familiar

6. What do you think is the impact of Hip-Hop culture on youth?

7. When you listen to music, do you use electronic goods like headphones and speakers?

- a. Never
- b. Occasionally/sometimes
- c. Almost every time
- d. Every time

8. Do you enjoy shopping?

- a. Always
- b. Sometimes
- c. Never

9. How frequently do you shop at the following stores for purchases, indicating one of the following: Never, rarely, sometimes, often, always/frequently?

- a. Amazon (online) _____
- b. Best Buy _____
- c. Ebay (online) _____
- d. Target _____
- e. Radio Shack _____
- f. Wal-Mart _____

10. Which factors are important to you when making purchases, indicating one of the following: not at all important, somewhat important, neither important nor unimportant, important, very important?

- a. Brand _____
- b. Consumer Reviews _____
- c. Quality _____
- d. Style/Design _____
- e. Price _____

11. What influences you to purchase certain items? (check all that apply)

- a. Seen on T.V.
- b. Seen in magazine/catalogue
- c. Friend or family informed you
- d. Personal preference
- e. Others

12. Do celebrity endorsements play a factor in your purchasing decisions?

- a. Always
- b. Sometimes
- c. Never

13. Does the brand of an item influence your purchasing decisions?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Sometimes
- d. Depends on the product

14. What are some of your favorite brands in the following categories?

- a. Clothes _____
- b. Shoes _____
- c. Music _____
- d. Accessories _____
- e. Cosmetics _____
- d. Electronics _____

15. Please choose the best choice for each electronics brand, indicating one of the following: currently own, would like to own, plan to own, not interested, not sure. If your brand is not listed, please add it in other.

- a. Apple _____
- b. Bose _____
- c. Beats by Dre _____
- d. DNA _____
- e. Panasonic _____
- f. Sannheiser _____
- g. Skull Candy _____
- h. Sol Republic _____
- i. Sony _____
- j. Other _____

16. How familiar are you with Beats Electronics (Beats by Dre)?

- a. Not at all familiar
- b. Somewhat familiar
- c. Moderately familiar
- d. Extremely familiar

17. Do you currently own any Beats products?

- a. Yes
- b. No
 - If yes, what products do you own?
 - If no, why?

18. When you think of Beats, what comes to mind?

19. Please list any celebrities that you associate with Beats by Dre.

20. Gender

- a. Male
- b. Female

21. What is your ethnicity?

- a. Asian/Pacific Islander
- b. African American/Black (non-Hispanic)
- c. Hispanic
- d. Mixed/multiple ethnic groups
- e. White (non-Hispanic)
- f. Other

22. Age

- a. 18-25
- b. 26-35
- c. 36-45
- d. 46-55
- e. 56 and older

23. What is your highest level of education?

- a. High school Diploma/GED
- b. Associates Degree
- c. Bachelors Degree
- d. Masters Degree
- e. Trade school

24. Marital Status

- a. Single
- b. Married
- c. Domestic partnership
- d. Widowed
- e. Divorced

25. Which area best describes where you live?

- a. Urban
- b. Suburban
- c. Rural
- d. Other

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Major Professor: Dr. Kavita Karan