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Musical Artists as Entrepreneurs: Assessing Popular Artists’ Brand Partnerships, Social Media Usage, and Performance of Identity Politics

Amara Pope
Western University

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Musical artists as entrepreneurs: Assessing popular artists’ brand partnerships, social media usage, and performances of identity politics

Amara Pope
Media Studies, Western University, London, ON, Canada

The evolving landscape of the music industry

The emergence of new technologies and recent changes to the music industry’s business model require a reevaluation of the potential power musical artists have to influence culture.

Brand partnerships offer music and promotional industries more power over the production, dissemination, and visibility of musical artists across multiple platforms.

360 deal

Articulations and re-articulations of musical artists’ identities across multiple media and industries are heavily controlled by promotional and music industry conglomerates.

Concentration of media

Artists’ social media accounts seemingly circumvent opinion leaders and connect artists and fans directly.

Artistic social media accounts seemingly circumvent opinion leaders and connect artists and fans directly.

Artists and off-screen identities become marketable into one packaged personality that is marketed for consumption.

Seemingly direct access to artists.

Following Dyer’s (1979) theory of a ‘star image’ as the carefully constructed public personality of a film actor curated through multiple forms of media, I examine the construction of musical artists’ identities in today’s online, branded world.

I wish to fill a gap in the literature that explores how musical artists’ ‘star images’, as constructed through brand partnerships and online music videos, may offer alternative identity categories and thereby challenge dominant ideologies of identity politics.

The exploration of the online music videos’ remains underdeveloped and so I wish to contribute to existing literature about the changing relationships between artists and audiences, as afforded by social media.

I will also evaluate modern constructions of musical artists’ authenticity based on artists’ performances of their star images across various platforms and industries.

Research questions

Case studies: Drake, Cardi B, Post Malone

Using three case studies, Drake, Cardi B, and Post Malone. I determine how modern musical artists articulate identity categories through performances of their star images. I examine the construction of artists’ star images through dominant and preferred readings of their (1) music videos (2) brand partnerships (3) social media posts and (4) self-branded commodities.

I will compare and contrast the ways in which each artist navigates through music and promotional industries based on their intersectional identities to question: how musical artists’ ‘star images’, as constructed through brand partnerships and online music videos, may offer alternative identity categories and thereby challenge dominant ideologies of identity politics?

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Methodology

Through processes of articulation and re-articulation to conceptualize how meaning-making evolves from context to context, from practice to practice, or from one stage of a practice to the next, I explore how musical artists represent their identities through (1) posts on their social media accounts (2) images, sounds and lyrics in their music videos (3) artists partnerships with other companies and (4) artists’ self-branded commodities.

I conduct discourse analyses of YouTube and Instagram to examine their affordances and the social dynamics involved in different forms of engagements between audiences, artists, labels, and companies partnered with artists on those online platforms.

Timeline

Social media activity

Instagram

A discourse analysis of Instagram will consider (1) interactions afforded by the platform (2) how artists engage with Instagram users and (3) how other Instagram users engage with each other.

Music videos

A discourse analysis of YouTube will consider (1) ways in which participatory action is encouraged through practices of memeifying, commenting, liking and uploading music videos (2) how music videos are perceived in the online environment (3) how artists align with the representations of their music videos in the online environment (4) how music videos are validated by music critics and (5) how artists are valuated by consumers.

YouTube

A discourse analysis of YouTube will consider (1) ways in which participatory action is encouraged through practices of memeifying, commenting, liking and uploading music videos (2) how music videos are perceived in the online environment (3) how artists align with the representations of their music videos in the online environment (4) how music videos are validated by music critics and (5) how artists are valuated by consumers.

Brand partnerships

I will construct a timeline of each artist’s career to determine what narratives were used to construct their star image using (1) interviews (2) performances (3) appearances on talk shows and (4) award shows.

Self-branded products

I conduct discourse analyses of YouTube and Instagram to examine their affordances and the social dynamics involved in different forms of engagements between audiences, artists, labels, and companies partnered with artists on those online platforms.

I will compare and contrast the ways in which each artist navigates through music and promotional industries based on their intersectional identities to question: how musical artists’ ‘star images’, as constructed through brand partnerships and online music videos, may offer alternative identity categories and thereby challenge dominant ideologies of identity politics?

Articulations and re-articulations of musical artists’ identities across multiple media and industries make artists well-positioned to shape socially constructed ideologies of identity categories.

Musical artists as potential meaning-makers

As media becomes more concentrated through brand partnerships and more pervasive through social media, I wish to examine the current conditions of the music industry and their effects on artists’ performances of identity politics.

Literature cited


Reinforce, complicate and resist hegemonic identity categories

I will compare and contrast the ways in which each artist navigates through music and promotional industries based on their intersectional identities to question: how does Drake, Cardi B, and Post Malone’s individual performances of race, gender, and sexuality reinforce, complicate, or resist dominant ideologies of identity categories within and outside of the traditional music industry??