The Hunger Games Viral Marketing Campaign

A Study of Viral Marketing and Fan Labor

Sandra Ilar
The Hunger Games Viral Marketing Campaign

A Study of Viral Marketing and Fan Labor

Sandra Ilar

Abstract

This essay examines Lionsgate’s viral marketing campaign for The Hunger Games (Gary Ross, 2012) and the marketing teams’ use of new marketing techniques and the online fan base. The essay also asks the question to what extent the fans’ participation in Lionsgate’s marketing campaign can be called fan labor. The study is based on a film industrial perspective and academic literature that deals with film marketing, the film industry, fandom and digital labor. The material used for the analysis of The Hunger Games marketing campaign is collected from newspaper articles and news interviews with Lionsgate’s marketing personnel. The study shows that although Lionsgate used many new marketing strategies associated with viral marketing, it is problematic to depict these strategies as a wholesale movement from older marketing techniques. It points to the importance of a nuanced understanding of how producers and consumers operate in the digital age with a holistic view on film marketing practices. The study also shows that Lionsgate’s use of the online fan base correspond with many characteristics of fan labor on the internet. It is, however, problematic to establish that this necessarily means that the fans’ contributions to the marketing campaign were exploited or that it demands compensations. The essay argues that the popularity of viral marketing among film studios and their use of fans and fan created content for promotional purposes calls for further investigations.

Keywords
The Hunger Games, Lionsgate, Film Marketing, Viral Marketing, Fans, Fandom, Fan Labor, Digital Labor, Word of Mouth, Social Media, Twitter
Contents

1. Introduction ......................................................................................................................... 1
   1.1 Background ...................................................................................................................... 1
   1.2 Purpose and Research Question(s) ............................................................................... 3
   1.3 Material and Method ...................................................................................................... 4
   1.4 Research Overview ........................................................................................................ 5

2. Viral Marketing .................................................................................................................... 7
   2.1 Producers and Consumers in the Digital Age ................................................................. 7
   2.2 Viral Word of Mouth ....................................................................................................... 8
   2.3 The Advantages of Internet Marketing ......................................................................... 10
   2.4 The Definition of Fans .................................................................................................. 11

3. Lionsgate’s Viral Marketing Campaign ............................................................................. 12
   3.1 How Lionsgate Targeted the Online Fan Base .............................................................. 12
   3.2 Create Fan Engagement ............................................................................................... 15
   3.3 Turn Traditional Marketing into Online Events ......................................................... 17

4. Fandom as Free Labor ........................................................................................................ 21
   4.1 Lionsgate’s Viral Marketing Campaign as Fan Labor .................................................. 21
   4.2 Fandom and Commodity Culture ................................................................................ 22
   4.3 The Relationship between Producers and Fans ......................................................... 23

5. Conclusion and Further Research .................................................................................... 26

6. List of Literature ................................................................................................................ 29
1. Introduction

1.1. Background

*The Hunger Games* (Gary Ross, 2012) is a film adaption of Suzanne Collins’s novel with the same title. The dystopian story takes place in a post-apocalyptic future in the nation of Panem, where children from 12 districts must compete in the annual Hunger Games, a televised event where the tributes fight to the death until the last remaining is crowned the victor. When THG premiered in March 2012 it became a “box office success” setting several records, one of them being strongest opening weekend total for a spring release.\(^1\) It grossed over $150 million on ticket sales on its opening weekend and has to date earned over $690 million worldwide.\(^2\)

It is important to underline that a number of factors can have contributed to THG’s opening weekend results, like the popularity of the book or the void in the marketplace for a new franchise after the *Harry Potter* and *Twilight* series.\(^3\) However, another key factor that reappears in news articles is Lionsgate’s online marketing campaign.\(^4\) The existing fan base is

\(^1\) *The Hunger Games* will hereafter be referred to as THG.
\(^2\) Numbers regarding box-office revenue should always be read with caution as these can have been fiddled with for different reasons, like tax purposes.
said to have played an important role in the design and result of the viral campaign, a factor that this essay aims at examine further.

To understand the breadth of the fan base surrounding the film adaption, it is important to grasp the popularity of the book trilogy. *THG* first appeared on Hollywood’s radar in early 2009, and Lionsgate acquired the film rights in tough competition with major Hollywood studios.\(^5\) The book had at the time sold less than 100,000 copies, but a strong “buzz” surrounded the trilogy and studio executives were eager to find the next media franchise.\(^6\) In March 2012, *THG*’s franchise had grown into three books with U.S. sales of more than 24 million copies. Today, the three books have more than 65 million copies in print and digital formats in the U.S. alone, and the books have been sold into 56 territories in 51 languages.\(^7\) *THG* is said to have taken the “world by storm” and built up an audience of readers and fans around the globe.

In an analysis of the marketing campaign for *THG*, it is important to be aware of that Lionsgate had a lot at stake on the success of the film adaption. Lionsgate were at the time in a tough period with underperforming films, an expensive requirement of Summit Entertainment, as well as legal battles and a lost financial deal with Goldman Sachs. The company also had stock holders’ expectations to answer to, and was planning a refinancing that depended on the success of *THG*.\(^8\) These factors can have contributed to Lionsgate’s...

---


investments and efforts in the marketing campaign. Lionsgate’s stock did eventually rise to a record high, fueled by the positive results of *THG*, the requirement of Summit Entertainment, and bright TV-outlooks.¹

### 1.2 Purpose and Research Question(s)

The purpose of this essay is twofold. Firstly, to analyze and describe how Lionsgate used new marketing techniques like viral marketing to promote *THG* to the target audience online. This is motivated by the fact that promotion and marketing are key components of Hollywood films with expenditures that can equal or considerably exceed production costs. It is therefore a relevant research subject in order to understand the driving forces of the film industry and its capitalist context within which movies are produced and distributed with the main goal to generate profit. The profit motive and commodity nature of the Hollywood model also have implications for how movies are distributed and promoted.¹⁰ Lionsgate’s marketing campaign is an illustrative example of how the rise of the internet and the popularity of social media platforms have generated new marketing sites and strategies that calls for further investigations.

Secondly, the essay also asks the question to what extent Lionsgate’s use of the online fan base in the marketing campaign can be called “fan labor”. Lionsgate encouraged fans to share material and fan created content for promotional purposes, and the fans took a

---


¹ Ibib.

key role in the marketing campaign. The popularity of viral marketing among film studios and their use of fan created content raises important questions whether fans contributions online can be seen as digital labor.

1.3 Material and Method

The study is delimited to focus on Lionsgate’s online marketing campaign for *THG* and their use of new marketing strategies like viral marketing, and not more traditional marketing techniques like posters and television trailers. It is although hard to make a distinct boundary as more traditional marketing materials also were part of Lionsgate’s online efforts, which will be analyzed in this essay. Lionsgate’s marketing campaign for the other films in the franchise also raises interesting questions about viral marketing and fandom, but due to the limited space this essay is delimited to the first movie to enable a focused study.

The marketing materials and news articles available on the web are numerous, so the examples that are analyzed in this essay should be seen as a selection and not as a complete picture of the whole campaign. The examples aim to provide a nuanced idea of the campaign. The selection is based on campaign events that are frequently mentioned or highlighted in news articles or by Lionsgate’s personnel.

The essay primarily studies film marketing from a film industrial perspective and is based on academic literature that deals with film marketing, the film industry, fandom and digital labor. Helpful terms for the study are viral marketing, word of mouth, participatory culture, fan labor and relationship building; terms that help to describe how fan interest, anticipation and participation can be built up around a film through a strategic and interactive marketing campaign. These terms will be developed further in the analysis.

The material used for the analysis has been collected from newspaper articles and news interviews with Lionsgate’s marketing personnel. It is therefore important to underline that the analysis is based on the marketing teams’ public story of how the viral marketing campaign operated. Interviews with business people should always be read with skepticism about what industrial motives or personal investments may motivate the respondent’s

---

answers. This is further problematized by the fact that trade magazines like *Variety* may not always be reliant, as their news can be influenced by the publicity seeking nature of Hollywood. Many researchers acknowledge these problems with securing accurate data about the film industry. Scholars primarily have to rely on public sources, and are therefore forced to structure their work to account for industry discourse and spin. The analysis of Lionsgate’s campaign should be read with this caution in mind.

### 1.4 Research Overview

Considering that *THG* is relatively newly produced, no academic marketing research has been done on the specific film. There are although articles about the campaign in newspapers and business magazines. Chuck Tryon mentions the viral campaign in his chapter on “The Twitter Effect: Social Media and Digital Delivery” in *On-Demand Culture: Digital Delivery and the Future of Movies* (2013), which has been helpful for this study.

Finola Kerrigan’s book *Film Marketing* (2010) has provided a solid background for the understanding of film industrial marketing practices and how new marketing techniques like viral marketing operates. Janet Wasko’s book *How Hollywood Works* (2003) has given a background to the industrial context of film marketing in Hollywood. Henry Jenkins’s theories have illustrated how digital technologies are redefining the relationship between producers and consumers, which is central for the understanding of viral marketing. The anthology *Digital Labor: Internet as Playground and Factory* (2013) and especially De Kosnik’s chapter “Fandom as Free Labor” have provided the academic ground for the analysis of Lionsgate’s use of the online fan base as digital labor. Roberta Pearson’s article “Fandom in the Digital Era” has also been helpful for this part of the essay. Tiziana Terranova’s book *Network Culture: Politics for the Information Age* (2004) presents the concept of “free labour” on the internet that many scholars in this essay draw upon. The ideas presented in these books will be discussed in detail in the analysis.

---

12 Johnson, 18. This also reflects Caldwell’s description of “industrial self-reflexivity”, which is the effort by Hollywood’s production personnel to describe their activities to the public in a way that justifies their careers and the work created by their companies: John Thornton Caldwell, *Production Culture: Industrial Reflectivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2008), 1, 5, 9 f and 15-36. See also: Denise Mann, “Introduction: When Television and New Media Work Worlds Collide”, *Wired-TV: Laboring Over an Interactive Future*, ed. Denise Mann (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2014), 9f.

13 Wasko (2003), 203. See also: Drake, 74.

This essay positions itself in dialogue with both film industrial marketing research and fan studies, where the case study of Lionsgate’s viral marketing campaign can be seen as an application of these researchers’ theories. The analysis begins with a background to the concept of viral marketing and word of mouth. The third part is the analysis of Lionsgate’s marketing campaign. The fourth part asks and reflects about the question to what extent Lionsgate’s use of the online fan base can be called fan labor. The essay ends with a conclusion and suggestions for further research.
2. Viral Marketing

2.1 Producers and Consumers in the Digital Age

Scholars point out that new technologies and the flow of media across multiple platforms are changing consumer behaviors and the relationship between producers and consumers. This also affects film industrial practices and how commodity culture operates. Lionsgate’s marketing campaign was structured and designed with the existing fan base participation in mind. This can exemplify how the concept of the active audience has become central for how culture operates in the digital age. The fan base took an active role in the online campaign and annotated, appropriated and recirculated content related to the film. This also defines the concept of participatory cultures, where fans and consumers actively participate in the creation and circulation of media content. Fandom has become central to media industries as they realize that their products need fans and followers in the digital age. Some factors that can explain the notion of fandom and the rise of participatory cultures are the increased processing power of personal computers, decreasing costs of digital authoring tools and the ease of publishing on the internet. This has facilitated a boom in online fan activity, which is prominent in the case of THG.

Marketers’ attempts to link consumers directly to the production and marketing of media content are variously described as “relationship marketing” or “viral marketing”. These strategies are increasingly promoted as a model of how to sell goods in an interactive environment. Viral marketing makes consumers actively engaged in promoting products and

16 Ibid.
17 Jenkins, *Convergence Culture*, 290.
18 De Kosnik, 98. Jenkins lists three similar trends that have fostered participatory cultures: Jenkins, *Fans, Bloggers, and Gamers*, 135f.
19 Jenkins, *Fans, Bloggers, and Gamers*, 147f. See also: Finola Kerrigan, *Film Marketing* (Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2010), 200f. Jenkins, Ford and Green use “spreadable media” in lieu of viral marketing to describe the way today’s networked media encourage users to circulate ideas and images: Mann, 137, footnote 18.
services, both consciously and unconsciously. Lionsgate’s use of pre-existing social networks like Twitter and Facebook reflect how viral marketing depend on consumers to share information and content to other internet users on social media platforms. The relationship between producers and consumers on the web is therefore important for the creation of consumer activity online. Viral marketing relies on consumers’ innovation and compliance with the aim of media organisations, and will only succeed if consumers avail of these and develop their own word of mouth building activities. Whether one sees this as a dialogic departure from the binary division between fans and consumers or merely a tech-savvy marketing plot, it is an integrated media model that is rapidly gaining popularity.

2.2 Viral Word of Mouth

Word of mouth is defined as “informal communications between private parties concerning the evaluation of goods and services.” The creation of online word of mouth around THG was a driving factor of Lionsgate’s campaign, a subject that will be developed later in this essay. It is therefore important to understand why it is crucial for companies to create positive word of mouth for their products online.

Word of mouth has long been a concern for marketers. A conclusion from research is that word of mouth can be motivated both by satisfaction and dissatisfaction with a product or service. Product involvement results in word of mouth activity by consumers, and studies have shown a link between customer satisfaction and positive word of mouth as well as dissatisfaction and negative word of mouth. Negative word of mouth can undermine a marketing campaign, and film professionals believe that word of mouth is central to the success or failure of a film. The importance for Lionsgate to generate positive word of mouth before THG’s opening weekend can be further understood in that the opening weekend is as a critical event in a film’s commercial life, where box office takings earn the majority of

---

20 Kerrigan, 193f. Kozinets writes similar that “fans-as-consumers” can become advertisers through social media: Kozinets, 169f.
23 Kerrigan, 115.
receipts in the opening two weeks of exhibition. This also indicates the film’s market value for further distribution sales.  

There is no guaranteed way in which to generate positive word of mouth, and commentators say that it is impossible to control. Kerrigan, however, writes that one way that film marketers can ensure positive word of mouth is by identifying the most likely audience for a film and bringing it to their attention, also known as target marketing. Internet can here allow marketers to communicate with narrower target segments in ways that appeal to them, and simultaneously evaluate the communication impact. This applies to the strategy used by Lionsgate, where the online fan base early on was identified as the main target audience for generating positive word of mouth.

News articles and Lionsgate’s marketing team mentions the viral campaign as a key factor for THG’s results on the opening weekend. It is, however, problematic to establish how much word of mouth affects box office results. The main problem is how to measure word of mouth influence on consumers’ purchases. One factor that can indicate positive word of mouth strategy with big budgets and “promotional hype” can draw a large audience to the opening weekend, but a film will only enjoy a long run and sustain itself on the market through positive word of mouth. THG’s long theatrical run on the domestic market can in this aspect indicate that positive word of mouth affected the film’s result. However, the word of mouth activities that are analyzed in this essay mainly took place before THG’s premiere, so it is difficult to establish how much they affected the film’s long-time performance.

Assumptions about causal relationships between word of mouth and box office performance are further problematized by the fact that there are a number of factors that can contribute to sales which cannot be evaluated using existing methods. It is, however, accurate

---


26 Kerrigan, 112, 115 and 146f. Wasko writes that film companies can use marketing segmentation techniques to target audiences: Wasko (2003), 192.

27 Kerrigan.


29 Kerrigan, 116. See also: Tryon, 118ff. Wasko (2011), 311. Sreenath Sreenivasan, Digital Journalism Professor at Columbia, talks about the problem of measuring social media impact in an interview about THG’s viral campaign: Tsuboi (00:50).

30 “The blockbuster strategy” with a big opening weekend can both sustain and “kill” a film’s theatrical run through “information cascades” of positive or negative word-of-mouth depending on the audience enjoyment with the film: De Vany, 122ff., 137f and 122-138. See also: Wasko (2003), 106f. Kerrigan, 112 and 115.

31 Box Office Mojo, “The Hunger Games”. The Numbers, “The Hunger Games”.
to conclude that online virtual communities should be considered by marketing managers when developing their overall marketing strategy.32

2.3 The Advantages of Internet Marketing

Lionsgate’s decision to launch an online marketing campaign also has economic advantages as a cost-effective marketing strategy.33 Lionsgate had a marketing budget of $45 million and a marketing staff of 21 people.34 This is a big budget for a relatively small company like Lionsgate, but not compared with many major Hollywood studios.35 Barnes writes that Lionsgate were able to spend so little largely because they used inexpensive digital initiatives.36 This reflects that online “any-to-any” communication can operate on a global scale, reduce conversation costs, and allow information and value to transfer between consumers and business in many combinations.37

One additional advantage with internet marketing that mirrors Lionsgate’s campaign is timing.38 Online marketing allows marketers to reach an audience, communicate with them and establish a two-way relationship well before the film comes out. Lionsgate’s marketing campaign started over a year before the premiere, and even before the film was finished shooting.39 The possibility to use online marketing as a cost-effective marketing tool allowed Lionsgate to even with a relatively small marketing budget to start targeting the online fans

32 Kerrigan, 116f. The advent of online reviewing has facilitated some new methods of assessing the impact of online world of mouth: Kerrigan, 117-119.
35 THG’s production budget of around $78 million is also relatively small compared to similar big event films produced by Hollywood’s major studios: Box Office Mojo, “The Hunger Games”. The Numbers, “Movie Budgets: All”, http://www.the-numbers.com/movie/budgets/all (Controlled June 13, 2014). Drake draws a table over average marketing costs in 2005 and also writes that spending on advertising is increasing. This gives an apprehension of film marketing costs, but should be read with awareness that the exact numbers have changed in the last 9 years: Drake, 63 and 71f. Wasko provides a background to Hollywood’s film industrial marketing practices: Wasko (2003), 188-211.
36 Barnes, (18 March 2012).
37 Finney, 132. Finney writes about film marketing from a film business perspective, although he has an academic background. The book therefore has another status than the academic literature used in this essay. Finney's writing has although contributed with an important business-perceptive on film marketing.
38 Finney, 132. See also: Kerrigan, 147.
well in advance of the opening weekend. This would have been an expensive strategy using only more traditional marketing techniques like posters and television trailers.

2.4 The Definition of Fans

A broad definition of a fan culture is a group that coalesces around a certain object, like a film or an artist, around which fans build up societies with particular hierarchies, values, and belief systems.\(^{40}\) The definition of the term “fan” is, however, debated and problematic to establish for this study, as it is partly determined by Lionsgate’s use of the term. Some scholars argue that there are multiple types of fans and fan audiences, where some are more mainstream than others.\(^{41}\) The meaning of a fan can in this aspect vary with the specific context. Lionsgate’s media industrial context and business rhetoric can in this way affect their use of the term in relation to THG’s fan base. Business managers and marketers like Lionsgate often embrace fans as “ideal consumers” due to their engagement-seeking nature and emotional commitment.\(^{42}\) This industrial notion of fans is a debated subject within the field of fan studies, and among fans themselves.\(^{43}\) The more mainstream concept of fans as ideal consumers is often viewed in opposite to the notion of fans as anti-commercial and members of niche subcultures.\(^{44}\)

This polarized picture of fans is problematic and debated, which will be returned to later in the analysis of Lionsgate’s campaign as fan labor.\(^{45}\) Lionsgate’s use of the term “fan” should, however, be read with the industrial perception of fans as ideal consumers in mind. It is also important to underline that the degree of fandom probably varied among the internet users that constituted Lionsgate’s target audience, and that some of them may not even consider themselves THG fans at all.

\(^{40}\) De Kosnik. 101f. See also: Kozinets, 164.
\(^{41}\) The article in *Cinema Journal* includes a discussion on the definition and meaning of fans between academic researchers: Louisa Stein, Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford, Joshua Green, Paul Booth, Kristina Busse, Melissa Click, Sam Ford, Xiaochan Li and Sharon Ross, “Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture”, *Cinema Journal* 53, nr 3 (Spring 2014): 158-163 and 171.
\(^{43}\) Stein, Jenkins, Ford, Green, Booth, Busse, Click, Ford, Li and Ross, 152-177. Hills develops the problem with defining fandom in academic terms: Hills, ix-xiv.
\(^{44}\) Kozinets, 162ff and 161-175. See also: Hills, 27ff. Stein, Jenkins, Ford, Green, Booth, Busse, Click, Ford, Li and Ross, 154f, 160 and 162f.
\(^{45}\) Ibid.
3. Lionsgate’s Viral Marketing Campaign

3.1 How Lionsgate Targeted the Online Fan Base

The aim of the analysis below is to exemplify how Lionsgate used viral marketing techniques and the online fan base in their campaign for *THG*.\(^{46}\)

Early on in the marketing campaign, Lionsgate decided to use pre-existing social networks to market *THG*.\(^{47}\) Danielle De Palma, Lionsgate’s senior vice president for digital marketing, recalls that the marketing team saw that social media could be “the backbone” of the campaign and the “best route” to engage with the fans in a meaningful and cost-effective way.\(^{48}\) This mirrors the mentioned advantages of viral marketing. Lionsgate’s social media and overall campaign was overseen and structured by chief marketing officer Tim Palen, and included an offline strategy managed by vice president of media and research Erika Schmik.\(^{49}\)

*THG*’s marketing campaign illustrates the importance for studios to think of the creation of marketing materials as early as possible in a film production.\(^{50}\) Palen mapped out the marketing campaign even before Lionsgate secured the rights for the film. The well-planned campaign is also claimed to be one reason that Lionsgate got the film adaption of the popular book, which was approved by the author herself.\(^{51}\) The formulation of a marketing strategy is the starting point of a marketing campaign, and De Palma drafted a chronology for the entire online effort, “using spreadsheets (coded in 12 colors) that detailed what would be introduced on a day-by-day, and even minute-by-minute, basis over months. (‘Nov. 17: Facebook posts — photos, Yahoo brand page goes live.’)”\(^{52}\)

The marketing team decided to “tap” into all the large social media platforms, but in different ways “because each platform is unique”.\(^{53}\) The first task was to target the pre-

---

\(^{46}\) Buzz is a marketing term designed to represent the amount of discussion and public interest an upcoming film is generating: Finney, 216.


\(^{48}\) *Fast Company* is a business magazine and the interview with De Palma should be read in that context: Karpel.

\(^{49}\) Karpel.

\(^{50}\) Kerrigan, 132f. See also: Derek, 70.

\(^{51}\) Grover and Lauria.

\(^{52}\) Barnes, (March 18, 2012). Drake, 71.

\(^{53}\) Karpel. See also: Green, (01:00).
existing fan base surrounding the book trilogy using social media tools like Twitter and Facebook. Lionsgate’s marketing team learned early on that they could use the engaged fan base that already were “eager” for any word of the upcoming screen adaption.\textsuperscript{54} This mirrors that internet can benefit recognizable franchises that already have a significant and active fan base that can circulate content and create buzz online.\textsuperscript{55} Even before the internet, however, event films like \textit{THG} were keenly anticipated with fans looking for leaked information and discussing this in various forums.\textsuperscript{56}

In accordance with this, Lauren Jacobs, digital marketing manager at Alliance Films, says that there were a lot of passionate fans online that just wanted to talk about the books.\textsuperscript{57} With Lionsgate’s relatively small marketing budget they thought, “Why don’t use them? Why not let them be our brand advocates?” Facebook was already established as a “hub of fan discussion” so they decided that the first big reveal of the campaign, the cast of the film, would happen online via Facebook.\textsuperscript{58} From the beginning Lionsgate wanted to establish Facebook as an essential gathering place for fans where they could gain information, access and community.\textsuperscript{59} Lionsgate’s strategy exemplifies that social networks can be used to leak information about an upcoming film in an attempt to build up pre-launch word of mouth.\textsuperscript{60}

Another way that Lionsgate established the relation with the fans was by inviting “die-hard fans” for exclusive visits to the film set via Facebook.\textsuperscript{61} To establish the trust-relationship with the fans Lionsgate invited no reporters to the set in North Carolina. Palen says that the studio didn’t want consumers thinking that it was “another instance of Hollywood trying to force-feed them a movie through professional filters.”\textsuperscript{62} Lionsgate’s desire to distance themselves from corporate Hollywood can reflect theories that fans want to separate their fandom from commercial motives, a subject that will be developed later in the chapter on fandom as digital labor.\textsuperscript{63}

Lionsgate used fan created content to connect with the fans, and for promotional purposes. Early on, the marketing team understood the breadth of \textit{THG} related content the

\textsuperscript{54} Karpel. See also: Green, (01:10).
\textsuperscript{55} Drake, 71.
\textsuperscript{56} Kerrigan, 202.
\textsuperscript{57} Green, (01:25).
\textsuperscript{58} Karpel.
\textsuperscript{60} Kozinets writes that the Facebook page with its “like” function entangles the notion of the fan, the social media community and the practice of branding: Kozinets, 168.
\textsuperscript{61} Kerrigan, 202. See also: Wasko (2003), 198f.
\textsuperscript{62} Karpel.
\textsuperscript{63} Barnes, (March 18, 2012).
fans created online. Lionsgate started “Fan Fridays” to highlight the fans’ work and used THG’s Youtube channel as a “showcase hub”. De Palma says it allowed the marketing team to form an emotional connection with the fans, which got them following and spreading the word about the movie for them: “It was exciting because we knew that we could work with them and get them onboard to really help push the campaign.”

Lionsgate also used fan created content as a window into what the fans were most interested in, which can be seen as a form of audience research. Extensive audience research is important to create audience enjoyment in order to generate positive word of mouth and sustain a film on the market. Social media can in this way provide studios with data for marketing and promotional purposes. For example, Lionsgate learned from fan comments online that they should avoid playing up the love triangle story as part of the marketing campaign in the same way as The Twilight Saga adaptations. By avoiding the love theme, Lionsgate had a greater chance at creating audience enjoyment with the fans. This also mirrors how new technologies empower audiences to directly affect production decisions. However, the decision to avoid the love-theme was probably also affected by the fact that it had economic advantages for Lionsgate, as they could address a wider audience.

De Palma calls Lionsgate’s social manager Jessica Frank their “fan whisperer”, and claims that she had a personal relationship with the fan sites. From the beginning, Frank was the one communicating with fans and working all the social activities on a daily basis with postings on Twitter and Facebook. Trust is an important aspect of relationship marketing. On the internet, a distributor can produce a message to a consumer which in turn can provide feedback, which in turn the producer can respond to. Internet marketing can in this way sustain the fans sense of brand loyalty and emotional involvement that are characteristic for

---

64 Karpel. Corporate attempts to create fan communities online must appear authentic to succeed: Kozinets, 170. FanLib was an online project that failed when it to explicit tried to capitalize on fan created content: Brooker, 76-80. See also: Pearson, 89f. Russo, 111f.
65 Ibid.
67 Tryon, 118.
68 Karpel.
70 Karpel.
fandom and desirable for marketers. This also mirrors the notion of fans as ideal consumers, mentioned above. Lionsgate’s dedication to the fans applies to theories that one way for virals to work are through a campaign for a highly anticipated property that has a year or more to develop a connection with its audience.

3.2 Create Fan Engagement

Another key component launched early on in the campaign was a site called TheCapitol.pn that allowed fans to register for a district. Fans could create their own districts badges on Facebook where they would connect with their districts communities and be active participants. This gave fans an identity in the campaign, and an active role. Tryon writes that more than 800,000 fans created digital identification cards as if they were living in Panem, the futuristic society in the novel and films. Fans with ID passes could later compete on Twitter to be elected “mayor” of one of the twelve districts in the book. This viral strategy made fans into invested participants in the campaign and encouraged them to engage with and share promotional content.

The districts badges can be applied to the viral marketing strategy of self-replicating “ideaviruses”, in which the medium of the virus is a marketing component for THG. Lionsgate used numerous ideaviruses in the form of trailers, games and posters, all aiming at drawing attention to the film online. The districts badges also reflects the viral marketing strategy to identify individuals of high social networking potential (SNP) and create viral messages that appeal to this segment of the population and have a high probability of being passed along. In viral marketing it isn’t enough that users “like” the film’s Facebook page, as the viral approach only really takes off when users generate and send on original content.

Another viral marketing technique used by Lionsgate was to assign separate hashtags to each campaign event. De Palma says, “Those really helped us trend because each one of

71 Kerrigan, 112. It can be difficult to establish what a brand is in relation to a film, as a number of competing brands often coexist within a film production: Kerrigan, 146. See also: Finney, 132f. Jenkins, Fans, Bloggers, and Gamers, 147f. Kozinets, 164f and 161-175. Jenkins’s definition of knowledge cultures: Jenkins, Convergence Culture, 169 and 287.
72 Finney, 134.
74 Tryon, 125. In the first THG book there are only 12 districts in Panem and not 24 as Tryon writes. See also: Barnes, (March 18, 2012).
75 Finney, 133f. Brian Murch, senior director of Crown Factory, calls these viral components “engagement mechanism” in an interview about Lionsgate’s campaign: Tsuibo, (00:35). See also: Kozinets, 172.
76 Finney, 133f.
77 Finney, 133f. See also: Kozinets, 172.
those milestones had its own identity and helped it to spread so easily.”

Twitter can be used in this way as a form of collective entertainment consumption. Hashtags makes it easier for users to follow, discuss and share a topic or event related to a film for a longer period of time, which also increases the film’s exposure. For Lionsgate, each specific hashtag launched a different part of the campaign. For example, the hashtag #HungerGames100 was released to mark that it was 100 days left until the movie premiered, and #HeadtotheSquare launched the Facebook tab where fans could run for mayor.

Lionsgate launched the hashtag #WhatsMyDistrict tucked into a corner at the end of a trailer. The hashtag led observant viewers to the website TheCapitol.pn, where they could gain their district badges mentioned. The new citizens were then encouraged to start sharing content in order to become elected mayors of their new districts. Each citizen of Panem got a CapitolTV-video with a unique URL. The citizens who shared their link the most on social networks became elected “mayor” of their district on Facebook. The mayors received exclusive news and prices, and were responsible for “recruiting” new citizens and keeping the Facebook page updated. Fans also had to share content to gain information about what was coming next in the campaign. Lionsgate’s Twitter profile @TheCapitolPN would only release new information if enough users had shared the previous task and made it satisfactorily viral.

Together with the hashtag #HungerGames100, Lionsgate released an online puzzle for the launch of a new poster. The puzzle allowed fans to gather pieces from different places online in order to assemble the poster themselves, thereby leading fans from one social media site to another. One hundred partner sites hid 100 puzzle pieces on their Facebook pages, and by tweeting about it they sent their Twitter followers there to gather them. Fans had to search through Twitter to put together the poster, either by printing out the pieces and cutting them out or using a program like Photoshop. The puzzle challenge made “The Hunger Games”

---

78 Karpel.
79 Tryon, 122f.
80 Karpel. See also: Tryon, 125.
82 Example of @TheCapitolPN’s Twitter updates from Orsini’s article: Twitter, published November 14, 2011, https://twitter.com/TheCapitolPN/status/136080274927779840 (Controlled June 13, 2014).
trend worldwide on Twitter within minutes.³³ Lionsgate’s use of a collective scavenger hunt like this can cultivate a more engaged audience. Twitter can be used in this way to generate excitement by encouraging different forms of participation.³⁴ This also reflects the concept of “collective intelligence” that Jenkins has adopted to describe the collective behaviors of movie or television audiences when they combine their skills to solve or make sense of a complex narrative, which can be translated to interactive challenges like Lionsgate’s online puzzle.³⁵

The different hashtags helped Lionsgate to locate fan conversations, follow their reactions and join them like a third part. For example, if two fans were tweeting about going to see THG together, the online marketing team could join in the conversation and suggest that they look at the trailer online. It was important not to push things on the fans, and instead join the conversations.³⁶ The marketing team also used those passionate fans that already existed online to “empower” other fans and to grow an additional fan base, where the digital properties were key components to foster new fans.³⁷ Social media can be used by companies in this way to facilitate fan activity.³⁸

3.3 Turn Traditional Marketing into Online Events

Although new technologies have changed film marketing practices, it is important to underline that depicting these changes as a wholesale movement from “old marketing” may be to overstating things. Traditional marketing techniques are still an integral part of film promotion and can be supplemented by innovative online campaigns.³⁹ Alongside new marketing techniques, Lionsgate used many of the more traditional marketing techniques associated with promoting a Hollywood movie. Tryon writes that the studio gave away 80,000 posters, secured almost 50 magazine cover stories and advertised on 3,000 billboards and bus shelters to create awareness of the film.⁴⁰ Lionsgate’s strategy was to use social media to

---

³⁴ Tryon, 124f.
³⁵ Tryon, 125. Jenkins’s and Lévy’s definitions of collective intelligence: Jenkins, Convergence Culture, 281f.
³⁶ Leslie Hartsman, president and chief creative officer, Hooplah Inc: Green, (01:40).
³⁷ Green, (01:10).
³⁹ Kerrigan, 123 and 222f. See also: Finney, 133f. Wasko (2011), 310f.
⁴⁰ Tryon, 125. Barnes, (March 18, 2012).
empower the fans, and traditional media to create a “mass appeal”. In the analysis of Lionsgate’s campaign it is important to have in mind that the purpose of marketing materials is to position the film in the mind of the potential audience.

Lionsgate were able to incorporate traditional marketing techniques into their online efforts. Lionsgate used social networks and the fans to amplify traditional marketing online and made them all “work in tandem”. For example, the marketing team made the release of each character’s poster into online events, partly by driving people to tweet from the posters. Actors or “stars” are important components of film marketing campaigns, and in the case of THG the fans’ interest was probably enhanced by their eager to see how the adaption of the book would come out. Kerrigan writes that although film posters often are ascribed the status of art works, it is important to consider posters as an advertisement text.

Lionsgate posted a new online poster every week, or every other week. This reflects their strategy to constantly give the fans new things to “play with” to keep the buzz alive through the whole campaign. Just the week before the opening weekend, Lionsgate introduced a new Facebook game and a virtual tour of the capitol in a web partnership with Microsoft. Marketers often try to create buzz for a film in whatever way possible as a film nears completion.

An illustrative example of how Lionsgate integrated their television exposure with the online campaign was when Josh Hutcherson appeared on Good Morning America to introduce the first trailer in front of a crowd of screaming fans. Both the trailer and the TV-clip were simultaneously available online. It was a big advantage for Lionsgate to have both clips simultaneously shared on the web with specific hashtags. Lionsgate’s release of the first trailer became a “viral success” that received eight million views within its first 24 hours

91 Green, (04:40). “The blockbuster strategy” is based on the theory that motion picture audiences choose movies according to how heavily they are advertised: De Vany, 122f.
92 Kerrigan, 128f.
93 Kerrigan, 128f.
94 Kerrigan, 82.
95 Ibid., 129f.
96 Green, (02:50) and (03:35).
97 Barnes, (March 18, 2012). See also: Green, (02:50).
98 Wasko (2003), 194. See also: Drake, 70.
100 Karnel.
In the age of Youtube, social media and “platform mobility” can the film trailer be seen as the ideal promotion tool for a film. De Palma says that Palen best described Lionsgate’s use of both more traditional and new marketing techniques:

He said it was just the perfect storm where everything just aligned and really kind of had to feed off each other. So, I really don’t think one over the other is more important. I really do think that they had to complement each other.

This reflects the mentioned theories of the importance of both marketing strategies in the digital age. It was important for Lionsgate to have a planned out schedule to keep the buzz alive through the year-long campaign. However, they also allowed for changes along the way in order to adjust and optimize according to fan reactions. Room for both participation and improvisations is today often built into franchises with the fan base in mind. Through postings on Facebook the marketing team learned what the audience liked the most, and the constant tweeting made it possible for them to gauge engagement. The postings that seemed to work best were fan created content and posts mentioning Peeta’s name. According to De Palma, whether it was people retweeting or responding to them, the marketing team were able to steer the conversation and always had the next goal in mind.

In April 2012, De Palma says that with *THG* playing strong in the box office, two more movies to come and an upcoming DVD-release, the marketing campaign at Lionsgate continues:

Everybody [in the core fanbase] has seen the film now. Fans want to be able to continue to share with friends their excitement for the film. [The ongoing campaign] gives them something
tangible to continue to spread the word online and to share with friends that maybe haven’t seen the film yet or haven’t read the books.\textsuperscript{108}

\textit{THG} had at the time more than 6.5 million followers between Facebook, Twitter, Youtube and Tumblr. De Palma concludes, “We have to continue to communicate with these fans and to keep them engaged. I’m sure as we move into production of the next film, it’ll be starting all over again.”\textsuperscript{109}

The day before \textit{THG} premiered, Lionsgate posted videos where Josh Hutcherson and Liam Hemsworth thanked the fans for supporting the film.\textsuperscript{110} They also expressed their hopes for the fans to go and see the movie in theaters, followed by another view of the film trailer.

\textsuperscript{108} The interview was published in April 2012: Karpel. See also: Barnes, (March 18, 2012). Theatrical releases also function as promotion for the film in other windows, such as DVDs: Drake, 72. See also: Wasko (2003), 107.
\textsuperscript{109} Karpel.
\textsuperscript{110} Josh and Liam play Peeta and Gale in \textit{THG}.
4. Fandom as Free Labor

4.1 Lionsgate’s Viral Marketing Campaign as Fan Labor

In the anthology *Digital Labor: Internet as Playground and Factory* scholars are thinking about the activation of user’s behaviors on the social web as monetizable and unwaged labor.\(^{111}\) This is an interesting theory to consider in relation to Lionsgate’s marketing campaign that explicitly was structured and designed with the fans’ participation and interaction in mind. Scholz writes that the argument about digital labor is frequently challenged “because in opposition to traditional labor, casual digital labor looks merely like the expenditures of cognitive surplus, the act of being a speaker within communication systems. It doesn’t feel, look, or smell like labor at all.”\(^{112}\) The internet is, however, intensively subjugated to corporate interest. Even peer-to-peer sharing among internet users often takes place on corporate turf and creates capital for the holders of those platforms.\(^{113}\)

De Kosnik argues that fan contributions on the internet constitute unauthorized marketing for a wide variety of commodities and should be regarded as labor. Fan production can be valued as a new form of publicity and advertising practiced by volunteers that corporations need, and should not be dismissed as insignificant.\(^{114}\) De Kosnik draws on Tiziana Terranova’s theories that calls fandom a form a “free labour”, which constitute many creative activities that produces content for the internet.\(^{115}\) Terranova defines “free labour” as the tendency of users to become actively involved in the production of content and software on the internet.\(^{116}\) Free labor is a feature of the cultural economy at large, and an important source of value in advanced capitalist societies.\(^{117}\)

The relationship between fans and producers in the digital age has at least indirectly benefited powerful corporations. Like in the case of *THG* can producers benefit from productive fan consumers by indirectly monetizing user-generated content for promotional

---


\(^{112}\) Scholz, 2.

\(^{113}\) Ibid., 7f.

\(^{114}\) De Kosnik, 98f. See also: Kozinets, 171f.


\(^{116}\) Terranova, 4.

\(^{117}\) Terranova, 73f. See also: De Kosnik, 99.
The internet has facilitated the production of gifts and the exchange mechanism among fan communities, and producers seek ways to profit from the mass of user-generated content as digital technologies have increased the circulation of fans’ work publicly to a wider audience. This have made some worry about the fact that internet also has facilitated the capacity for commercial exploitation. Pearson asks if the legitimacy bestowed to fans for showing their productions on recognizable media outlets might lure fans out of previously closed networks into the arms of powerful corporations. This is interesting to consider in relation to Lionsgate’s campaign that explicitly used fan created content for promotional purposes on their social network sites and Youtube channel. Posts containing fan created content were among the most popular updates that attracted most attention on THG’s social media sites. The fan activities on Facebook that already were established around the book series were also incorporated into Lionsgate’s viral campaign.

4.2 Fandom and Commodity Culture

In this discussion on fan labor, it is important to understand why fans choose to spend time and energy on objects like THG, and why they may not want to consider their activities as labor. One explanation can be Jenkins’s theory that fans choose to work on objects because they experience a multiplicity of affect when engaging with them. The fascination that fans feel for these objects mean that they must continue to salvage them for their own interest. The fans’ interest for the film adaption of THG was probably enhanced by their already established affection for the book series.

De Kosnik argues that Jenkins’s theories helps us to grasp that from a fan’s perspective, there is a clear separation between the fans’ labor on a commodity and the labor of the producer of that commodity. The distance between the fan laborer and the official producer contribute to the notion that fans don’t see themselves as laborers. Fans’ work on objects is not for the marketplace or average fans, but for themselves and other fans. Because

---

119 De Kosnik, 105. See also: Pearson, 87.
120 Pearson, 87. Scott raises similar questions in her article: Scott, 210-223. See also: Brooker, Russo and Mann: Mann, 25.
121 Karpel.
122 De Kosnik, 102.
fans don’t consider themselves motivated by financial gain in the same way as official producers, many think of their motives as purer that those and above questions of market value, advertising and sales.\textsuperscript{123}

Matt Hills argues that fans are in fact essential components of the capitalist system within which official producers operate.\textsuperscript{124} Knowledge cultures like the fan culture around \textit{THG} never fully escapes the influence of commodity culture.\textsuperscript{125} Hills mean that there is an inherent contradiction in seeing fandom as anti-consumerist:

While simultaneously “resisting” norms of capitalist society and its rapid turnover of novel commodities, fans are also implicated in these very economic and cultural processes. Fans are, in one sense, “ideal consumers” [...] since their consumption habits can be very highly predicted by the culture industry, and are likely to remain stable. But fans also express anti-commercial beliefs (or “ideologies”, we might say, since these beliefs are not entirely in alignment with the cultural situation in which fans find themselves).\textsuperscript{126}

Hills views fandom as having two competing aspects: the “anti-commercial ideology” side and the “commodity-completest” side.\textsuperscript{127} Even though fans spend both time and money on their objects of fandom, they don’t think of these objects as commodities.\textsuperscript{128} This can reflect the inherent contradiction of film critics, whose reviews can function as a form of publicity that creates economic and cultural value for a film, even though critics may not want to consider themselves marketers.\textsuperscript{129} This anti-commercial ideology can, however, prevent fans from considering that their work might increase the value of the object of fandom and be deserving compensation.\textsuperscript{130}

4.3 The Relationship between Producers and Fans

Terranova refers to free labor as the excessive activity that makes the internet a thriving hyperactive medium. The digital economy requires a constant need for updating and is

\textsuperscript{123} De Kosnik, 103.
\textsuperscript{124} Hills, 127ff. See also: Johnson, 203.
\textsuperscript{125} Jenkins, \textit{Fans, Bloggers, and Gamers}, 144f.
\textsuperscript{126} Hills, 29. See also: De Kosnik, 104. Kozinets, 165.
\textsuperscript{127} Hills, 28 and 35. See also: De Kosnik, 104. This touches on the mentioned academic discussion on the definition of fans as mainstream and commercial or subcultural and anti-commercial: Stein, Jenkins, Ford, Green, Booth, Busse, Click, Ford, Li and Ross, 152-177.
\textsuperscript{128} De Kosnik, 105.
\textsuperscript{129} Stéphane Debenedetti, “The Role of Media Critics in the Cultural Industries”, \textit{International Journal of Arts Management} 8, nr 3 (Spring 2006), 30, 32 f and 37.
extremely labor-intensive. This maps the discussion of fan labor. Fans’ work to update existing products and contribute with new material refreshes the product or website, which creates consumer demand and keep users coming back. THG’s fans constantly discussed and shared new content related to the film online. An explicit example of this is Lionsgate’s campaign where elected mayors were assigned the task to keep the districts’ Facebook pages updated with new content and information. Just in order to be elected mayor, fans had to share promotional content online. The fans’ unpaid labor in spreading and creating THG related content and refresh the product would have been a labor-intense and expensive project for Lionsgate if the same amount of work had been done by paid employees.

As De Kosnik writes, it is important to underline that free labor not necessarily means exploited labor. Fans often invest time, energy and creativity in making, sharing and discussing film related content for “pleasures of communication and exchange”, and do not feel that their labor is imposed. Terranova refers to internet as a “gift economy”, which is one framework that affinity groups use to characterize their modes of exchange without pay. However, although fans don’t feel that their work deserves compensations, their activities can create a great deal of economic value. Users’ activities on social networks today numbers in millions and can contribute to significant corporate revenues.

In keeping with Hills’s theories, it is therefore problematic to view fandom as an alternative regime to capitalism. This is underlined by the industrial perception of fans as ideal consumers. Pearson argues that a polarized picture between fan community and gift economy on the one hand, and industrial corporate interest and commodity culture on the other, fails to account for the complexity of the contemporary symbiotic relationship between fans and producers. This touches on Jenkins’s concept of convergence culture, where the relationship between producers and consumers is being redefined in the digital age, and is more complex and contradictory than a top-down perspective. Industries and producers will try to protect their interests on the web, but the audience is also gaining greater control and

131 Terranova, 73f and 90. See also: Johnson, 203.
132 De Kosnik, 105.
133 De Kosnik, 106. See also: Terranova, 93f.
134 De Kosnik, 106. See also: Hills, 165. Jenkins, Fandom, 361.
135 De Kosnik, 106.
136 Kozinets, 164ff. See also: Jenkins, Fandom, 361. Hills, 29.
138 Jenkins, Fans, Bloggers, and Gamer, 1f.
influence due to new technologies. Illustrative for this is that fans often are celebrated by film studios as long as their activities recognize industrial legal ownership over the object of fandom. This applies to Jenkins’s statement that the interactive audience is “more than a marketing concept and less than a semiotic democracy.”

It is, however, problematic to conclude that the activities performed by THG’s fan base should be called labor that demands compensation. One reason is that even though companies understand that their products need fans and followers in the digital age, fandom is still widely categorized as pure leisure outside the “serious” realm of work. This contributes to fans’ own perception of their activities as anti-commercial, and prevents them from seeking compensation. Interesting to this, Johnson writes that consumer labor in the production relation of franchising often is masked by subjectives of play that obscures the economic power relation underpinning that collaboration. Many of Lionsgate’s promotional events were designed as “games” and “challenges” with prices and rewards, akin to the epithet of play and distanced from any aspect of work.

Another factor that complicates these questions is the uncertainty of how much revenue fan activities actually generate for companies. This makes it difficult for fans to seek payment on a commission or revenue-sharing model. This is further complicated by the mentioned problems of measuring word of mouth impact on consumer purchases and that a number of factors can contribute to sales. As THG’s campaign exemplifies, fan created content often merge with the stream of official promotional materials, which makes it impossible to tell which percentage of sales that was a result of the fans’ efforts versus those of the paid corporate marketers. It is also problematic to claim that the marketing campaign for THG would have had the same result or drawn as much attention online without the strategic marketing techniques and the work done by Lionsgate’s team. Lionsgate contributed to foster and activate the fan culture online and kept them engaged throughout the campaign, which increased fan activity and the buzz around THG online.

---

139 Jenkins, *Fans, Bloggers, and Gamers*, 136. See also: Jenkins, *Convergence Culture*, 3 and 243.
140 Gray, Sandvoss, Harrington, 4. Pearson writes about the question of fan production and copyright law: Pearson, 90f.
142 De Kosnik, 108.
143 Johnson, 216 and 229f.
144 De Kosnik, 109.
145 Kerrigan, 116.
146 De Kosnik, 109.
5. Conclusion and Further Research

The aim of this essay was twofold. Firstly, to analyze and describe how Lionsgate used new marketing techniques and the online fan base in their viral campaign for *THG*. Secondly, to ask to what extent the fans’ contributions to the viral campaign can be called fan labor.

Firstly, the essay has hopefully in dialogue with academic research contributed to a broader understanding of how studios like Lionsgate can use digital technologies and social media for film marketing purposes. Lionsgate’s marketing campaign exemplifies many of the new marketing techniques associated with viral marketing, like the importance to create online word of mouth and to establish a two-way communication with the target audience. The study shows that the digital age complicates the binary division between producer and consumers, and that a study of film industrial marketing practices calls for a nuanced picture of how producers operate. However, the analysis also shows that many of the more traditional film marketing techniques still play an important part, and can be supplemented by and integrated with online marketing. This underlines that new marketing techniques shouldn’t be seen as a wholesale departure from traditional film marketing.

Secondly, the analysis also shows that Lionsgate’s use of the online fan base corresponds with many characteristics of digital labor and raises questions whether the fans’ participation can be called labor. There is no easy answer to these questions, and it demands a broad understanding of how the relationship between gift economies and commodity culture constitute the digital age. A polarized picture between fan communities and corporate interests fail to account for the complexities that characterize the interactions that occur between fans and producers today. Both the industry and the audience have an interdependent relationship and bargaining power in their immaterial labor negotiations, and fans cannot be reduced to “capitalist dupes”. As research show, it is, however, clear that the increased circulation of fan created content on the internet and its capacity for commercial exploitation calls for further investigations. This essay can hopefully contribute and inspire to further studies of these questions.

Due to the limited space, there are also further research questions in relation to *THG* that had to be left out of this essay. For example, an interesting question in relation to film

---

147 Russo, 99.
148 De Kosnik, 105. See also: Pearson, 85-89.
marketing can be how Lionsgate’s marketing strategies changed and developed for the second movie *The Hunger Games: Catching Fire* (Francis Lawrence, 2013). Lionsgate spent nearly twice as much on its budget for the second movie and were also able to secure more promotional partners after the success of the first movie in the franchise. Another interesting subject is how THG’s tricky story about children killing each other affected the marketing materials and the marketing strategies, and how/if that in turn affected the reception of the movie. For example, Palen says that Lionsgate made the rule to never say “23 kids get killed”, and instead focused on the more selling formulation “only one wins”. The marketing team also decided not to show any violence in the marketing materials, so that the audience had to buy tickets in order to see the actual games. When THG premiered in the U.S. it caused debate whether it was a suitable film for a younger audience. A study of these subjects can raise interesting questions around film industrial marketing practices and the relations between film, film marketing and the society at large.

The study also illustrates the importance of looking beyond the mere film text in order to understand a film’s life cycle and its circulation in different social, cultural, industrial and technological contexts. THG’s circulation from book to media franchise and through the marketing campaign exemplifies that a film’s reception and meaning is formulated in a web


151 Barnes, (March 18, 2012).

Barnes, (March 18, 2012). See also: Green, (04:00).


*THG* also caused some headlines in Sweden:

of different relationships and paratextual activities. Relationship building activities are a central part of viral marketing, and understanding these relationships can be very complex. It is the interactions between consumers and producers, among media consumers, and consumers and media texts. Internet allows these relationship building activities to extend further in space and time, which is prominent in Lionsgate’s marketing campaign that started to form in 2009 and still continues for the following films in the franchise. This calls for a holistic view of film marketing as a process that may begin once the idea for a film is formulated, and that reaches beyond the film text. This essay hopefully illustrates that the interchange between fan studies, marketing research and consumer culture research can provide a fruitful ground for the study of these relationships in the digital age.


155 Kerrigan, 222f.

156 Jenkins, *Fans, Bloggers, and Gamers*, 135f.

157 Kerrigan, 147 and 222f.

158 Kozinets, 170.
6. List of Literature

Films

*The Hunger Games* (Gary Ross, 2012)
*The Hunger Games: Catching Fire* (Francis Lawrence, 2013)

Books


Mann, Denise. “Introduction: When Television and New Media Work Worlds Collide”. In


**Academic Articles**


http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15405700903502346  
(Controlled June 13, 2014).


**Internet News Articles/Videos**


Acuna, Kirsten. “Why Lionsgate Spent Nearly Twice as Much on ‘The Hunger Games’ Sequel”. Internet magazine Financial Post, published November 1, 2013,  

Barack, Lauren. “Lions Gate Doubles Down on *The Hunger Games*”. Internet magazine CNN


Paul, Pamela. “Peer Pressure? How About, Like, Fighting to Death?”. Internet magazine New
York Times, published March 9, 2012:

Pols, Mary. “Why I’m NOT Taking My 8-Year Old To The Hunger Games”. Internet magazine Time, published March 22, 2012,

Rae Orsini, Lauren. “Interactive Marketing Tool For ‘The Hunger Games’ Gives Control To Fans”. News website The Daily Dot, published November 15, 2011, 

Rishwine, Lisa. ”’Hunger Games’ Gorges on $214 Million Global Debut”. Internet magazine Reuters, published March 25, 2012, 


Vinjamuri, David. ”’The Hunger Games’: Why Lionsgate Is Smarter Than You”. Internet magazine Forbes, published March 22, 2012, 

**Other Internet Sources**


The Box Office Mojo, “The Hunger Games”, Website Box Office Mojo, 
http://boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=main&id=hungergames.htm
(Controlled June 13, 2014).

TheCapitol.pn, Lionsgate’s website, 

The New York Times, Lionsgate’s Facebook page for THG, 
http://www.nytimes.com/imagepages/2012/03/19/business/HUNGER4.html
(Controlled June 13, 2014).

The New York Times, Lionsgate’s puzzle challenge, 
(Controlled June 13, 2014).

The Numbers, “The Hunger Games”, 
http://www.the-numbers.com/movie/Hunger-Games-The#tab=summary
(Controlled June 13, 2014).

The Numbers, “The Hunger Games: Catching Fire”, 
http://www.the-numbers.com/movie/Hunger-Games-Catching-Fire-
The#tab=summary (Controlled June 13, 2014).

The Numbers, “Movie Budgets: All”: 

Scholastic Media Room, “The Hunger Games Trilogy”, 

Twitter, @TheCapitolPN’s, published November 14, 2011,


