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Star image distribution in the age of social media

Description

How social media has influenced the relationship between stars and fandom.

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Stars have played a paramount role in securing the financial success of **Hollywood** films since the dawn of time. Having the names of so called â??**A-List celebrities**â?• such as Robert Downey Jr., Chris Pratt or Dwayne â??The Rockâ?? Johnson, printed onto movie posters have considerably boosted the chances of a film becoming a hit with the audience.But why exactly is this the case? And why do well-known actors get paid more than newbies do in the entertainment industry?

Stars as icons: â??The Rockâ??

Simply put, established stars are extremely **recognizable** and **iconic** to us consumers: We are constantly exposed to stars through the media and further spread our knowledge about our favorite celebrities through word of mouth. We talk about celebrity A and celebrity B splitting up (yet again) and how celebrity C is such a genuinely good person for donating money to a good cause. So basically, we associate specific social values and characteristics with stars through the information we obtain from various sources and media outlets. All this constitutes the **image** of a #star or in other words the way in which we, as consumers, perceive them. So, when we go to the movies and recognize the face of an actor we kinda know what to expect from him.

Letâ??s take a look at a contemporary and very well-known film star for example:

Ex-professional wrestler turned Hollywood actor Dwayne â??The Rockâ?? Johnson has been a household name in Hollywood in the past decade. But you wouldnâ??t really expect him to play the lead in a romantic comedy now, would you? This pretty much comes down to the fact that he has been mainly involved in action films â?? with a few notable exceptions such as Tooth Fairy (2010) â?? throughout his career. Outside of his films he is portrayed as a **likable badass** whoâ??s worked really, really hard to get to where he is now â?? yeah, heâ??s pretty much the epitome of the **American Dream**.

Social media

This is the part where **social media** kicks in â?? sorry for the lengthy introduction btw! Before we had our very own (semi-)personalized, online social networks in the form of Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, all the information we obtained about celebrities came from third party media outlets such as gossip magazines, film interviews and radio or television. Now in the age of social media we are directly connected to the celebrities that we choose to follow. This means that we get information and insights into their private lives outside of their professions directly from them â?? if the account isnâ??t run by

some publicist that is. This further means that stars â?? and their PR team â?? are now for the very first time in history capable of managing and shaping their own images by interacting with the public on social media: Theyâ??ve become their very own obnoxious **paparazzi**.

The good old studio system

To put this into perspective, letâ??s take a trip down memory lane all the way back to the glorious 20s and the glamorous **studio system**. Back in the day, stars were contractually obliged to have their images produced and managed directly by the studios. Studios paid close attention to keep their starsâ?? images in accordance with their **on-screen characters** to maintain **continuity**. In order to accomplish this, studios even set up interviews in which they specifically instructed their stars what to say and how to behave. So, the construction of a star image had to be carefully and specifically prepared in advance.

Ultimately, if the studios proposed a star that the audience did not want to see the movies in which those stars starred in would naturally flop. In this sense, the making of a star is kind of a **democratic procedure** â?? and even more so in social media. Eventually, the studios gave up this approach of carefully nourishing and producing stars, which lead to actors becoming responsible for their own images.

With the rise of social media stars possess greater tools for managing their own images with a system that allows for immediate feedback in the form of **likes, shares and follows.** #socialmedia #therock.



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Category

1. Venice International Film Festival

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