

## Reality TV Formats as Multimedia Brands:

Affective Economics & Effective  
Revenue Generation

- What is produced?
- Who is involved?
- Consequences?



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My research background: Internationalisation of television in terms of production, distribution and consumption. In the past five years I have focused in particular on TV Formats, looking at their employment in prime-time schedules, at international trade flows and (through trade journal analysis and interviews with producers) at formats' local adaptations. Why are formats localised? In which ways? To what degree? Who is involved and how conscious are those involved of these decisions? In recent months I have started doing focus groups with colleagues in Denmark, Finland and Germany to find out how viewers make sense of 'nationally labeled' talent shows, such as Britain's Got Talent, Next Top Model, the Voice of.... Our particular interest in this is to establish how important the 'local elements' are to viewers and their enjoyment of the show, how aware they are of the fact that they are watching an international franchise and whether they also watch other international versions. In addition, I have begun looking at the increase and success of multiplatform reality TV format brands and this is what I want to talk about for the next 5-10 minutes, addressing the questions 'What is being produced? Who and what is involved? and the possible impact this has on production relationships but maybe also format protection.

The staple genre of the format business is reality TV. Formats such as The Kardashians, The Only Way is Essex, but also talent shows, involving 'ordinary people', such as The XFactor, have successfully created strong brands by establishing a wide-ranging multiplatform presence and importantly offering extensive social media activity. These programmes have not only managed to create a buzz that attracts large live audiences—which are important in today's attention economy-- but have also created the potential for viewer agency and for emotional engagement. This in turn creates loyal audiences. Moreover, with their affective economics approach and the successful creation of 'lovemarks' (Roberts 2005) the producers have much enhanced the potential for ancillary revenues.

According to affective economics theory (Jenkins 2006, Roberts 2005), the ideal consumer is active, emotionally engaged and socially networked. For broadcasters, social media are the latest tool to achieve this. Social TV (the intersection between social media and TV) is hugely popular with young people and broadcasters benefit in that it allows for a deeper emotional engagement with the text. Also, as word-of-mouth marketing, it helps strengthen the brand. Keeping Up with the Kardashians and The Only Way is Essex show us how its done effectively and how producers, broadcasters and brand partners all seem to benefit from formats like these.

- Family-based reality TV
- Launched 2007
- E!Entertainment
- People's choice award for guilty pleasure

## KEEPING UP WITH ...



- Structured reality (ITV2)
- Launched 2011
- Lime Pictures/All3Media
- Audience share of 5-6%
- BAFTA audience award

Keeping Up... follows the life of Kris Jenner and her husband Bruce Jenner (a former Olympian), Kris' children Kim, Kourtney, Khloe and Rob from her first marriage to Robert Kardashian (renowned for being O.J Simpsons lawyer), and Kris' and Bruce's children Kendal and Kylie. The show which is broadcast on E!Entertainment has various spins offs on TV (including *Kourtney and Kim take Miami*, *Kourtney and Kim take New York*, or *Khloe and Lamar*. In addition, Kris Jenner launched her own chat show this summer.) The spin-offs help strengthen the brand and keep the audience glued. It is notable, for example, that the shows are aired very closely to one another; as one show ends another starts very soon. Of course each is also used to promote the other actively. In addition to the spin-offs, there are specials like the two-part E! special, "Kim's Fairytale Wedding," which told the story of the run-up to Kim Kardashian's (short-lived) marriage to NBA player Kris Humphries.

*The Only Way is Essex* (TOWIE) is a British 'structured' reality show broadcast on ITV2 twice a week. The 50-minute 'dramality' series (said to be inspired by MTV's *The Hills*) follows the trials and tribulations of a group of real-life suburban Essex boys and girls in their twenties, notable for their fake tans, fierce cleavages and their obsession with their next date or sexual encounter. The show, which was launched in 2011 and since then has seen 10 series broadcast, has been a huge success for ITV2. With an audience share of around 5-6% (BARB 2013), it is one of the channel's most high profile programmes. In 2011 it also received the BAFTA audience prize by a record number of votes, beating the NBC-bankrolled UK period drama *Downton Abbey*, the BBC hit *Sherlock*, and the critics' favourite, Danish crime drama *The Killing*.


Both shows extend the text very effectively online and have created ample opportunities to develop a strong emotional engagement with the show.

## Social Media

Keeping Up With The Kardashians on E! shared a link.  
3 hours ago · 49

Kanye West wanted Kim Kardashian's diamond to "look like it was floating on air."  
<http://eonline.com/178n5Rb>

Get all the details on how Kanye picked out this gorgeous engagement ring! #Kimye




Kim Kardashian's Engagement Ring: Kanye Wanted the Diamond to Look Like It Was Floating on Air  
[eonline.com](http://eonline.com)


When it came to picking out a ring for Kim Kardashian, Kanye West knew exactly who to turn to. La...

Like · Comment · Share 138

13,871 people like this.

View previous comments 2 of 367

 **Isabella Matthews** Nice to know he make her happy! But is she still married to Kris? 5 minutes ago · Like

 **Diane Ivicic** Adorable couple 2 minutes ago · Like

- Daily updates
- Website(s)
- Live web chats
- Online spin-offs
- Facebook
- Instagram
- Twitter


**TOWIE**

> 1m followers


125,000 tweets in a day

### Tweets: Arg's naked truth

@JamesArgent · 21 OCT 2013




Arg was in thick of the action in episode five. He had us (and himself) in hysterics as the drawing class and then faced off with Gemma over his claims that he slept her in Vegas. Here's what he had to say about it all. Keep reading and you'll also find out who Martin's slept with...

 **James Argent** [@JamesArgent](#)

Me in [@JamesArterton](#)'s gill: laughing from life drawing class! Sometimes harsh things get said in the heat of the moment, sorry Gem! x #TOWIE

21:08 - 20 October 2013 Retweet · Reply · Favorite


It seems Arg's adamant he had fun times with Gem in the U.S...

 **James Argent** [@JamesArgent](#)

Thanks for the great tweets and support. More great stuff to come from me and Diags! The truth always come out in the end, I learnt that!

23:26 - 20 October 2013 Retweet · Reply · Favorite

I would love the life drawing class but I wish who Arg and Diags attracted the attention of... were being themselves...

 **Same McCain** [@samemccain](#)

[@JamesArgent](#) [@JamesArterton](#) funniest scene he ever seen

The bi-weekly TOWIE has a website which offers daily on-line updates whilst the show is on air, episode guides, photo and biographies. Also, there is an online spin-off, *Fresh Out Of Essex*, filling the void when the show is off-air. Probably the most important textual extension though are Facebook and the extensive Twitter activities of the cast members. Once an episode has finished, a cast member holds a live web chat over Twitter, Facebook and TOWIE's official website. During each episode TOWIE cast members also encourage viewers to tweet their thoughts on the show and some of this is then read out before the advertising breaks. The regular cast members of *The Only Way is Essex* have over a million followers, and in April this year, trade journal *Broadcast* reported that TOWIE was the most tweeted about TV show at the time. 75,000 users had posted nearly 125,000 messages on the day of the final episode, a 7.5% conversion rate of the 1m live TV audience who tweeted about it (Broadcast 2013).

What is also noteworthy here is the, for this age group, surprisingly large live audience. The fact that the audience prefers to watch the show live and simultaneously tweet about it suggests that Twitter is driving the ratings of TV shows like TOWIE.

Like in the case of TOWIE, social networking sites also provide important platforms for the Kardashians to engage with their fans. Through the extensive posting of personal content via Twitter, Facebook and Instagram fans receive further insight into the family members' personal lives. As you can see above, Kim is sharing plans for her second wedding. The Kardashians also hold online chats with their fans.

It is not only direct engagement with the shows, their various textual extensions and the cast members that seem to turn these shows into lovemarks. Merchandising products, too, evoke excitement and emotional engagement and strengthen the brand. They become an integral and importantly welcome part of the show.



**Branding**  
Consumer merchandise

<http://www.bbc.com/1/programmes/towie>

**Indirect**  
Cast publicity through

- PR & publicity stunts
- TV Circuit, e.g. *chat shows*  
*Dancing With the Stars*  
*The Apprentice, 90210*

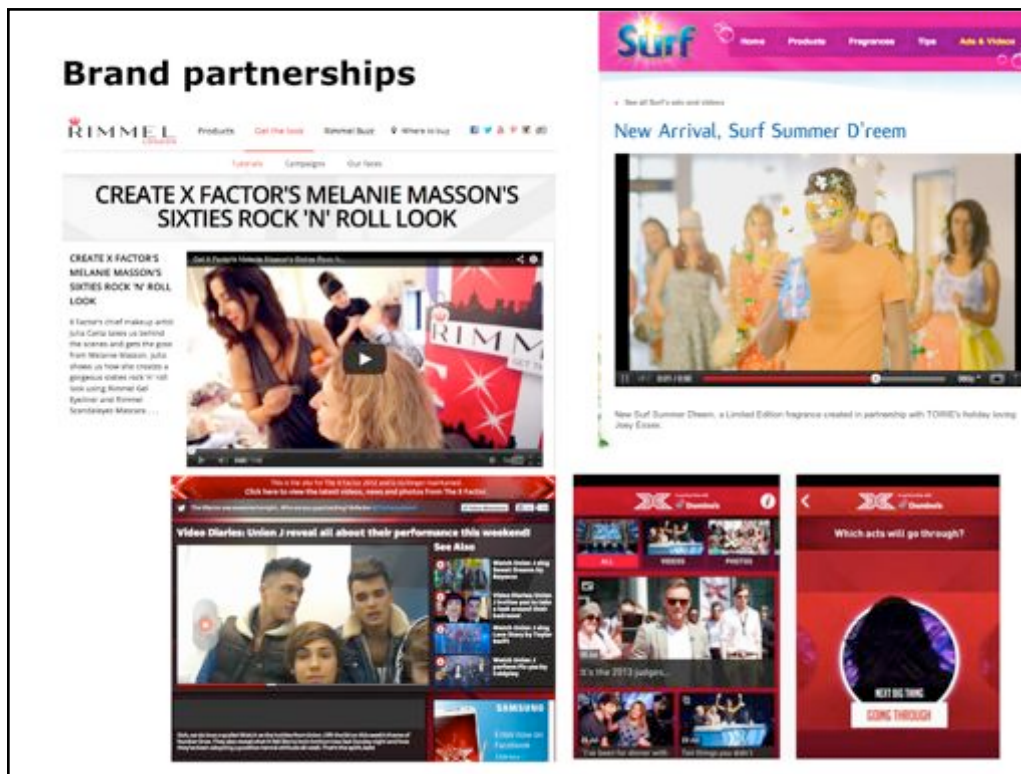
One of my student,s who is a guilty Kardashian fan, believes that the purchase of Kardashian products strengthens fans' connection with the Kardashians as they feel they have purchased something personally made by the Kardashian sisters. A participant in a focus group conducted by another student declared that she uses the Kardashian website not just to see what will happen in the programme's next episode but also to find out about the *Kardashian's* latest clothing line and their next business endeavour. Affective economics have clearly worked here and a Lovemark has been created for a brand that strongly links a TV programme and consumer products.

To help create a strong brand the producers of the Only Way is Essex, Lime Pictures, ensured that the show was not only known by its full title but also by its acronym *TOWIE*. Various consumer products associated with the brand including perfume and eyelashes feature the TOWIE acronym on their packaging. Moreover, catchphrases and slang used by the show's participants are promoted to strengthen brand identity. For example, one of the most well-known words associated with the show is the word "reem" introduced by character Joey Essex. Reem means 'cool' and has apparently become common slang amongst not only viewers of the show but also the general British public. Its cultural clout has led to a perfume called "reem" and a music video called reem performed by Joey Essex.

The Kardashians' have a range of boutiques ('Dash'), a fassion line (Kardashian Kollection), cosmetics (Kroma Beauty), Jewellery and Nail polish. The stores often feature in the shows and the launch of the Kardashian Kollection in London was also shown.

Both brands, TOWIE and The Kardashians , are further strengthened through the casts frequent appearances in other media texts. Rob and Kim Kardashian, for instance, have participated in *Dancing with the stars*, Khloe Kardashian has been on *The Apprentice*, and Kim and Khloe have appeared in a popular American teen drama (*90210*), where they are shown selling clothes from their boutique to one of the characters. When the Kardashian Kollection was launched in London, the British *XFactor* contestants were invited to the launch party, securing greater publicity. Moreover, clips of the contestants at the launch were shown in the primetime *XFactor* programme, at the time reaching about 30% of the British TV audience.

In addition to strengthening the brand and audience loyalty, both merchandising products and guest appearances also add revenue of course. And the potential for revenue is further increased by the involvement of third parties.



TOWIE, for example, has promoted a washing detergent by Surf. It's called "d'reem" and is promoted by Joe Essex. Kim Kardashian and mother Kris are the face of Skechers trainers, and Kim, Kourtney and Khloe have an endorsement deal with Perfect Skin. Kim moreover has endorsement deals with Quick Trim (a weight loss supplement), Shoe Dazzel, Fast food for Carls Jr. and Midori Licquer.

The original British XFactor has had a range of sponsors, including mobile phone manufacturer Nokia, telecomms firm TalkTalk, cosmetics company Rimmel London and pizza chain Domino. Until 2011 the sponsors had dedicated sponsor-owned areas of the website's video section. Since 2012 sponsors receive bespoke, exclusive video for their own websites and social media profiles. Domino has sponsored the new app that allows viewers to act as the fifth judge and to give real-time feedback on performances as they watch the show. As they progress through the game, players will receive Domino's offers via ITV's dual-screen ad format. [The dual-screen format will feature branded games, which offer players Domino's deals and personalised promotional codes based on the success of their gameplay.]

Since 2012 Xfactor UK also has its first legal paid-for product placement deal with South Korean electronics brand Samsung. The company's products have a presence on the main show, the spinoff show *The Xtra Factor* on ITV2, the online video diaries on *The X Factor* website, *The X Factor* Facebook page and *The X Factor* Twitter feed. Contestants are given Samsung phones, tablets and cameras and the finalists use them to talk to their mentors and to record video diaries of their X Factor experience for the website. Off-air and off-broadcast, its products and brand will be displayed on tickets and in-store displays, and for its own new Samsung Galaxy phone, Samsung will launch a dedicated *The X Factor* Android app.

In the US last year, Simon Cowell unveiled a new set of XFactor branded Sony headphones. The shiny silver and red headphones were showcased at the US season premiere of *The X Factor* and featured throughout the programme as the official headphone partner.

## CONCLUSION

Both advertisers and rights holders benefit from partnerships.



Alliances of television with music, fashion, cosmetics and other consumer products will be a defining characteristic of future television programmes.

Complicates rights situation as more parties are involved.

But may also help protect format rights as the expertise needed to see these complex constructions through may be something local adapters are willing to pay for (at least for a while).

In the attempt to turn brands into 'lovemarks' and advertising into news, advertisers are increasingly reliant on celebrities and on providing entertainment. Most of today's celebrities are originally 'made' on television (and more and more often by reality TV shows), and television is the medium that has the most expertise in providing entertainment. Also, links between broadcasters and advertisers already exist. For advertisers, strengthening these links thus must be a logical step.

Broadcasters, or better the right holders, too, benefit. Most importantly, they benefit financially through additional income from sponsorship, product placement and merchandising partnership deals. The (expected) additional income allows them to strengthen their programme brands by getting existing celebrities involved (like the judges on talent shows), embarking on costly textual extensions (website material, Facebook and Twitter engagement), being able to offer sth. of a high production value, and to spend money on the international marketing of the format. International marketing in turn will help protect their brand and increase their revenues from format rights. Moreover, if the brand is known globally, chances grow that large advertisers globally want to be associated with the programme brand which in turn increases revenues.

If we look at the above example, we have to come to the conclusion that alliances of television with music, fashion, cosmetics and all kinds of other consumer products will be a defining characteristic of the future of television and television content. The fiercer competition in the Tv market got, the more advertisers kept pushing for new ways to get their advertising messages across, and the more popular interactive and emotionally engaging reality TV shows proved to be, the greater it seems the merger between television entertainment and consumer product promotion became. As one trade journal commentator noted, when reflecting on how TV should learn from developments in the music industry : "The merchandising, theatre tours and web spaces shouldn't be a by-product - they should be the product itself." I think this trajectory is what will define much of television in the near future and reality TV formats are at the forefront at this. They are perfectly suited for this kind of business model.

In terms of the rights situation, it is likely to complicate matters as even more parties are now involved (brand partners, celebrity brands). On the other hand, it may be exactly the formats' complex structures that make buying the expertise attractive. The more complicated the rights situation, the less easy it is for TV producers to quickly copy a show. Few small local producers have the personal and the legal knowledge to do so. Large international format producers seem much better placed to produce or coproduce them locally, or at least to sell their production expertise in the form of a bible that also includes the partnership constructs and related rights legislation.