Exploring Promotion and Film Culture:

Promotional Materials and the Cultural Spaces of American Indie Film.

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Abstract

The aim of this project is to explore the co-constitutive relationships between promotional activities, the materials that result from them, and American indie film culture of the "Sundance-Miramax" era of independent cinema (circa 1980-2010). It will challenge and expand on the conceptualisation of film cultures as being somehow divorced from the structuring activities of the promotional industries. The utilisation of a spatial lens offers a unique approach that considers how cultures are rendered by promotion in discursive, practical, and material terms. Four case studies of indie promotion are examined through an approach that mixes critical discourse analysis with theories surrounding space, place, and economic geography. Following a historical timeline covering significant formative nodes in indie's development as a film culture, Chapter One explores the relationships between Business-to-Business (B2B) trade press and the developing regional industrial infrastructure from which indie film culture emerged. Chapter Two considers the role of film trailers in discursively and textually forming a unique value proposition for indie films, as standing in some opposition to notions of "mass mainstream" promotion and filmmaking. Chapter Three examines celebrity branding and public relations in fashion magazines, with particular emphasis on the ways that an "indie" star image is formed through place-based and geographic symbols. Last, Chapter Four analyses out-of-home advertising at Sundance Film Festival, to reveal the ways that material advertising and brand image offer conceptual metaphors for learning about the film culture and its structuring practices. Overall, the project offers renewed insights into the history of indie film culture, alongside a new approach with which to consider its mutually productive relationship with promotional industries, its infrastructural development, and the discursive formations that render it into a relatively cohesive cultural and consumer category.

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Acknowledgements

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Introduction: Film Promotion and Indie Film Culture

This project is about the promotional industries, activities, and materials that render American independent cinema—or, "indie"—as a film culture. It offers a somewhat unconventional approach to the exploration of indie, given its alignment with the elements of consumerism and marketing from which it is often distanced in the cultural imaginary. The project is situated in an area of film research that has historically demonstrated a proliferation of academic works (King, 2005, 2009, 2013, 2017; Berra, 2008; Tzioumakis, 2006, 2017; Newman, 2011, 2017; Ortner, 2013, 2017; Perren, 2012), yet even in its divergence from these approaches, springboards from several core understandings about indie's operation as a film culture. It shares, for instance, the conceptualisation of indie as a cultural and consumer category, which is used to describe texts and production practices that are (to varying degrees) distanced from the Hollywood major studios. In this opposition, it is understood to speak to an often uncritically applied notion of standardised "mass mainstream" production. Indie provides an important sense of product differentiation through a spectrum of sensibilities that speak to authenticity and originality, through to more radical notions of counter-hegemony and subculture (King, 2013, p. 2-3). It is demarcated as a distinct phenomenon in comparison to other media forms that share "indie" oppositional sensibilities, such as television, videogames, and music, due to its emergence from a particular nexus of historical, industrial, and cultural phenomena. The film culture is generally considered to have gained coherency during the "Sundance-Miramax era" (Newman, 2011, p. 1), where independent film production became supported by an infrastructure of film festivals, independent distributors, and studio speciality divisions (King, 2005). In scholarly terms, the era is loosely bounded by an approximate timeframe that begins in the mid-to-late 1980s and ends roughly around 2010, during which American independent cinema experienced a prolific phase of production (King et al., 2013, p. 2; Tzioumakis, 2017). While acknowledging these core understandings of indie film culture, this project now diverges to shift focus on promotional industries and texts that are critically under-

represented. Here, promotion—not films—are thought to be at the core of what makes indie a film culture, co-constituting its material, practical, and discursive spaces in a continuous process of negotiation and reformation.

Before moving further into the literature review and methodologies that underpin this work, I will take a moment to explain the convergence of professional experiences that have influenced its scope and perspectives. The case studies that follow indicate a high level of interdisciplinarity, particularly in the ways that branding, advertising, business management theories, and learning are found to co-create meaningful spatial experiences. Namely, my career as a researcher in online advertising, and later as a teacher and learning designer across a range of education and technology sectors, has contributed insights and approaches that combine here to form a distinct theoretical lens for examining the material, discursive, and practical aspects of promotion and film culture.

Between 2017 and 2020—and coinciding with the research, fieldwork, and data collection for this project—I secured a research placement with a global online video advertising company, which was funded by the Consortium for the Humanities & the Arts South-East England (CHASE) Doctoral Training Partnership. My role with the company was to analyse data gleaned through the online advertising platform, to develop insights into what was then a key issue for consumer engagement: audiences interacting with web and social media-based platforms with the sound turned off. As a researcher who was primarily concerned with film and television studies, my skills were applied through semiotic examination of advertising media to uncover formal and stylistic patterns that correlated with viewer engagement. This work resulted in a journal publication that provided recommendations for advertisers and other media producers contending with sound-off viewing environments (Campbell & Pearson, 2019), and later, in a second project that utilised similar methods to investigate the types of viewer engagement and narrative possible in six-second advertising (Campbell & Pearson, 2020). Even as the direct findings of this work are unrelated to the questions posited here, it

remains that the experience was formative in the research design of this project in several ways.

The first was that the promotional texts under consideration—whether trailers, advertisements for a wide range of products, or even calls-to-action videos for charities seeking donations—were considered both in research and in practical terms by creators, analysts, and organisations as central texts, rather than as add-ons to other "primary" media. Bringing advertising to the centre of analytical focus resulted in a necessary divergence from the assessment of perceived cultural value, or of the role of marketing ephemera in rendering taste cultures; both perspectives which tend to dominate scholarly work concerning the role of promotion in film culture (King, 2019; Betz, 2003; Wilinsky, 2001). Instead, regardless of what the subject of the media was (or indeed whether the purpose was informative, for entertainment, or persuasive), the creative direction of each media was to be taken seriously as a textual form that could impact consumer feeling and behaviour using its own distinct and contextual methods. Each type of media could almost be broken down almost into "sub-genres" of advertising that were adapted to different viewing environments, for a range of affective purposes. Insights into how various forms of promotional content is user-tested, and tailored to fit specific spatial contexts, are directly applicable to the approach of this project. Here, each promotional case study is situated within its own social, historical, and geographic context, and further in relation to its position within a broader supply chain for film exhibition and distribution.

Secondly, my professional experience in online advertising was formative in the development of a lexicon and vocabulary that has only been further embedded throughout my career as a learning designer working in the technology and not-for-profit sectors. While generally terms and concepts such as "Business-to-Business (B2B) Marketing", "brand engagement", and "experiential marketing" would perhaps otherwise be more at home in marketing and advertising disciplines, here I have opted to accurately use terms as they present in professional industries more broadly. This is a

deliberate measure, to highlight the practical and discursive convergences between film culture and the range of marketing disciplines that produce promotional campaigns and materials. Rather than simply using the terms, this work is also concerned with the theory, processes and operational strategies that sit behind them, and considers these as necessary for understanding the form, structure, and themes of the promotional activities discussed herein. Together, the perspective offered here indicates that marketing, branding, advertising and the formal, economic, and socio-cultural qualities of visual media are necessarily co-existing and convergent, rather than as separate phenomena.

Last, as a learning designer working across large scale, technology-focused projects, my role has required the integration of learning theories, stakeholder management, branding and marketing strategies, and user experience (UX) design. For clarity, broadly learning designers develop educational experiences, curricula and instructional materials. In my experience, this has entailed end-to-end design of multimedia, interactive gamified content, and the creation of digital platforms that engage learners and improve knowledge and skill outcomes. This work has also necessitated the provision of delivery plans, marketing strategies and branding, to ensure that learning products attain their proposed reach; whether that is within an organisation, or as in the case of one project, for all public schools in Australia. The point is here that in this work, the ability to work collaboratively with stakeholders, and to combine disciplinary and professional perspectives with educational models, is fundamental. For example, principles of user experience (UX) design, such as the use of analytics to assess program effectiveness, co-exist necessarily with concerns for how the spatial experience of learning can be optimised through event planning. The development of learning experiences that engage multiple senses converges with the ways that experiential marketing can be harnessed to create memorable, immersive environments that resonates with attendees. Learning design inspires questions around how one might acquire cultural knowledge and social practices through technological, experiential, branding, and advertising. This interdisciplinarity manifests here through

concerns around the ways that material and discursive spaces are structured in and through promotion, to enhance engagement and convey cultural narratives effectively. Furthermore, this experience has encouraged conceptual linkages between the development of human-centred solutions through stakeholder co-design, with the collaborative efforts involved in the promotional strategies, narratives and events that converge with film products. If I have learned anything from my professional experience, it is that the most unlikely of stakeholders can play a formative role in the overall manifestation and delivery of media, programs, and products. Therefore, this project offers a space where tourism concerns, events management, and business strategy can coincide with learning and pedagogy; where promotion can work alongside geographic concerns to produce cultural forms. It is undoubtedly one of the aims of this work to demonstrate the ways that such interdisciplinary perspectives can offer a range of somewhat unexplored methods and conceptual frames.

This project offers four case studies (or "snapshots") of film promotion, to deepen the understanding of indie and the forces that render it, while making interventions into two issues that hold relevance for media and promotional studies. The first issue is the recognition that film culture isn't solely shaped by films and reception; rather, it emerges from intricate constellations (and experience) of promotional practices and materials. This study seeks to assert the co-constitutive role of promotion in the emergence of film cultures, that as Johnston (2019) points out, have "been part of the commercial film industry for almost as long as there have been films to advertise" (p. 643). It takes the view that cultures, including film culture, do not possess inherent qualities or innate essences that allow them to exist independently of social action (Harbord, 2002). In doing so, it aligns with Williams' (1981) call for cultural materialism, which posits that all forms of material or symbolic signification are socially produced and interrelated phenomena that should be situated within the means and conditions of production (p. 64-5; see also Couldry & Hepp, 2016). Conversely, to consider film texts as being productive of film culture—through some inherently artistic, original quality,

or otherwise—constitute the abstraction of the text from its contexts of social production. Hall (1980) warns that such abstraction, in analytical terms, may lead to the fetishisation of cultural artifacts rather than contributing towards deeper understandings of the systems of power and social action that render them. To borrow Hall's (1980) terminology, this project therefore forms part of an attempt to "make visible" the processes through which certain forms of culture (like indie) become dominant, by situating cultural analysis within socioeconomic relations (p. 27). Ultimately, this approach underscores the significance of promotional practices in shaping film cultures, by analysing the interplay between promotional forms, media production, and spatial relations. By situating film promotion within broader socioeconomic and geographic contexts, the project provides valuable insights into the dynamics that influence the emergence of film culture as a distinct formation.

The second concern of this project relates to a distinct underrepresentation of research that situates promotion within the spatial contexts through which they are rendered and experienced (Johnston, 2019). The material dimensions of promotion—for instance, the situatedness of billboards, the design and architectures of spaces, and the experiential qualities of its events—remains largely unexplored. For Harbord (2002), all the activities that render film culture are firmly grounded in geographic locations, materiality, and socially produced spaces, each of which plays a role in influencing and enabling its various facets to emerge (p. 45). However, the gap in consideration of these elements—both in the study of promotion, and of film culture generally—is correlated to a comparative scarcity of methodologies for approaching, selecting, and analysing such materials within the discipline (Johnston, 2019, p. 643). Even though academic interest in promotional industries, activities and materials has grown, the examination of promotion as forms that are historically situated within networks of social practice, exchange, and geography, remains unexplored territory in film and media studies (Johnston, 2019, p. 643). This project aims to enhance research situated at the intersection of promotion and film culture, by providing breadth and nuance of understanding around the material and conceptual forms that such activities take within cultural landscapes.

The identification of these underpinning concerns—namely, the underrepresentation of promotional studies in the analysis of film culture, and the need for further research that examines the spatial dimensions of promotion—has led to the formation of two propositions that frame the project. The first assumes that promotion, in its multifaceted industrial, practical, and textual manifestations, establishes mutually reinforcing and inextricable relationships with indie film culture. In essence, the project proposes that film culture is moulded, permeated, and brought to life through various forms of promotion that are situated within specific spatial contexts. The second proposition posits that promotional activities, at times deviating from commonly held views about what constitutes as "promotion", continuously reshape both tangible and discursive spatial structures. These structures play a pivotal role in supporting and influencing the social dynamics that define film cultures, particularly in the context of indie.

The central propositions that guide this research are undoubtedly ambitious, and posed with the full recognition that a single work cannot provide findings that apply to every manifestation of promotion and film culture. Indeed, while the term "propositions" is used here to clarify the research focus and objectives of the project, it is also deliberately utilised to signal the investigative lens that has been taken across the case studies. Using the term "proposition" aims to highlight the theoretical and exploratory nature of the project, emphasising that each case study focuses on investigating and understanding complex spatial relationships. Conversely, using terminology such as "research questions" or "problem statements" may run the risk of implying that clear definitive answers can be provided through measurement, analysis, or testing. Undoubtedly, the subject matter and foci of this project are not easily measured or testable, and certainly not applicable to every manifestation of promotion or film culture. However, the following literature review will offer important contextualising factors that demonstrate how these propositions are grounded in (and seek to build upon) existing theories, which will also serve to limit the scope of the project within reasonable means.

First, the review will evaluate concepts and theories surrounding "film cultures", in a manner that works towards a central definition that underpins this work. It will then elucidate the ways that indie can be considered as a film culture, along with the features that have been found to characterise it in pre-existing research. In the second section, the literature review will discuss the term "promotion", defining what precisely demarcates a promotional activity or material. The review will also evaluate common approaches to promotional studies as a sub-discipline of film and media research, and explain the views taken towards the analysis of promotion in this project. Last, the review will explore the ways that promotion and film culture will be considered as spatial and situated phenomena. Although broadly the analysis of spatial dynamics is marked by a certain plurality in terms of converging disciplines and approaches, the review will delineate the core tenets of spatial theory that underpin the project, and that together result in mixed methods and approaches that characterise this work.

Defining (Indie) Film Culture

Film culture encompasses an array of socio-cultural and economic phenomena, including practices, events, discourses, and institutions. Hodson (2002) aptly illustrates its elusive nature, suggesting that it is "just about everywhere" in the discourses surrounding texts and industries, and in the values, activities and institutions that shape it (p. 2). Due to the variety of manifestations that film culture might take, the fluidity of the overarching concept is somewhat essential to its currency as an analytical concept. Harbord (2002) underlines the necessity for contextualisation in the examination of film cultures, arguing that they emerge from specific spatial, contextual, and psychological hierarchies of distinction (p. 2). Film cultures that extend beyond indie, for instance Bollywood, French New Wave cinema, Dogme 95, or Italian Neorealism (to name but a few), encompass diverse styles, perspectives, storytelling traditions, and textual qualities. The diversity of these film cultures can be accounted for due to their emergence from

nexus points of industry and investment, geographic location, histories, national and international politics, and social contexts. Each practice involved in the journey of films through national and international markets— for instance production practices, critical journalism, distribution channels, physical exhibition sites, and of course promotional activities—can serve as a node for cultural analysis (Harbord, 2002, p. 4).

In order to avoid the creation of monolithic narratives that betray the productive diversity of film cultures, scholarly focus tends to be on contextualising and elucidating particular cultural nodes. For instance, Holmes (2005) explains how the character of 1950s British film and television culture was produced through the circulation and exhibition of celebrity "star texts". In an examination of interwar European film culture, Hagener (2014) identifies factors such as film festivals, canons, criticism, archiving, and increasing recognition of film theory, as being critical to the form being "taken seriously". In this specificity, these studies also work to elucidate what film culture is not. It does not involve universal participation, uniform experiences, or linear culminative events that are experienced the same way by all individuals. In some cases, individuals or organisations may not recognise their actions as being part of a specific "film culture"; even as such practices contribute to reinforcing cultural criteria. Instead, film culture can be seen as spatially and temporally situated terrains through which movies, promotion, and their producing organisations circulate and are experienced. Within these terrains, such as those that have come to characterise indie film culture, communities negotiate socio-cultural, textual, and economic expectations, as well as shared values. Considering the need for spatial and temporal specificity around the cultural nodes under examination, the review will now turn to elucidating the terrains that are understood to be fundamental to the operation of indie film culture.

As touched on previously, one of the most prominent attributes thought to demarcate indie film culture (and indie as it pertains to various other media forms) is a relational connection to "mainstream" products. Regarding film, this tension manifests most clearly in a binary construct that pits indie

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against the texts, budgets, and practices of Hollywood major studios, which indie audiences may find a personal sense of distinction in opposing (King, 2006, p. 79). The indie/Hollywood binary sits at the core of discourses that position the film culture and its texts as bastions of "authenticity", "originality", and "artistry", in contrast to the perception of Hollywood as being inauthentically market-driven and standardised (King, 2006, p. 79). Taken further, aligned discourses posit indie as being thought to symbolise truth, reality, and insights into hidden facets of American life, in comparison to the distorted perceptions or "lies" offered by Hollywood (Ortner, 2013, p. 3; King, 2017). Such discourses tend to be most apparent in the portrayal of indie filmmaking as a "movement" (Ortner, 2013, p. 1-2), or a counter-hegemonic "vanguard subculture" (Newman, 2011, p. 2-3). These discourses have been found to serve as a yardstick against which indie films are assessed (Newman, 2011, p. 53), whether through broader cultural and critical dialogues, or through film festivals such as Sundance Film Festival, Telluride, or the Independent Spirit Awards.

However, in a challenge to conceptions of any clear indie/Hollywood binary, the film culture is marked at an industrial level by a closer relationship with major studios than might be expected. In the first instance, defining the majors is a complex endeavour, due to the various mergers, buyouts, synergies, and divisions that typify the industrial landscape. At the beginning of the "Sundance-Miramax era" (in the mid-to-late 1980s), references to Hollywood major studios may have included Warner Bros., Universal Pictures, Twentieth Century Fox, Paramount Pictures, Columbia Pictures, and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (under which United Artists also fell) (King, 2005). It is important to state that this grouping is not based on any sort of definitive measure – indeed, such determinations are rather beside the point. The majors, as referred to here, are based on the perception of disproportional, if not monolithic command over the box office share, and the degree to which studios exercise power and control over integrated systems of production, distribution, and marketing. In an aligned way, demarcating "indie" production along clear industrial lines is complex, given the same propensity for majors to engage in acquisitions in response to economic and

technological opportunity. Miramax, the distributor for canonical indie films such as *sex, lies and videotape* (Steven Soderbergh, 1989) and *Pulp Fiction* (Quentin Tarantino, 1994) was famously acquired by Disney in 1993. Focus Features, producer and distributor of indies such as *Lost in Translation* (Sophia Coppola, 2003), *Brokeback Mountain* (Ang Lee, 2005) and *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (Michel Gondry, 2004), was formed in 2002 through a merger between Universal Pictures, USA Films, and independent distributor Good Machine. Between 2008 and 2011, many of the studio speciality divisions that could be considered to lead the production and/or distribution of indie films – including Warner Independent Pictures, Paramount Vantage, and Miramax– were closed, sold, or merged again into new configurations (King et al., 2013, p. 4). Even from the beginning of the Sundance-Miramax era, indies can be understood as a mechanism through which major studios cater to specific audience segments, provide economic stability through diversification of products, and serve as platforms for emerging talent. The currency of indie as a consumer category therefore relies upon its sense of alterity; a factor that, as this project will demonstrate, promotional activities and materials work hard to render in a wide range of ways.

Apart from clearly illustrating the mutually productive relationships between the major studios and indie (rather than straightforward oppositionality), such merger, acquisition, and closure events are understood in scholarly terms to signal the beginning and end of certain eras or periods of independent production. However, as will be discussed throughout this project, the inclusion of promotion as a central mediator in the film culture can offer some challenge to notions of clear-cut periodisation. Tzioumakis (2013) identifies three distinct eras within American independent cinema: independent, indie, and Indiewood. Independent film, in this scheme, refers to more fringe and arthouse examples of independent cinema, exemplified by *Shadows* (John Cassavetes, 1958), *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (Tobe Hooper, 1974), *Eraserhead* (David Lynch, 1977), and *Killer of Sheep* (Charles Burnett, 1978). Indie is a label adopted by industry analysts, film critics and film-going public from the early 1990s, signalling a shift towards

more commercially recognised expressions (Tzioumakis, 2013). In utilising the nomenclature of the "Sundance-Miramax era", Newman (2011) similarly signals the distinction of this period based on the two key institutions considered integral and formative in bringing it to prominence: the Sundance Institute and film festival, and the independent distributor Miramax (p. 2). The approximate milestones bracketing the indie era are the 1989 Sundance Film Festival, where *sex, lies and videotape* premiered to surprising critical and commercial success, and the aforementioned closure of indie distributors and production companies at the end of the 2000s (Newman, 2011, p. 1). Indiewood emerges as a new configuration or "post-indie" phase that overlaps with the end of the Sundance-Miramax era, and signals "quality filmmaking" through a blend of arthouse and classical narrative style (King, 2009). In some contradiction to these efforts, however, it is a common feature of research to elucidate this periodisation and deny it at the same time. Tzioumakis (2013) states that "rhetoric aside, much of American independent cinema has always operated at close range with the Hollywood majors" (p. 30). Newman (2017) points out that the Sundance-Miramax era "might not be as coherent as I would like it to seem" (p. 25). King (2017) remains perhaps the most resolute in the argument that the concept of indie is inherently (and productively) imprecise, and challenges the closure of Miramax as signalling the end of the era. All of this may lead one to wonder for whom such distinctions are useful for, and whether such impositions may offer a false sense of demarcation across what is otherwise a broad consumer category that continues to hold resonance. Given these complexities, this project aligns with Ortner's (2013) view that the understanding of culture requires attendance to the ways it is constructed situationally, rather than in the attempt to define or determine specific temporal contours.

Tensions between the multiplicity and singularity of indie in its presentation as a film culture are similarly demonstrated throughout the textual analysis of indie films. Particularly in terms of film style, both King (2005, 2009, 2017) and Newman (2011, 2017) stress the importance of recognising the diversity of indie not as a singular type, mode, or community, but as a multifaceted

construct. Even so, certain textual attributes have become enduringly tied to the film culture. Research demonstrates a certain predilection for using close textual analysis to investigate specific manifestations or patterns of film style as being markers of distinction from classical Hollywood filmmaking style (Sconce, 2002; King, 2005, 2009, 2012; Berra, 2008; Newman, 2011). As a result, some aspects of film style have been configured as artistic "sensibilities" that have become more characteristic of indie than others, regardless of assertions that there are no formal or set rules for what constitutes an indie film style (Newman, 2011, p. 1). Sconce (2002), for instance, observes a distinct shift towards a sensibility of "smart cinema" in American filmmaking, marked by a preference towards elements such as black humour, irony, fatalism, and nihilism. Indie films such as *Slacker* (Richard Linklater, 1991), *Bottle Rocket* (Wes Anderson, 1994), and *Ghost World* (Terry Zwigoff, 2001) are thought by Sconce (2002) to be representative of a wave of independent cinema that embraced classical narrative strategies, while using tonal qualities to critique mainstream "bourgeois" taste culture (p. 8). Cumulatively, findings point towards the significance of perceived alterity in formal qualities such as social realism, ambiguous narrative endings, experimental techniques involving camera angles, nonlinear storytelling, and the incorporation of naturalistic dialogue (Sconce, 2002; King, 2005, 2009, 2012; Berra, 2008; Newman, 2011). In this friction, between pattern recognition at a close, film-centric level, and demonstrating the multiplicity of film style, the role of promotion in rendering precisely such alterity and oppositionality (or sense of periodisation, canonisation, or discursive negotiation) is overshadowed.

In a similar manner to the consideration of art cinema, the centrality of film texts and style to the analysis of indie is at the crux of certain assumptions around the ways that formal qualities are thought to be linked to an audience that has the knowledge and wherewithal to decode it. This is not to say that discourses around the signalled authenticity, originality, and perceived independence of textual and stylistic factors do not take place more broadly in the cultural realm. Indeed, formal qualities have been found to form part of the basis upon which professional segments of the film culture—or,

gatekeepers, as they might be termed—debate the inclusion or exclusion of films to the film culture (Pearson, 2017). However, discussions around film style and the perception of "experimental" qualities can become conflated with the spectre of an imagined "elite" audience for indie films. Much of this kind of analysis draws from a Bourdieusian approach that sees the pleasurable consumption of works being somewhat dictated by the reserves of capital held by the beholder. In the work of Bourdieu (1986, 1993), certain acts of "decoding" or deciphering works—for instance, in the case of more experimental or avant-garde texts—require certain levels of cultural capital (or, competency) that are gained through various forms of social interaction and education. In relation to indie, Bourdieusian theory is used to explain how viewing pleasure and a personal sense of distinction is gained by those who have higher levels of cultural capital, who are then "able to pick up particular nuances, resonances or references" that in some cases "might be a matter of relatively more complex narrative structures or more challenging material" (King, 2009, p. 14). Newman (2011) fleshes out the imagined audience for indie films, stating that it is "generally urban, affluent, well-educated, and fairly narrow by comparison with the audience for studio pictures" (p. 2). Newman (2011) goes on to describe indie as an "emergent formation of high culture… inheriting its social functions previously performed by foreign art films" (p. 2). Ultimately, the imagined audience for indie films—and its operation as a form of "high culture"—remains debateable, due to the limited nature of investigations around the reception of films. As King (2009) states, "it is not possible to assert with confidence that viewers for Indiewood films come from any one clearly identifiable class or class fragment" (p. 24). Such debates, particularly around Bourdieusian theory, also rely on supposed class and cultural markers as being somewhat static, rather than having shifted and changed in response to new media and technologies, or social and political factors. The relevance of such analyses to this project is to instead consider the multiplicity of promotional aims, rather than to be tied to those that might be targeted to the spectre of an imagined audience type. As this project will demonstrate, while the perceived "elite" audience of indie films is rooted in long-standing theoretical

perspectives, the fluidity of modern media and societal dynamics calls for a more nuanced approach to notions of audience segmentation and appeals.

The emphasis on film style as a marker of distinction is also echoed in the consideration of art house cinema and its associated marketing materials. Primarily, this kind of analysis focuses on the role of promotion in establishing and maintaining taste cultures, and distinctions between "high" and "low" forms of culture. For example, King (2019) states that art cinema is "characteristically accorded particular kinds of cultural value" (p. 1), and discusses the ways that art films are positioned by marketing materials and the work of film critics. King's (2019) analysis focuses on the "discursive assumptions and institutional imperatives" that underpin the cultural positioning of art cinema (p.1). The term "positioning" is taken to refer to broader implications around the status and hierarchy of films, rather than a definition in line with the term's origin within marketing and sales-specific contexts (p. 2). Barr (2009) also utilises the textual qualities of promotional materials to signal or provide insight into larger socio-historical concepts. Barr (2009) offers a historical perspective of Australian cinema by examining the label "Continental", which was used to market films from the 1930s to the early 1970s. Through an analysis of trade publications and marketing campaigns, the label is found by Barr (2009) to position films as part of a more discriminating and sophisticated form of "high culture" cinema. Betz (2003) uses promotional materials in a similar way, to challenge the perceived differences between "high" and "low" cultural forms through an analysis of ad campaigns for French and Italian art films in the 1960s. Wilinsky (2001) highlights that art cinema, like wide-screen cinema, offered audiences a sense of distinction from "ordinary" filmgoers through narratives that focused on intellectual, artistic, and high culture leisure (p. 3). While the works mentioned here do analyse the textual qualities of marketing materials, the term "positioning" is used somewhat loosely and with the clear aim of unpacking questions around taste, cultural and class hierarchies, and the discursive structures that shape them. As Wilinsky (2001) acknowledges, questions of geography and other contextualising spatial factors do not form part of the analysis (p. 7). Together, these works contribute to a

comprehensive understanding of how art house cinema is marketed and positioned within the broader cultural landscape, yet there is still room to consider these activities in structuring and sustaining other elements of film culture—for instance, place, material sites and promotional practices—outside that of taste.

In appearing to accept any configuration between "high" and "low" forms of culture in relation to indie and its audiences, there is a risk of further demarcating and fuelling binary conceptualisations that obscure the range of structuring activities in the cultural realm. Certain promotional, branding, and advertising positions in the field, that may not fit with the loftier aspirations of high culture, are at risk of being overlooked. While the analyses of film style and industry highlight some of the criteria that has been thought to define the cultural realm, what becomes clear is that the title of "indie" is not bestowed upon texts according to some kind of strict logic for entry to the field (Newman, 2011). Newman (2011) highlights the social production of indie as a film culture, stating that indies are those films considered within the institutions of American film culture to be indies, regardless of budget, producer, distributor, director, and cast, or other factors pertaining to genre, theme, style, and tone (p. 23). Again, Bourdieu (1993) is often used to explain these dynamics, so that indie is configured as a "field of cultural production" through which social actors take "positions" that work to structure it (King, 2013; Ortner, 2013; Pearson, 2017). Examples of arenas in which indie status may be conferred are film criticism, and journalistic texts that work to canonise films into the category—for instance, the *Rough Guide to American Independent Film* (Winter, 2006) and *100 American Independent Films* (Wood, 2004). However, despite acknowledging the socially produced nature of indie as a film culture, the roles available in the cultural realm are somewhat narrowly conceived.

Newman (2011) writes that the distinctive qualities of indie are embraced by a spectrum of stakeholders that include filmmakers and their supporting staff, distributors and publicists, personnel engaged with independent cinema institutions (such as film festivals), along with critics, writers, and

audiences (p. 11). In the context of Indiewood, King (2009) adds that the cultural capital produced by the film culture is beneficial to executives involved in the sector, for "personal investments" and the "articulations through which they distinguish themselves from their colleagues in the commercial mainstream" (p. 30-31). There is space to unpack these broad categorisations of social actors. The breakdown of the organisations, institutions and professions that sit under "distribution", for instance, would likely reveal further interrelated promotional industries such as trailer houses, graphic designers, creative advertising agencies, brand management, public relations, digital and social media marketers, and event marketing. There is ample room for more detailed and updated considerations that contribute to the understanding of the industries, professions, and practices that hold significant power over discourse and material space. In the chapters that follow, the aim is to provide new insights into the dynamics of capital and power that structure the film culture, and that influence inclusion to "indie" as a cultural and consumer category.

The relatively narrow conceptualisation of indie as a form of high culture also tempers the conceptualisation of its marketing, branding, and advertising. A prevalent notion is that indie films undergo specialised and holistic treatment as speciality products, characterised by meticulous attention to their unique qualities (Berra, 2008; King, 2009; Newman, 2011). Berra (2008) suggests that independent cinema marketing adopts a "subtler" approach compared to major studios, which deliberately aims to disguise the act of marketing. King (2009) describes the promotion of indie films as "niche marketing", which is thought to represent a highly detailed strategy for categorising and selling products, contrasting with Fordist notions of mass consumption practices (p. 12). Niche marketing, as King (2009) explains, tailors products to narrow market segments willing to pay extra for perceived higher quality and exclusivity (p. 12). Specialty films, while not necessarily commanding premium prices like other niche-market products, are understood to appeal to consumers by marketing notions of distinctiveness, uniqueness, and superiority (King, 2009, p. 12). In this way, promotion for indie films is considered to oscillate around the core purpose of imbuing or

communicating distinction; promotional materials such as film posters and trailers, therefore, are understood to operate in ways that position specific films within hierarchies of taste and capital (Cavalcante, 2013; King, 2009; Kerrigan, 2017). While these kinds of strategies may be present in some forms of indie distribution, there are risks to assuming a singular form of promotional strategy rather than recognising the diversity of interconnected industries—some paid, and others unpaid—that contribute to the promotion of film products. It also perhaps serves to reinforce the notion of indie/Hollywood and speciality/mainstream binaries, which may not accurately reflect in industrial, organisational, or audience terms how such films are regarded.

It is important to note that there is no direct evidence of this kind of holistic, niche, and tailored marketing occurring in a "blanket" form across all indie products; or indeed that authenticity and distinction, as they might pertain to the perceived social identity of the viewer, are the main organising principles for the presentation of indie promotional materials. From within the industry itself, there are implicit challenges to the notion that indie film promotion is somehow more inherently authentic than the marketing of mainstream films. Rosen and Hamilton (1987), in a study examining marketing strategies for independent films (funded by the Sundance Institute), detail the breadth of activities that may take place by stating that independent film distribution is "geared towards gaining media attention and public interest". Like other mainstream film products, marketing was found to involve various activities such as interviews, critics' screenings, public appearances, advertising methods like sandwich boards, and merchandising such as T-shirts and comic books (p. 319). In a study focusing on independent distributor Miramax, Perren (2012) underlines the need to consider the effects of the brand's marketing, distribution strategy, and other infrastructural efforts beyond simply "making independent mainstream" (p. 3). According to Perren (2012), Miramax was known for an aggressive promotional style that knowingly exploited discourses of independence to cultivate a recognisable brand identity (p. 3-4). These examples challenge the notion that the marketing for indie films oscillates around maintaining fidelity towards a film

product, as a somehow more genuine and authentic form of promotion. It is in this arena that this project looks to make its intervention, considering the ways that film cultures are socially produced; just not necessarily with film texts being at the core, and around which "satellite" texts oscillate to service them. Instead, it means to make a more concerted attempt to elucidate some of the promotional industries that may otherwise be seen to be outside of this "cultural arena", existing in a more commercial or economic one.

Contemporary Approaches to Promotional Studies and Film Marketing

So far, it has been identified that promotion forms a broadly underrepresented area of research in the analysis of indie as a film culture. It is also necessary to determine what precisely is meant by promotion as it pertains to the film culture and offer a fuller picture of how the term will be utilised throughout the project. In the screen industries, promotional screen content is broadly located across three areas: film and television marketing, screen advertising, and corporate and organisational promotion (Grainge & Johnston, 2015, p. 24). Yet, the range of promotional activities and materials that may occur under these rubrics, is multitudinous. Promotion is a broad category that encompasses both paid and unpaid efforts that are designed to connect consumers with products, or buyers with suppliers. In the pursuit of "making connections" in consumer culture, Acland (2009) posits that any media content—whether cultural, virtual, physical, or human—can be used and re-used for promotional purposes. Davis (2013) similarly argues that promotional practices have transcended beyond serving as conduits between buyers and sellers, to become an internalised aspect of contemporary life (p. 2-3). Promotional culture, as it is termed by Davis (2013), forms part of the generation of products, values, concepts, political and market trends, and even the rendering of markets and democratic processes. The term "promotion" itself, with its apparent singularity, may inadvertently obscure the vastness and complexity of the industries, activities, and materials that intersect with film cultures, in the pursuit of exposure, engagement, reach and profit. While film promotion is most

commonly (and perhaps limitingly) conceived of as being represented by trailers, posters, and press kits (Johnston, 2019), the term holds far greater potential to reveal multifaceted and potentially surprising involvement in the shaping, diversifying, and sustenance of indie film culture.

Considering the multi-faceted nature of promotion also leads to a broader view of its structuring industries and the ways in which they produce various aspects of film culture. In relation to film, the four main promotional industries are generally believed to be advertising, Public Relations (PR), marketing, and branding (Powell, 2013, p. 51). Each industry houses a range of professions and skillsets, which can challenge the perceived definitiveness of these labels. For instance, the primary function of marketing is to offer managerial services guided by empirical data, which determine the scope, target, and purpose of activities across advertising, branding and PR (Hackley, 2013, p. 16). Advertising is understood to operate in a creative capacity, delivering media that is designed to persuade recipients to enact buying behaviours (Richards & Curran, 2002, p. 74). Branding aims to enable identification of organisations and representative symbols, and evoke emotional responses through the creation and maintenance of brand images (Powell, 2013, p. 64). PR involves tailored and nuanced content that is published without direct payment or attribution, most often as news or editorial content (Ringold, 2022, p. 563). Although these branches traditionally have distinct functions, notions of defined separations as existing between them—particularly in the case of media promotion—can be misleading. For instance, Grainge and Johnson's (2015) fieldwork in London-based companies reveals a space between media and marketing filled with intermediaries. The range of companies and occupations involved may encompass film and television marketing departments, broadcast promotion specialists, trailer houses, content divisions in advertising and media agencies, and digital media firms, with specialists and personnel covering all these strands (Grainge & Johnson, 2015, p. 3). These industries, as well as the campaigns produced, exhibit dynamic relationships that intermingle with one another, resulting in the movement of talent, knowledge, skills, and influence across what may traditionally be perceived as the

separate domains of advertising, marketing, PR, and branding (Grainge & Johnson, 2015). Therefore, it is often more useful to examine the influential role of an overarching promotional culture that is created in and through the networks of these industries, rather than focusing solely on the impact of any one discipline within the promotional sector (Holt & Perren, 2009, p. 29).

Given the fluidity and diversity of promotion, it stands that approaches to the promotional materials produced by them are similarly varied and are subject to contention. The field of "promotional material studies", as it has loosely been called (Johnston, 2019), does not tend to imply a sense of cohesion in the discipline or its core methodologies. An alternative category, "off-screen studies", has been proposed to encapsulate the analysis of promotional materials such as film trailers and DVD special features (Gray, 2010). Given that many of these materials are encountered on various screen, including phones, tablets, personal computers, televisions, or cinema screens, the notion of categorising them as "off-screen" has been considered problematic (Johnston, 2013). Similar contentions exist in what to call these materials in the first instance. Heath (1997) uses the term "epiphenomena" to describe promotional materials and describes them as an extension or elongation of a primary film text. Gray (2010), as will be considered in more depth in the following paragraphs, offers the term "paratext" to analyse materials that surround or contextualise a primary film text. Consequently, there is no clear consensus on how to effectively distinguish the interdisciplinary analysis of promotional materials, as a field that is distinct from advertising and marketing disciplines that analyse consumer behaviour and managerial concerns. To highlight the relational qualities between film and media studies with marketing and advertising disciplines, this project aligns with the preference for "promotional materials". The integration and acknowledgement of promotion within this scheme is here considered to be important in underscoring the relationship between these media forms, and the industrial and social practices that shape them.

The tension in what to call promotional media is indicative of a broader theoretical concern of significance to the direction of this project. As

Johnston (2019) points out, nomenclature has tended to focus on the "ancillary", "ephemeral" and "satellite" nature of promotional texts, which is thought to have hindered their academic influence. Within these schemes, promotional materials are thought to primarily function to mirror or distil the essence of a primary film text. Film texts are situated at the core of the media ecosystem, while promotional materials oscillate around it. It is precisely in schemes that situate the promotional material as an addendum to a film text (and that can consequently be "mined" for information regarding its cultural positioning) that limiting binaries between high and mass culture can be reinforced. One such example can be seen in Wyatt's (1994) analysis of "high concept" films in the post-classical era. According to Wyatt (1994), high concept films like *Grease* (Randal Kleiser, 1978) are those that can be succinctly summarised and marketed with a one-line pitch that is easily transferable to marketing and merchandising (p. 7). In contrast, "low concept" films (such as many indies) are too intricate and diverse to be distilled into a single-line pitch. Of course, in terms of naming conventions Wyatt (1994) flips notions of "high" and "low" in terms of binary distinctions between high culture (related to art) and low or popular culture (related to mainstream products). Beyond this, the concept of high versus low suggests that only some films are shaped by economic forces and market dynamics—namely, Hollywood blockbusters—while others, including indies and arthouse films, require the kinds of "special attention" discussed above. Overall, however, it contributes to a body of work that assumes that promotional materials aim to reduce a film's narrative, and while doing so, may misrepresent it (Wyatt, 1994, p. 10). Haralovich and Klaprat (1981/2), in an earlier work, similarly described trailers as being "condensed narratives" that compress full length features into 90 seconds in order to influence consumer choice. Kernan (2004), building on these premises around condensed narratives, suggests that trailers encourage audiences to build imaginary constructs that generate desire for an envisioned film. All these premises appear to be based on notions of logical and rational information processing in relation to film trailers; that in viewing montage, notions of narrative become coherent (whether such narrative is accurate to the film text, or otherwise). This approach, as I will explore in Chapter Two, is

perhaps based on a false conceptualisation of the ways that promotional materials are experienced. It also does not consider that promotional materials may have broader objectives, and therefore varied usefulness as analytical objects.

Paratextuality is perhaps the most prominent framework that demonstrates the view of promotion as an addendum to a film text. While the term "paratext" originally stems from linguistics and discourse analysis (Genette, 1997), Gray (2010) extends its application to examine how promotional elements like trailers, teasers, posters, and websites shape the interpretation and meaning of film and television shows (p. 6). They are likened by Gray (2010) to parasites feeding off a host body (p. 6), which oversimplifies the polysemy, creativity, and contingency inherent in promotional activities. An illustration of the limitations of paratextuality can be found in Cavalcante's (2013) analysis of promotional materials for the film *TransAmerica* (Duncan Tucker, 2005). Cavalcante (2013) demonstrates how materials such as posters, DVD commentary, and cover art, sought to downplay potentially "threatening" transgender themes in the film through a process of "paratextual domestication" (p. 85-86). While such analysis may be seemingly straightforward, Cavalcante (2013) also notes that the promotional materials performed a "double work" by at once domesticating the film's themes, and opening up discussions about gender and sexuality, creating spaces for queer representation and recognition (p. 86). It is here, in the concept of "double work", that there appears to be some acknowledgement that paratexts do not rigidly guide interpretations of a core film text, but rather enable multifaceted discursive negotiations of meaning (Cavalcante, 2013, p. 99). The tension between perceived singularity and multiplicity of the trailer form, and in promotion more broadly, demonstrates something of the limitations of the paratextual framework. While paratextual analysis tends to focus on the relationship between promotional screen media and the textual construction of film and television, taking a broader view allows for space to consider multiple different structuring roles that the practices of promotion can take in relation to film culture.

Similar views around the perceived functions and types of promotional activities can be found within the discipline of film festival studies, even as such work has made extensive inroads into considering the ways that promotion can render social identities for events and institutions. Film festival studies tends to focus on the role of promotional materials in the processes of value creation and distinction that occur both within and outside of film festival events (Harbord, 2002; Stringer, 2008; Stevens, 2016; Zielinski, 2016). For instance, Stringer (2008) views film festivals as a form of celebration for cultural participants, and analyses rhetorical communication occurring during these events to understand the formation of group and institutional identities. Stevens (2016) examines advertising campaigns by the Melbourne International Film Festival to provide insights into the history of film culture in Australia. Stevens (2016) analyses the imagery and language of promotional materials to reveal the contours of "good taste" and the ways that such criteria influence perceptions of "quality" and world cinema. Zielinski (2016) explores the impact of ephemeral materials, such as posters, guides, and advertisements, in forming the identity and memory of film festivals. They write, "through its careful selection, design, placement, and frequency, [ephemera are] used to help craft the self-definition or identity of the event itself" (Zielinski, 2016, p. 140). Queer film festivals, in particular, are thought to create ephemeral "archives of feelings" that hold affective power, by mobilising life histories through images, music, and interviews (Zielinski, 2016, p. 153). Together, these works share the important notion that while the programming of films is important, the factors that make up a festival go beyond individual films (Zielinski, 2016, p. 153-154; Stevens, 2016).

In keeping with much work analysing promotion and film cultures more broadly, even as this type of work centralises promotional materials as objects of analysis, it does not necessarily mean that they are placed at the core of structuring meaning in terms of film culture. As will be discussed further below, there is certainly room to consider other forms of promotion that are aligned with festival events and promotion more broadly. Furthermore, as Robinson (2016) points out, there is a tendency to think

about film festivals in "macro" or global terms, which they seek to redress through the exploration of the more "micro" roles of individual actors in festival design. There is likely a mid-point between macro and micro views, where professional disciplines and practices—for instance, public relations advisors, creative directors, fundraising leads—may be found to inform and structure the promotional materials that shape festival experiences. While Zielinski (2016), for instance, describes general processes and systems through which festival and brand identities might be approved, there is still space to more deeply determine how modes of delivery, persuasive technique, brand narratives and other factors might serve to influence film events and culture. These approaches highlight the relationship between public-facing promotional activities and the internal development of festival identity, showing how promotional materials might affect both the immediate and long-term perceptions of film festivals. However, it is also important to consider the possibility of multiple identities, to broaden the understanding of what constitutes promotional material, and to explore the precise mechanisms through which these materials shape the spaces of film culture.

There is another form of promotional analysis that recognises the polysemic nature of film promotion, and it is worth demonstrating precisely how materials are conceptualised in this view. In these models, the fluidity and diversity of media forms the basis of analysis; promotional materials are considered to harness contingency and multiplicity in different ways, rather than being held to notions of accuracy and fidelity. Klinger (1989) clearly demonstrates this view in an analysis of the promotion and review journalism surrounding the films of Douglas Sirk, and the ways that these forms contribute to the term "melodrama" as a cultural category (if not, perhaps, a film culture). Klinger (1989) argues that film promotion produces multiple co-existing channels of appeal, which enable it to "resonate as extensively as possible in the social sphere in order to maximise its audience" (p. 10). Uniform interpretations are, within this scheme, not the main concern for film promotion (Klinger, 1989, p. 10). The term "consumable identity" is used to describe the networks of advertising and media elements that are brought together in promotion of a film, which can be analysed on its own contextual

and historical terms (Klinger, 1989, p. 14). However, the question turns to whether multiple points of access to a text—and, multiplicity in terms of the various contexts in which promotion may be situated and experienced—supports the notion of a single consumable identity, or multiple identities.

Certainly, marketing and advertising literature has long acknowledged the polysemic and unpredictable nature of promotional materials (Belch & Belch, 2012; Hackley, 2005; Forceville, 1996; Proctor & Kitchen, 2002; Cook, 2001). As Hackley (2005) explains, advertising agencies exploit the ambiguity of advertising to establish personal connections with multiple consumer groups, rather than being constrained by the complexities of meaning creation (p. 43). Kerrigan (2010) argues that while marketing literature may categorise promotion as activities and materials aimed at informing and influencing a consumer's purchase decision, the film-making process may not be customer-centred. Production involves multiple mediations between filmmakers and audiences at different stages, therefore making the singular definition of "film promotion"—or, put differently, consumable identity—questionable. Similarly, Grainge and Johnson (2015) emphasise that multiple avenues towards a text emerge in promotion because of the diverse screen industries that generate them. Given the emphasis of marketing and advertising literature on measurable efficacy and value of promotion within specific contexts, the view that promotion works in practical terms to create multiple (and perhaps even conflicting) identities for films is compelling. Even though this project is concerned with the ways that promotion reproduces discourse, social practices, and material culture, pursuing an interdisciplinary approach regarding the form and function of promotional media is undoubtedly valuable. Therefore, film promotion can be considered throughout this project to result in multiple channels of information and persuasion, shaped by various social and economic contextual factors.

Certain trailer studies approaches demonstrate precisely such a shift towards embracing multiplicity, moving away from traditional analyses of the relationship between promotional materials and finished films. Within these

approaches, trailers tend to be analysed at the intersection of historical and technological developments within the film industry and media advertising (Johnston, 2009; Vollans, 2015; Johnston et al., 2016; Hediger, 2004), rather than as a source of value attribution. The trailer is understood to be a form of enjoyment and creative expression, as well as serving to draw the audience's attention to upcoming films (Hediger, 2004; Vollans, 2015). For example, in a study conducted by Johnston et al. (2016), audience responses to trailers were surveyed to reveal that trailer viewing is a separate consumption practice generative of emotional, cultural, and social expectations, which are sometimes unrelated to feature film viewing. Trailers can be considered as a particular type of experiential promotion (Vollans, 2015), that refer more broadly to a theatre's program as well as drawing attention to films (Hediger, 2004). The examination of trailers as "unique forms of short films" that are situated within historical, social, and industrial networks (Johnston, 2009), offers significant potential to consider trailers—and their construction, reception, and purpose—as being more diverse than traditionally expected. These views of the trailer as its own contextualised form provide opportunities for the consideration of promotional materials more broadly; first is the consideration of the experiential nature of promotional materials, as a broader underrepresented aspect of analysis. With that, there is also the consideration of the material realm, where experience unfolds. If these elements can be productive in terms of the understanding of trailers as a distinct media form, then it stands to reason that they also offer potential new insights into posters, billboards, merchandising, and all promotion as being inextricably situated within physical, geographical contexts.

The Spatial Dimensions of Indie Promotion: Core Principles

For some theorists, spatial contextualisation and analysis is essential to understanding their forms and functions. Davis (2013) contends that promotional texts are best understood when analysis considers the material conditions of their construction, communication, and reception (p. 60).

Similarly, on the topic of film cultures, Harbord (2002) underlines that film cultures are inextricably situated in the material manifestations, sites, and spaces of daily life. Harbord (2002) argues that the promotional activities surrounding and converging with consumer categorisation are critical to producing the everyday spaces of film culture, forming part of a distribution and exhibition infrastructure that embeds and delivers films in different locations (p. 3). Further, the symbolic associations of places—for instance, the multiplex "shopping centre" cinema versus the arthouse theatre—can form mutually productive relationships with the discourses that render a film's position within consumer and taste hierarchies (Harbord, 2002). The following review will elaborate on several core tenets of spatial theory to elucidate the relationships between material, social, and discursive spaces, as they pertain to both film and promotional culture. While spatial analysis is best performed with specific reference to the phenomena in question, the remainder of the review will provide the key generative underpinnings for the project before discussing the methodology and approach for the upcoming chapters.

First, it is important to state that the jump to analysing promotion through a spatial lens is not so much of a leap, given the emerging direction of previous works on promotion and indie film culture. The inception of this project can be traced back to Gray's (2010) work on paratextuality, which introduced the notion that promotional materials can be seen as constituting a distinctive textual architecture. According to Gray (2010),

> we are all part-time residents of the highly populated cities of Time Warner, DirecT, AMC… And yet not all of these cities" architecture is televisual or cinematic by nature… Hype and synergy abound, forming the streets, bridges, and trading routes of the media world (p. 1).

Even though the idea of paratexts can be premised somewhat heavily on the (pre)construction of narrative frameworks for films, the conceptualisation of promotion as forming interrelated material and textual architectures proved formative. Similarly, spatial metaphors have long been employed to describe

indie films of the Sundance-Miramax era. The idea of the film culture as being surrounded by contested "territorial boundaries", and the formation of "landscapes" or cultural "terrain", recurs throughout literature on the topic (Perren, 2012; King, 2009, 2017; Pearson, 2017). Indie is also considered to be a "regional" form of American national cinema, with its sense of oppositionality often drawing discursively from the representation of places generally unseen in Hollywood filmmaking (Erickson, 2017). While these examples may speak to more metaphorical readings of space, there is also room to consider them at the cusp of recognising the imbricated nature of both promotion and film culture in spatial terms. Here, these discursive excursions into spatial language suggest a range of broader possibilities in the exploration of space as something that is both structuring and structured by these forces.

Film festival studies has also made considerable inroads towards the exploration of space in the analysis of film cultures. De Valck (2007) argues that film festival studies is part of a "spatial turn" in humanities research, which extends cultural analysis to include the spatial and temporal dimensions where film is experienced (p. 17). In this way, film festival studies is thought to move away from "literary tradition, semiotics, structuralism and psychoanalysis" to explore "various network and system theories for the investigation of cinema in the era of globalisation" (de Valck, 2007, p. 17). There is a distinct tendency in this work to employ spatial thinking and theory to demonstrate the ways that film festivals navigate local, national, and global influences. Further, it considers the involvement of governments and the emphasis on artistic quality reflect how festivals operate within and respond to various political and cultural aspirations. Some spatial perspectives within film festival studies include: global networks of competition and cooperation (de Valck, 2007), tourism and place branding (Derrett, 2004; Getz, 1997; Pulido Polo & Vázquez González, 2019), national agendas, government intervention and geopolitics (Ostrowska, 2014), network theories that examine spatial connections between human and non-human social actors (de Valck, 2007; de Valck, 2014; Iordanova, 2014; Elsaesser, 2005), and questions of symbolic cultural, rhetoric and the

discursive architectures of cultural legitimation (Burgess 2014; Dayans, 2000; Johnson, 2022; Dalla Gassa et al., 2022). Yet, despite many inroads into spatial theory, one area that is perhaps less travelled is the potential impact of the specific geo-location of place, sites, and supply chains on the contours of film festival promotion and film culture. Iordanova (2018) posits precisely such a question in the introduction to a special issue in Frames Cinema Journal, asking:

> More and more I grow convinced that we need to pay more attention to exploring the specificity of the ways locations and venues are chosen and used at film festivals. Why is it that festivals like the one in the remote Ardeche village of Lusass is unanimously regarded as the most important documentary event by the majority of intellectuals in France? Would the festival be the same if it was taking place at Centre Pompidou in the heart of Paris, as it is the case of its counterpart, Cinéma du reel?

Even as this project works to centralise promotion as a core structuring feature of the festival, the inclusion of geographical and place-based perspectives in the case studies that follow will serve to expand on precisely such theoretical gaps; particularly when considering the dynamics of promotion in and around festival environments.

The spatial analysis of the promotion case studies that follow are based on core principles of spatial and geographic theory. The first and perhaps most foundational understanding is that space is not a static or purely physical phenomena. Instead, following the traditions of Lefebvre (1991) and Massey (1991, 2005, 2006), space is considered to encompass social, mental, and conceptual realms in fundamentally interrelated ways. For Lefebvre (1991), space is constructed in and through three trajectories: the physical (nature and the cosmos), the social (the space of social practice and sensory phenomena), and the mental (the realm of logical, conceptual, and formal abstractions) (p. 15). Social space, characterised by Couldry and Hepp (2016) as our "human life-in-common" (p. 3), is a bridge between embodied individual and group actions and the discursive frameworks that influence behaviour. Social space is a social product, emerging from the dynamic

interplay of practices, embodied material experiences, and rituals within society (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 26). For media analysis, the crux (and benefit) of this line of spatial theory is in the acknowledgement of communications and media as being rooted in the material processes, infrastructures, technologies, platforms, and objects that construct meaning (Couldry & Hepp, 2016, p. 3). Analysing film culture through a spatial lens provides a conceptual bridge between individual actions, societal practices, and the material conditions of media production, even if such factors may be traditionally situated outside of "film studies" in both disciplinary and practical terms.

Spatial theory offers a lens to examine the ways that film cultures are produced by interrelated material, conceptual and behavioural forces; however, it provides even further opportunities to consider the histories, politics, and power relations that produce and maintain them. For Massey (2005), spaces are not simply the result of cumulative, freely made choices. Instead, they are the result of complex social, political, and economic power dynamics (Massey, 2005). According to Massey (2005), space is certainly a "sphere of possibility" characterised by "contemporaneous plurality" (p. 9). However, distinct spatial trajectories can be found to co-exist, produced through networks of economy, society, and politics (Massey, 2005, p. 9). Subjects are not radically free to forge their own experience of space; identities and subjectivities are relational, as malleable outcomes of ongoing interactions (Massey, 2006, p. 92-3). In relation to indie film culture, spatially situated analysis raises interesting questions about how geographically located interactions—for instance, supply and distribution chains—become inextricably tied to cultural identity and subjectivity. Further, it has the potential to broaden the consideration of which institutions and practices have power and influence at certain times, and how such interactions are productive of the experiential spaces that characterise the film culture.

While it may seem distanced from the examination of film cultures—and certainly, of film promotion—it is perhaps the discipline of geography that is best placed to offer frameworks for investigating their interrelations. In

particular, economic geography focuses on questions of uneven spatial distribution, and the ways that economic activities are organised in terms of resourcing, markets, and industry. A poststructuralist strand of the discipline (within which Massey's work is highly influential) is characterised by a deep consideration of the relationships between human agency, practice, and the material/geographical construction of economies. (Hudson, 2005, p. 1). At the nexus of economic geography's concerns regarding materiality, space relations, and identity, there is a core question regarding the ways that "value" (whether economic or cultural) is culturally constituted and defined (Hudson, 2005, p. 1). The examination of promotion emerges somewhat organically from these concerns, given its explicit role in the symbolic (and, experiential) creation of value. The Latin root, "promovere", means to "move forward"; hinting at activities that facilitate the dissemination and advancement of products and brands across various spaces. Chapter One of this project offers a salient example of promotion offering mobility across mutually productive spaces of discourse and materiality. In examining the role of trade press and PR coverage to the earliest iterations of indie's infrastructure, the chapter demonstrates the ways that regional economic development comes to influence the discourses of the "new indie" film culture. To analyse promotion is to almost necessarily consider the economic and geographical dynamics from which it emerges, and through which it renders meaning and value; and, importantly, to see these real and imagined facets as being fundamentally interrelated in the configuration of product "value propositions".

For geography disciplines, "felt value" is closely aligned with (and attributed to) the concept of "place", as a system of meaning that sees emotion, identity, or purpose attached to a specific location. Drawing from this geographical lineage, place is considered here in relation to the ways that indie is continuously reshaped as a centre of felt value in the broader landscapes of media production. For scholars such as Tuan (1977), Massey (1991, 1994, 2006), Low and Altman (1992), and Gorfinkel and Rhodes (2011), places gain their distinct value and character from the intricate convergences of social relations and power at specific spatial and temporal

nodes. As articulated by Massey (1991), places are intertwined with global networks of geography, power and economy. Place can be seen to form a bastion of situatedness and identity, in relation to broader notions of the consuming forces of globalisation (Massey, 2004, p. 98). As part of a broader scheme operating under a dichotomy of local/global, it is understood in geographic disciplines to have organisational qualities in both cultural and consumer terms (Low & Altman, 1992). Of course, this has significant relevance to the way that consumer economies are organised along place-based lines. In Chapter Three, place comes into significant focus as a governing factor in dichotomies that pitch indie (the regional, and local) against the all-consuming and appropriating forces of Hollywood. However, it raises another important facet to the spatial lens of this project. In the consideration of places, it is not necessarily just cognition and practice that structure their distinct qualities. As Low and Altman (1992) point out, it is affect and feeling that are fundamental to forming places and place attachments (p. 5). Calling back to an earlier point in the review, it is the experiential qualities of promotion that are perhaps most relevant to the analysis of indie film culture as both a place within a broader media landscape, and as being made up of places through which its meanings and practices emerge.

In relation to indie film culture, both place and spatial theory can be approached in several ways. Broadly, film is thought to offer a sense of place by recording real-world locations, constructing environments in studios, and in physical sites of screening and exhibition (Gorfinkel & Rhodes, 2011, p. ix-x). The value propositions demonstrated by places are also imbricated with the psychological and experiential dimensions of cinema viewing, playing a role in rendering human subjectivity and identity construction (Gorfinkel & Rhodes, 2011, p. x). However, there is ample room to expand the application of spatial theory to consider the ways that place images, branding, and attachments—whether in terms of tourism and leisure, or otherwise— become bound up with the value-creation and experiential practices of film promotion. There is further room to consider the concept of place more literally, to talk about particular places (as sites, or locales) where value

collects and manifests, whether at independent film festivals and awards, or filming locations. By employing spatial frameworks, promotional materials emerge as creators of a sense of place in relation to classificatory systems, consumer hierarchies, specific reception sites, and the promotional screen industries responsible for their creation. This exploration pivots towards a focus on social and industrial practices, revealing that the spaces of film culture, whether in promotion or other contexts, are not passive entities to be merely interpreted. Instead, these spaces are sites of social relations, which interact with the discursive and material architectures that render indie film culture with significance and symbolism.

Methodologies and Approach

To briefly reiterate, this project is organised around two objectives. The first is to redress the lack of studies that investigate promotion within the sphere of cultural analysis. It posits that promotion shares a powerfully interdependent relationship with the development of indie film culture and has remained core to its operation as both a cultural and consumer category. The second is that film promotion, even as it diverges from traditional promotional models (such as trailers and posters), shapes discursive and material structures that correlate to specific enduring qualities and social practices. The investigation of these propositions has necessitated a mixed-methods research design, and a clear scope that places reasonable limitations on the project.

The potential for "film culture" to become a somewhat nebulous and abstracted term necessitated the focus of this work to be located around a single film culture. Indie emerged as a clear choice for two reasons. First, it provided an opportunity to make new contributions to a well-established cultural and consumer category. Rather than being detrimental to the project, its prominence as a cultural category (and subject of academic pursuits) prevented the need to extensively labour to establish indie cinema as a film culture in the first instance. While this choice does not preclude

future studies of lesser-known film cultures, pre-existing analyses of the cultural terrain of indie undoubtedly assisted in building out a unique perspective at the intersection of film, promotional, and spatial studies. Second, by examining promotion's role in indie cinema—a form that is often aligned against the consumeristic goals of marketing—logic held that a similar approach may be equally useful in other arenas. If the co-constitutive role of promotion is true of indie film culture, it is likely to be true of many.

Under the rubric of indie, four further case studies construct snapshots of the promotional industries, its activities, and texts. This multi-faceted approach to promotional studies is designed in an attempt to avoid narratives that signal monolithic or linear notions of cultural "development", even though some comparisons are drawn between the chapters. Three key considerations guided the selection of the chapter case studies:

1. Case studies should find a balance between conventional promotional forms and lesser-explored areas (such as Business-to-Business marketing), to broaden the scope of what promotion might be thought to encompass.

2. The spatial lens through which the case studies are analysed should aim to find balance between physical, conceptual, and social spaces. This contrasts with a focus that would veer towards either physical or discursive dimensions, and result in an unbalanced view of the ways that promotion co-produces the spaces of film culture.

3. The case studies should allow for balanced insights into the socio-historical contexts of indie film culture. Conversely, choosing promotional case studies that cover the same years or periods would be unlikely to yield enduring insights into the range of spatial architectures characterising indie.

As a result of these factors, the project narrowed down to focus on four case study themes and time periods:

1. Trade Press and B2B Communications (1976-1990)
2. Film Trailers (1989, 2009)
3. Celebrity Branding and Magazine Coverage (1993-2010)
4. Out Of Home Advertising (2019)

Two chapters (Chapter One and Chapter Four) focus directly on Sundance Film Festival, in two different time periods. The focus on Sundance in both chapters is in no small manner due to the organisation's institutional and cultural significance to the infrastructure that supports indie filmmaking (Ortner, 2017). Although indie film culture is also characterised by a range of annual ceremonies and festivities such as the Independent Spirit Awards, Gotham Awards, Telluride, and particular strands of larger festivals such as South by Southwest, the significance of Sundance Film Festival (and its associated Film Institute) to its operationalisation as a cultural category has been long-established in a range of both academic and journalistic works (Newman, 2011; Perren, 2012; King, 2005, 2017; Ortner 2013, 2017). For Newman (2011), Sundance is "the festival with the strongest influence on independent cinema" (p. 63), with canonical indie films such as *Stranger than Paradise* (Jarmusch, 1984), *sex, lies and videotape* (Soderberg, 1989), *Poison* (Haynes, 1991), and *Slacker* (Linklater, 1991) having famously premiered at the event. Furthermore, the festival is clearly central to the periodisation of the "Sundance-Miramax" era, and offers inroads to considering this label as a specific categorisation of indie film culture. Analysing trade press and out of home advertising pertaining to Sundance in both Chapters One and Four provided an opportunity to "bookend" the study, and to compare and contrast the perceived spaces and contours of film culture—and the periodisation of indie film culture—over time.

To expand, even though Sundance is at the core of two chapters, it doesn't necessarily straightforwardly take up the approaches of previous literature.

Although the loose timeframe chosen for this project refers to the "Sundance-Miramax era" of independent filmmaking (1985-2010) (Newman, 2011), it is essential to note that the timeframe is not applied uncritically or rigidly. As subsequent chapters will reveal, promotional activities began shaping indie's supporting infrastructure at least a decade before the era is thought to begin. Additionally, the investigation of indie's physical marketing at Sundance Film Festival occurred in 2019, which necessitates something of a re-evaluation of the presumed "end" to the indie era in 2010. While the era is used as an organising concept for this project, the analyses conducted here invariably challenge the configuration of the era as a somewhat finite entity.

Given the idiosyncrasies of the promotional and spatial dimensions explored in this project, an interdisciplinary mixed methods approach has proven necessary. As a result, each section includes specific detail of its own methodological approach that aligns with its unique attributes. However, there are two overarching principles that are evident across all chapters that will be elucidated here for clarity.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is used as a core method for analysing the meaning of language and image as socially produced phenomena. This ranges throughout the chapter from the consideration of individual word choices, through to the identification of syntactic patterns across phrasing and language structure. Similarly, in terms of image, performing close textual readings of the image provides formal stylistic data, which is then analysed for its symbolic resonances. Once such patterns are identified in language or image, they are examined for both latent and manifest meanings, and the ways in which discursive structures are governed or intersected by stratifications of power (Davis, 2013, p. 51). For instance, in Chapter Three CDA is used to highlight the symbolic resonances of place-images in relation to stardom, and further, to consider how these gendered resonances may hinder the mobility of the star across consumer categories. The project broadly is premised on an understanding that language and image reflect and contribute to broader ideologies and discourses that cross-cut indie film

culture, and in return, support the spatial structures that maintain inequality and uneven development across the film culture.

It is important to note that the approach towards both CDA and semiotic analysis is here distinctly poststructuralist. That is, it is aligned with approaches drawn from British cultural studies that place emphasis on the fluidity, polysemy, and negotiated nature of sign systems (Kellner, 2009, p. 98). The significance of this approach to close textual analysis and CDA is two-fold. First, it fundamentally rejects distinctions between high and low culture, to consider media within its specific historic and industrial contexts (Kellner, 2009, p. 98). Second, it acknowledges the audience for promotional materials as active in the creation of meaning (Kellner, 2009, p. 98). This is not to suggest a perhaps more postmodern approach, where meaning can be "radically" or freely imposed. In keeping with Hall's (1973) supposition, while the poststructuralist view sees meaning as rich and varied, there remains dominant and preferred meanings that are influenced by extratextual determinants and influences. It is through such recognition that the multiplicity and contingency of promotional materials, in terms of the range of ways that they may be taken up and used in various contexts, can be more fully understood. Within this approach, attention can be given to the ways that promotional media discourses come to (re)structure particular environments through social action, and influence social practice (Kellner, 2009, p. 95).

However, for CDA and semiotic analysis to operate effectively, the project has been explicitly designed to mitigate the inherent risks of subjectivity and the creation of cultural meta-narratives. Barker (2008) warns against the use of CDA to underpin "premises concerning unity and coherence" (p. 158). Certainly, this is a risk for the case studies offered in this work, which aim to provide cultural insights over a period of time. To borrow Barker's (2008) terminology, to give the impression that there is some kind of "cumulative influence" that builds up through repeated and subsequent exposure by audiences, would consolidate monolithic and invariably false impressions of indie as a film culture. To avoid this, the project takes care to provide a range

of data sets that are explained at the outset of each chapter. It also uses a method of interdisciplinary "triangulation" that situates textual data at the nexus of its specific geographic, social, and institutional contexts.

In efforts to contextualise patterns found through CDA and semiotic analysis, the project uses what Johnston (2009) terms a "unified analysis". Within this method, textual evidence is situated within networks of influence and discourse, alongside historical factors that signal to the spatio-temporal moment from which it emerges (Johnston, 2009). Harnessing a triangulated approach enables Johnston to validate and evaluate evidence garnered from the analysis of film trailers against a range of socio-cultural factors, to formulate more accurate readings. Holt and Perren (2009) advise a similar approach in relation to media branding, arguing that they are best understood within broader frameworks that encompass industrial infrastructures, politics, policy, art, and audience engagement. As a result, the methodology for this project brings together textual analysis with contextualising factors spanning media advertising, (indie) cultural analysis, economic geography, and other aligned disciplines, to explore the various contours of indie throughout the Sundance-Miramax era. The results of this research design have led to the following four chapters.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 1. A Born-Again Boomtown: Geo-Locating Indie's Infrastructure Through the Trades.

Chapter One investigates the role of film industry trade press as a form of Business-to-Business (B2B) promotional activity. It focuses on the emergence and growth of the Sundance Film Festival, and explores the intertwined roles of trade press and public relations activities in shaping the spatial dimensions necessary for indie film culture to thrive. It broadens traditional promotional studies by examining how publications like Variety, The Hollywood Reporter, Backstage, BoxOffice and American

Cinematographer act as promotional conduits for market intelligence, industry trends, and networking opportunities among film professionals. In its approach, this chapter seeks to expand the understanding of promotional media beyond typical Business-to-Consumer (B2C) paradigms such as posters and trailers. Alternatively, the case study provides a comprehensive understanding of how trade press has structured and supported the growth of indie film culture, particularly within the context of Park City's emergence as a cinematic and economic hub.

Utilising critical discourse analysis (CDA) on a dataset comprising 44 news articles and 18 feature articles from 1977 to 1991, Chapter One analyses textual discursive patterns to reveal the role of the trade press in disseminating information and setting industry agendas. Insights from scholars like Neale (1993) and Klinger (1989; 1994) serve to illustrate how trade publications have historically influenced indie film categorisation and popular canons, while shaping industry norms and practices. However, the chapter also expands understanding of the promotional facets of trade press by harnessing a spatial lens to consider how they interrelate with both the discursive and practical manifestations of indie film culture during the period. The findings drawn from CDA are contextualised using social capital frameworks that are usually applied to economic geography and business management studies (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998; Burt, 1992; Granovetter, 1992). This involves the discussion of various structural, relational, and cognitive clusters, to elucidate the ways in which the forms of value exchange demonstrated in trade press are embedded in specific social relationships. By exploring the interplay between institutional and personal factors influencing economic decisions, the chapter illuminates ways that trade press supported the infrastructures that underpin indie film production, distribution, and cultural positioning.

Furthermore, this chapter considers how social networks have come to manifest in the physical, geo-located infrastructures of Sundance and indie film culture. It suggests that this geo-location has some impact on the symbolic, practical, and discursive manifestations of indie cultural products.

The chapter begins at the intersection of indie film culture and the economic revitalisation of Park City, Utah, illustrating how Park City transformed from a declining mining town into a vibrant cultural centre through the infusion of indie film activities. Economic geography is used to understand the development of indie's supporting infrastructure as resulting from, and part of, the uneven development of geographical regions (see: Fujita et al., 1999; MacKinnon & Cumbers, 2019). Institutional economic geography is demonstrated to hold relevance to the mediating role of the trades, by showing that the economic activity surrounding indie is embedded in geo-located social relations and contexts.

Chapter 2. Ambiguity, Multiplicity, and "Infinite" Possibility: Examining Indie Film Trailers.

Chapter Two undertakes close textual analysis of trailers for two milestone films representing late-1980s and 1990s indie cinema: *She's Gotta Have It* (Spike Lee, 1989) and *Gummo* (Harmony Korine, 1997). Unlike more traditional trailer analyses that focus on trailers' fidelity to core film texts, this study explores how the forms negotiate various brand qualities to differentiate indie films within the broader media landscape. Drawing on literature from branding theory and cultural studies, the chapter argues that trailers construct "brandscapes" where brand meanings are negotiated and circulated, shaping audience perceptions and expectations (O'Reilly & Kerrigan, 2013; Sherry, 1998). Given the necessarily spatial nature of brandscape theory, this chapter offers an experiential perspective that highlights the affective and sensory impact of various brand relations. The consideration of trailers within this scheme also lends to further discussion surrounding its broader role as a form of branding, in consumer culture, and the potential for promotional media to shape individual and group identities.

In addition, the chapter posits that "authenticity" acts as a governing logic that organises formal and stylistic elements in the trailer brandscapes. Authenticity is explored as an experiential concept in relation to the form and style of trailers, lending to affective qualities such as contingency, surprise,

ambiguity, and curiosity. Indie trailers are thought to strategically utilise notions of authenticity—emphasising creativity, originality, and opposition to mainstream commercialism—to appeal to niche audiences and distinguish films in crowded markets. Rather than a lucid, cognitive construct, authenticity is examined as a structure of feeling that works to communicate unique value propositions for indie films of the Sundance-Miramax era. At the same time, focusing on the experiential qualities of brands in the film trailers discussed forms an implicit challenge to the image of goal-directed, cognitive evaluation that has come to characterise some promotional studies research.

Chapter 3. Site-Seeing with Sevigny: Publicity, Place, and Situating Indie Stardom.

Chapter Three analyses the portrayal of place in celebrity magazine coverage between 1994 and 2015, to explore the construction of stardom in relation to indie film culture. The promotional materials under consideration are somewhat two-fold. Entertainment media is understood to be a persuasive promotional vehicle for the work of public relations, and further, the star image itself is explored as a promotional form. The chapter is premised on the notion that stardom offers a "symbolic commerce" that organises consumer markets (McDonald, 2013), which is structured by the practices of entertainment media and personal image management. The role of place within this scheme is to illuminate the ways that stardom can be interrelated with the symbolic and material functions of sites, as part of a broader scheme to organise the market for films. The case study defines place in cultural geographic terms as a "centre of meaning and attention" (Adams, 2009, p. 2), which plays a key role in lived experience and individual identity (Rose, 1995; Massey, 1994). However, it also considers place to be a critical economic organising unit both within and between local and global markets (Florida, 2012). This work therefore aims to deepen understanding of how stardom, publicity, and place interrelate to structure film culture and its markets, in material, social, and discursive terms.

The focus of this case study is on actor, director, and fashion icon Chloë Sevigny, given her longstanding alignment with indie and "cult" stardom of the "Sundance-Miramax" era (Sexton, 2013; Newman, 2011). The dataset under analysis focuses on feature articles in US or UK-based entertainment magazines such as *Dazed*, *Vogue*, *The New York Times,* and *The New Yorker*. From these features, place mentions and associated rhetoric are geographically mapped to illuminate Sevigny's spheres of activity, as they are found to appear in magazine coverage. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is then performed on the data set, to reveal patterns in the way that place images are represented and elucidated in discursive terms. The result is a thorough investigation of place-based ecosystems that are inextricably aligned with indie film culture. Namely, the chapter examines the relationship between Sevigny's stardom and New York City's "underground" and "hip" social milieus, and the ways that these activity spheres work to situate her in a cultural hierarchy of media consumption as an indie "It Girl". Sevigny's New York City residency and her indie stardom are found to be reinforcing, both in terms of her own personal brand image and with regard to indie film culture more broadly. The case study concludes with a discussion on the ways that place works to reflect and perpetuate gender-based power structures that shape Sevigny's stardom, and that permeate indie film culture.

Chapter 4. The Festival Experience: Learning About Film Culture Through Visual Marketing and Merchandising.

Chapter Four is concerned with the relationship between out-of-home (OOH) advertising, retail merchandising, and the Sundance Film Festival as a site of indie film culture. Conducted through fieldwork in 2019, the case study examines how OOH advertising such as billboards, banners, and vinyl wrapping can both produce and reinforce notions of indie film culture within the physical environment of Park City, Utah. OOH advertising is understood to form a series of visual identities, crafted by a range of design professions and informed

by marketing data, which serve promotional purposes and act as a vehicle for cultural learning. It will underscore the festival's role as a cultural event and foundational commercial enterprise, which is curated through OOH advertising at the festival site to create brand coherency across the events that make up Sundance. Through visual marketing and merchandising, festival participants develop knowledge about brands, structuring discourses, expected social dynamics of the festival, and their own tastes in relation to broader consumer culture.

Central to the discussions in this chapter is the concept of experiential marketing, which entails strategies that curate the sensorial experiences of brands (Tafesse, 2016). Under the umbrella term of "experiential marketing", brand experience is explored as a central concept that broadly refers to the sensations, feelings, and behavioural responses that can be stimulated through brand activities (Brakus et al., 2009). While these concepts are certainly at the core of the analysis of OOH materials, this chapter goes further to investigate the ways that brand experience and merchandising interrelate to support learning about indie film culture. Experiential marketing is posited here to be interrelated both with the social production of learning (Vygotsky, 1978), and to "habitus" as the skills and dispositions that are thought to result from social experience (Bourdieu,1984, 1986, 1993). The chapter investigates ways that OOH advertising and associated merchandising may contribute to internal structures of knowledge, which are necessary for the social production of film culture. The case study concludes that Sundance is not just one festival event, but a collection of sites where cultural meanings, consumer practices, and brand identities are negotiated to form productive elements of indie film culture.

Chapter 1: A Born-Again Boomtown: Geo-Locating Indie's Infrastructure Through the Trades

Introduction

It is difficult to imagine—especially given its current prosperity and renown—that Park City, Utah was once a town in decline. Hosting approximately 120,000 visitors over ten days every January, the site of the Sundance Film Festival has been described as a "Born Again Boomtown" (Anon., 1979) in a playful nod to its goldrush heritage. Rather than gold and silver, it is the emergence of indie film culture from the late 1970s that once again put Park City on the map, and began a period of both economic and cultural growth for the once failing mining town. There is a temptation to see the growth of the city (and the region, more broadly) as being the direct result of the development of indie film culture. In this rubric, the physical spaces of Park City operate as a container for the social activity that takes place within it; the city profits from the tourist income generated every January, which account for its success. However, as this chapter will demonstrate, the fortunes of the city and indie are fully imbricated, intertwined, and mutually productive. For indie film culture, Park City is a vein of gold, a valuable resource at the core of its growth and prosperity. In this chapter, the question turns to the forces that signalled that there was indeed gold in the hills. What promotional forces supported the intertwined regional development of Park City, and of indie film culture? And, how can these forces be understood to have rendered the discursive and material architectures of indie in particular ways? As it will be explained in this chapter, some answers can be found in the American film industry trade press (or "the trades"), in their function as a Business-to-Business (or, B2B) marketing communications channel.

Positioning the trades as an example of B2B promotional media also poses something of an expansion to the traditional remit of promotional studies, which generally tends to be dominated by the analysis of Business-to-

Customer (B2C) media. The outputs of B2C marketing in relation to film, for instance trailers, posters, and merchandise, are thought to promote certain experiential or discursive qualities to increase audience appeal, awareness, and engagement. In contrast, B2B media focus on the promotion of products and services to organisations, through a range of communication channels that may not align with traditional notions of "promotional media" (Brennan et al., 2020, p. 6). While B2C forms tend to be driven by customer tastes, emotions, and patterns of purchasing, B2B marketing boasts different appeals such as expertise and industry insights, networking opportunities, cost-effective advertising, audience targeting, credibility and reputation (Brennan et al., 2020, p. 6; Lilien 2016). In this way, the trades (otherwise called "specialised business press", "journals", or "trade magazines") can be considered as B2B media due to their target audience of film industry executives and professionals (Corrigan, 2018, p. 2755). For over a century, film industry publications such as *Variety*, *BoxOffice*, *The Hollywood Reporter, American Filmmaker* and more have offered data pertaining to sector information and growth, industry and film performance, competitor analysis, global movements of capital, and commodity chains; all of which offer support in business decision-making through the provision of competitive market intelligence. Through this function the trades perform (or otherwise facilitate) activities critical to effective B2B networks, such as enabling communication and collaboration between different organisational entities. As a B2B marketing channel, the trades also promote industry events for film professionals to network and share information about new technologies, financing options, and distribution strategies. As a form of B2B marketing that is enshrined within the production of entertainment news, the trades can be considered as a promotional material that may impact the way that industrial infrastructures produce and position films; affecting the manifestations of networks that provide finance and distribution, through to the methods of production and exhibition.

Despite playing a fundamental role in research examining the history of film production, the trades have largely been considered as a mode of information dissemination rather than as a structuring force in relation to

cultural and economic development. For instance, Neale (1993) offers an analysis of the trades between 1938-1960 to uncover the uses of the term "melodrama" as a mode of film categorisation. Neale (1993) found that the judgments of reviewers in trade press could "convey an impression of the term's ubiquity" and "convey an impression of the consistency and coherence with which it was used". Similarly—both in relation to the term melodrama and the proposed function of the trades—Klinger (1994) demonstrates the ways that the trades presented the most saleable aspects of director Douglas Sirk's melodramas, and offered important insights into "journalism's role in public taste making via the creation of popular film canons" (p. xviii). For Neale (1993) and Klinger (1994), trade press are considered to be cultural arenas where individual and organisational actors negotiate norms, values, practices and professional ideologies (see also: Turow, 1997; Corrigan, 2018; Hoyt, 2022). Yet, in addition to information dissemination and various agenda-setting or gatekeeping functions, the trades offer even greater potential as structuring organisational forces within the film industry. What has yet to be examined is precisely how the trades negotiate a range of broad economic interests, to promote the development of the resourcing and physical supply chains necessary for film cultures to emerge.

Examining the trade press therefore requires a dual lens that considers, on the one hand, information dissemination through journalistic structures of "newsworthiness"; and on the other hand, the enduring relationship with public relations (PR) activities that aim to promote personal and organisational interests. In the pursuit of industry entertainment news, trade press is thought to be guided by traditionally held notions of "news values". These are understood to be informal and often intangible conventions that guide journalists and editors in executing the content of publications or broadcasts (Brighton & Foy, 2007, p. 9). For MacShane (1979), newsworthy events can be divided into categories such as danger to the community, unusualness, scandal, individualism, and conflict. Harcup and O'Neill (2001) also include elements such as celebrity, entertainment, magnitude, relevance, and media agenda. However contentious the precise definition of

news values might be, the premise of such theories is that the news is governed by more or less conscious agendas that determine what is likely to be published, and where (Brighton & Foy, 2007). Simultaneously, the trades maintain a close and mutually beneficial relationship to promotional industries such as PR and advertising.

While the definitions and applications of PR vary, here it is taken to relate to the practices involved with presenting the "public face" (or, in other words the image or identity) of an organisation or individual (L'Etang, 2004, p. 2). Through media relations strategies, PR can help clients to communicate certain aims and objectives, views on relevant issues, or perform crisis management in the arena of public identity (L'Etang, 2004, p. 2). PR messaging is primarily enacted through the medium of the press release, which is sent on behalf of organisations or individuals to inform of events, developments, or products (Boumans, 2018, p. 2267). Press releases foreground the value propositions of businesses and individuals, forming an information subsidy for trade news outlets that provide timely and relevant news and information. As Caldwell (2008) points out, many trade articles are "merely hastily reauthored company press releases" (p. 24). The use of such sources by trade press (even verbatim) are enabled by their presentation, which is often written in a journalistic style that meets standards of newsworthiness (Boumans, 2018, p. 2267). According to Jacobs (1999), press releases are "told only to be retold", and are preformulated to encourage accurate reproduction in news reporting (p. 1). The work of PR as a "passive discovery" method of news production forms a cost-effective and timely way for the trades to provide competitive and accurate intelligence (Boumans, 2018). PR messaging may perhaps be, in some cases, the only way to secure detailed data regarding developments in private, for-profit organisations. While traditional news journalism draws complaints that it is dominated by PR and advertising institutions that do not serve the public interest (Boumans, 2018, p. 2264), the news cycle for trade publications depends on steady flows of information from precisely such organisations and personnel. While the level of uptake of PR messaging and media releases is expected to vary amongst film industry trade publications, it

remains that there is a strong convergence between the promotional aims of PR in foregrounding the favourable corporate identities and reputations of its clients, and the promotional aims of the trades in terms of communicating competitive market information. The recognition of the trades as being produced through both news and image management functions, has the potential to shift the perspective of the publications away from being simply sources of information and arenas of cultural debate; instead, leading to their consideration as active and powerful promotional and agenda-setting institutions.

Shifting the perspective of the trades towards their potentially structuring roles offers a range of insights into the ways that indie, and regional economic development more broadly, came to manifest in the Sundance-Miramax era. It has the potential to provide insights into a "missing link" between seemingly contingent historical encounters that are thought to bring a sense of cohesiveness to the film culture. It is a commonly held contention of research that prior to the mid-to-late 1970s, independent films lacked defined markets, distinct communities of practice, or clear distribution pathways (Perren, 2012, p. 18; Tzioumakis, 2017, p. 235). From the 1980s, independent film gained larger audiences, more widespread recognition, and a greater sense of cohesion (Ortner, 2017, p. 42; Tzioumakis, 2017, p. 235). This shift from "independent" to "indie" is thought to be the result of an alignment of economic fortunes, ambitions, and key stakeholders (King, 2005; Newman, 2011; Tzioumakis, 2017). For instance, the early 1980s brought more opportunities for both project and organisational development funding, which resulted in initiatives such as The Independent Feature Project (IFP) (Tzioumakis, 2017, p. 238). The early 1980s also saw the founding of the Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers and the Sundance Institute, which both supported narrative and documentary production outside of Hollywood (Perren, 2012, p. 19). Theatrical distributors became "keen to release quality independent films", while cable and video companies in the home video market began to exchange film finance for ancillary rights (Tzioumakis, 2017, p. 234). However, between these industrial events, there are a vast range of formative knowledge sharing

activities, attitudinal shifts, networks of practice, and institutional discourses, which have yet to be examined. Given its focus on highlighting opportunity— both in terms of promotion, and newsworthiness—analysis of the trades offers insights into what might have contributed, for instance, to theatrical distributors becoming "keen" to shift focus to quality independent films. It leads, necessarily, to the consideration of how (and in what terms) the actions of economic agents may have been influenced in the development of indie's material and discursive infrastructures.

Before moving to the discussion of this chapter's methodology and approach, it is important to clearly define what is meant by the term "infrastructure" and how the analysis of the trades can contribute to its meaning in relation to indie film culture. Infrastructure, at the core of its meaning, refers to any system that gives rise to certain phenomena (Larkin, 2013, p. 328). It can be taken to mean the semiotic and physical networks that enable the movement of matter in the pursuit of capital; what Larkin (2013) describes as the "things and also the relation between things" (p. 329). Two interrelated factors appear to be necessary for the manifestation of material infrastructural "things", and the symbolic and interpersonal relations between them. The first are the "institutional" facilities and data that are available to economic agents (Jochimsen, 1966, p. 100). When the above research refers to indie's supporting infrastructure, it can be considered to provide institutional data that elucidates the industry's key figures, events, and organisations. As research by King (2005, 2009), Perren (2012), Newman (2011, 2017), and Tzioumakis (2017) highlights, certain collaborations between institutions—for instance, between Hollywood major studios and independent distributors—have developed in ways that enable indie to operate to a certain level of economic activity. The second factor is what Jochimsen (1966) terms "personal" facilities and data (p. 100). That is: emotions, interpersonal relations, discursive frames, felt and perceived values, and various other factors that shape the actions of economic agents. By offering market intelligence, along with modes of positioning and persuasion, the trades can be understood to offer different degrees of influence on both the institutional and personal facilities that form the basis

of purchasing decisions, negotiations, and deals. As Corrigan (2018) argues, the combination (both within and between publications) of editorials by industry regulators, market data analysis and news, are designed to offer decision-makers "industry information and the conceptual frameworks for acting on it" (p. 2755). In detailing the exchanges between buyers and suppliers (along with various other industry dynamics), trade press can be seen to influence the perception of value and opportunity, which as this chapter will demonstrate, has proven critical to rendering the specific networks, interpersonal relationships, and felt values of indie (and Park City's) infrastructural development.

Methodology and Approach

This chapter examines how trade coverage of Sundance as an institution, and its geographic site at Park City, form a conceptual and material nexus for the supply chains that promote and sustain indie. It considers the ways that trade press, in both news reporting and image management functions, play a role in the development of the material and discursive infrastructures necessary for indie to thrive. Furthermore, the chapter explores the ways that the resurgence of Park City and indie film culture are interrelated phenomena, with the trades both signalling to and harnessing broader patterns of regional development to promote economic and cultural growth. Overall, the case study aims to illustrate the impact of trade press, as a form of promotional media, on shaping, directing, and enriching the spaces of indie film culture in its emergent years.

The focus of this analysis, thematically speaking, is the coverage of what is now known as the Sundance Film Festival, but prior to 1984 was the Utah/US Film Festival. Rather than reiterate the significance of Sundance (as a brand, institution, and event) to the economic and cultural fortunes of indie, this chapter will examine reportage and analysis of the brand to determine the ways in which such coverage enabled indie to function as a distinct economic, cultural and media category in the mid-1980s. It will

analyse trade publications during the period 1977-1991 to better understand the geo-located narratives of development and progress that have historically shaped indie as a viable cultural and economic category. The beginning of the time frame is derived from the year prior to the first festival event, to investigate how the upcoming festival was positioned in promotional terms. The end of the time frame reflects the year following the screening of "breakthrough" indies such as *sex, lies and videotape*, which mirrors research that takes the surprising commercial success of the films as a sign of the new viability of indie as a film culture (Tzioumakis, 2017; Perren, 2012).

Trade press articles were gathered using the Entertainment Industry Magazine Archive (ProQuest). Results were limited to the period 1977 – 1991 inclusive. Search terms included: Sundance, Sundance Institute, US/Utah Festival, and variants such as U.S Festival and United States Film Festival. Inclusion in the dataset was also premised on the text meeting the criteria of being a trade publication; that is, a publication that through contextual research and demonstrable discourse could be proven as one that was focused primarily on B2B communications within the film industry. They are understood to primarily contain entertainment news and features pertaining to upcoming releases, box office results, industry-specific events and insights, and new technologies.

The type of articles chosen to be part of the data pool were news reports and feature articles. News reports are accounts that, in the most ideal form, are designed to offer timely, accurate and fair coverage of events or situations. Feature articles are a type of news story that provides further contextual information and analysis to news events, and generally includes a broader range of narrative techniques. Paid advertisements, critical journalism, and notices promoting individual films currently in production ("Filming in the U.S" memos) were removed from the data set. The basis for removing these from the data was due to the additional need to contextualise such media forms within the specific industries and practices from which they emerge. Critical journalism, for instance, is a distinct form

that cannot necessarily be conflated with the same practices that produce entertainment news; these forms should, therefore, be considered on their own terms. The resulting data set was 44 news articles and 18 features, from a cross-section of trade publications including *The Hollywood Reporter*, *Backstage*, *Variety*, *American Cinematographer*, and *BoxOffice*.

Text-focused Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was performed on the remaining data set. By using a text-focused approach, the analysis involved examining the language and phrasing of news articles and features, along with the structural elements of press coverage that prioritise certain information over others. The analysis looked for patterns and themes in both language and in broader discursive terms. CDA was chosen as a structuring methodology for the analysis in no small part due to one of its originating aims, which in the words of Fairclough (1995) are to "systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between a) discursive practices, events and texts, and b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes" (p. 132). The opacity of causal relationships between texts and cultural systems resonates with the ties between trade press and film cultures more broadly; while causation between texts and the productive infrastructures of film cultures can't be absolutely proven, CDA can support the investigation and exploration these links and their discursive potential. The examination of the trades is not expected to reveal direct causal relationships that determine specific outcomes in the economic or cultural development of indie, in no small part due to the nature of infrastructures as dispersed networks that operate at interrelated spatial levels (Larkin, 2013, p. 330). As the following analysis will reveal, the trades instead take on a bridging role that reflects and seeks to mediate individual and organisational actors across space.

The findings drawn from CDA processes were contextualised and examined against two core theoretical frameworks. The first is the consideration of social capital as the context for (or social dimension of) infrastructures, which helps to explain the breadth of its use in analysis across business studies (Nahapiet & Goshal, 1998), management studies (Adler & Kwon,

2002), and regional economies. Broadly, social capital encompasses the complex interconnections of interpersonal relationships that are seen to link individuals and organisations. Bourdieu (1986) argued that social capital in the form of status and reputation is a resource that can provide individuals with a "credential" that entitles them to "credit" and membership in particular networks (p. 243-249). In this chapter, the framework takes on more specific connotations. In line with Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998), social capital is here considered as it exists across three interrelated clusters: structural, relational, and cognitive. Structural clusters offer a top-level view of social system configuration and the presence of network ties, examining the overall patterns of linkages between people and units (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998, p. 244; see also: Burt, 1992; Granovetter, 1992). In the examples offered below, trade press can be seen to reflect structural clusters of social capital in their top-level reporting of festival funding sources and foregrounding of some festival attendees. Relational clusters are understood to include interpersonal qualities respect, friendship, and trust, examining the kinds of "actor bonds" (Håkansson & Snehota, 1995) relationships that develop through network interactions (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998; see also: Granovetter, 1992). Cooke et al. (2005), in summarising work on social capital, explains the relational view as "the application or exercise of social norms of reciprocity, trust and exchange for political or economic purposes" (p. 1066). Cognitive clusters, within this scheme, are groups that share beliefs, mental models, or paradigms for problem solving. Used together, these frameworks of social capital aim to elucidate the ways in which the forms of value exchange demonstrated in trade press are embedded in specific social relationships.

The second theoretical framework that supports the exploration of textual findings draws from the discipline of economic geography. Staber (2007) perhaps best outlines the challenge in analysing the dispersed networks and actors that form infrastructures, writing that "Individual and organizational actors operate in different domains, where they face different demands such that separate models may be required to explain network structures and practices" (p.506). In the case of this analysis, the theoretical model used to

trace and explain the movement of human, material and discursive networks through the trades is economic geography. As "the study of where economic activity takes place, and why" (Fujita et al., 1999, p. 1), economic geography offers inroads to understanding the development of indie's supporting infrastructure as resulting from, and part of, the uneven development of geographical regions. Institutional economic geography holds relevance to the mediating role of the trades, by focusing on the notion that economic activity is embedded in social relations and contexts, and that social and institutional foundations are the basis from which economies develop (MacKinnon & Cumbers, 2019, p. 46). By shifting the lens of analysis to institutions, economic geography works to foreground their role in disseminating the informal attitudes norms, values and social networks that influence the decisions of social actors (MacKinnon & Cumbers, 2019, p. 46; Gertler, 2004, p. 7-8). In geographic terms, the analysis of institutional impact on economic and cultural development pertains to the ways that human activity is territorially embedded, and grounded physically and conceptually in places (MacKinnon & Cumbers, 2019, p. 46). Through this lens, indie film culture as it presents through networks of institutions and brands through the trade press, can be understood as necessarily geo-located; and that this geo-location has some impact on the symbolic, practical, and discursive manifestations of its cultural products.

The resulting findings are organised into three sections. The first section considers the ways that stardom and social capital interrelate in trade coverage to bridge and broker discursive and material distances between the Hollywood film industry and the regional economy of Utah. The second looks at how particular B2B promotional appeals were constructed by trade press through shared narratives of regional economic development. The last section considers the mechanisms of PR and trade press reporting that sought to manage the size and scale of the festival, and retain value in a sense of alterity to mainstream production.

Social Capital and Stardom: Bridging Structural Holes

The trades can be seen to map the structural and relational dynamics of the festival—and indie, along with it—from the earliest reports of the Utah/US Film Festival. *BoxOffice* (Anon B., 1978) exemplifies the focus of the trades in spotting and elucidating dynamics of social capital with the title: "You may spot a few familiar faces at Salt Lake City's US Film Fest". The festival experience is framed as a star-spotting event, reporting that "one may walk into one of the theatres to find New York City's former mayor John Lindsay lecturing on city life", or actor Robert Redford "who took on an ambassador's role when he attended the festival" (p. W7). An organisational focus is demonstrated by *American Cinematographer* (Anon., 1979), which highlights the specific sources of financial support for the festival: "Funding came from the Four Corners Regional Commission, the Utah Department of Development Services (three different divisions); the Utah Endowment for the Humanities; Schick-Sunn Classic Productions, Osmond Entertainment and Mr. Sol Lesser" (p. 139). The explicit point of the festival, they argue, was to showcase independent films "to New York/Hollywood names and representatives of The System" (p. 139). *The Hollywood Reporter* (Anon., 1980) offers an extensively detailed account of personnel and organisations set to attend:

> Roger Corman, president New World Pictures; cinematography Caleb Deschanel; Janey Fleming, VP, Pacific Sales; Derek Gibson, executive vp of Sandy Howard Prods. And International Cinema Alliance; Wayne Godwin, senior vp programing, PBS - Bruce Hough, Director Bonneville Satellite Corp; William Immerman, chairman the Cinema Group; writer David Rayfiel, directors George Romero and Mark Rydell, Angela Schapiro, vp programing, Cinemax and program services, Home Box Office; production manager-producer Ron Schwary, editor Fredric (Fritz) Steinkamp (p. 3).

By 1981, festival attendance was also reported to include "Mark Rosenberg, Senior Vice President of Production, Warner Bros Studios" who was acting as chairman of the festival (Anon., 1981). This was alongside "three major

television networks" and representatives from "Paramount, 20th Century Fox, Universal and United Artists" (Anon., 1981). The names and organisations listed in reporting throughout the years may carry varying degrees of symbolic resonance and renown (particularly for those operating within the industry), and could be used to identify potential collaborators or competitors. However, in elucidating the flows of social capital in and around the festival, the trades also promote a sense of emergent potential through the clustering of attendees that together form an enviable supply chain for independent films.

It seems pertinent at this juncture to add a retrospective reading to this analysis, to highlight what reporting offers to broader understandings of indie film culture. The primacy and detail of the reporting of attendance between 1977-1981 demonstrates that the high currency of indie was felt in industrial terms somewhat earlier than the proposed "mid-to-late 1980s" of the Sundance-Miramax era (Newman, 2011). The early involvement of home video distributors, television networks, and major Hollywood studios, alongside independent film directors, producers, and celebrities such as Robert Redford and Sydney Pollack, calls into question notions of "sudden coherency" or "convergence of events" that can characterise discussions around the development of indie's infrastructure. Such relational and structural networks, it would seem from reporting, were being forged from at least the mid-1970s. Further, it challenges ideas about the distanced relationship between indie and the Hollywood major studios. The category of "Indiewood" as a "post-indie" period, for instance, is posited as the result of mergers and acquisitions by Hollywood from approximately the mid-2000s (King, 2009). The opening of Indiewood's "studio speciality divisions" can be seen as attempts to profit on the sudden popularity of indie in the Sundance-Miramax era. However, taken collectively, the trades appear to demonstrate that Hollywood and studio involvement (alongside other major corporate players in home video and television) are formative facets of the festival and film culture from its earliest years. Indeed, such perspective is matched by Redford, who states that the aim of both the Sundance Institute and festival is to "eliminate the tension that can exist between independents and the

studios. We're not anti-Hollywood… We've created a symbiotic relationship that did not exist before" (Byrge, 1986, p. 26). While posing an interesting challenge to questions of periodisation and the development of indie in industrial terms, this retrospective analysis stands somewhat apart from the consideration of the mechanisms through which reporting operated at the time of publication. Such analysis does, however, signal to the need to investigate the ways that the structural and relational links necessary to the production of indie, and the ways in which such networks of social capital impact the development of film cultures.

Through leveraging flows of social capital, the trades can be understood to serve a bridging function that aims to connect perceived gaps in networks and markets. Drawing on Burt's (1997) conceptualisation of social capital, "structural holes" are disconnects that cause individuals and organisations to be unaware of the value they can bring to one another (p. 340). Structural holes lead to "imperfect markets", where an over-reliance on pre-existing relational connections between people and organisations can lock assets into patterns of suboptimal exchange (Burt, 1997, p. 340). Broadly, the idea of industries being held in exchange patterns that do not best serve them resonates with the industrial context within which the Utah/US Film Festival emerged in 1978. The industry, as discussed at the outset of this chapter, was characterised by a lack of clear supply chains for the financing, production, distribution, or exhibition of films made outside of the major studios. Press coverage reports on precisely such structural holes, elucidating a disconnect between centres of film production such as Los Angeles and America's regional territories. For example, *BoxOffice* (Anon B., 1978) quotes Redford as saying that "the festival will help promote an exchange between outside filmmakers and those in Utah" (p. W7). In this example, the publication serves to foreground a distinct geographic and economic gap between Utah and "outsiders", that speaks to profitable potential should it be bridged through connections between otherwise siloed market segments. That it is also supported by Redford, a symbolic figurehead for the festival, lends a certain gravitas and prestige that amplifies the message (and potentially, its appeal). The trades can be

understood here to provide a brokerage of sorts, mediating information flows that make visible the structural gaps that separate its audiences from potential opportunities.

To expand, a broker is understood through social capital frameworks as a socio-economic actor that has networks spanning many structural holes (Quintane & Carnabuci, 2016, p. 1343). "Tertius gaudens" are brokers that act as information and communication conduits between members on opposite sides of structural holes (Burt, 1992, p. 33). Drawing from an Italian proverb - "Far i due litiganti, il terzo gode" (between two fighters, the third benefits), – tertius gaudens hold a certain amount of control and influence due to their brokerage strategies, and invariably benefit from the relationship (Burt, 1992, p. 33). Put differently, a manager (or tertius gaudens) who creates the bridges between disconnected contacts invariably "has a say in whose interests are served by the bridge" (Burt, 1997, p. 341). In terms of agenda setting and textual mediation, the trades can be seen to operate in a space between buyers and suppliers, as a third who benefits from the provision of competitive market intelligence. Benefits may include the perceived relevance, usefulness, and insightfulness of the publication, along with organisational profits.

Yet it is important to note that the trades are, by some considerable measure, not the only brokers operating in the film industry. As part of their mediating function, the trades negotiate myriad brands, purposes, and goals of industry stakeholders, in various cultural and economic spaces. The relationship of the trades to image-management industries such as PR also demonstrate that synergies between brokering figures can provide even further benefits. Advanced insights, the ability to confirm information, and the potential added symbolic resonances and reach of industry spokespeople, all serve to provide mutually beneficial relationships between social actors attempting to bridge structural holes. The trades have the power to discursively situate other brokers as well, offering various impressions of control and authority to individuals and institutions throughout the course of coverage. Publications also, therefore, signal to relational and structural

clusters through the amplification of certain broker-figures; which invariably compounds the layers and dynamics of image-management and PR influence in news reporting and features.

The privileging and positioning of Redford in coverage around the festival, and indie film culture more broadly, is exemplary of the trade's ability to confer power and status to other brokers. The symbolic associations of his stardom, particularly during the period under analysis here, offered a host of positive associations for festival organisers and the trade press. Redford occupied a prominent place in the somewhat more countercultural offerings of the New Hollywood period, through films like *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (George Roy Hill, 1969) and *The Sting* (George Roy Hill, 1973), but offscreen offered an easy-going, enduringly "cool" reputation that carried through to thoughtful environmental activism (Wright, 2016; Dyer, 2004; Spada, 1977). Symbolically, Redford can be seen to boost the credentials of the event, with *American Film* (Perry, 1981) directly reporting on the synergy between Redford's stardom and the philosophical underpinnings of the festival. Perry (1981) writes, "The artistic and philosophic concerns of recent independent features – humanist, regional, ecological – are the same ones that permeate the most personal of [Redford's] own studio works" (p. 48). Yet, the positioning of Redford in the trades also amalgamates the thoughtful, ethical, and moral dimensions of his stardom with concerns around business and commerce, while amplifying his voice as an authoritative decision-maker and organisational representative. Redford becomes a key figure that bridges major film markets and independents, and consequently, acts discursively as a channel through which a range of organisational aims and public image are embodied.

Trade coverage positions Redford as an ethical broker, which validates the informational and control advantages that he appears to hold in relation to the festival and indie film culture. While the potential goals, benefits and gains of brokers may in other areas be understood as "vested interests" or "ulterior motives" for fostering business networks, for Redford they appear to be a sign of credibility. It is reported as early as 1978 that Redford managed

business interests in regional Utah, in the form of a personally owned ski resort in nearby Provo Canyon (Anon B., 1978, p. W7). The festival's director, Susan Barrell (in Kaminsky, 1981), also clearly outlines the benefits for Redford's Sundance Institute—held at the Sundance ski resort—in championing the festival:

> Those close to the filmmaking scene in Utah see the film festival and the Sundance Institute working in tandem… They want to develop new talent at Sundance. We offer to showcase the new talent, to encourage more filmmaking in the state (p. 36).

While certain ecological, ethical, and moral inferences intersecting Redford's stardom may temper accusations of deception or ulterior motive, the way that this is portrayed in the press can be further explained through social capital dynamics. As Kent et al. (2016) point out, tertius gaudens can be associated with negative qualities such as manipulative control, or immoral modes of brokerage that benefit at the expense of others (p. 91). For this reason, Kent et al. (2016) challenges the theory in its application to PR and image-management activities, pointing out that those who seek to overtly manipulate information for profit or reputational gains may contravene professional codes of ethics, such as those provided by the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) (p. 93). Instead, they offer the term "tertius iungens" to describe third parties who join others to "endorse connecting organizations and emphasize the collective good" (Kent et al., 2016, p. 91). Given the kind of attention afforded to Redford throughout trade press coverage, the tertius iungens theory does appear to explain his positioning more accurately as a supportive and ethical form of broker.

One such example from coverage around the first Utah/US Film Festival in 1978 is the authoritative determination by Redford that Utah was "long overdue for development" and that the festival will "provide a balance between the economic and cultural aspects of Utah's movie industry by "generating more interest" in movies" (Anon B., 1978, p. W7). Another headline reads, "Redford offers help", and states that "Robert Redford is

setting up an independent film institute to help young filmmakers" (Anon., 1980, p. 4). It also helps to explain why quotes from Redford tend to receive top-billing in the information hierarchies of reporting around the festival and Institute: for instance, that some of the most "newsworthy" information about the festival in 1981 was that "Redford, chairman of the festival board and founder of the Sundance Institute, was featured speaker at the Saturday session to sum up the achievements and import of the festival" (Kaminsky, 1981, p. 34). In each of these examples, Redford's public image is rendered as one that unites previously disconnected parties within the infrastructure of indie filmmaking for the greater good of the filmmaking community, rather than perceived personal benefit. His tertius iungen role is defined as one of non-partisan arbitration between major studios and regional filmmaking, which is perhaps best exemplified in Victor Nunez's (in Perry, 1981) assertion that "Sundance's excitement is in the cross-fertilization, proof that all groups don't have to be adversaries" (p. 40). The result of these convergent mediating activities, however, is to reinforce a primary directive of the festival and its stakeholders: to explicitly encourage a form of alternative, ethical, and regional film production in Utah.

Regional Economic Development and Discursive Architectures

The dynamics of social capital and public image mediation in early press coverage of the festival position the geographic region as one primed for economic development. Although Redford is a significant brokering figure in this process, it is the interests of the parties that he represents that form an important core of discursive and material resource through which the emerging indie infrastructure is rendered. In 1977, the director of the Utah State Film Commission was quoted in *The Hollywood Reporter* as "stress[ing] his office's eagerness to help filmmakers" (p. S-39). The Utah State Film Commission had been established in 1974, with the goal of connecting media producers and filmmakers to resources in the region. This included "one-stop permitting, non-fee permits, complimentary police supervision and computer access to support services such as local

businesses, equipment suppliers, crew, and talent" (Klein, 1989, p. 54). Since the development of the first official commission (Colorado) in 1969, competition between State film commissions grew more intense with full page ads, aggressive sales campaigns, and the development of festivals to promote state resources (Klein, 1989, p. 54). State governments funded film commissions, usually through departments of commerce, economic development, or tourism, to bring in media production, which elicits jobs, profits, and tourism revenue for the state (Humphrey, 1991, p. S-10). The close and mutually beneficial links between Redford's Sundance Institute and the Utah Film Commission are explained by Klein for *American Film* (1989), who states that the Commission "closely links itself to the Sundance Institute and United States Film Festival as a sponsor, thereby actively courting beginning and independent filmmakers from the ground floor" (p. 54). In return, Redford demonstrates reciprocal relationships through press coverage, in his explicit attempts to build up "a whole new market that's more regional, that allows filmmakers to keep their unique vision" (Redford in Perry, 1981, p. 49). In bridging networks between Utah and the "outside" film industry, these brokering dynamics of reciprocal benefit serve not only to increase the profile of the festival, but of the regional economy of Utah. In various ways, the trades can be seen to reinforce and mediate the institutional and social foundations that characterise the economies of America's regions.

In mediating the competing interests of PR, news reportage and maintaining appeals relevant to B2B audiences, trade press coverage iterates narratives of core-periphery relations that are crucial to the institutional and cultural discourses of indie. The notion of "core-periphery" development, in geographical terms, refers to the tendency for growth and investment to concentrate within locations, and for this spread of activity to be geographically uneven (MacKinnon & Cumbers, 2019, p. 10). Regionalism emerges as a core concept from core-periphery relations, referring to scenarios where groups with unique collective identities reside within state boundaries, often in a specific locale (Knox & Marston, 2016, p. 47). Unlike more casual uses of the term, "regional" operates as a scientific

classification for geographers, with regions coming to share characteristics in economic, political, and social terms (Knox & Marston, 2016, p. 47). New York is thought to operate as a "core region" and the hemisphere's gateway to Europe, as well as being an important tourist and financial centre (De Blij et al., 2014, p. 179). Los Angeles is termed as the "Pacific Hinge" and holds a position as the entertainment capital of the Western World (De Blij et al., 2014, p. 185). Schatz and Perren (2004) argue that Hollywood, in Los Angeles, is more of an idea than a physical site, speaking to its long-held social identity as an entertainment centre. However, as Scott (2005) argues, Hollywood was, and is, a sustained and concentrated source of production and distribution enterprise that reinforces Los Angeles's position at the forefront of the filmmaking industry. If New York and Los Angeles are considered core sites, Utah is comparatively the "Western Frontier" and a "periphery" region (De Blij et al., 2014, p. 170). It has historically been understood as remote, sparsely populated, the centre of the Mormon faith, and boom-and-bust mining (De Blij et al. 2014, 185). In this distinction between core-periphery, there is both symbolic and financial value that becomes attributed to indie film culture. As part of a B2B function that aims to connect people, organisations, supply chains, trade press harness the long-held symbolic associations of place to flesh out a series of distinct value propositions offered by the film culture.

An example of the currency of core-periphery relations can be found in Lamont's (1982) coverage of the festival. They write,

> "Utah? Ugh!" sophisticated Easterners will complain. "There's nothing there." Nothing but the warmest, most ambitious, best-attended festival of independent American film and video in the U.S… Don't confuse it with Cannes, New York, or Los Angeles - those expositions are all huge, multinational, and relatively impersonal. If an American independent film is shown there, it tends to get lost in the crowd (p. 2).

Lamont's coverage demonstrates embedded place-associations that still today underline the industrial dynamics of film production, with the urban centres of Los Angeles and New York becoming representative of a

hegemonic and dominating system that can only be escaped through geographic (and discursive) distancing. Utah, while undoubtedly perceived as remote, is aligned with warmth, friendliness, and "small town" associations. While films "get lost" in the urban core regions, they are seen and recognisable in Utah. While the festival's films have "ambition" (and perhaps, creativity and originality as aligned concepts), the "huge", "multinational" and "impersonal" centres of production do not. These spatial oppositions, between regional Utah and the urban cores of Los Angeles and New York, resonate throughout press coverage (and appear in Chapter Three of this project). Together, Lamont's (1982) coverage is just one example of the kind of value found in the oppositionality between core and periphery regions, which as discussed later, form the basis around which B2B brand communities form.

Reframing the extensive mentions of funders, networks of personnel and organisations through the lens of core-periphery relations offers further insight into the role of the trades in rendering the value of discursive and material infrastructures. For instance, the emphasis on reporting networks and social relationships also makes prominent a series of narratives regarding the "initial advantages" of the emerging economic and regional development in Utah. The concept of initial advantage explains why and how economic activity takes place in certain geographic sites compared to others. Generally, initial advantage is premised on the idea that economic development will emerge in sites that can utilise existing consumer and labour markets, and notably, "existing frameworks of fixed social capital" (Knox & Marston, 2016, p. 303). To be most effective, initial advantages must cluster in localised economies so that growth can continue (Knox & Marston, 2016, p. 303). Effective communication, particularly in relation to the new opportunities or economic developments deemed "newsworthy" in B2B press, necessarily requires a leveraging of pre-existing schemas, symbolic associations, and frameworks to convey meaning. The detailing of film industry networks and labour markets, as described in the previous section, are precisely one such way that the initial advantages of Park City (and Salt Lake City, prior to 1980) are rendered.

The existing material infrastructures of place also form a considerable initial advantage. The growth of the festival, as reported in press coverage, prompted a move from Salt Lake City to Park City in 1981, due to "feelings of discontent over the lack of proper facilities" (Kaminsky, 1981, p. 34). Conversely, Park City – a "historic mining town and ski resort in the mountains 26 miles east of Salt Lake City" (Anon., 1981, p. 1095) – offered pre-existing tourism infrastructure and leisure activities. The leveraging of tourism appeals and the upgrade in terms of infrastructure was made explicit in trade press: Kaminsky (1981), for instance, stated that "Park City officials welcomed the festival as an addition to its attractions as a developing ski resort", and that the "festival was glad to add the ski attraction as part of the lure to out-of-area and out-of-state festival-goers" (p. 34). Discursively highlighting the advantages of the festival – whether in the form of existing networks of social capital, or the distinct added value(s) of place – also served to foreground opportunities for continuing material development in the region.

Along with discursively supporting the initial growth phases of indie, trade coverage also promotes networks of ancillary industries and specialised labour that together form attractive propositions for future investors. In economic terms, this kind of reporting aligns with patterns of "forward linkage", which are the supply chain relationships that industries have with the other industries that rely on its products or outputs; for instance, when new firms repackage products to use in their own packaging and distribution models (Knox & Marston, 2016, p. 304).

Forward linkages demonstrate the success and growth of industries, and understandably in B2B press form "newsworthy" developments. One such example can be found in coverage of the Sundance Institute alongside other research and development (R&D) initiatives, which form ancillary industries in the region. *Variety* (Anon., 1981), for instance, highlights a collaboration between the American Film Institute, "Robert Redford's Sundance Institute", and "Gotham-based Independent Film Project" that aimed to provide a "rare

in-depth study on the distribution of independent films" (p. 4). *The Hollywood Reporter* (Anon. A, 1982) reported that "Sundance script development slate totals nine for 1982" (p. 4), while *Variety* (Anon. B, 1982) echoed the report with "Redford's Sundance assigns pro writer to nine beginners" (p. 24). The presence of initial advantages, according to Knox & Marston (2016), increase the likelihood of R&D initiatives such as those reported in the press, and "increas[e] the likelihood of local inventions and innovations that might further stimulate local economic development" (p. 304). The reporting of such linkages and ongoing economic development plays a role in the geographic location becoming self-reinforcing, as a mode of appeal and discourse in the press.

Whether or not the reporting of initial advantages and forward linkages had direct causal impact on the development of the region is beyond the scope of this work. However, certain reporting events in the press do give the impression of agglomeration occurring in Park City, as a result of the spiralling economic advantages of the festival and region. Agglomeration is the clustering of interrelated industries or firms in a geographic area, driven by synergies and mutual dependencies, and perpetuated by self-reinforcing logics (Fujita et al., 1999, p. 1). Prominent examples of agglomeration exist in geographic clusters such as the tech industry in Silicon Valley, California, or the automotive industry in Detroit, Michigan. Notably, Silicon Valley and Detroit are permanent fixtures, which introduces some challenge to its application in relation to film festivals. However, the permanent presence of the Sundance Resort and Institute, along with the enduring interests of the Utah Film Commission to draw media production to the region, likely lend enough credibility for narrative resonances of agglomeration to gain saliency in the trade press. Structural and relational clustering in the Utah region, as detailed in the previous section, are present from the earliest reporting on the festival (1977). The reciprocal nature of the Sundance Institute to the Utah Film Commission, and ongoing production in the region, also offer a sense of the area as offering a source of mutually beneficial resourcing. However, from 1984, the trades illustrate a clear shift in the fate and fortunes of the festival that signal to agglomeration in more distinct ways.

In 1984, the Sundance Institute took over the management of the US Film Festival, resulting in its eventual rebranding as Sundance Film Festival in 1985. Immediately, Sundance was positioned as a governing power and key decision-maker for both the festival and film culture, homing in on independent cinema as a focal point (at the expense of the home video section) and drawing in considerable capital. Sterling Van Wagenen, executive director of Sundance, offered an authoritative account of upcoming plans that may have assuaged any doubts as to the repute of the Institute or its ability to manage the festival: "First, it should remain in Park City. Second, the thrust should be independent film. Third, funding for the festival needs to have a broader base, a natural constituency…". The impact of this authoritative shift in management is explained by *Variety* (Anon., 1984), who noted that while the video section was dropped, 150 sources of additional financing were gained to fund the festival (p. 5). By offering space to its spokespeople and setting the tone for discussion, the trades conferred its power as an institution; a label that, in technical terms, is determined by its ability to direct the policies, routines, conventions and industrial discourses that have formative impact on the values and attitudes of economic actors (Gertler, 2004, p. 7-8). Taken together, coverage of this kind repositions the Sundance brand from aligned stakeholder to an identifiable nexus of symbolic meaning and industrial mediation for indie production of this kind. With a new, more determinative role in the regulation of public image in trade press, Sundance becomes a nexus point for the self-reinforcing logics in which the perceived value of its geo-location is both represented and consistently reinforced.

The Consolidation and Management of a B2B Brand Community

While it has not yet been the subject of investigation, throughout the period leisure and tourism operators also hold significant stakes in the economic and infrastructural development of indie film culture, and Park City along with it. Film industry representatives from outside of the state require travel and

accommodation for the festival event. Year-on-year, the festival (and ongoing film production in the region) demonstrated growth in visitor numbers and profits to the local economy (McCarthy, 1986). Ski resorts—including Redford's own Sundance Resort—became increasingly popular in the region, to the extent that the 2002 Winter Olympics was hosted in Park City. Yet, underpinning all these profit-bearing initiatives, is a central necessity: not just consumer awareness of the event, but enough desire and motivation for consumers to make purchase decisions. Trade press play a role in fleshing out the kind of circular, self-reinforcing logics around the region, that motivate purchase decisions in the pursuit of alterity, difference, and unique experience. By imbuing the Sundance brand with narratives of continuous growth and place-based symbolism, the trades can be seen to construct the psychological and experiential qualities necessary to form a B2B brand community for the festival.

Brand communities refer to groups of stakeholders that have some kind of interest in a brand. They are "brand-centric structures (or groups)" (Veloutsou & Liau, 2022, p. 431), which are "specialized, non-geographically bound communities, based on a structured set of social relations among admirers of a brand (Muñiz & O'Guinn, 2001, p.412). In B2B terms, these communities can be a powerful tool for maintaining a loyal base of organisations and personnel that share common goals and interests in a particular sector (Muñiz & O'Guinn, 2001, p.412). However, the notion that these communities are "non-geographically bound" means that geography and direct engagement is not a limiting factor to engaging with the brand. The sense of social belonging felt in B2B or B2C brand communities can exist "even if there is no social interaction among the members of the brand community" (Klara, 2020, p. 157), which is a critical point considering the temporality and transient nature of the festival event each year. Given the ever-changing nature of festival programs, brand communities tend to form around participation and experience; that is, it is more likely to be a strong sense of brand community and connectedness with other consumers that ensures re-attendance to the festival event (Drenger et al., 2012). It follows that experience, and the psychological qualities of that experience, is at the

fore of trade coverage of the festival post-1984, which in turn emphasises and reinforces symbolic associations around the event.

While leveraging the additional tourism advantages of Park City, the trades flesh out a particular image of the festival experience, with skiing forming a particular ritual that distinguishes the Sundance brand community from others. In short form news reporting, Park City is described repeatedly and variously as either a ski resort or mountain town (Anon, 1985, p. 10; McCarthy, 1986, p. 5; Anon. B, 1986, p. 5; Anon. A, 1986, p. 8; Anon. A, 1987, p. 12; Anon B., 1987, p. 5; Anon. A, 1988, p. 12; Hicks, 1991, p. 123; Randle, 1991, p. 123; Ryan, 1991, p. 4). As but one example, reporting generally takes the form of describing or situating the event "at the mountain ski resort of Park City, Utah" as part of a "marathon of films, seminars, workshops, tributes, social events and spectacular skiing" (Anon., 1985, p. 10). Longer forms and features more fully explore the appeals of Park City. *Variety* (McCarthy, 1986, p. 5) describes that "Films and skiing split the attention of many of predominantly young visitors to this forming mining town turned resort" (McCarthy, 1986, p. 5). The following year, *Variety* (Anon. A, 1987) went so far as to cover the skiing prowess of industry personnel:

> As usual, skiing was a top priority among many visitors. Most expert of
> them were video cameraman and editor Tom Taplin, cinematographer
> Paul Ryan… Leading the women was Florence Dauman of American
> Film Institute, followed by producer Sarah Pillsbury and director Martha
> Coolidge (p. 12).

Without wanting to over-emphasise the significance of skiing to the emerging discourses of indie film culture, it is worth noting that tourism and leisure appeals like skiing do form a significant part of the economic and built infrastructure around which the Sundance brand community (and the indie film culture with which it converges) forms. Skiing at a winter event offered a key point of differentiation to festivals such as Cannes and Berlin; so much so that "by the early 1980s, Rocky Mountain ski slopes had become a favourite vacation destination for Hollywood power players; Sundance hoped

to benefit from their attention" (Newman, 2011, p. 65). The sport also offered an important discursive alignment with the developing values of indie cinema of the period, holding longstanding associations with risk, adventure, and "the lure of getting away from it all and reconnecting with nature" (Denning, 2014, p. 4). As Sam Kitt (director of acquisition at Universal Pictures) described of the festival: "The chance to find something that totally unexpected plus the perk of a skiing vacation is irresistible" (in Harmetz, 1991, p. C24). Skiing, in its tourist and leisure appeals, plays a structuring role in the formation of a Sundance brand community both discursively and in economic terms. Certainly, the activity forms a shared point of understanding about Park City and its unique festival experience, which at the same time serves to emphasise the values of independence, risk, and community.

In terms of urban spatial development, economies focused around leisure activities such as skiing also lend themselves to particular spatial and architectural manifestations. By elucidating the spatial appeals of Park City, the trades served to increase its attractiveness to the emerging B2B brand community. Skiing is often organised spatially around slopes that aim to preserve a notion of unsullied nature, contrasted with intimate spaces to gather in warmth. Park City, in terms of its urban development, is structured for precisely such activities around Park City Mountain Resort and Deer Valley Resort. It is encapsulated by the picturesque Wasatch Mountain Range, with a historic main street reminiscent of the town's rustic mining heritage. The spatial organisation of the town around leisure activities also lead to specific discursive qualities in trade press representation. In *Variety* (Anon. B., 1986), the town is described as having an "intimate nature", consisting of "one main street and surrounding clusters of condominiums" that "lent itself to coincidental meetings, impromptu drinks and meals and plenty of new contacts" (p. 5). The main street and venues offer small, friendly meeting points in which attendees are encouraged to gather, not least due to the freezing temperatures outside. At the same time, emphasis is placed on the surprising and contingent nature of whom one might meet and when, alongside the seeming potentialities for investors to source talent

and undiscovered films. Ryan (1991) for *The Hollywood Reporter* explains that "Hollywood, which sends plane-loads of young executives and talent scouts up for the 10-day event, is already abuzz with talk of potential 'surprise hits" and the latest talent discoveries" (p. 4). The balance of excitement, contingency and surprise offered by Park City by 1990 appear quite embedded as part of the rhetoric around the festival:

> Each January, the film community turns its gaze toward a historic mining hamlet in the rugged Wasatch Mountains of Utah, site of the Sundance United States Film Festival... Even if last year's glories did create unreasonable expectations, the festival retained the feel of a casual get-together. And although plenty of business was conducted, the main focus remained the pleasurable acts of watching motion pictures, schmoozing and drinking the local Wasatch beer (Seidenberg, 1990, p. 12-13).

The author's emphasis on the leisurely, soothing and friendly qualities of the festival exude a sense of warmth, in contrast to perhaps more constrained and uptight affairs of business, meetings, and negotiations. Discursively speaking, in a manner akin to music festivals, the growth of brand communities can have positive and reinforcing consequences by enhancing the reputation, cultural and economic lives of host cities (Getz, 2010; Leenders, 2010). Such distinctions, of course, also form something of an extension to the structuring discourses that oppose Utah to urban core centres such as New York and Los Angeles, and through which indie film culture began to garner value in uneven geographic development.

The development of a cohort that appeared to share at least some understanding of the festival's distinct appeals (both in terms of geographic location, and film product) can be understood to have played a role in the ongoing success and growth of both the festival and site. By 1991 independent program director Albert Garcia noted that there was a record 250 submissions for the film competition, and was quoted in *The Hollywood Reporter* as saying that "Even though there's been a rise in the number of festivals around the U.S., a lot of people in the last two years have come to look to Park City as an opening ground for their films" (Ryan, 1991, p. 4).

This is reported to have an impact on the systems of infrastructure within Park City itself, changing the landscape and discursive terrain of the city. McCarthy (1986) notes that free transport and festival shuttle services made it easier to navigate the city, while "The locals of Park City genuinely seemed to get into the swing of the fest along with the visitors, and fest officials reported at 40% increase in boxoffice receipts over 1985" (p. 36). As a result of increasing demands, postproduction and screening facilities developed in Park City, with upgrades to ensure professional projection quality (Anon. B, 1987, p. 5). At a state level, *Variety* (Anon. B, 1988) reports that Utah posted a "$22.7 lift to the economy in the fiscal year 1987-1988 as a result of film and TV production", and that a high mark was in 1978-1980 when "film, tv and commercial production enriched the state economy by $25,000,000" (p. 34). The following year, it again goes on to report that "Utah has set a record annual film revenue of $22 million for fiscal 1988-1989, according to the Utah film commission" (p. 12). *The Hollywood Reporter* (Young, 1990) links this continuous production and profit growth "to the rigorous support of the Sundance Film Institute" (p. 21). Over the years the narrative becomes one of positive, continuous growth supported by the sense of a coherent brand community, which cements the significance of the festival to the fortunes of Utah and Park City, but also to the burgeoning indie film culture that relies on it for exhibition and distribution supply chains.

In giving primacy to the region's ongoing opportunities for investment, the trades foreground data that not only promises a hope of success, but also validates and confirms the pre-existing presence of such success. To expand, individuals and organisations can be called to action by the promise of success, but are less likely to act entrepreneurially if success probabilities are low (Burt, 1992, p. 38). This is called (fittingly, in this case) "prospecting mentality", a psychological phenomenon that sees more weight added to opportunities if there is a perceived higher rate of success (Burt, 1992, p. 38). The trades form a strong evidential basis for the perception of higher success rates, through the provision of narratives around the economic growth of the region. "Continuous growth" is a concept that suggests the tendency of certain industries and regions to continuously expand as a

necessary outcome of economic development. However, while these narratives may be used to justify further investments, policies and practices, continuous growth also poses distinct problems for the B2B brand community, along with Park City.

Narratives of continuous growth can be used to justify problematic industrial developments despite the negative impacts that may be felt by local communities and the environment. The increasing presence of Hollywood and major studio involvement (even though, such involvement has always been part of the event) can perhaps be understood through the lens of problematic growth. *Variety*, for instance notes that "Hollywood presence and support is reflected in the membership of the 1986 festival advisory committee" (Anon, 1985, p. 12). The continuing draw of large festival attendance also poses issues to the infrastructure and appeals of Park City, in material terms. Byrge (1985) states that "Last year, under Sundance's sponsorship, the festival doubled its attendance over the previous year", with Redford quoted as saying "This festival should shed pride on the state of Utah" (p. 4). By 1987, *Variety* reports that "67% of all tickets available for the event had been sold by opening day, attendance has grown from 6,000 in 1985 to 22,000 last year and an expected 30,000 this year, and 800 industry reps were anticipated a three-fold increase over a year ago" (Anon. A, 1987, p. 5). Trade press, journalists and the public relations activities that inform them therefore begin to strike a careful balance between celebrating growth and achievement, and mitigating against the kinds of growth that may threaten the symbolic and economic appeals of independent production.

In the preservation of the perceived values in regionality, localism and independence, Redford again forms a brokering figure. While trade press report on the positive cultural, economic and industrial fortunes of Sundance, Redford can be seen to make attempts to offset the resulting narratives of continuous growth that could threaten the cultural landscape of indie film production. These discourses appear to run a careful balance between utilising and celebrating the linkages to major studios, television networks, and home video distributors, and maintaining distance from major Hollywood

entities. For instance, in response to the rapid growth of the festival, Redford states in *Variety* that "There's a purity to the festival that I think can only be kept if it maintains its scale" (1987, p. 5). He goes on to explain:

> If the festival got bigger than Park City, I'm not sure it would be the right festival. It would just be out of whack. The festival pumps $3-4,000,000 into the local economy, and there's still a lot of room for growth. But the hordes of people coming here from Hollywood may overwhelm us. We have to watch it. There may have to be a cutoff point, and it will have to be on a first-come, first-serve situation (Variety, 1987, p. 5).

The need for balancing perceived and actual opportunities for economic development and managing the appeals of intimacy of the Park City location, is evident in the notion that there is "room for growth" but without the "hordes of people" that threaten to overwhelm the festival site. Indeed, this concern eventually filtered its way through to policy at Park City, with 1988 being the first year that a cap was put on the number of outside visitors (Anon A., 1988, p. 12). The report also quoted Redford on the move to cap numbers as saying that "rustic atmosphere is very important – it shouldn't be too slick. We want to continue to have the festival in Park City. It's good for the people from the outside because there's a sense of community you lose in a bigger urban center" (Anon A., 1988, p. 12). On the one hand, this provides an example of one very practical way in which the organisation sought to offset continuous growth at the expense of environmental and cultural factors that may otherwise threaten the physical site of the festival. On the other hand, it is also a discursive measure, aligning with and complementing earlier messaging regarding brand communities and the values of the "intimate atmosphere" of Park City that formed a point of difference to larger festivals such as Berlin or Cannes (Ryan, 1991, p. 60). Elsewhere, Redford appears to confirm such sensibilities, saying that the festival has "become known as a nuts-and-bolts type festival – the kind Sundance prefers –rather than festivals that merely serve as venues for movie studio publicity" (Byrge, 1985, p. 4). It is through the publication of clear PR messaging, enacted through spokespeople such as Redford, that attempts to manage the scale of the festival and film culture are made clear. It is also one way that the

development of Park City in terms of regional growth and infrastructure, mirrors that of indie filmmaking; suggesting that their development is something in concert, rather than separate phenomena.

Conclusion

As media that demonstrate the fundamentally intertwined nature of news journalism and promotion, the American film industry trade press of the Sundance-Miramax era can be seen to offer considerably more than a source of historical information about indie film culture. As the above analysis demonstrates, the trades construct and reproduce systems of social capital to leverage symbolic meaning around industrial events, personnel, and market phenomena. In the pursuit of offering newsworthy, competitive, and actionable market information, the trades facilitate activities that are critical to the development and maintenance of effective B2B networks by enabling communication and collaboration between different organisational entities. For clarity, the findings of this case study have been summarised under two overarching themes: the first, "Promoting Infrastructure", concludes that the trades can be seen to perform promotional and agenda setting functions during the Sundance-Miramax era, which enabled the material and discursive infrastructures necessary for indie to thrive. The second, "Core-Periphery Logics", summarises the ways that the trades signalled to, and harnessed, core-periphery logics of regional economic development that framed the resurgence of Park City and indie film culture as interrelated phenomena.

Promoting Infrastructure

The dynamics of the trade press between 1977-1991 support the idea that the trades worked to structure and maintain socio-economic and geographic agendas that impacted indie's infrastructural growth. During the period, the trades negotiate a broad range of stakeholder interests in the development of indie film culture, promoting the development of investment, resourcing,

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and supply chains necessary for the construction of infrastructure. Press coverage maps the emerging structural and relational dynamics of the Utah/US Film Festival from 1977, offering insights into the key organisations, personnel, networks and initiatives converging around the Salt Lake City and Park City region in Utah. By offering detailed lists of attendance and sponsorship, the trades offered a space for organisations to identify both collaborators and competitors. More than this, it offered a picture of how coherent institutional and investor supply chains for independent films might emerge. The reported clustering of economic activity in the region can be seen to promote an enduring sense of opportunity and potential in the new "regional cinema".

However, more than simply representing or duly reporting on attendance at the festival, the trades can be understood to perform a bridging function that connects existing gaps in networks and markets. As part of their B2B function, publications appear to focus on creating opportunities for, and maintaining relationships between, buyers and sellers that would otherwise be disconnected. This bridging function appeared particularly relevant for the industrial context that saw the Utah/US Film Festival emerge, which in 1978 lacked clear chains of financing, production, distribution and exhibition of films made outside of the major Hollywood studios. Through detailed reporting, the trades both illustrated and promoted attempts to bridge the gap between the core centre of film production in Los Angeles, and regional opportunities in Utah. It is through this function that the trades can be understood to offer a brokerage position, which makes visible structural market gaps that separate their B2B audiences from potentially profitable opportunities. Importantly, this relationship is not one-way. Publications also benefit from their brokerage function, by reconsolidating their perceived usefulness, insightfulness, and market awareness.

As part of their information brokerage function, trade press also demonstrates the ability to imbue others with a sense of authority and power, which support certain individual and social actors to gain prominence in the development of indie film culture. In particular, Robert Redford is positioned

to become a symbolic figurehead for the festival. At the outset of coverage on the event, the intertextual associations of Redford's stardom offer a host of positive associations for festival organisers and the trades. His star text, through his work in New Hollywood films and more activist endeavours, offered a series of thoughtful, ethical, and moral dimensions to messages concerning the emergence of a more regional independent cinema. However, in the privileging of Redford's voice as a spokesperson for the festival, his stardom takes on "B2B" qualities as an authoritative decision-maker with control advantages over the future trajectory of indie film. Redford becomes a key figure that bridges major Hollywood film production and independents, not least through his work with the Sundance Institute, and acts as a discursive channel through which a range of ethical and local brand and organisational qualities become embodied. In an aligned way, a sense of authority and power is bestowed on Sundance as an institution. This is particularly evident from Sundance's takeover of the festival management in 1984, positioning it as a governing brand that has become synonymous with the type of indie filmmaking that emerged from the infrastructures formed during this period.

Rather than only promoting continuous growth, however, press coverage can also be seen to mobilise networks of brokerage to maintain the equity and felt values that form part of indie's discursive infrastructure. While the financial and physical infrastructural growth of the region points to success, there appears to be an awareness that its value is in alterity rather than in any rampant financial gain. The trades offer space to Redford, as a spokesperson and brokering figure for the festival and Sundance Institute, to underline notions of the "intimacy" and "sealed" nature of the festival. As caps are reportedly placed on visitor numbers in Park City during the festival event, discourses around fear of the brand community being "overrun" combine to manage the scale of perceived growth and popularity. While serving to maintain the perceived territory and cultural landscape of indie film culture, the trades also demonstrate their role as a conduit for powerful image-management to take place.

Core-Periphery Logics

This chapter supports the assertion that the trades reported on, and served to reinforce, a distinct pattern of core-periphery narratives. In doing so, the trades positioned the festival's growth as being inextricable from that of Park City. The trades can be seen to lay the social capital groundwork necessary for indie's supply chains to develop within the film industry. Yet, at the same time, they also simultaneously mediate the representation of economic development in Utah. The trades demonstrate a long-held aim for the Utah Film Commission to act as a driving force for motivating film production in the region, and in the generation of both tourism and media industry income. The gaining popularity of the Utah/US Film Festival and the growth of income in the region are not presented as mutually exclusive phenomena in press coverage. Instead, they are demonstrated to be co-productive, as the result of networks of ancillary industries and specialised labour that are reported to emerge in the region, and ultimately form attractive propositions for future investment.

In reporting on the growth of the festival, and in Utah's media production industries, coverage serves to construct and consolidate a series of core-periphery logics that to this day offer a sense of product differentiation to indie and its co-constitutive brands. In positioning Utah (as representative of "regional filmmaking", in broad terms) in contrast to urban centres of New York and Los Angeles, discursive elements deriving from long-established geographic and cultural dynamics are conferred to indie film culture. Whereas regionality appears to offer qualities of friendly localism and authentic creativity, New York and Los Angeles are posited in distinct opposition as being commercial, cold, synthetic, and standardised. Trade press harness symbolic associations of place to flesh out a series of distinct value propositions offered by the film culture as a regional form; highlighting the unique charm and authenticity of indie film culture in Utah and contrasting it with the more commercialised and competitive industries in Los Angeles and New York. Through these ongoing dichotomies, Park City is positioned, over time, as a productive site for brand communities around

independent cinema to converge, which only further consolidate its appealing regional qualities.

As the festival gains further traction—particularly following Sundance's takeover in 1984—the trades offer a number of insights into the rituals and discourses in which its B2B brand communities appear to participate. In particular, certain elements of discussion around tourism, space, and regionality appear to become firmly embedded and reiterated as part of a standard formula for coverage of the festival. Geo-location provides a physical anchor for the Sundance B2B brand culture, and for broader notions of indie film, and also provides a range of symbolic associations that are reproduced and reinforced in press coverage. In promoting tourism appeals for Park City (and the festival), particularly in the form of skiing, bars, fireside conversation, and exclusive parties, experiential qualities of warmth, contingency, and novelty are brought to the fore. In rendering these qualities of the brand community, reporting serves to situate Sundance as a distinct event with key points of differentiation in relation to other major festivals such as Cannes and Berlin. These experiential qualities, at least in reporting on the festival, converge invariably with discourses through which discussions about indie filmmaking take place. The trades are critical to fleshing out psychologically and experientially appealing aspects of the Sundance brand community, which later appear to manifest into qualities such as brand awareness and loyalty as it is perceived through repeated evaluations of the festival event.

Post-1984, repeated and continuous reporting on the growth of the festival and film production in the Utah region offer the impression of continuous and spiralling growth, supported by the elucidation of a clear B2B brand cohort. While at once this kind of growth reporting validates the pre-existing presence of success, at the same time it offers a hope of further success for those that might invest in the region. Together this signals the construction and persistence of self-reinforcing logics around the value of the festival's core-periphery economics. Reported continuous growth, while also

foregrounding the appealing qualities and rituals of a niche community, appear to lead to even more perceived value in the pursuit of alterity, difference, and unique experiences.

Summary: Regionality and Cultural Discourse

To conclude, this chapter serves to assert the role of B2B media, as it exists at the nexus of news media and public relations activities, in promoting the emergence of indie film culture of the Sundance-Miramax era. The trades play a vital role in shaping and promoting indie film culture, as demonstrated by its enduring and interdependent relationship with the Sundance Film Festival. This relationship is mutually beneficial, as the trades help to boost the profile of the festival and Park City, while the Sundance brand—and its ambassador, Redford—provides valuable credibility, reach, and engagement for B2B target audiences. More broadly, trade press coverage of indie film reinforces and mediates the institutional and social foundations that characterise the economies of America's regions, while also setting the agenda for the infrastructural development of indie film culture.

There is room, however, for the following chapters to extend the findings here to consider the ways that structuring discourses of regional economic development, and geography more broadly, play a role in the situating of indie as a distinct product category. Beyond this project, while this project focuses on Sundance as a case study, it would offer further benefit to transfer the methods used here to the analysis of other film festivals. Such comparison may offer insights into the ways that various facets of indie, perhaps even in competing terms, may have rendered the infrastructures and supply chains of the film culture over time.

Chapter 2: Ambiguity, Multiplicity, and "Infinite" Possibility: Examining Indie Film Trailers

Introduction

This chapter explores the idea that "authenticity", as it is often applied to indie media, forms an organising concept for the formal style, structure, impressions, and experiential qualities of film trailers. Rather than focusing on the relation of the trailer to core film texts, this chapter considers the ways that trailers negotiate various brand qualities according to governing themes that work to differentiate indie films from other media products. In an analysis of two trailers for milestone indies—*She's Gotta Have It* (Spike Lee, 1989), and *Gummo* (Harmony Korine, 1997)—the chapter will expand on the notion of trailers as "brandscapes" that negotiate multiple brand identities and symbolic associations within one promotional media form. Further, it will consider the structuring impacts of such brandscapes on the film culture, as it is conceived of in terms of interrelated spaces of discourse, social practice, and material manifestations. In the course of this examination, the chapter will offer insights into debates around the role and function that the trailer is commonly thought to have within promotional campaigns; for instance, whether its purpose is fidelity to a film text, or otherwise. Trailers are found to offer a productive source of tension in the negotiation of various brand identities, which together highlight discursive and affective frameworks around authorship and film style that have become characteristic to indie film culture.

First, it is important to define the specific form of film trailer advertising under consideration in this chapter. Film trailers are promotional clips designed for direct-to-audience engagement that are intended to provide a preview of upcoming or recently released films, of about 2 to 3 minutes in length. In the period discussed here (1989 -1997), trailers were designed to be shown in theatres prior to the main feature. As Grainge and Johnson (2015) note, trailers are typically produced by trailer houses, which specialise in creating

audiovisual promotional content for movies. However, they are the result of a hybrid industry that swarms and converges to promote media products. As a form of advertising, film trailers can be understood to offer a mode of cinematic performance and creative expression, despite their commercial function (Hesford, 2013). However, trailers also intersect with marketing professions and practices, which in varying degrees tailor the form and style of the media to specific needs, interests, and ideal audience groups. In this endeavour, a range of market sensing activities may be taken, to differing degrees based on budgets for film distribution and exhibition. Activities may include audience surveys, focus groups, A/B and content testing (creating multiple versions of a trailer with slight variations), competitor analysis, and desktop evaluations. The notion of who the audience is, regardless of budget, is to some degree based on notions of an imagined audience for films; whether gathered through experience, testing, measurement, or assumption. All this is to say, trailers are not made solely to represent films (accurately or otherwise) but are a form of combined creative and promotional labour with its own organising logics. Due to many of these factors, Johnston (2009) argues that trailers can reveal how cinema sees itself and imagines its products at a particular historical moment. He argues that trailers are highly structured, complex films in their own right, with specific conventions and aesthetic qualities. It is on this premise that trailers are thought to offer a rich source of information concerning the impact of film promotion on shaping the contours of indie during the Sundance-Miramax era.

While generally situated at the nexus of advertising and marketing disciplines, trailers also benefit from approaches that highlight their function in branding and image-management. Branding is a commercial tool that refers to strategic practices around the production and maintenance of cultural meaning. The brands constructed by these activities are a means through which people, organisations and products become imbricated with schemes of symbolic and affective meaning, which differentiate them from other alike products (Banet-Weiser, 2012, p. 4). The application of branding theory to film products has historically been challenging, largely due to the

socially produced nature of films (O'Reilly & Kerrigan, 2013). It is unclear, according to O'Reilly and Kerrigan (2013), who might own and manage film brands given the involvement of various stakeholders such as directors, actors, screenwriters, and financiers. To address this challenge, O'Reilly and Kerrigan (2013) offer the notion of a "brandscape" to the analysis of film promotion, as a way to explain the cultural and market milieus where a range of brands intersect with consumer experience. Brandscapes refer to spaces, discursive or material, where brand meanings are negotiated and circulated, forming particular relational manifestations (Sherry, 1998). While brandscapes are generally viewed in relation to events such as festivals, expos, and other material spaces of multiple brand convergence, the viewing of films within the branded spaces of the theatre is also thought to serve similar functions. If this terminology can be applied to the analysis of the multiplicity of brand identities negotiated in and around film products, it is posited here that it can extend to encompass the convergence of brands and promotional aims in the trailer format.

However, this chapter posits an amendment to brandscape theory as it is applied to film and media products. Unpacking the trailer as a brandscape necessitates a shift in analytical perspective from the consideration of the form as a series of informational data points, to instead offering fundamentally experiential qualities. This "experiential view" of brandscapes highlights their subjective and hedonic nature, positing that they are designed to be experienced through "primary process thinking" frameworks that orient consumption towards the pursuit of fun, amusement, fantasy, arousal, sensory stimulation, and enjoyment (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982, p. 132). Brandscapes are interrelated with concepts of brand experience, where consumers encounter brands directly and interactively (Whelan & Wohlfeil, 2006). Generally, brand experience is conceptually linked to event marketing as a type of "theatre", with brands appearing on a "stage" (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). The reversal of this analogy, in explaining the experiential qualities of trailers, seems apt: that brands appear in the theatre, as part of a marketed exhibition event. In this experiential view, affective qualities such as contingency, surprise, ambiguity, and curiosity are prioritised in the

text/viewer relationship, rather than cognitive elements such as pattern recognition, information processing, and problem solving. Focusing on the experiential qualities of brands thus forms an implicit challenge to the image of goal-directed, cognitive evaluation that has come to characterise some promotional studies research.

In "information processing" models, consumer choice is seen to be a rational assessment of various options that trigger memory activation (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982, p. 132). An example of such schemas is provided by Kerrigan (2010), who identifies key elements shaping a film's identity. These elements, such as stars, script, genre, age classification, and release strategy, are factors consumers consider when selecting films. These elements correspondingly serve as signifiers of brand identity, and are thought to be interpreted by consumers through their cultural codes. These are the functional elements of the film that can be communicated to consumers through marketing communications texts such as posters, trailers, advertisements, reviews, and websites (Kerrigan, 2010). As O'Reilly and Kerrigan (2013) point out in a later work, "A film consumer considering whether or not to watch a film for the first time considers the director, the actors, the screenwriter, genre, the grade of the film […] and the storyline" (p. 773). Even though the authors are key proponents of brandscape theory as it is applied to film reception, it is posited here that such models must be necessarily situated within the promotional practices and theory from which they emerge. Rather than as data for logical information processing, trailer brandscapes can be considered to speak to converging interests in brand experience, brand awareness, brand equity, brand personality that can sometimes lead to (and account for) the sense of ambiguity, emotion, experience and affect that the trailers can generate.

The idea that indie trailers may form distinct and differential brandscapes is supported by the historical contexts that converge with them. Several industrial factors point to a series of distinct promotional strategies, particularly in terms of how they leverage brandscapes to signal broad notions of authenticity. The stock market crash of October 1987 significantly

choked the available capital for low-budget specialty film investments (Rosen & Hamilton, 1987, p. 264-265). Coupled with the flourishing and then flattening of the home video market throughout the 1980s and 1990s, many independent distributors ceased trading. This created a space for the subsidiaries of Hollywood studios—Miramax (bought by The Walt Disney Company in 2003), Focus Features, New Line, Fine Line, Fox Searchlight, Sony Pictures Classics, and Paramount Classics— to fill the gap with the production of specialty or "niche" products; what Newman (2011) describes as "lower-budget films aimed at more affluent and urban art house audiences" (p. 9). As Marich (2013) points out, "independents staged another comeback with a new wave of edgy films coupled with clever film marketing" (p. 368). Distributors could be found to profit from the relational opposition that indie posed against broad spectres of the Hollywood studios and the Megaplexes (Newman, 2011, p. 2). While textual approaches invariably differ between trailers, the distinct selling prospects for indie films during this period tend to speak to the film culture's perceived values "in the virtue of alternative representations, audiovisual and storytelling styles, and systems of cultural circulation" (Newman, 2011, p. 2). As a broad and often unexamined concept, authenticity—not necessarily as a lucid, cognitive construct, but as a structure of feeling—emerges as a strong unique selling point for indie films (and the film culture) within this scheme.

Authenticity is a symbolic construct with significant cultural and moral value, that speaks to notions of genuineness, creativity, originality, and the supposed existence of a unique and real "self" from which these qualities are thought to emerge. It is a socially produced construct that, according to Banet-Weiser (2012), "continues to have cultural value in how we understand our moral frameworks and ourselves, and more generally how we make decisions about how to live our lives" (p. 5). Williams (1961), traces the concept of authenticity to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and the beginnings of industrialisation in western society. Imaginative and creative skills were posited in direct opposition to industrial manufacturing, which found alignment in aesthetic theories of the Romantic period of that time (Williams, 1961; King, 2017). Drawing from this historical

lineage, authenticity can be considered as a somewhat reflexive and reactive position to industrialisation, globalisation, and the capitalist organisation of economies (Banet-Weiser, 2012, p. 10). It remains that much of authenticity's structuring meanings are drawn from oppositions to notions of superficiality and commerciality, despite continuing reminders of the all-pervasive nature of consumer culture in modern life (Banet-Weiser, 2012, p. 10). Such notions play out, according to King (2017), in critical discourses around the idea that indie film culture (in its most ideal sense) offers an authentic space of creativity and originality, from which works organically emerge. Despite drawing value from its alterity to consumer culture, capital exchange and the commercial world, it remains that authenticity is a productive and profitable asset that organises commodity culture, and individual's relationships to it (Banet-Weiser, 2012, p. 14). Authenticity, here, is not merely ideological, but a necessarily functional element of consumerism, that is critical to the perceived differentiation of products, and the construction of consumer values and experience.

However, what constitutes signs and experiential frames of authenticity at historical and socio-cultural moments is variable and contextually determined. As Van Zoonen (2013) points out, authenticity "is an ascribed rather than an innate or essential quality. Authenticity is in the eye of the beholder… it is part of a negotiation" (p. 46). "Genuine" creativity, particularly under capitalistic frameworks where promotion has become imbricated with daily life, is not necessarily one that is configured neatly outside of (or in direct opposition to) the realm of consumer culture. That the trailer can be considered a creative expression on its own terms—even considering, or perhaps as the result of its marketing and advertising function—speaks to the need for recontextualised notions of authenticity as they might apply to contemporary media forms. This is particularly relevant for the marketing of indie films, given that within traditional rubrics of authenticity, to be seen as promoting or selling films would be directly opposition to notions of a "pure" and unadulterated creativity. Instead, I posit that the advertising of the films considered here speaks to a particularly postmodern sensibility, where the symbolic signals of authenticity derive from the acknowledgement of the

necessary imbrication of commodity culture with the production of art. In turn, these ideas about authenticity can determine what elements of the brandscape are amplified, what are subsumed, and what are omitted.

As it is understood here, postmodernism is an ongoing cultural process made possible by modernism, and with which it demonstrates a contradictory relationship of dependence and independence (Hutcheon, 1988, p. 18). In line with Hutcheon (1988), postmodernism is considered a cultural phenomenon that "uses and abuses, installs and then subverts, the very concepts it challenges" (p. 3). At a textual level this sensibility manifests in a clash between new and old cultural and economic modes (Foster, 1983, p. x). Modernism, of the period characterised by the traditional notions of authenticity described above, describes a process dating from the late nineteenth-century encompassing progressive industrialisation and economic rationalisation (Featherstone, 2007, p. 3). Along with modernism are associated principles of progress, individualism, and a unique self (Jameson, 1983, p. 113-14). Rather than positioning the trailer format as a reaction to what Jameson (1983) considers the "established forms of high modernism" such as the university, the museum, the art gallery (p. 111), this view opens the idea that the form can be configured to pose an inherent challenge to modernism in response to a changing media environment and the development of mass culture. In particular, the indie trailers considered here can be considered as the result of "convergence culture", defined by Jenkins (2006) as "the flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries, and the migratory behavior of media audiences […]" (p. 2). As this chapter will go on to explore, the indie trailers examined here attempt to assert difference within a media saturated convergence culture, implicitly challenging the conditions of their making in experimental modes that looks to set themselves, and the brandscapes that they negotiate, apart.

Within this rubric, a particular conceptualisation of indie authenticity in the Sundance-Miramax era can be configured through the perceived harnessing of the trailer brandscape, its form, and in subsequent effects of multiplicity,

ambiguity, and infinite possibility. This view draws from broader conceptualisations of the trailer as a format that inherently negotiates multiple identities and multiplicity of meaning. For Hediger (2004), the film trailer is always inherently a cinematic format of beginnings: "Every beginning, and every trailer, by its nature holds such promise that no middle, end or full-length feature film could ever live up to" (p. 154). It is therefore a space where infinite possibility dwells, where "the world of images [...] is all it can be" (Hediger, 2004, p. 154). Of course, the term "infinite" is problematic. As Newman (2011) points out with regard to the formal aspects of indie films, the viewer is not radically free to impose meaning; viewing strategies are still closely related to textual practice, and to the cultural contexts from which they emerge (Newman, 2011, p. 22). As it appears here, infinite possibility relates to a reading strategy that speaks to an imagined state of limitless becoming, as the result of textual techniques that generate multiplicity and ambiguity of meaning, rather than any more literal sense of the term. As a space that is textually focused around beginnings, the trailer can be understood to offer a sense of possibility that is not "infinite" in the sense that anything can happen at any time; only that the possibilities have not yet been borne out and therefore definitively determined (through middle, and end, as Hediger [2004] argues). The ability to open up a textual world to multiple avenues of meanings, and to the surprise of encounter, is perhaps always an inherent function of the trailer format that can be harnessed with greater and lesser degrees of knowingness.

Within modernist frameworks, multiplicity can be understood as necessarily threatening to core notions of the authentic, singular self; here, this chapter demonstrates that the acknowledgement of multiplicity can itself be an important signal of the authentic. In celebrating the "surface 'depthlessness' of culture" (Featherstone, 2007, p. 7), ambiguity and multiplicity can be seen as important signs of honesty; appearing to recognise that we live in a consumeristic, absurd, and constructed universe. In this model, ambiguity is not necessarily something that must be "decoded" by a viewer, but instead can be enjoyed for its own pleasures, in generating excitement, anticipation,

curiosity, wonder, or as the chapter will go on to discuss, other emotions such as fear or discomfort.

Understanding the dynamics of trailer brandscapes speaks to the types of brand experiences that have become aligned with the film culture over time, and the ways in which they interrelate in material and discursive spaces. It can illustrate the ways that trailers may serve to construct and reinforce the symbolic and experiential qualities of theatres as branded spaces. Throughout this period, the United States theatrical market for speciality features was limited to a comparatively small number of cinema screens, showing at one or two engagements at the most important urban markets (New York and Los Angeles) and slowly expanding via a platform release strategy (King, 2005, p. 27). By the end of the 1990s, a Hollywood film might have opened simultaneously on 3,000 screens and potentially disappeared relatively quickly, depending upon performance (King, 2005, p. 27). In comparison, the gradual platform releasing of independent and art-house films allowed for word-of-mouth marketing, publicity, and critical reviews to build, and stimulate further openings in other markets (King, 2005, p. 27). Within comparatively more site-specific schemes of platform releasing, brand experience becomes critical to generating word-of-mouth marketing and publicity. The textual ambiguity and polysemy of the trailers discussed here emphasise the perceived nature of indie film culture as a sphere of possibility, and as such, speak to the experiential appeal of a surprise of encounter with a film that may spur on exactly such buzz. This can be seen in examples where certain cinemas such as the have become imbricated with a certain "indie" heritage, as cultural sites for the indie film community. Laemmle Theatres in Los Angeles form precisely one such brand, which fall into an "arthouse" category that historically has demonstrated longstanding commitment to supporting indie cinema. The type of films shown, along with trailer advertising, becomes part of a reinforcing loop of value-attribution for the theatres and the film cultures that converge with them.

Methodology and Approach

In the very early stages of research design for this project in 2016—and prior to the formative professional experiences outlined in the introduction to this work—the purpose of this chapter was to establish common promotional traits and activities across a chronologically-organised dataset of canonical indie films. Over time the guiding aims of the case study necessarily changed. It became clear that surveying the content of trailers by attempting to identify common themes and patterns would not necessarily yield useful results, particularly without any corroborating study around the development, user testing, or reception of such forms. Ultimately, starting to carry out this exercise led to something of a conceptual crisis in how trailers were thought to operate, and the purpose of such research. If there were common traits found, would these be recognised by an audience? Does such methodology reflect the ways that trailers are experienced? How many trailers would an audience need to see, in order to learn the patterns relevant to indie film culture? Who is "the audience"? As a direct result of these questions, the focus of this chapter shifted away from what is here termed "information processing" models of trailer study, to instead consider the experience of trailers as distinct forms with their own professional, cultural, and stylistic lineages. While close textual analysis has been retained as the method most appropriate to analysing the trailer format, the trailer has been returned theoretically-speaking to both its promotional and advertising roots to consider how the forms were intended to be experienced during the period in question. The view was taken that more fruitful analysis could be carried out by deeply investigating one or two trailers in experiential terms.

In light of this revised perspective, three guiding aims were implemented to structure the case study. The first is to explore the idea that trailers function as brandscapes, where a range of brand meaning, and identities are negotiated. Second, it seeks to investigate the ways that "authenticity", as an organisational concept for the trailer brandscape, is constructed through certain formal and stylistic traits in the promotion of indie films. Third, it proposes that trailer brandscapes speak to experiential qualities, rather than

being tools for cognitive "information processing". Instead, they actively contribute to and negotiate various formations of brand experience that hold significance for the spatial rendering of indie film culture. In order to achieve these aims, the chapter utilises an approach that compares and contrasts film trailers recognised as iconic (or, canonical) of the Sundance-Miramax era, while also ensuring some representation and acknowledgement of the breadth of indie filmmaking during this period.

Several factors influenced the choice of trailer case studies for this chapter. The first was a desire to compare and contrast trailers across a chronological time period, while ensuring a spread that best reflected the loose periodisation of the Sundance-Miramax era. The decision was made to focus on trailers at the "beginning" of the period (in the mid-to-late 1980s), and the approximate end of the period around 2010 (Newman, 2011; King, 2017; Tzioumakis, 2013). Focus then shifted to narrowing down a shortlist of independent films released theatrically during that time from a range of academic sources (King, 2005, 2009, 2013; Newman, 2011; Ortner, 2013; Biskind, 2004), which could be considered as iconic of the era. It became apparent that the breadth and scope of indie filmmaking, even with the narrower window of theatrical release, was expansive and included sub-genres such as mumblecore, queer cinema, social realism, neo-noir, coming-of-age dramas, and experimental avante-garde films. The range and scope of films was seen here to provide an opportunity to contrast promotion against two different types of indie sub-genres, as an additional layer of analysis. The decision was made to choose sub-genres with some level of polarity in both audience segmentation, themes, geography, and genre traits. Out of the films presented, New Black Cinema (also known as Black Independent Cinema, or African-American Cinema) and the more experimental or avante-garde end of the indie filmmaking spectrum appeared to offer the most contrast in cultural, historical, and stylistic terms. The final step was then to decide on the film trailers that would form the basis of the case study, which was invariably decided by the recognition of films as being iconic of the Sundance-Miramax era in broader scholarly literature. *She's Gotta Have It* and *Gummo* have been extensively discussed

in academic and journalistic literature on the topic of indie film culture, and their significance to its defining canon has been well-established (King, 2005, 2009, 2013; Newman, 2011; Ortner, 2013; Biskind, 2004). Yet, both films were chosen to deliberately attempt to reflect the diversity in indie filmmaking, by representing intersections of African-American Cinema, New Queer Cinema, and what Sconce (2002) terms the "American Smart Cinema". Necessarily, these choices leave out the enormous scope of films that may come under the rubric of indie during this period. However, unlike the first iteration of this project, the purpose is not to prove that all indie trailers—or even some indie trailers—share common traits. Instead, it takes the revised view that the most fruitful analysis comes from the examination of promotional media geographically and experientially, and contextualised in light of relevant industrial, social, economic and historical factors.

The study employed a close textual analysis method to scrutinise the two selected trailers, as a choice somewhat justified by the method's alignment with experiential perspectives; that is, prioritising the effects generated by syntactic aspects of message content, including structure and style (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982, p. 134). The analysis involved looking for visual signifiers and patterns in the trailers, such as those formed by logos, brand names, and visual design motifs. It examined the editing qualities of montage to identify patterns of juxtaposition or transition, along with dialogue and narration and the use of sound and music. As discussed at the outset to this project, the chapter complemented and evaluated data generated by close textual analysis with contextualising research drawn from socio-cultural and promotional perspectives, to allow for a comprehensive examination of their role as structuring forces in indie film culture.

The result of this analysis revealed several discursive and stylistic approaches to the construction of "authentic" trailer brandscapes. The first section discusses the trailer for *She's Gotta Have It*. It offers an analysis of the ways that the symbolic and affective power of the "auteur-brand" is configured, and how it speaks to the kinds of authenticity that are thought to differentiate indie films from more "mainstream" products. The second

section considers the ways that the *Gummo* theatrical trailer accentuates the ambiguity and multiplicity offered by the trailer format, to create a disquieting, odd, and at times uncomfortable brand experience. In this section, will look at how these various elements form ambiguity and the ways in which this speaks to an "enfant terrible" brand persona. Despite offering very different aesthetic presentations, the trailers demonstrate surprising similarities in relation to rendering affective experiential qualities. The chapter will analyse the ways that stylistic and discursive devices such as ambiguity and multiplicity are used to preserve a sense of the "infinite possibilities" that lie beyond the borders of the trailer text.

The Enduring Potential of the Author-Brand: *She's Gotta Have It*

The trailer for *She's Gotta Have It* takes a novel and knowing approach to the question of authenticity, through its productive interplay of converging brands. The trailer begins with Lee standing in the centre of the frame on a city street corner, dressed casually in a T-shirt emblazoned with the branding of the film's distributor, Island Pictures. Behind him is a wall of vibrant neon graffiti, which together with traffic noises and the ambient sounds of footsteps on concrete mark it out as a downtown urban territory. "Tube socks! Tube socks! Three for five dollars!", Lee calls out to the people walking past him, who show indifference to the outstretched packs of socks in his hand. As the camera closes the distance by moving towards Lee, he turns to deliver a direct address to the camera in an exaggerated "personal selling" mode. In a tonal change from boisterous street-corner salesman to poised, articulate filmmaker, he states:

> Hi. I'm Spike Lee. When I'm not directing, I do this. It pays the rent, it puts food on the table, and butters my whole wheat bread. Anyway, I have this new comedy coming out. It's a very funny film: She's Gotta Have It. Check this out.

So begins a montage of scenes from the film, cutting from the vibrant colour cinematography of the street corner to black and white footage; an aesthetic

marker of low-budget (or "no-budget") independent filmmaking, reminiscent of films such as *Stranger than Paradise* (Jim Jarmusch, 1984). Lee, as the self-pronounced author of the film, cuts a humorous, smart, and memorable figure. Yet, while clearly drawing on long-held notions of the cinematic "auteur", it is important to recognise at the outset that there are multiple brand identities vying for attention: Lee, as an author-brand, the film product (along with its actors, and soundtrack), and the distributor Island Pictures. In the analysis of the trailer that follows, attention will be given to these multiple competing facets of the brandscape, and the ways in which this negotiation offers emotional and epistemological experiential qualities that speak to authenticity and independence.

The author-as-brand is a notably amplified element of the trailer brandscape, particularly through sound design. In experiential terms, the sound design of the trailer is prominent, and can be seen to play an important role in installing Lee as an emerging auteur who has control over every aspect of the film's production, from writing through to directing, acting, and selling. Through a vococentric emphasis in the soundtrack, Lee's vocal presence is highlighted as a common thread that weaves throughout the trailer. For Chion (1994), the term "vococentric" refers to the privileging of the voice in a film, so that the voice becomes "isolated in the sound mix like a solo instrument—for which the other sounds (music and noise) are merely the accompaniment" (p. 5). Of course, vococentric film trailers in the form of hyperbolic voiceovers or voice-over narration have been a staple of the format since their inception (Johnston, 2009, p. 27). However, in this manifestation, vococentrism is crucial to signalling the film's alterity. The added voice-over narration by Lee describing the film's plot, and his voice again featuring in dialogue taken from the film (Lee plays the character Mars Blackmon), cumulatively work to install him as an author-figure through the sonic primacy of the authorial voice. Lee's direct address to the camera at the outset of the trailer acts as a "point of synchresis" that forges "an immediate and necessary relationship between something one sees and something one hears" (Chion, 1994, p. 5). Lee's sales pitch acts as one such point of synchresis, with the address offering more than a perceptual fusion

between sound and vision. This point of synchresis, compounded by the direct address, therefore also renders an ongoing relationship throughout the trailer (and beyond) between what is being said, how it is said, and of Lee as the perceived source of this commentary. Synchresis focuses the listening ear to the nuances of vocal sound, elucidating a source for the sonic voice through visual perception. In literal terms, it syncs the image and sound. In metaphorical terms, it syncs Lee as the original creative and authorial source from which the sound—and the film—derives. The trailer acknowledges and foregrounds the tendency for film authorship to become part of a broader distribution strategy, by building an "author brand" that increases the cultural and commercial value of films in the marketplace (Tzioumakis, 2006, p. 60). Through various cinematic techniques, the trailer brings to the fore (in quite literal terms) the idea that the author brand can form an explanatory label for their films (Tzioumakis, 2006, p. 60). However Lee, in very literal terms, comes to explain the film for the audience, in an ironic harnessing of advertising form that is both humorous and surprising.

The primacy of the voice at once signals Lee's creative ownership over the film as auteur, at the same time as his vocal style further suggests a disengagement from the personal selling mode of the trailer. The syncretic points that forge sound and vision focus the attention not only on Lee and what he is saying, but also how he is saying it; drawing focus to the rhythmic and almost poetic quality of his Brooklyn-ite drawl, the choice of words that he carefully enunciates, and the deadpan dryness of his humour. It is the drawling quality in particular, in the careful elongation of certain words, that has a syncretic magnetism that draws both the gaze and the ear. "When I'm not directing [pauses for effect], I do *this* [holds up a packet of tube socks to show the camera]". Drawn out, "this" is marked enunciatively with distinct meaning and potential, referring to more than just a packet of tube socks; instead, perhaps alluding to the creative genius hustling for minimal funds, to put food on the table and "butter on [his] *whole wheat bread*". The similar enunciation of "whole wheat bread", combined with a distinct drop in vocal pitch that suggests something of a disdain, knowingly poking fun at the image of the struggling artist. This knowing and sarcastic tone also speaks to

a somewhat strategic gesture of ironic detachment and disaffection, which Sconce (2002) describes as forming the core of an "American smart cinema" (p. 352). *She's Gotta Have It* does not quite speak to the same predilection for irony, black humour, fatalism and sometimes, nihilism to the extent of later indie films that Sconce (2002) exemplifies as milestones of "the art of the smart" (p. 351), such as *Ghost World* (Terry Zwigoff, 2001)*, Clerks* (Kevin Smith, 1994)*, Slacker* (Richard Linklater, 1992) and *Happiness* (Todd Solondz, 1998). However, Lee does suggest an ironic engagement with the film trailer; simultaneously a genuine and creative harnessing of the format to encourage patrons for the film, but also a detachment from the trailer's generally unquestioned selling proposition. Conversely, sincerity in promotion and marketing would perhaps be seen to threaten a core notion of indie authenticity, which finds alterity in a sense of resistance from exactly these elements. Lee is therefore positioned to discursively represent artistic ideals of authenticity, yet simultaneously and knowingly operates in a commercial mode working to "sell" that vision at the same time.

Furthermore, even as the trailer harnesses and foregrounds the long-held symbolism of the author (or, auteur), it is not a position that is straightforwardly implemented in the brandscape. By auteur, I refer to the conceptualisation of film authorship popularised by the French journal *Cahiers du Cinema* in the 1950s, as a result of ongoing discursive intersections between indie and European art cinema. *La politique des auteur*, initially outlined in Truffaut's (1954) article "A Certain Tendency of the French Cinema", committed to the idea that a true auteur is one who infuses works with personality and a unique style that can be traced throughout their films. The notion of auteur forms a hierarchy of directors, distinguishing those that make "original" films by writing scripts and directing them, and "metteur en scenes" who lifelessly render texts that originate elsewhere (Buscombe, 1999, p. 24). Certainly, the concept of the auteur provides a way to classify films and imbue them with a sense of artistic integrity, creating a hierarchy between films created by an auteur and those that are not. However, Lee takes on a clearly performative role in this notion of the "auteur", and rather than aligning the film to the loftier aspirations of art

cinema, instead likens film authorship to the struggling artist who is forced to sell tube socks to pursue his own artistic vision. In essence, Lee can be understood to demonstrate a postmodern sensibility that "produce[s] an imitation which mocks the original" (Jameson 1983: 113). The trailer intertextually echoes the figure of the auteur, but in its satirical positioning, simultaneously undercuts it. In this way, authenticity can be configured as being seen to acknowledge and harness previous iterations of the auteur, but at the same time, implicitly critique and counter it.

It is worth also considering the way that the trailer is constructed not only to stand out to audiences on its own terms, but within what would commonly be experienced as a series of trailers prior to the screening of the main feature. Trailers can be considered within the remit of "flow", even as it is a theory originally applied to televisual forms (Williams, 2000). Originally related to television of the broadcast era, flow suggests that programming—aimed at keeping viewers watching—attempted to generate fluid movement through programming and advertising that would lead the viewer from one show to the next (Williams, 2000, p. 233). However, for trailers, flow does not necessarily represent the kind of experience that would generate excitement, curiosity, and create memorable brand impressions.

For example, the trailer for *She's Gotta Have It* can be understood as part of a broader scheme that seeks to draw attention to the peculiarities of form within and between trailers, in an attempt to capture the distracted gaze that is generally associated with televisual and online mediums. Here, the amplification of the author brand in the trailer draws comparison to guerilla marketing forms, which generally hold a series of positive associations for the marketing of indie films. Guerilla marketing techniques are thought to navigate potentially negative associations of marketing by implementing unconventional and surprising promotional methods (Zarco & Herzallah, 2023, p. 108). Novelty lies at the core of guerilla marketing technique, which is effective for differentiating products—also termed "cluster breaking"—and message transmission (Zarco & Herzallah, 2023, p. 110). Creating a distinct

brand persona through memorable and novel qualities was a known strategy for Lee:

> I knew early on, I'd have to create some kind of person behind my name because companies weren't going to spend millions of dollars to promote my films [...] We can't take out full page ads in *The New York Times* the same day *Batman* opens [...] so we had to do other stuff (Lee in Levine, 2011).

The trailer harnesses the spirit of guerrilla marketing to present Lee as a multifaceted figure, simultaneously controlling the narrative, pushing boundaries, and cultivating a brand image that holds the potential to extend well beyond the confines of the film itself. However, it simultaneously attempts to break the "cluster" of media, as it can be understood as being formed by the grouping of trailers at the outset of a theatrical screening.

The experiential effect of these dynamics is a quality of surprise, within which the trailer creates a space for authenticity—or rather, the perception of it—to emerge. However, there is the question of which brand the consumer may become aware of, and perceive to be particularly authentic, in the generation of surprise as experiential affect. In terms of guerilla marketing technique, surprise is considered essential to counter the sense of overexposure to traditional advertising and content (Derbaix & Pham, 1991). Stemming from a deviation from expectation, surprise can lead to favourable attitudes towards brands and inclination towards purchase (Zarco & Herzallah, 2023, p. 118). For Luxton and Drummond (2000), one of the key factors in customer surprise is the involvement of "unusual systems" of creativity, and a sense that it is the only advertising action that has been created. Rare stimuli are often perceived more intensely than common ones (Luxton & Drummond, 2000). Surprise, as it stems from novelty and rarity, can therefore apply to several aspects of the trailer brandscape, possibly even simultaneously. At once, there is the auteur-brand of Lee, the distributor Island Pictures that have iconography throughout the trailer, and then of course the film itself, with its various actors, particular style and form.

Surprise, also, may be in relation to the creative use of the trailer itself, in its reconfiguration of form. Comparisons can be drawn to the ways that TV opening sequences—often considered as an add-on to the main narrative responsible for the "self-presentation and self-promotion" of a show (Gripsrud, 1995, p. 183)—have been reworked to offer sophisticated, if not experimental styles that attest to a sense of the shows' quality and distinction (Picarelli, 2013). The generation of surprise holds potential for drawing attention to different elements of the brandscape, that intertwine and form relationships of meaning within the trailer rubric. In many ways, the author figure can provide something of an anchor point for brand awareness, but is indicative of other multiple converging aims, too.

The trailer plays a significant role in a brand-building exercise that reveals the long-term investment of Island Pictures not to be the film in question, but Lee himself; a representative of the black middle-class and an educated urban twenty-something audience, both of whom the distributor explicitly aimed to appeal. The creation of Lee's auteur-brand through systematic and concerted marketing efforts by Island Pictures, and the film's potential to garner attention from a large and underrepresented audience for black independent filmmaking (King, 2005, p. 212), are not mutually exclusive phenomena. Russell Schwartz, vice president of marketing at Island, stated:

> Spike was an extremely talented emerging filmmaker, the kind we're
> always looking for... We also thought the film had a chance to tap into an
> audience that had not been tapped into previously, namely the emerging
> black middle class (in Frechette, 1986, p. 112).

As part of this ongoing investment in Lee, Island went on to sign him to a multimillion-dollar deal to produce two more films (Frechette, 1986, p. 57). His rising profile allowed him to access studio funding for a string of further features (King, 2005, p. 212). The experience of Lee as a distinctive brand personality, therefore, was of explicit and fundamental concern to the marketing and advertising campaigns of the film. However, it is perhaps in this structuring concern around the presentation of Lee as an author brand

that most distinctly signals to a new configuration of the term authenticity in the historical and cultural moment within which he emerged.

While the "Spike Lee brand" broadly can form a sense of singularity around the film (and trailer), it is a brand that is essentially demonstrated to be made up of multiple identities vying for attention in the brandscape. Yet, despite appearing to be a sign of a more deceptive plurality—as configured in traditional notions of authenticity, against which a more singular self is posited—it instead appears to be a signal of his (and the distributor's) creativity and originality. In emphasising the performative aspects of Lee as a character (as filmmaker, as a character in the film, as a black man, or even tube-sock salesman), he can be experienced as various emblems of African American social identities. Another layer of performance is formed by Lee's character Mars Blackmon, who features heavily throughout the trailer and in snippets of dialogue from the film. It is Blackmon's vocal style, later mirrored in the trailer by Lee in the role of filmmaker, which forges another kind of synchresis with Lee's auteur-brand. For instance, the repetitive style of Blackmon's catchphrase that is featured in the trailer— "please baby, please baby, please baby, please"— is repeated by Lee at the end of the trailer when he asks of the audience, "you gonna go, you gonna go, you gonna go?". This creates a link between Lee-as-auteur, and Lee-as-Blackmon (which can be read also as Lee-as-black-man), that acknowledges the inextricability of Lee and Blackmon as characters, as symbols, and as performance. There is considerable value, however, in this multiplicity of identity, particularly for a young, urban audience, and more specifically a black audience segment who were at that time significantly underserved. For this group in particular, the appeal of diverse and complex black characters, and the representation of the realities of black American life on-screen, cannot be understated (King, 2005, p. 211). The trailer suggests that the film is invariably Lee's product, as a young black first-time filmmaker. It is in his potential—and perhaps also the seemingly infinite possibilities of creativity and imagination—in which the audience might invest when engaging with the film.

Exploiting Ambiguity: *Gummo*

The trailer for *Gummo* demonstrates the malleability of the trailer form by utilising different brand touchpoints to create a spectre of authenticity. If the trailer for *She's Gotta Have It* amplifies the author brand as a source of knowing creativity, the *Gummo* trailer instead amplifies the avant-garde potential of film style. Rather than the kind of "suturing" effect that Lee's voiceover carries throughout the *She's Gotta Have It* trailer, here the scenes form – to borrow particularly apt terms from McRoy and Crucianelli's (2009) analysis of *Gummo* – a "pestilential" and "schizophrenic" effect (p. 266). Neither the dialogue or noise-effects point to any kind of distinct exposition, and in this way it is perhaps exemplary of the fact that the trailer is not created solely to perform narrative functions. "Life is beautiful. It really is. Filled with beauty and illusions", a disembodied voice says, before a different voiceover launches into song: "The hen goes cluck-cluck, the rooster goes cock-a-doodle-oo!". Combined with a montage of scenes taken from the film, the effect is of an experimental sample that compounds the strangeness of the images onscreen. A young boy wearing only board shorts and a hat with pink rabbit ears skateboards down a suburban street; a minstrel in black-face stares disconsolately off-screen; a young boy removes a picture frame from its hanging place on a wall, to reveal insects spilling out of a hole behind it; a woman, laughing, shaves off her eyebrows using a pink razor. The sonic and visual tapestry of the trailer appears to be concerned less with smoothing over the ruptures of conventionality and linearity within the format, than with foregrounding the shock of fragmentation in both sound and image. It is reminiscent of an intensified audiovisual aesthetic that Vernallis (2013), drawing from Bordwell (2002), describes as "intermedially reconfigured and accelerated" through rapid editing, constant reframing and free-ranging camera movement (p. 21). This intensified, mixing board effect is foregrounded in the trailer, which in turn, highlights other elements of musicality, rhythmic qualities, and sectional divisions (Vernallis, 2013, p. 36). In this example, the perceived values of the brandscape are in foregrounding the mixing board effect of the trailer format, and subsequently its ambiguity and multiplicity, rather than in the more lucid personification of an author. It

raises an interesting question about what happens when ambiguity is an integral part of the trailer brandscape (and central to the brand experience), and the ways in which the space of ambiguity can be productive of emotion, meaning, and epistemological values.

The trailer aligns with guerrilla marketing principles and underscores the film's confrontational and unconventional brand identities, challenging the norms of both cinema and marketing practices. In foregrounding form, and a sense of strangeness and the grotesque, *Gummo*'s trailer speaks to the experimental and more avant-garde end of the spectrum, which has been described as "New Punk Cinema" (Rombes, 2005). In this context, "Gummo" reconfigures the notion of guerrilla marketing, infusing it with a more confrontational and war-like sensibility, aligning with the original definition of guerrilla warfare as atypical tactics employed within the enemy's territory (Zarco & Herzallah, 2023, p. 108). This unconventional marketing approach is characterised by ambush, shock, and surprise, albeit in a darker and more uncomfortable manner than conventional guerrilla marketing campaigns. A clear example is in its appropriation of popular mass cultural form. The introduction and chorus of Madonna's "Like a Prayer" (Sire/Warner Bros, 1989) features as a non-diegetic soundtrack that is intercut with excerpts of dialogue from the film, along with a distorted electric guitar intro and array of electronic noises. Dialogue, "Like a Prayer", and noise effects do not overlap one another or fade casually into the background, but form abrupt confrontations with conflicting tonalities, textures, and timbres. Its sampling effect is fragmentary, bringing disjunctive elements into collision in a kind of audio spectacle, drawing attention to both sonic and visual form in its eccentricity. Here, then, the form can be considered both as unconventional and as somewhat assaultive in nature in terms of the brand experience that it offers.

The trailer demonstrates a multiplicity of appeal in its warlike form, which raises questions around who the perceived "enemy" is. It has the potential to be the viewer in terms of its discomforting qualities, or it could also be "mainstream" culture (as typified by the appropriation of "Like a Prayer"), or it

could also be classical linear narrative forms, or traditional trailer formats. The overall effect is a sense of oppositionality, which can be linked to what Thornton (2005) terms "subcultural capital": a form of cultural knowledge that "fuel[s] rebellion against, or rather escape from, the trappings of parental class" (p. 205). Subcultural capital relates to social standing (particularly in the young) in a similar way to cultural capital, which Thornton (2005) defines (drawing from Bourdieu) as knowledge "accumulated through upbringing and education which confers social status" (p. 202). However, rather than appealing to notions of "decoding" and information processing models, here the trailer appears to offer subcultural capital through the experiential effects of the disruptive, lewd, gross-out and the vulgar.

The experience of the trailer brandscape offers multiple modes of interaction and appeal; however, the generation of shock is particularly amplified in a manner that aligns the trailer with principles of avant-garde practice. As something of an intensification of the surprise offered by novel forms of guerilla marketing, the *Gummo* trailer speaks to notions of indie authenticity through shock and provocation. According to Duncan (2015), shock is central to the practices of avant-garde experimental forms, which together are seen to resist "bourgeois" notions of beauty, art, and authorship. In the trailer, this confrontational resistance is one expressed through the trailer format and in the text/viewer relation, particularly through direct address to camera. The first scene of the trailer features a white male character who lifts his head to look into the camera, and then spits directly at it. The image lingers, as saliva drips down the camera lens. While Lee directly (yet light-heartedly) challenges the audience to go and see the film by asking, "are you gonna go?", *Gummo*'s trailer is challenging in other ways. It seems to test the audience's expectations—and perhaps endurance—for difference and alterity, particularly in social representations. The montage quality of the trailer, too, serves to enhance the likelihood of audience shock; adding to an effect that magnifies the potential for outrage, by offering glimpses into a spectacle that promises to offend.

Further, the configuration of the brandscape also offers the possibility for strong emotions like disgust and repulsion. While positive brand experiences are often thought to be most likely to lead to purchase outcomes, the trailer implicitly challenges this notion by speaking to a fuller diversity of possible attitudes towards the brands within. Such challenge is one echoed in branding literature more broadly, that argues for a fuller gamut of emotions to be considered as appealing to the brand experience: such as love, hate, joy, boredom, anxiety, pride, shame, and awe (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982, p. 137). The effect of the character spitting at the screen, for instance, undoubtedly offers resonance with notions of the abject. Derived from psychoanalytic theory, the term "abject" (first posited by Kristeva, 1982) refers to materials such as bodily excretions, which are capable of triggering memories of earlier stages of psychic life (Arya & Chare, 2017, p. 10). Excretions, such as spit, in their traversal from inside to outside of the body necessarily disrupt notions of its secure borders, and are considered to be psychically threatening (Arya & Chare, 2017, p. 10). More broadly, spitting at the screen can also be understood to speak to the "personal, everyday forces of human life" and its "coarse realities" (Brottman, 1997, p. 4), offering a sense of grittiness, disgust, or repulsion. Postmodernism, in this respect, then relates to the way that the trailer harnesses these regimes of signification to create structures of feeling that bear some sense of opposition to ideas of the "proper body", as well as to notions of a parental class.

Together, and in application to film cultures more broadly, these kind of appeal structures can be seen as characteristic of what King (2021) terms a "cinema of discomfort", exemplified by sustained disquieting, awkward, and uncomfortable appeals that are offered to viewers as they navigate fictional worlds (p. 1). As somewhat apart from more "radically assaultive and extreme" endeavours, the cinema of discomfort is thought to refer to various experiences of alienation, embarrassment, or other negative sensibilities as a distinct form of appeal (King, 2021, p. 1). In terms of *Gummo*, while undoubtedly confrontational, the trailer ultimately promotes the potential for more extreme elements rather than depicting them. It sits somewhere in a zone of "uncomfortably weird", which emerges in opposition to notions of the

"proper" body. This does, however, provoke a certain form of curiosity regarding the promise of the film, and the range of brands (including actors, and multiple directors) within the brandscape.

A disquieting sense of curiosity and awe is further generated by the multiplicity of various identities within the film, which are represented through a mix of actors and non-actors. Together, the trailer offers an almost circus or carnival-like picture of what Duncan (2015) terms a "menagerie of wasters, outcasts, and delinquents" (p. 721). At once, this has drawn comparison to social realism, in the sense that the film is thought to promise insights into "unseen America". However, there is little doubt in the hyperstylisation of film form that there is a deliberate attempt to attract a more voyeuristic mode of viewing. For instance, immediately following the image of saliva dripping down the lens of the screen, the trailer offers a lingering gaze of a topless Sevigny (as the character Dot), who licks her lips and gyrates in a slow-motion, direct address to the camera. Rather than being necessarily seductive, however, this view of Sevigny is—at least, within the context of the trailer as a whole—distinctly odd and unsettling. It is also notable that Sevigny is perhaps the only figure in the trailer that holds any kind of significant brand equity, demonstrating an emerging renown in the fashion and independent film spheres (as will be examined further in the next chapter). These voyeuristic flashes, for Halligan (2005), point to the fact that "the film has a self-contained still-born marketing campaign: a promise of pandering to the racist stereotype of the white-trash freak show" (p. 153). While the apparent exploitative and stereotyping nature of the film's presentation is somewhat beyond the purview of this trailer analysis, it is suffice to say that the trailer is involved with demonstrating a spectacle of unconventionality.

At the same time, and in a manner that demonstrates the multiple appeals and identities of the form, this spectacle of unconventionality opens the door conceptually to readings of a particularly American indie, postmodern form of authenticity. Rather than straightforwardly appearing to position the film within the remit of long traditions of social realism, the trailer foregrounds a

knowing use of hyperstylised form that deliberately invites viewers to "gawk" (McRoy & Crucianelli, 2009, p. 266). It can be read, in this sense, as an attempt to imbue a sense of worth and value into its characters, even if such value may be disquieting, confrontational, or uncomfortable. The trailer can be likened to the reclamation of cultural "detritus"; a term that is used to describe discarded materials, debris, and "something manufactured which is thrown away" (Bonheim, 2004, p. 145). Crucially, in order for this reclamation to take place, "the object has to be thrown out first, jettisoned as ugly and of no earthly use" (Bonheim, 2004, p. 153). The *Gummo* trailer subverts this process, and instead offers its band of wastrels and outcasts a restyling as the unabashed objects of the voyeuristic gaze. As Bonheim (2004) points out, "Like 'waste', 'detritus' may refer to anything marginal, dysfunctional or silly" (p. 145), and the trailer appears to revel and indulge in the margins, alongside groups that have been in some way cast-off.

This can be applied to trailer advertising itself, which in its very expression here is presented as something of a creative, original, and perhaps reimagining of the potentials of the format. However, it also speaks to the emergent postmodern potential in the film, suggesting that it may have found "new ways to present the unpresentable, so as to break down the barriers that keep the profane out of the everyday" (Denzin, 1988, p. 471).

The seemingly experimental form of the *Gummo* trailer may distract from notions of conventional "image management" with regard to the author brand; however, it is still very much present, if configured differently to Lee's overt branding in the *She's Gotta Have It* trailer. While Lee's auteur brand trades on a personality of ironic knowing and "smart cinema", Korine's auteur brand is aligned with and can be seen to remix the spectre of the auteur in European art cinema. The difference between the two trailers appears to resonate with Corrigan's (1990) notion that auteurs have transitioned from being phantom presences within a text, to commercial performers in the business of being auteurs (p. 47). If Lee knowingly occupies the role of the commercial performer, in contrast Korine offers a "phantom presence". The only signal to Korine is a single black title card with white writing, which says "A Film by Harmony Korine". Together with the more avant-garde and

experimental elements, the title card is reminiscent of European art films and the *auteur* concept. This appears to be a knowing adoption in the marketing for the film, as part of a concerted campaign. In the course of publicity and branding activities for the film, certain quotes were generated from precisely such figures of the European Avant-Garde for which the label became popularised. As Duncan (2015) details,

> advance endorsements by directorial luminaries Bernado Bertolucci,
> Werner Herzog and Gus van Sant sought to position the film outside this
> mainstream cinematic order… Bertolucci dubbed the film 'a revolution in
> cinema', van Sant called it 'a completely original creation', and Herzog
> claimed, rather dramatically, that 'it knocked me off my chair' (p. 218).

While this concerted PR campaign speaks to an overarching intent to align the film conceptually within the distinctive category of "art cinema", the trailer also offers another point of entry to the text. Combined with the more confrontational avant-garde qualities described above, the trailer is demonstrative of the "enfant terrible" label that is applied to filmmakers who are known for their provocative, unconventional, and controversial works.

Enfant terrible artists often aim to shock and challenge the recipient, pushing the boundaries of what is considered acceptable or conventional in art (Hjort, 2011). In the context of arts products, including film, the brand identity of enfant terrible is characterized by a deliberate and provocative approach that seeks to disrupt established norms and provoke strong reactions from audiences (Hjort, 2011).

While the term is more commonly associated with European filmmakers like Jean-Luc Godard or Lars von Trier, there have been American indie filmmakers who have been described in similar terms due to their challenging films. This includes Larry Clark, who is explicitly mentioned in the trailer. Alongside "A Film by Harmony Korine", another title card reads, "From the creator of Larry Clark's *Kids*". Korine wrote the screenplay for the film, which explored the lives of teenagers in New York City and addresses themes of youth culture, sexuality, and drug use. *Kids* gained attention for its

raw and unflinching portrayal of teenage life, and the film itself generated controversy and critical acclaim for its provocative subject matter. Intertextual linkage between the film and Gummo therefore serves to flesh out a brand identity for Korine, which at the time of exhibition, perhaps had less equity as a director and author-figure. It also, however, aligns the film with social realist, gritty American indie cinema, for which Clark became known. Although presenting very differently, the trailer for Gummo therefore speaks to the notion of infinite possibility and potential, for both the author brand and film. In the comparison, however, it becomes evident that "likeability" does not necessarily need to be a governing factor in signalling to an authentic indie alternative, whether in terms of author or film brands. Consumer behaviour can be energised, as this analysis would suggest, in very different ways.

Conclusion

The question of authenticity, as it pertains to the examples of indie film advertising considered in this chapter, forms an interesting proposition to the analysis of the trailer medium. At once, the theatrical trailer is an explicit form of advertising that is unlikely to be confused for anything other than showcasing upcoming films. This is quite aside from any consideration of the trailer as a creative expression; indeed, as the examples in this analysis demonstrate, the trailer can be harnessed in novel and surprising ways that are equally amusing and disquieting depending on the use of the form. Yet, regardless of how creativity the format might be used, it is still fundamentally, constructed for the purposes of appeal and persuasion, and to influence consumer choice. For this reason, the question of authenticity—which in broad discursive terms generally stands in opposition to overt marketing and consumerism—should not be applicable, by its very definition. The construction of the examples considered here, however, demonstrate how the trailer brandscape can be negotiated and stylised to create structures of feeling and experience that speak to an authentic sensibility. These structures demonstrate the importance of authenticity as a principle for

organising film and media cultures, and their place in the market. Regardless of whether they are ads, the mixing board offered by the trailer format can be harnessed to amplify elements of multiplicity and ambiguity, which together lead to a sense of the infinite possibilities of featured brands.

To more effectively summarise these complex ideas, the remainder of this section is divided into three themes that reflect the initial guiding aims of the chapter. The first, "Trailers form Brandscapes", explains the ways that the case studies function to negotiate multiple brand meanings and identities. The second, "Authenticity as an Organising Concept", discusses how authenticity is constructed through formal and stylistic traits in the two trailers presented, and further, acts as a key organisational concept for the trailer brandscape. The third section, "Trailers and Experience" uses these findings to conclude that trailer brandscapes speak more to experiential qualities, rather than operating simply as tools for cognitive "information processing". Throughout, the conclusion will discuss how the findings of this case study might impact the consideration of trailers and promotional materials more broadly.

Trailers form Brandscapes

The examination of the trailers for *She's Gotta Have It* and *Gummo* suggest that trailers function as brandscapes. Indeed, both trailers demonstrate an inextricable and mutually productive relationship between brands contained inside the confines of the format, and even those outside of it. The competing and co-productive nature of brands within the trailer can be understood to form a brandscape, where multiple brand identities, personalities, and interests converge to promote the film product. Given the findings summarised below, the brandscape concept is understood to have relevance to the ways that indie films may be positioned—by marketers, distributors, or filmmakers—as being part of "indie" as a mode of market categorisation, through the amplification of certain brand elements. Although

generally applied to large scale events, it is argued here that trailers demonstrate a commonality with the concept of brandscapes, in that the convergent interests in the trailer are productive of meaning and affect.

Both trailers demonstrate various interrelationships between known and emerging brands, which vie for attention throughout. The trailer for *She's Gotta Have It* harnesses iconography, sound, and montage to amalgamate a number of symbolic resonances which hold value for brands. Island Pictures, the distributor for the film, is featured through logos worn by Lee as he offers audiences the "hard sell" for the film. The trailer's novel and surprising take on the format may also generate a series of impressions around the distributor, as the supporting force behind the exhibition of the film product. *She's Gotta Have It*, as the film that the trailer is advertising, forms its own brand in the sense that affect and meaning can be attached to its title and form. As voiceover narrator, Lee provides certain anchoring touchpoints to the potential reading of the film's montage sequences, which together form a series of experiential impressions about the film's humour, themes, and tone. The actors, including Lee as an actor, demonstrate their own personal brands that gain exposure through screen time. Lee, however, is foregrounded as the primary brand in the trailer, and a nexus through which all these brand meanings draw and converge. This serves to highlight the significance of the author-brand to offering a sense of distinction for indie films, which will be discussed further below.

In contrast, the trailer for *Gummo* foregrounds the film-as-brand by amplifying a sense of multiplicity and ambiguity in montage and image. Intensified continuity editing, the appropriation of popular culture music in the soundtrack, and the hyperstylisation of the image, together offer a sense of notoriety and even provocation around the filmic experience. In its far more experimental quality, *Gummo* offers something of an avante-garde sensibility to the converging actor, film, music, and author-brands in the trailer.

Although both films present in vastly different aesthetic and thematic terms, they share a predilection for amplifying the author-brand. It is also important

in offering a sense of alterity to notions of standardised, "mass" market films. As discussed in the first section of this chapter, Island Pictures' long-term investment in *She's Gotta Have It* was not necessarily the film itself, but in Lee as a representative of the Black middle class and an educated urban twenty-something audience whom the distributor hoped to appeal to. The Lee "author brand" is notably foregrounded, which provides the trailer brandscape with a conceptual anchor point even as it balances multiple identities and appeals. While the hard sell format could signal to a somewhat more deceptive plurality of purpose and intent, it is instead framed in the trailer as a sign of Lee's (and the distributor's) creativity and originality.

Similarly, even as the avant-garde qualities of the *Gummo* trailer appear to distract from the format's implicit selling and branding propositions, the author-brand is managed in ways that speak to Korine's creativity and control over cinematic technique. While acknowledged on a title card, Korine's author-brand (or, auteur-brand) creates a phantom-presence in the trailer that is reminiscent of European avant-garde filmmakers such as Werner Herzog, or Bernardo Bertolucci. More explicitly, the film is situated within a broader cultural field of similarly provocative, gritty, and disquieting films; supported in no small part through the explicit intertextual linkage with Larry Clark's *Kids*. The brands that are negotiated within the trailer brandscape extend to form mutually productive relationships of meaning with other external brands. Together, this suggests the deliberateness with which the trailer advertising for some indie films harness brandscapes to situate products in the marketplace.

The negotiation between fleshing out Korine as an author-brand, and the frenetic qualities of the film itself, results in a particular set of symbolic associations regarding his status as an auteur. While the *Gummo* trailer speaks to an overarching aim to align the film conceptually within the distinctive category of "art cinema", it also offers another interpretation of the author-brand. The trailer suggests an "enfant terrible" quality that is applied to certain filmmakers, often at the more experimental end of the spectrum, which aligns with provocation and unconventionality. While offering a sign of

originality and rebellion, the label can also signal to more egocentric means of gaining attention. Together, it suggests a sense of deliberateness in style and form—however much this renders a somewhat uncomfortable experiential quality to the trailer—that ultimately influence the dynamics of the trailer brandscape.

Authenticity as an Organising Concept

The trailers for both *Gummo* and *She's Gotta Have It* suggest that authenticity acts as a concept that organises the trailer brandscape. However, these example demonstrate a particularly postmodern sensibility, in which the overt harnessing of the commercial and artistic qualities of filmmaking are thought to speak to authenticity. While modernist views of authenticity speak to a single, unified, and true self, postmodernism—at least, in textual terms—suggests that multiplicity is in itself authentic. Within this rubric, to be genuine, honest, and authentic is to acknowledge the fundamental imbrication of capitalist culture and consumerism with everyday life. That said, the style of both trailers lends itself to postmodern readings of authenticity, where the selling and advertising mode of the format is not only acknowledged but undercut and critiqued.

The *She's Gotta Have It* trailer offers a personal selling mode that sees Lee shilling for the film, in the same way that he is seen to sell tube socks on a street corner. While this mode of selling could, in other terms, provide something of a threat to an "authentic" core of independence that eschews the imbrication of commerce with art, here the selling of the film is resolutely acknowledged as a necessary part of the filmmaking endeavour. However, the ironic, detached, and satirical tone through which Lee delivers his sales pitch is demonstrative of a certain knowingness, that neutralises the potentially threatening elements of the form. In the act of being seen to knowingly harness and reappropriate the trailer, it offers a surprising, novel, and unconventional take on the form that speaks to its rarity, singularity, and authenticity.

The potential for authenticity to be read, conceptually speaking, is harboured in both trailers through techniques that foreground a sense of novelty and surprise. Both examples offer a "guerilla marketing" sensibility, and a seemingly unconventional approach to the question of film marketing. For *Gummo*, this is evidently in the production of a trailer that resists traditional notions of beauty, art, and authorship. It professes to offer insight into "unseen" parts of American life, and appears to rail at the trappings of class in its deliberate appropriation of Madonna's "Like a Prayer". It further resists realist and classical narrative technique, through lingering and strange camera work that defies any sense of consistency in form. If *She's Gotta Have It* can be seen to offer a sense of novelty in unconventionality, in *Gummo* such novelty is amplified to an almost confrontational level. In the provocation of shock and other disquieting experiential qualities, the trailer can be read as authentic in its ability to challenge viewer expectations and subvert trailer convention.

Although offering markedly different aesthetics and approaches, the theatrical trailers for *She's Gotta Have It* and *Gummo* both rest on defining the films as "original" or "artistic expressions", whether through the rendering of an auteur-figure (as an original source from which the text derives), or in foregrounding formal qualities that speaks to an experimental sensibility. Infinite possibility thus relates not only to a sense of the potentials of encounter that may lie beyond the borders of a film text, but also the perceived source of imagination and creativity both within a text, and in the author-figure. To different degrees the trailers can be read as articulating an anti- Hollywood sentiment by emphasizing the multiplicity and heterogeneity of the texts in different ways. However, they can also be read as offering a distinct selling proposition for films that otherwise might find it difficult to compete in the marketplace alongside the Hollywood majors, and the specialty branches of the major studios encroaching into the independent sector at this time. Even as it speaks to a reductive binary between Hollywood and indie, or commerce and art, it is indeed exactly these kinds of

seemingly clear-cut and demarcated notions around which the conceptual spaces of indie seem to revolve.

In these signals to authenticity, the trailers offer the impression that more attention has been paid to the trailer form, versus other more standardised, production-line style marketing formats. Of course, this is based on a broad and unexamined notion of what marketing campaigns actually entail for Hollywood films, or in popular culture more broadly. However, this "attention to form", as it might be called, does appear to rest at the core of ideas around the speciality nature of indie films as being treated somehow more holistically that other media products. Within this rubric, indie films are allegedly less likely to "lie" or provide a false image of the film that is being advertised. Yet as the examination in this chapter suggests, the trailers are not necessarily concerned with faithfully or otherwise representing a core film text. As Lee's example states, the distributor Island Pictures—in concert with Lee—made a deliberate choice to instead foreground Lee as an author-brand, rather than the film's narrative. *Gummo* barely offers a coherent impression of film narrative at all. Within the consideration of authenticity as a governing concept for the organisation of brands, there is also the acknowledgement that it appears to act more as a method of differentiating products in the market than signalling any sort of more "genuine" or "specialist" approach to the marketing of films.

Trailers and Experience

The analysis of the trailers considered in this case study support the notion that trailers are designed to offer experiential qualities. As explained in the outset to this chapter, trailers of the period described here were designed to be experienced at the beginning of theatrical screenings, in cinema environments. With that context in mind, the analysis of these trailers has considered the ways that they may signal multiple appeals, impressions, and experiential qualities, especially given the transient nature of their exhibition.

In informational processing theories data gleaned from trailers can be tallied almost scorecard like and evaluated in the aim of making purchase decisions. Elements such as director, type of film, distributor, actors, narrative, and other qualities are considered to be captured in the act of trailer viewing. However, in the examples considered here, the trailers appear more impressionistic; offering resonances, notions, and qualities that speak to feeling, rather than necessarily to complex cognitive processing.

Both trailers contribute to a range of affective brand experiences, offering frameworks that might elicit surprise, shock, provocation, discomfort, curiosity, and humour. The surprise of novel approaches to cinematic form, as in the case of *She's Gotta Have It*, may lead to brand awareness and recognition; although, which brand precisely might generate such awareness is unclear. However, in marketing and advertising terms, such ambiguity is a well-acknowledged risk. Foregrounding multiple appeals and identities in different ways is, as these trailer examples demonstrate, relatively standard practice.

In the case of the trailer for *Gummo*, ambiguity and a sense of infinite possibility are rendered with considerably more aggressive and confrontational promises. The very first scene, which sees a young man spit directly into the camera lens, speaks far more to affective than cognitive appeals. The notion of appeal, however, is one challenged through the configuration of the trailer brandscape. In foregrounding a sense of strangeness and grotesque, the trailer offers an oppositional quality to the mode of selling and advertising itself. It challenges the viewer's expectations through an unconventional use of form, and promises to test their endurance for difference and alterity. The trailer's sense of ambiguity becomes less about decoding, or the demonstration of capitals that might be expressed in doing so. Instead, it offers ways to think about how ambiguity and multiplicity can be enjoyed experientially, on their own terms, and for their own distinct affect.

This compounded sense of infinite possibility also feeds back into the imagined space of indie, where to state definitively "this is what indie is", or, "what it should be" might serve to fossilize the seemingly ineffable qualities often taken to make indie filmmaking distinctive (and also that make it culturally valuable to a hierarchy of consumers). By foregrounding a sense of openness of meaning and possibility, in an idealized sense, indie can therefore act as a classificatory measure for a large grouping of films that are difficult to pin down, or that do not share many semantic units of meaning in the way that a genre might. It offers a boundary, but it is a relatively loose and often implied one that can attempt to preserve indie's authentic and oppositional sensibilities, marking it off (in some cases, more vehemently than others) from a notion of the mainstream— what it is not— while leaving open the possibilities for what it might be.

Trailers can therefore be considered in terms of they ways that they form brand experiences. This is an opportunity with significant potential. It extends the concept of brandscape outside of the trailer itself to also consider the material environment within which it is viewed, and where other brandscapes—for instance, other trailers and the main feature—converge to produce meanings and experiential frames. At the same time, it poses a challenge for historical analysis of trailers and brandscape environments, given the situated nature of the examination. In terms of the analysis here, it can only be assumed that the brandscapes became some part of a reinforcing loop of value-attribution for the theatres and film culture that converge with them. However, by examining the trailer through the lens of plurality of experience and meaning, it opens up a multitude of ways that trailers can contribute to the discursive and symbolic systems that structure film cultures.

Summary: Dynamics of Indie Branding

The analysis of trailers in this chapter suggests a range of ways that valuable concepts of authenticity—along with other qualities, such as alterity

and opposition—can be configured through the trailer form. While the findings of this chapter are limited to the analysis of two trailers, there is some suggestion that certain elements of trailer brandscapes can be amplified to render more or less "indie" configurations. The ideals of infinite possibility, heterogeneity and originality evident in the film trailers, seem to place more emphasis on leaving oneself open to the surprise of encounter with a film text; with the textual roughness, unconventionality, variations and irregularities that discursively mark collective understandings of indie films, and the film culture more broadly. The analysis therefore suggests that the trailers may be structured less around the ability of the viewer to hold, express, or gain various capitals in the cognitive evaluation and processing of film trailers. Instead, it suggests particular frames of experience, or structures of feeling, that align with certain expectations around indie film products.

Both examples considered here negotiate various formations of brand experience that hold significance for the spatial rendering of indie film culture. Indie authenticity, in the Sundance-Miramax era, can be configured through the perceived harnessing of the trailer brandscape, its form, and in subsequent effects of multiplicity, ambiguity, and infinite possibility. At the same time, this spectacle of unconventionality opens the door to readings of a postmodern spectre of authenticity in indie film promotion. In harnessing the brandscape in different ways, the trailers offer a space for meaning and experience to be rendered. In their own way, both form a space of beginnings, a wonder and curiosity concerning the next textual encounter, where possibilities and trajectories of the text have yet to be fully rendered. They offer the promise, broadly speaking, of the potential for alternative authorial expressions and representations. When harnessed in this way, trailers can be understood to play a critical role in establishing the spaces of indie discourse and exhibition as a territory of authentic, non-mainstream and alternative culture. In this way, trailers can be seen to form an interdependent relationship with indie film culture, with an ability to amplify key brand elements that shape and render experience.

Chapter 3: Site-Seeing with Sevigny: Publicity, Place, and Situating Indie Stardom

Introduction

This chapter will analyse the ways that stardom, publicity, and place interrelate to support the structuring of the market for indie films. It is premised on the notion that stardom offers a "symbolic commerce" that organises consumer markets (McDonald, 2013), and that the resonances of meaning and attachment that render geographic places play a role in this system. The chapter offers an examination of the publicity and press coverage around actor, director, and fashion icon Chloë Sevigny, who has long been aligned with a conceptualisation of indie or "cult" stardom that poses some opposition to notions of Hollywood or "popular" stardom (Sexton, 2013, p. 73). Since her feature film debut in Larry Clark's *Kids* (1995), and further roles in prominent indie productions such as *Trees Lounge* (Steve Buscemi, 1996), *Gummo* (Harmony Korine, 1997), *Julien Donkey Boy* (Harmony Korine, 1999), and *Boys Don't Cry* (Kimberley Pierce, 1999), Sevigny's star text has come to demonstrate a distinct style of mediation in press coverage. With features and interviews in high profile publications such as *The New Yorker*, *Dazed*, *Vogue*, *New York Times*, *Rolling Stone* and *Harper's Bazaar*, Sevigny is representative of how the star image can be negotiated, guarded and managed by print media industries and the promotional intermediaries, such as press agents and publicists, that intersect with them (Gamson, 1994, p. 79-107; Rojek, 2001, p. 10; Sexton, 2013). This chapter proposes that place is an important part in Sevigny's star text as it is constructed at the nexus of promotional and press industries, as a mediating factor through which certain notions of cultural value and difference are inscribed. At the same time, Sevigny herself can be seen to act as a mediating star text for both indie film culture and its associated geographies. This chapter will examine the ways that the resonances of place in press accounts—along with the symbolic connotations of the publications themselves—situate and align Sevigny

within a cultural hierarchy of consumption, in which print cultures also have a stake.

First, it is necessary to clearly define what is meant by "place" in relation to press coverage. Place is defined by Adams (2009) as a "centre of meaning and attention", constructed via "social interactions occurring over time and their sedimented layers of meaning" (p. 2). Rose (1995) similarly argues that place, along with the wider sets of social relations that structure it, are central to lived experience and everyday consciousness, and is therefore integral to the negotiation of individual identity (Rose, 1995, p. 88; Massey, 1994). More specifically, Florida's (2012) emphasises on the significance of place as a key economic and social organising unit (p. 188), which resonates with the organisation of core-region geographic development of the kind examined in Chapter One. The significance of place as an organising system for economies, society, culture, and identity cannot be understated, and is reflected in its positioning at the core of promotional systems. Place is core to the marketing-mix and necessary to introduce products and services to markets, being situated alongside product, price, and promotion. In this scheme, it not only refers to where products are sold and exchanged—for instance, channel selection and logistics—but also how places can become inseparable aspects of consumer life, and impact factors such as consumer attachment and value creation (Rosenbaum et al., 2017, p. 281). Of course, place may inspire greater or lesser degrees of value, understanding, curiosity, or affective resonance in each individual. Yet, as a formative component of both individual and group identities, the harnessing of place in press coverage is neither a throwaway mention, nor an empty signifier.

In terms of the promotional industries that harness place, this chapter will focus specifically on the intersection of Business-to-Consumer (B2C) magazines and news media, and the work of publicity. In a manner akin to the relationship between B2B media forms and public relations outlined in Chapter One, here publicity refers to unpaid media exposure (such as reviews, feature articles, TV spots, and press conferences) (Rosen &

Hamilton, 1987, p. 319). It is often generated on behalf of celebrity brands by publicists (also called "press agents") who are responsible for organising and generating such publicity. The practices of publicists, which can broadly be termed "image management", are described by Sexton (2013) as a negotiation that attempts to elucidate the star image through activities such as controlling interview questions, disseminating media releases, and writing statements or other material for the star to perform during media publicity schedules (p. 74). However, it is important to see the nexus of celebrity brands, publicists, and press as one of mutually interrelated promotional aims, rather than one necessarily controlling the other. Magazines, as Holmes (2013) points out, have always been associated with promotion, whether in terms of an ideal self, the promotion of personal interests, specialised knowledge or of consumer goods (p. 173). The relationships between various promotional forms and interests manifest distinctly in the promotion of personal, cultural, and professional identities, which are moulded and reinforced by publications (Holmes, 2013, p. 174). In the analysis of these materials, however, the significations of place can be a taken-for-granted system of symbols, that both render and situate discourse in relation to several promotional aims.

The geographical positioning of the celebrity in press coverage is part of a standard formula for celebrity profiles and features (Marshall, 2008, p. 320), which has perhaps contributed towards its perceived normativity in media discourses. As Marshall (2008) points out, profiles often begin by describing the star "in situ", with a "meeting of journalist and star in either domestic-setting or cafe" (p. 320). They may then move on to describe their dress and demeanour, their current (or body) of work, and to reveal or challenge something of the star's persona (Marshall 2008, p. 320). Although this is a general and somewhat broad-stroke view of the ways that place manifests in press coverage, it does serve to highlight that despite the performance of celebrity there is a "real life", situated self and identity that can be revealed by publications. It is this "behind the scenes", or "in situ" view that publications can trade on offering seemingly exclusive insights into the celebrity world. However, appearing to "be seen" certain places by the press

can, knowingly or otherwise, provide symbolic resonances that can situate the star within broader narratives (whether factual, or otherwise). This chapter uses and expands the term "place images" to account for the various place utterances that are utilised in press coverage, whether visual or textual.

For Adams (2009), place images in media are a crucial means of communicating information, which can elicit a range of affective responses (p. 2). To reference places during press coverage is to offer a snapshot of place—a place-image—that may be loaded with more or less symbolic meaning and affective potential. Image is a mental structure that integrates the elements, impressions, and values people project onto a specific place (Adams, 2009). It is based on the material knowledge and emotional perceptions of perceivers of places (Espelt & Benito, 2005). "Place images" often refers to the perceptions and representations of places as they are shaped by media, personal experiences, stories, and other forms of cultural expression. These images play a crucial role in tourism studies, where the promotion of a destination relies heavily on crafting a particular image or perception of it. Place images are evident throughout articles (rather than just an introductory "in situ" description), are repeatedly referenced across them, and are bound up with references to other people, social groups, and brands. Broadly, place images may also be utilised when celebrities are 'sighted" or 'spotted" (see Leon Talley 2000), and in paparazzi or publicity materials that capture a celebrity in situ. The pervasiveness of place-images can be understood to reflect the ways that communication systems, such as those concerned with the promotion and publicity of celebrity, have become intricately melded with places; forming, in Adams' terminology, a "collective performance" of place built up over time (Adams, 2009, p. 147). Indeed, the situating of Sevigny is not just relevant to elaborating a particular public identity that is inextricable with independent production, but also speaks to another crucial function of the star in helping to organise the market for cultural products (Dyer 2004, p. 5); whether for film, fashion, music, literature, or otherwise, which together construct and constitute the "place-based ecosystems" (Florida 2012, p. 188) from which stardom draws. The

localisation of star texts such as Sevigny's through such microcosms can, I argue, lend to the implacement of the fields and cultural products with which her stardom converges. The effect is to construct place as a system of shared meanings produced through cultural densities over time (for instance, in press coverage), and through exactly the kinds of symbolic guarantees of cultural belonging that are foregrounded in Sevigny's localised star text.

In highlighting the links between place and promotion, this chapter is situated at the nexus of material space, social space, and discursive spaces that structure indie film culture. That Sevigny is considered in these accounts to be both an "indie muse" (Nussbaum, 2003; Cox, 1998) and a New York resident of some social renown (McInerney, 1994; Glitz, 2000; Leon Talley, 2000; Hedegaard, 2003), are not mutually exclusive phenomena. The symbolic power (and, capital) that emerges from Sevigny's place-images within specific lived, social, and economic territories of New York City, also speaks to—and is productive of—the indie film culture from which she is understood to emerge. Sevigny's rootedness to the physical and social milieus of Manhattan is a significant implacement that both constructs and constitutes the sensibilities of authenticity and originality that form her star text. This is understood to be part of imbuing the personal brand (and, the brands that converge with her) as authentic, in a particular configuration that is illustrated through place-images in press coverage. However, it also considers the way that such place images are indicative of power relations that intersect with indie film culture, and in society more broadly. It considers the power-geometry framework, which relates to the notion that time and space have become compressed in an era of globalisation (Massey, 1994, p. 148). This chapter will posit that flows of power are both exhibited by and structured through place images, which are demonstrated by Sevigny's apparent rootedness and fixity to the social and cultural milieu of New York City and notions of "indieness". This is most evident in Sevigny's positioning as a New York "It Girl" in the press, which not only illuminates the geometries of power that cross-cut the social worlds for which she has been deemed iconic, but also more broadly that which makes indie distinguishable as a differentiated product from that of Hollywood.

Methodology and Approach

This chapter is grounded by two foundational ideas. The first posits that the depiction of place images in media narratives work to construct and render the perception of Sevigny's identity as an "indie star". This is supported not least by Sevigny's long-standing affiliation with certain social and physical environments in Manhattan, where the city's imagery contributes significantly to her symbolic stature within indie film circles. The second notion contends that these place images transcend mere spatial depictions; they also function as signifiers that reflect and influence the power dynamics inherent in indie film culture.

Several stars were considered suitable for this analysis, including "Queen of Indies" (Corliss, 1997) Parker Posey. Sevigny was selected due to a convergence of factors. Of course, Sevigny demonstrates sustained prominence in the indie film sector during this period, which met the needs of the broader project by offering insights into a particular timeframe of indie cultural activity (approximately 1994-2015). However, Sevigny also demonstrates a crossover into Hollywood stardom because of her performance in *Boys Don't Cry*, for which she won an academy award for Best Supporting Actress. This crossover offered potential to compare and contrast notions of indie and Hollywood stardom, and evaluate the degree to which such categorisations might be made. The focus on Sevigny in this project does not, however, preclude the application of this methodology to other stars. The situation of other stars within their own networks of spatial relations—and the means by which such positioning is effected in a broader range of media—will undoubtedly demonstrate further findings that can be compared and contrasted across film cultures.

Articles featuring Sevigny were gathered using Gale Academic Onefile, and the Entertainment Industry Magazine Archive (ProQuest). Results were limited to the period 1994 – 2015 inclusive. The timeframe commenced with

the year prior to the release of Sevigny's first feature film, *Kids* (Larry Clark, 1995). The year gap between 1994 and the release of the film in 1995 was allowed in order to capture texts that sought to promote the film ahead of release. The end of the timeframe was set at 2015 in line with the broader aims of this project, to capture any materials that might support or challenge the periodisation of indie film culture as closing around 2010.

Inclusion in the dataset was premised on the text meeting the criteria of being a US or UK-based Business-to-Consumer (B2C) publication, rather than B2B texts (of the kind analysed in Chapter One); that is, a publication that through contextual research and demonstrable discourse could be proven as one focused primarily on direct to audience product advertising and entertainment news. This is posited in contrast to the B2B texts considered in Chapter One, which are here considered to be a distinct form with their own structuring goals and practices (which will be considered throughout this chapter).

The type of articles chosen to be part of the data pool were feature articles and interviews, the focus of which should be on Sevigny's star persona rather than her filmography. Critical review journalism of films in which Sevigny starred was removed from the data set. The basis for removing these from the data set, in the same way as Chapter One, was due to the additional need to contextualise such media forms within specific industries and practices. The resulting data set was 34 feature articles and interviews from publications such as *Dazed*, *Vogue*, *The New York Times,* and *The New Yorker*.

The dataset was analysed for any mention of place. This included towns, cities, streets, cafes, nightclubs, or any other place image that could be geographically located. Each place mention was mapped on Google Maps (Figure 1), according to the key detailed in the figure below. The result was 55 separate place image locations, although it should be noted that some of these place mentions were repeated across the coverage. Place images that

were repeated were highlighted for further specific attention in the analysis that follows.

Figure 1: Example of place image mapping with accompanying key.

Mentioned =1 (neutral/positive association)	Mentioned =1 (negative association)
Mentioned 1+ (neutral/positive association)	Mentioned 1+ (negative association)
Mentioned 1+ (positive & negative)	
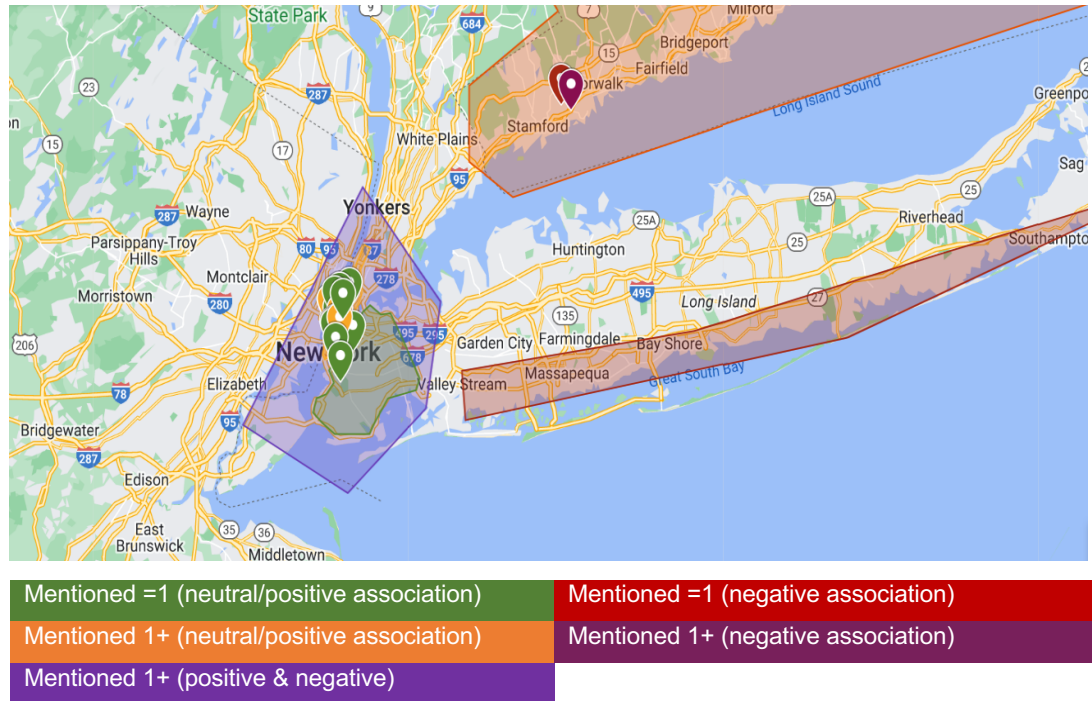
Note. The place image mapping shown here illustrates the number of times certain images were mentioned across the 20 articles in the dataset. By "neutral/positive" associations, it refers to places that were mentioned, or conferred in positive terms. "Negative" associations refer to where Sevigny explicitly will not go, or that are portrayed in a negative light by Sevigny in broader discursive terms.

Following the elucidation of Sevigny's place images and spheres of activity, critical discourse analysis (CDA) was performed on the data set. The analysis looked for patterns in the way that place images were represented and elucidated in discursive terms. It also considered how social activity appeared to be clustered in particular places and alongside certain remits of social and promotional activity. Here, the focus of CDA was to reveal the ways that prominent discourses around places were both reinforced and produced by cultural ideologies (Locke, 2004, p 1), and the role that intertextual mediation with place-based systems presented in discursive

terms. It was, however, also concerned with revealing notions of gendered power dynamics, and the ways that discourses around Sevigny both reflected and consolidated this power through reference to place systems. Findings from CDA were triangulated with broader historical, cultural, and geographic contextualisation, to evaluate the potential resonances offered by the symbolic use of place associations. Theories emerging from gender, film, stardom and media studies disciplines also enhanced the discussion of these findings, to provide a multifaceted view of the study's implications to the development of indie (and film cultures more broadly).

Further to this analysis, the chapter will argue for and demonstrate the mutually productive nature of Sevigny's gendered implacement to the markets, social worlds, and cultural economies of New York City. Section One will discuss the interconnectedness between place, Sevigny's public identity, and NYC's cultural history, by mapping and analysing the place images resulting from a review of press coverage. Section Two will investigate the problematic dynamics of power that result from Sevigny's positioning as an East Village "It Girl" by the press, with emphasis on the ways that gender appears to influence her mobility within, and experience of, both indie and celebrity culture.

Chloë's Scene: Mapping New York Through Place Images

Through the place-mentions in features and interviews, Sevigny cuts a distinct figure through the social and cultural milieu of Lower Manhattan. "New York-based" (Glitz, 2000, p. 37) and "New York-living actress" (Hedegaard, 2003) are but some of the descriptors that work to situate Sevigny broadly within the urban centre, but more specific place mentions tie her resolutely to a range of cafes, nightclubs, fashion houses, and public spaces. As Figure 2 demonstrates, these place images form a distinct clustering of Sevigny's scene in the trendy milieus of the East Village and Greenwich Village, as representing hotspots of 1990s counterculture in New York.

Figure 2: Sevigny's place image clustering in Lower Manhattan, New York City.
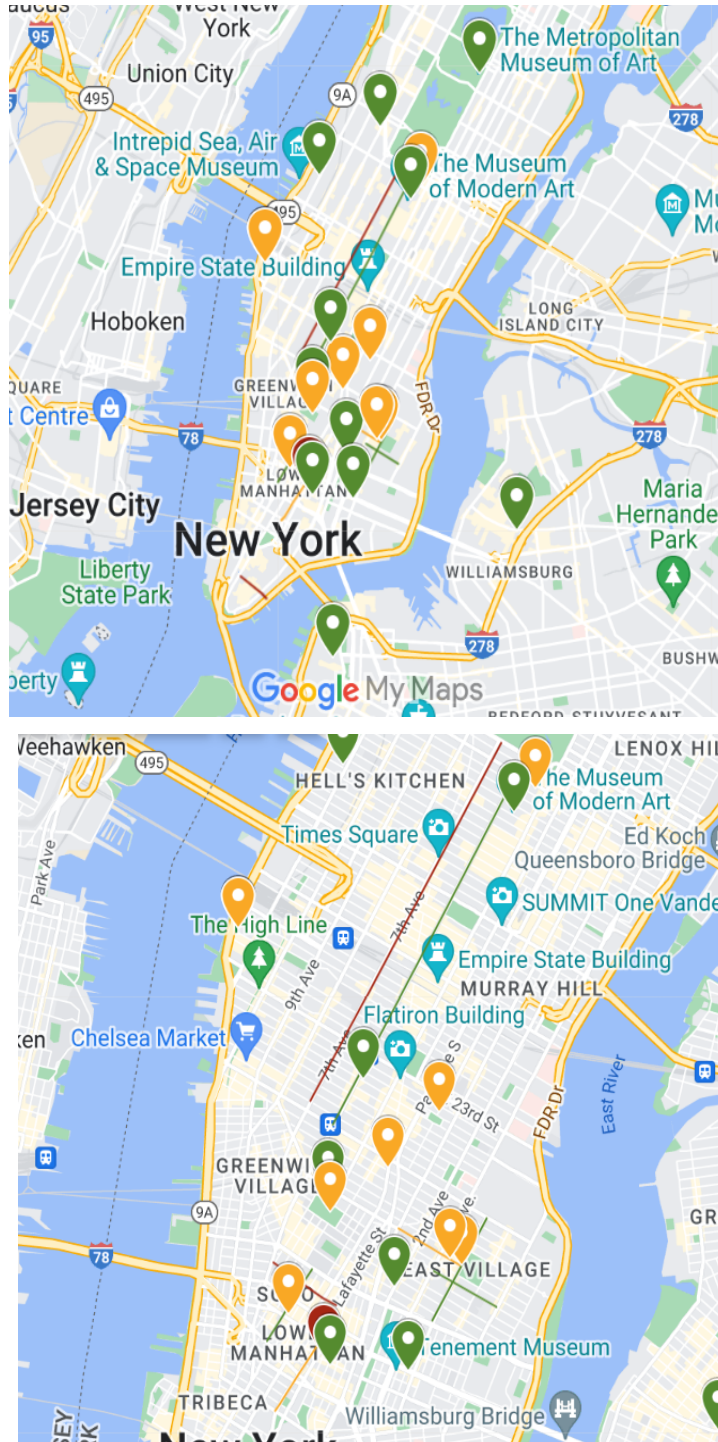
Note. The two maps demonstrate a macro-overview of place image clustering in Lower Manhattan (left), and how these place images present in a zoomed in version of the map.

Importantly, the geographic stage for Sevigny's activity spaces is in no small manner set in an influential article at the outset of her career, that continues to be referred to and resonate in media coverage around the star to this day (Hess, 2022; Handler, 2023; Ng, 2023). Over a seven-page spread in arts and culture magazine *The New Yorker*, "Manhattan Diary: Chloë's Scene" follows then 19-year-old Sevigny through Manhattan (McInerney, 1994). At the time of the article's publication, the author—Jay McInerney—held a social position as a writer of some considerable renown, having gained fame in the 1980s with the novel *Bright Lights, Big City* (McInerney, 1984). The novel portrays the disillusioned and hedonistic lives of young Manhattan professionals, representing the city's underground party scenes through expositions of club culture, drug use, and existential crisis. McInerney's article for *The New Yorker*, therefore, can be seen as something of an intertextual prolongation of his earlier work, consolidating a position as both a commentator and participant in the real-life excesses, glamor, and subcultural aspects of New York denoted in his fiction work. For McInerney, "Chloe *is* what's happening in the street" (original emphasis, 1994, p. 182), and it is through her positioning as flâneuse—a dawdler and observer without particular aim (Elkin, 2016)—that the cultural dynamics of these areas are laid bare. An example of the granularity in which this takes place: Her wanderings are reported to begin at "one of the outdoor tables at Stingy Lulu's, on St. Mark's Place just off Avenue A" (McInerney, 1994, p. 182); continuing to "the blue-tiled bathroom of Tunnel, a night club that has survived the eighties to enjoy a second round of popularity" (McInerney, 1994, p. 184); and ending at the then cutting edge fashion boutique "Charivari on West Fifty-seventh Street" for a "preview of Martin Marcella's new fall line" (McInerney, 1994, p. 192). In "Chloë's Scene", Sevigny is a mediating figure through which a countercultural spectre of the city is illuminated at a particular moment. In turn, the symbolic resonances of these places, throughout the period under analysis here and beyond, continue to contribute to the textures of alterity and bohemianism that flesh out her fame.

Place mentions converging around New York's downtown club cultures situate Sevigny within a nexus of intertextual and cultural meaning. Apart from McInerney's (1994) influential article, Sevigny is posited as an "East Coast club kid" (Stack, 2007), and "accidental ambassador" for 1990s rave culture in New York (Hack, 1996). It is a label that Sevigny does not appear to dissuade, describing herself as a club kid "just on the brink of being dangerous" (Hedegaard, 2003). Place images of specific nightclubs, of course, hold some significance within this scheme. Repeat mentions of the Limelight and Tunnel (McInerney, 1994; Rozzo, 2013) speak not just to the city nightlife in a broad sense, but to specific clubs owned by the "King of Clubs" Peter Gatien (Williams, 2020). The fame and notoriety of Limelight and Tunnel, as countercultural and transgressive spaces, have been enshrined in films and literature since. For example, Gatien was played by Dylan McDermott in the film *Party Monster* (Fenton Bailey & Randy Barbato, 2003), based on the memoir *Disco Bloodbath: A Fabulous but True Tale of Murder in Clubland* (St. James, 1999). Both the book and film focus on Limelight club promoter Michael Alig, who was charged with the manslaughter of Angel Melendez following a drug dispute. Apart from place mentions of Gatien's clubs specifically, Sevigny also demonstrates an enduring alignment with boutique fashion store Liquid Sky, the "raver boutique" on SoHo's Lafayette Street (Rozzo, 2013). Sevigny is described as the store's "most famous former clerk" (Van Meter, 2015; Kennedy, 2000; Romney, 1997; McInerney, 1994). These links between fashion, nightclubs, and (although a degree removed) with figures such as Gatien and McInerney, creates further intertextual links between Sevigny and what might be termed the Lower Manhattan counterculture. Together, this speaks to a nexus of subcultural ideologies and systems of status conferral that temper her fame.

Particularly in the earliest years of her emerging fame (1994-1998), club and music culture is an important part of the foundation (or, source) from which Sevigny's perceived authenticity as an "indie" celebrity derives. As Thornton (1995) points out, dance clubs and raves are spaces where groups with alike

interests congregate; they are taste cultures, and further, "a symbolic axis and working social hub" (p. 3). They are thought to demonstrate structuring contrasts between the taste culture and "mainstream", which are both based on and illustrated through certain values and aesthetics that become socialised within the culture (Thornton, 1995, p. 3). In this way, Thornton (1995) argues that the subcultural ideologies that underpin club cultures "are a means by which youth imagine their own and other social groups, assert their distinctive character and affirm that they are not anonymous members of an undifferentiated mass" (p. 5). However, for such subcultures to achieve differentiation, perceived cultural value must be conferred; being seen to "try hard", or to appropriate subcultural expressions, is precisely against what gives the ideology its value. In "being seen" in these places, these nodes give access to different kinds of gatekeepers (like McInerney) who are responsible for selling and/or evaluating cultural products (Currid, 2007), and indeed for producing stardom. Sevigny's positioning as within these fields therefore defines her as authentically deriving from them, as sanctioned by the press and editors as gatekeepers, but similarly also determines the kinds of coverage that she will receive.

Precisely such dynamics can be seen in reporting around Sevigny, as appearing to be discovered within and emerge somewhat naturally from this milieu. Rozzo (2013) writes of Sevigny's stardom that the "sequence of events created the impression of fame's giant hand reaching down from the sky into Limelight or the Tunnel club and plucking her out. Voila, "It Girl". Whitney (2014) states that "Even before *Kids*… she'd achieved—in some ways originated—a kind of downtown fame as a teen at the height of New York in the early 90s" (p. 272). The impression of this coverage aligns with Rojek's (2001) concept of "attributed celebrity", as a form of stardom in which an individual is presented as "noteworthy or exceptional by cultural intermediaries" (p. 18). At once, this kind of attribution or conferral of status offers a form of valuable attention and promotion for indie film culture, which operate in terms of a consumer categorisation along much of the same lines. In referring to and harnessing the symbolic resonances of place in particular ways, Sevigny comes to be associated with the concept of renown, as

something of a more informal rather than self-driven or deliberately garnered attribution of distinction (Rojek, 2001, p. 12). Press accounts of Sevigny work to situate and position her as within, or having grown from, exactly such a bordered and demarcated territory of subcultural (and, authentic) experience, which she is thought to bring to indie film culture.

The role of place in constituting a symbolic system of value is not only beneficial for stars such as Sevigny, but also for the co-production of valuable place associations. Drawing on symbols of place can be seen as part of a larger system of territorialisation, where different geographical locations become representative of various cultural industries. As Currid (2007) explains in relation to New York City, neighbourhoods can become inextricable with certain forms of creative expression: "Chelsea for art, SoHo for fashion, the lower East Side for music and art, the Bowery for music" (p. 106). These neighbourhoods, according to Currid (2007), offer a necessary infrastructure of material spaces, events, and methods of knowledge dissemination that enable them to act as centres of economic and social exchange (p. 106). Place images, as represented in press coverage, can therefore speak to broader webs of spatial resonance, history and meaning. For Sevigny, this not only presents in relation to her connection with SoHo's club and boutique retail scene, but is also demonstrable in her perceived localisation to the East Village. According to Rozzo (2013), Sevigny is a "local landmark" of the East Village that has "been about as synonymous with this neighborhood as the Astor Place Cube ever since she arrived in June 1993). The East Village is also a long-held site of creativity, arts, fashion and music cultures, with St. Mark's Place offering a similar history of closely tied star implacement. Known for various bohemian and beatnik character such as Jean-Michel Basquiat, Allan Ginsberg, Lou Reed, Andy Warhol, WS Burroughs, Blondie, and The Velvet Underground, the area has been described as more "underground than the underground" (Nerius, 2014). As well as cultural icons, the area is linked to cultural movements such as abstract expressionism, postmodern neo-expressionist art, and of course, indie film culture (Nerius, 2014). Sevigny's perceived place within this milieu, on the one hand, serves to further support the countercultural

ideologies and aesthetics that have become part of her stardom. However, it is worth also considering the ways that Sevigny's star text reflects on such places, to reinforce and reproduce the area as a site of cultural and creative expression. Just as Sevigny's star text is influenced through intertextual references to the iconic figures linked to the area, Sevigny also serves to revive their star texts. A notable point of reference, that will be discussed further below, is Sevigny's enduring comparisons with Edie Sedgwick (and by proxy, Andy Warhol), as iconic East Village figures. Maintaining the symbolism of these place images are significant to situating Sevigny within a particular cultural realm, but also, with imbuing geographic sites with meaning.

The symbolic and cultural value of places, and thus of place images, is not only garnered with reference to where stars are seen. Where they are not seen is also equally significant to the formation of perceived boundaries around places. It is precisely from such sense of opposition that place images serve to reinforce Sevigny's alterity to notions of mass consumerism and the mainstream. There are places within Sevigny's New York mapping that are explicitly viewed in negative terms, or where she will not go. Reportedly, she derives her style from St. Mark's Place and the East Village, but she explicitly does not go to Broadway (McInerney, 1994). Broadway, in some contrast to the East Village, is aligned with notions of "mass culture" due to consumeristic advertising in Times Square, core tourist appeals such as the theatre district, and commercial shopping. The East Village also forms a distinct point of comparison to where Sevigny was raised, in Darien, Connecticut (Figure 3). Darien and its high school are painted as a form of suffocating suburbia (Winters, 2005; Stack, 2007; Yuan, 2012), versus the excitement of New York to which Sevigny escaped on weekends. On the other side of the country, Los Angeles bears the brunt of a particularly negative framing (which will be discussed in more depth in the following paragraphs). Cameron Silver, owner of vintage boutique Decades says of Sevigny, "No one in LA gets it. Her attitude is foreign to this city" (Singer, 2002, p. 232). Hollywood is aligned with a somewhat insubstantial glamour,

with Singer (2002) reporting that "These days, Sevigny's attention has turned to the fickle business of becoming a Hollywood star" (p. 232).

Figure 3: Sevigny's "No-Go" Zones.
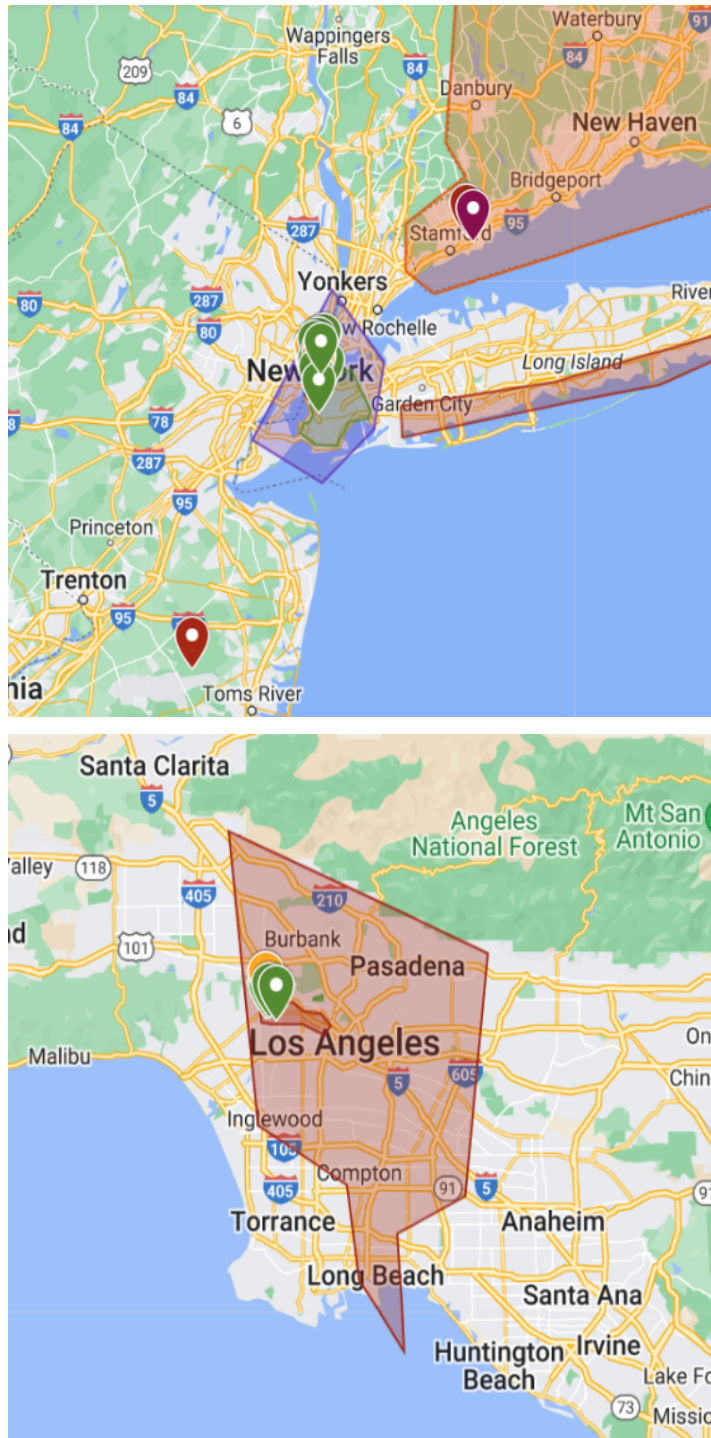
Note. Areas and map points marked in red illustrate the place images that are negatively portrayed in press coverage.

As Adams (2009) explains, territorial boundaries are more than simply the lines where people turn around and do not go. Boundaries instead can be understood as a form of performance, that "calls various forms of difference into being" (Adams, 2009, p. 88). In relation to Sevigny, mapping out these territories through place images can be understood are more than offering symbolic associations with places; they can be seen as part of a broader form of communication, where place meaning and identity is written through opposition (Adams, 2009, p. 87). Localisation of this kind can take on somewhat defensive and reactionary qualities, for instance in threats of gentrification to areas such as the East Village. Within these schemes, homogenisation is seen as a force bound up with global flows of capital, which threaten to suffocate out the unique qualities of local economies (Massey, 1994). Sevigny's implacement within this scheme can be seen as part of a cultural system of meaning, which guards against the dilution of cultural and economic identity of places such as the East Village, and resistance to threats from the supposed "standardisation" of a global world. At the same time, it solidifies these subcultural identities and preserves them as a source of creativity and capital for those who trade on it (or for whom it is conferred).

The performance of Sevigny's stardom is exemplary of the place-ecosystems that work to form notions of "independence" on which indie trades as a film and consumer culture. As Sevigny's stardom demonstrates, the social worlds of high fashion, underground music culture, and independent film overlap and interact with one another, sharing talent, designers, promotional intermediaries (such as publicists and press agents), journalists and other cultural "gatekeepers". All rely on the interconnected social networks, practices, and hierarchies of place that confer status. These interconnected clusters of activity represent what Becker (1982) terms "art worlds", as systems of capital, commerce and creativity that together create cultural products (Becker, 1982). These art worlds, or social worlds, propel indie culture in all its forms, as a result of what Currid (2007) terms the "economic system of cultural production" (p. 4). This is evident in the connection between Sevigny as "indie star" and fashion magazines, as a

relationship that emerges from overlapping place-bound spaces of social practice and consumption. Coverage in *Vogue*, *Harper's Bazaar*, and *The New Yorker* has added symbolic associations with high fashion, which speaks to values such as idiosyncrasy and singularity linked to the dynamics of New York's social worlds. Fashion occurs in a symbolic "geography of taste" and commerce in which some places are positioned as higher than others, and this is rendered through the fashion press (Gilbert, 2000). It makes sense, for instance, for Vogue to focus on her presence in 5th Avenue fashion parties and the Met Ballet Gala Ball (Leon Talley 2000), while Dazed & Confused and Rolling Stone focus on the more "downtown" or 'street style" aspects of her image (Hack 1996; Morse 2015). In both examples, the image of Sevigny's place-bound fashion image works to complement the respective brands of the publications, but at the same time, serves to mediate, and indeed promote certain exclusive geographies of taste. The stratification of the city into various cultural and creative zones, some of which are directly oppositional to others in discursive terms, is necessary for economic and consumer systems and industries. Fashion magazine coverage and publication brands are also, therefore, actively involved in the production of differentiated place images (Gilbert, 2000, p. 8). Sevigny's performing of place, which has relevance to indie film culture more broadly, is therefore also the result of invested and interconnected industries outside of film production. Sevigny's implacement in press accounts can work to illuminate social worlds and the undercurrents of culture and commerce that structure them. This cultural economy, of which promotion and print cultures are also part, is therefore discursively linked to the built environments of NYC where these creative communities share space.

Sevigny's stardom is part of a symbolic system that both represents and reproduces a hierarchy of places and geographical organisation of the market, which lends to the differentiation of cultural products and consumption. Place images and their discursive presentation are productive of the notion that New York City is a "hotbed" of creative independent production. In Chapter One, indie film culture was found to demonstrate a valuable alterity in the distinction between regional areas (such as Utah),

and core urban centres like New York. Along similar lines, stardom plays a discursive and symbolic role in mediating this opposition, here investing in the image of the city as a centre of commerce and culture. Regarding fashion cultures, Gilbert (2000) points out that localisation and a sense of rootedness to a particular place offers "a kind of world certification of innovation and iconoclasm" (p. 13). Cities are imagined as being diverse, unpredictable, and contingent spaces, with some taking on even more prominent roles in the "symbolic ordering of cities" (Gilbert, 2000, p. 18). Here, it is posited that the "symbolic commerce of stardom" (McDonald, 2013) plays a role in establishing such place-based hierarchies on a broader scale.

In the synergistic relationship between Sevigny and the countercultural spaces of New York City, place is illustrated as a somewhat inexhaustible, creative centre where exceptional talent emerges and becomes validated. Florida (2012) argues that creative communities and networks, of exactly the kind that indie can be seen to emerge from, do not thrive for "traditional" reasons such as access to resources; but instead, "A big part of their success stems from the fact that they are places where creative people want to live" (p. 186). Due equally to the industries and infrastructures of creative production, it is a place where creative identities can be seen to have their creativity validated (Florida, 2012, p. 185). Considering the multitude of other star texts and cultural products that exhibit similar sensibilities, the celebrity image may not only serve a function in promoting cultural products, but also promoting certain kinds of creative clusters and embedded networks.

The dynamics of place, geography, and stardom that co-produce creative clusters have significance to the emergence of indie during this period. As Ortner (2013) points out, the spaces and constitutive social worlds of New York City have proven to be an important centre of commerce and culture for indie, as a prime site of the independent film industry in the 1980s and 1990s (p. 101). Even at the time of writing, the exhibition and distribution strategies for many indie films hinge on limited theatrical releases in New York, as a central market that also provides access to review coverage in

high profile publications such as *The New York Times* (King, 2005, p. 16). However, in producer Christine Vachon's recollection, throughout the 1990s "there was no scene. It was the movies themselves that brought people together" (in Ortner 2013: 104). In order for the scene to emerge, a high concentration of like-minded creative individuals within a given space is necessary. Sevigny's stardom, particularly throughout the 1990s, reflects exactly such a centre of geographically embedded cross-collaborative efforts. This is not only evident in the countercultural textures of her stardom, intersecting as it does with film, fashion, music and club cultures, but also in the films that publicity and press coverage aims to promote. Independent production and distribution benefitted from the emerging concentration of indie art worlds. Many of the independent distributors and producers that helped to create the infrastructure for indie films from the mid-1980s began in New York, most notably independent distributor Good Machine. Founders James Schamus and Ted Hope point out that "part of Hope's inspiration came from crossing paths with independent filmmakers all over New York City […] [its] compact geography (as well as many other aspects of New York) played a significant role in making it the epicentre of the indie movement in the 1980s and 1990s" (Ortner, 2013, p. 103). Sevigny's stardom is undoubtedly representative of these emerging systems of place and art worlds throughout the 1990s and continues to play a role in rendering certain parts of its geography with valuable notions of alterity, creativity and distinction.

Geometries of Power and the It Girl

The analysis of space and place can pose a risk of abstraction, particularly regarding the dynamics of power that ultimately render it and shape its contours. However, as Massey (2004) argues, different social groups and identities are "placed in very distinct ways" to the flows and interconnections of power in space, which determine experiences—along with physical, socio-cultural and economic mobility—within it (p. 149). The way that spaces are cross-cut by power relations have been termed "power-geometries" (Massey, 1994, p. 148), in order to describe the ways that different groups have more

or less control over the construction and mediation of space and place (Massey, 1994, p. 149). The notion of power-geometries is particularly pertinent to press coverage of Sevigny, given that place mentions are almost always discursively accompanied with reference to the label of "It Girl" (McInerney, 1994; Morris, 2000; Hedegaard, 2003; Terrero, 2015), or other descriptors such as "indie-muse" (Nussbaum, 2003), the "face of indie chic" (Singer, 2002, p. 230), and even "the coolest girl in the world" (McInerney, 1994; Morse, 2015). It could be read, particularly given the place-based fixity of the "It Girl", that Sevigny herself comes to form an image of place, or at the very least a "localised aesthetic image" that limits sense of identity to a particular place (Massey 1994: 46). Place images are inextricably tied to Sevigny's gendered experience of space, and as a result, she is positioned in a series of problematic ways in relation to indie film culture.

First, it is necessary to explain the lineage and symbolism of the phrase "It Girl", and the interrelated concept of the "muse". The notion of having "It" alludes to an imagined and exemplary femininity—an "innate chemistry, as Roach (2004) describes (p. 555)—that exhibits extraordinary charisma, style, magnetism, and presence. The term "It Girl" can be traced back to novelist Elinor Glyn, and a short story published in *Cosmopolitan* magazine in 1927. The label gained significant traction following the silent film *It* (Clarence G. Badger, 1927), in which movie star Clara Bow played the title "It Girl" role. In the mid-1960s, Edie Sedgwick was also famously deemed to be an "It Girl" who, according to Sexton (2013), was "more famous for being famous than for being an actress, and who was also noted for her unusual sense of style" (p. 75). Since then, "It Girl" has tended to be applied to women who are considered "abnormally interesting", and hinges on narratives of lucky breaks or calamities that enabled their unique presence to emerge (Roach, 2004, p. 555). Of course, certain elements of Sevigny's star text resonate with the concept, given not only her lucky breaks into the industry but also the conferral of status and authenticity in various cultural realms. Glyn, who famously bestowed Bow with "It" in the 1920s—allegedly, at the bidding of Paramount studios—emphasised the perceived unselfconsciousness of the term and thereby the indifference a woman must

have on her effect on others (Roach, 2004, p. 558). It is aligned, conceptually, with notions of a uniquely feminine form of authenticity through which an extraordinary, genuine identity is recognised by others. The idea that some chosen women hold almost extra reserves of uniqueness, charisma, and effervescence neatly aligns with the concept of the muse, which is equally resonant in Sevigny's press coverage. The metaphor of the muse, drawn originally from Greek mythology, holds that certain women act as forces of creativity and inspiration for artists (Halling, 2014, p. 2). It is a term that has come, in modern times, to be particularly applicable to relationships between fashion designers and certain clients, high profile individuals (such as celebrities), or creative collaborators (Mancoff, 2014, p. 12). In the configurations of spatial mapping exhibited by Sevigny's press coverage, and the subsequent conferral of notions of authenticity and nonconformity, the dual statuses of "It Girl" (first applied by McInerney in 1994) and fashion muse are ones that easily adhered, and continue to discursively resonate throughout her stardom.

Place images function to affirm and reproduce both the It Girl and muse labels, by positioning Sevigny within particular flows of exchange and commodity. Just as Sevigny's place-bound star text works to elucidate cultural scenes and social worlds, it also speaks to what Jackson (1999) terms "commodity cultures" and "the traffic in things" that form a mutually productive relationship with places. In these instances, the relations between identity and the consumption of certain goods—whether Elbaz, Michael Kors, or thrift stores in Brooklyn (Morris, 2000; Leon Talley, 2000)—adds symbolic resonance to the place images that shape Sevigny's stardom. In McInerney's (1994) article, emphasis is placed on Sevigny's style as made up of thrift store shopping and chosen elements of high fashion, with her patterns of consumption being more akin to the curation of art than to consumerism. The search, or "hunt", through the thrift stores of Lower Manhattan is seen to set Sevigny apart. She is aligned less with unthinking consumption and disposable fashion, and more with a process of deliberately finding treasures; which is, perhaps, representative of the same kind of distinction where "clothes" become "pieces". Sevigny is presented, as

Sexton (2013) describes, as the "author of her own image" (p. 74); a woman who has won, through conferral of the It Girl status, a competitive contest of self-presentation.

While on the one hand appearing to be self-made is demonstrative of an exemplary femininity, on the other hand the It Girl label signals to a series of problematic assertions about female authenticity, and the ways in which female agency is thought to be genuinely expressed. The construction of Sevigny's stardom can be understood within a broader framework of postfeminist culture, where the spectre of femininity was charged with empowerment through commodification. According to Tasker and Negra (2007), postfeminist culture naturalises aspects of feminism in the suggestion that women are free to design the life they want, including through the purchase of consumer goods (p. 2). Tasker and Negra (2007) relate postfeminist culture to the "bubble culture" of the decade following the year 2000, which celebrated the female consumer as "an icon of excess as much as admiration" (p. 6). However, as McRobbie (2008) points out, the idea of being "self-made" through fashion places considerable emphasis on commodity culture. This is thought by McRobbie (2008) to create an "insatiable and quite unreflexive world of consumption" in the presentation of showing a "vast range of diverse consumption practices, from luxury top range items, to the seeking out of second-hand dresses and vintage clothes" (p. 541). The label can be read as being extremely conservative, and based primarily around the relationship between women to consumer culture. This rendering of commodity culture, and with the presentation of self through consumer goods, resonates with the implacement of Sevigny within geographic networks of production and consumption.

In this way, Sevigny's star text shares similar discourses surrounding director Sofia Coppola, particularly in terms of a "cool postfeminism" (Lewis, 2011). Lewis (2011) argues that Coppola is presented as being self-made through commodities and other reported capitalist ventures (such as fashion and shopping). Sevigny, as I have illustrated, shares much of these same traits, particularly in the arena of fashion. However, postfeminism is understood

here as a sensibility that makes use of such tropes but is 'context-specific', presenting and manifesting in a multitude of ways from the hybridisations of 'mainstream media, consumer cultures, neoliberal politics, postmodern theory and, significantly, feminism' (Genz & Brabon, 2009, p. 5). In illustrating the "commodity of things"—as subcultural as they may appear to be, in Sevigny's stardom—place images can also work to situate Sevigny (and the It Girl label) within broader gendered frameworks that reinforce the apparently "self-made" nature of the free woman.

The notion of feminism being something that is perhaps unnecessary and "post" is inherently challenged in the application of the It Girl label in the first instance. The label is one that has proven difficult for Sevigny to shift, with her resistance to it being somehow proof that she has "It". Her opposition to the label, as well as to the application of "cool", is well-noted. As Ginsberg (2000) writes,

> People would kill—or at least hire a publicist—to try to achieve the
> coolness factor Chloe Sevigny has accrued in her young life. Yet, from
> the way Sevigny rolls her eyes when the "C" word comes up, you'd think
> she'd kill to get rid of it.

With regard to McInerney's (1994) profile for *The New Yorker*, Sevigny states: "He was attempting to capture some kind of youth scene, and he just didn't get it, and he was tailing me around, and it all felt a little creepy" (in Hedegaard, 2003). Despite these (and other) explicit attempts to redress the term and signal her discomfort, the rejection of the term appears to feed the very notion of "It" as being unselfconscious and "indifferent to the effect on others" (Glyn in Roach, 2004, p. 558). The label, as it manifests here, can be seen to have a burdensome quality that is ultimately based on the policing of look, personality, and of social behaviour.

The label can be particularly problematic for the star in its potential to be revoked. To have lost "It" is to have lost an authentic capital that marks some women apart from others. One either has "It", or one doesn't, but one can

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also lose it through particular behaviours, activities and practices. Once conferred, "It Girl" becomes part of a brand that relies on a sense of extraordinariness to be continued and maintained; it speaks to the very definition of a brand in the first instance, as "a promise of reliability, quality, continuity and consistency" (Holmes, 2013, p. 178). Of course, one argument in relation to this is that all stars are, or at least in some way manage, their own personal brands. The difference, for the "It Girl", is in the ability of the brand to provide multiple avenues of identity and appeal. In relation to Clara Bow, for instance, the It Girl label placed a disproportionate focus—policing, even—on her look, social activities, perceived behaviours, and sexuality (Sharot, 2010). Sevigny also demonstrates similar pigeonholing at the outset of her career:

> I was picked as a spokesperson for "Kids" and people were asking me for
> comments about teen sex and I felt all this responsibility. They asked
> about my family and my private life, but I had no publicist at the time and
> no one to guide me. I wish I had lied more (in Kennedy, 2000, p. MT26).

Of course, this evidently uncomfortable probing into a then 17-year-old's sex life can be situated with the problematic policing of female sexuality more broadly, and not just in relation to Sevigny's "It Girl" labelling. However, this example forms part of a broader series of discourses around Sevigny that seem to counter notions of the star being the "author of her own image", despite how this may be configured through her reported shopping and dressing habits. Sevigny states, "It's always this 90's indie girl thing. I can't crawl out of that, at least in Hollywood's perception of me" (in Rozzo, 2013, p. 176). The fuller implications of the "It Girl" label to Sevigny's mobility across a spectrum of film culture will be examined shortly. For now, the implacement of Sevigny through both commodity and subcultural associations forms a challenge to postfeminist culture more broadly, which places primacy on perhaps superficial commodity elements as being a determinable source of perceived authenticity and female agency.

"It Girls" and "muses" form somewhat rare, exalted figures in contemporary culture, which make them particularly valuable in terms of promoting consumer goods. For publications—particularly those at the intersection of product advertising in relation to films, literature, and fashion—the labels hold a certain equity that can be tapped into for various promotional and branding purposes. Musician and long-time collaborator, Kim Gordon explains that Sevigny exists at the nexus of fashion, music and film subcultures, and as a result has historically been victim to a "trickling up" effect where niche countercultural forms become the source of NYC high fashion's next trend (in Sevigny, 2015). Thornton (1995) elucidates similar dynamics in club cultures as being constantly underneath a more dominant force, which appropriates certain aspects of the subculture (p. 5). This positionality, at the bottom of a food chain waiting to be consumed, also mirrors something of the status of the It Girl/indie muse as a source of creative expression. However, it is also a source of perceived value, particularly for indie film. Independent filmmakers and critics, for instance, attest to indie's oppositional nature through the notion that it exists in a state of crisis, permanently "on the edge" of being eclipsed by more dominant cultural forms (King, 2013, p. 43-44). In this case, a sensibility of nonconformity, alterity, and countercultural rebellion acts as a source of distinction from notions of the mainstream. The It Girl tells us what is "cool", what is "style", and conversely what is not authentic and is "trying too hard". In this, the It Girl becomes entirely Other - an image to be taken up and used, to be put into particular situations, and policed heavily for infractions of style and authenticity. It is exactly the kind of Othering that occurs in relation to place, indie, and other cultural movements more broadly, that places borders and territories to reserve authentic capital. The positioning of Sevigny as iconic of these scenes that are constantly under threat of co-optation, privileges creativity and preserves a sense of its supposed rarity, while at the same time neutralising it for promotion and consumption in the figure of the 'It Girl'. Ultimately however, for Sevigny, her star text is representative of a source of creativity that exists to be siphoned off by someone (or something) else until this energy has been perceived to have been spent, and the market moves on.

Both the It Girl and muse labels, while appearing to offer a flattering status on certain women, are premised on illuminating a fantasy of individualism that is ultimately based on the formation of consumption habits. The benefactors of such value-creation processes may not necessarily be the celebrity at its nexus, but instead other stake holders—for instance, magazines, fashion houses, retailers, or cultural figures—through which this status is conferred and fleshed out. Sexton (2013) argues that Sevigny's stardom emerged at a time when the "cool" label had become commercialised, as a marker of exclusivity and distinction within a broader consumer landscape (p. 77). However, as Heat and Potter (2004) explain in *The Rebel Sell*, the perceived resistance of 'high' culture to 'low' culture is a booming business that is crucial to organising the market into exactly such distinctions. Rather, the market (and industries that converge with it) hinges on such distinctions in order to prompt buying and differentiate products. Such dynamics enable fashion designers and publications to tap into personality branding—for instance, by positing Sevigny as the "face of indie chic" (Singer, 2002, p. 230)—which weaves a series of ideological, personal, and symbolic qualities into brands' equities and identities (Barron, 2019, p. 765). Yet, both "It Girl" and "cool" depend on notions of rarity and elitism and cannot be liberally applied, lest the individual, product or organisation be accused of "trying too hard" (Sexton, 2013, p. 77). Policing and gatekeeping therefore become necessary, particularly in light of maintaining the value of these rare and novel brand associations. Of course, such gatekeeping activities also preserve the positions of the cultural gatekeepers whose role it is to pinpoint and sanction such talent. More broadly, acts of gatekeeping can be viewed as attempts to both generate and preserve valuable symbolic resonances that can be harnessed in the promotion of cultural products. At the core of this labelling are mutually beneficial value systems for products, but the question (and perhaps one that only Sevigny could most fully answer) is whether this value has been adequately reflected in her own career and pursuits, or it is one that has been constraining.

From an observational standpoint, there are several ways in which the "It Girl" label can be seen as a limiting factor on Sevigny's mobility throughout both the industry and in discursive terms. Her localisation in New York, and in particular relation to its subcultural and countercultural histories, can be seen to obstruct the kind of "dispersed fame" that sees stars spatially dispersed across local, regional, and global markets (McDonald, 2013). Such feelings are echoed by Sevigny when she states that she has been tied to the "90s indie girl thing" (Rozzo, 2013, p. 176). However, it is also reflected in her brief crossover to Hollywood stardom in 1999, with her Oscar nomination for *Boys Don't Cry.* Sevigny states, "I don't think the Oscar [nomination] did one thing for me" (in Hedegaard, 2003). Elsewhere, she states, "I still see myself as on the fringe. Whenever I go to a Hollywood party, I feel like it's some sort of a secret club I haven't been invited to yet" (in Winters, 2005). Sevigny's positioning as an industry "outsider", however potentially limiting to Hollywood crossover, also forms a source of value for indie film culture and its aligned (and mutually productive) industries. There are stakes involved in the repositioning of Sevigny's public image, which perhaps comes to explain why—despite the talent to which the "It Girl" label professes—she has been enduringly aligned with nonconformity, alterity, and unconventionality. Sevigny's star image can, therefore, offer insights into the ways that celebrity is tied up with conceptualisations of indie authenticity (or, what it means to be authentically indie), particularly as it pertains to women. Although the boundaries of places may be permanently contested and subject to change, the geographies of rejection formed by Sevigny's implacement—where one place and its social worlds are defined in relation to, or opposite to, another place and its milieu—work to preserve a sense of the "authentic" and "real" experiences of urban life that structure and derive value from the territories of youth subcultures, club cultures, and the worlds of fashion, film, art and music. In comparison to often unexamined notions of standardisation, the "It Girl" label is seen to draw from this milieu, professing an individuality and exceptionalism of a particular cultural moment even as it is, at the same time, linked to power geometries that speak to much broader processes of conformity.

Conclusion

Place images can offer a means of rendering meaning and symbolism to celebrity. However, more than this, they can also serve to utilise the resonances and social worlds of place to organise brands and products within consumer markets. These dynamics are not only relevant to the curation of celebrity brands, or publicity and practices of image-management. The symbolism of place images are also a means through which various industries generate, confer, or maintain value, however this might manifest in cultural and financial terms. While almost deceptively naturalised as part of media coverage and promotional activities, the analysis of place offers a means by which structuring systems of commerce, communication and culture are laid bare. The dynamics of place images examined in this chapter, therefore, are indicative of the ways that stars—along with the publications that promote them, and the industries with which they converge—can form part of a broader nexus of geographical meaning. This nexus is not only economic, but also cultural and social. It is through the interplay of these different forces that place images are able to generate and sustain value. The concluding remarks that follow will summarise how the findings of this case study substantiate the central themes guiding this case study. The first section, "Place Images and Stardom", elucidates the way that the depiction of place images in media narratives contributes significantly to shaping and defining Sevigny's identity as an indie star. The second section, "Place Images and Power", explains the ways that place-images are shown to transcend their spatial representations, functioning instead as symbolic markers of the power dynamics that frame perceptions of indie stardom.

Place Images and Stardom

The above analysis supports the idea that place images construct Sevigny's stardom as a distinctly "indie" form. Over a period of 21 years, place images drawn from Sevigny's US and UK media coverage demonstrate a level of geographic clustering that is both significant and surprising. The place

images examined here form a largely coherent spectre of social activity, converging in Lower Manhattan's edgy, hip, and countercultural neighbourhoods around the East Village. Sevigny's stardom in no small manner appears to be influenced and reinforced by this sense of localisation, as it is recognised through the twin apparatuses of press and publicity. Appearing to emerge from New York's downtown club cultures in the early 1990s, Sevigny is framed as an "accidental" star that gained renown almost despite her best efforts to avoid it. Yet, recurring mentions of specific "underground" hotspots and sites of rave culture situated her stardom at a productive nexus of intertextual and cultural meaning. These place-associations imbue her with an aura of authenticity given that her renown is not seen to be the product of her own self-promotion, but rather is bestowed upon her by the media and other cultural intermediaries. Sevigny's portrayal as having emerged from the nexus of New York City's music, club and fashion subcultures serves to credential and construct her brand identity as distinctly alternative, and strongly aligned with notions of independence.

However, the findings of this chapter also suggest that this is not a one-way relationship between the press and the bestowal of "authenticity" onto Sevigny's star text. Sevigny's stardom and the image-management of it (as it appears in press coverage) suggests something of a reinforcing loop between various brand identities, celebrity, and geography. In "being seen" at particular places and events, Sevigny's stardom is offered a sense of localisation that, over time, becomes an inextricable part of her brand identity. To some extent (that will be considered further momentarily), this can be seen to offer a considerable source of value, particularly in terms of the alterity that situates her firmly within the arena of indie film culture. Yet, in seeing Sevigny at these sites, similar dynamics of place association are also conferred on the beholder, whether that might be in terms of status, prestige, hipness, or otherwise. In this system of mutual implacement, spectres of place identity also emerge and are reinforced, and serve to even more deeply embed their particular cultural and symbolic values.

Implacement, then, is not only significant to the development of discursive systems of alterity, but is also tied to the development of material place systems that construct and constitute highly competitive, yet interlinked, markets and discourses. Sevigny's stardom is a microcosm of the relationships between celebrity and place. Her star text is not only shaped by, but contributes to the construction of the East Village in the popular imaginary. Sevigny's public image is inextricably linked to the neighbourhood's bohemian heritage and its association with iconic cultural figures such as Andy Warhol and Edie Sedgwick. By drawing on these intertextual references, Sevigny is positioned as being located within a cultural lineage that speaks to alterity and originality. Yet, her presence in relation to the neighbourhood—and just as much by where she will not go in New York City—helps to maintain its allure as a place where alternative cultural expressions are celebrated. In this way, Sevigny's stardom contributes to the territorialization of the East Village as a periphery region within New York, which is at threat of being subsumed by broader forces of globalisation. In this rubric, place appears to take on added significance as a symbolic system, reflecting a 'doubling down' and indeed, almost reactionary locality. Sevigny is in her own way representative of the need for constant evolution of consumer style to maintain this system; but, broadly, suggests the integration of consumption into all aspects of daily life, so that a particular cafe, or district, speaks not only to geographical place but also to a system of discourses that can be harnessed to promote the star and their cultural products.

Place Images and Power

The case study further supports the notion that place images, as they appear in media narratives, can reflect and reproduce broader systems of structural inequality. The spatial mapping of Sevigny's stardom in the media reveals the complex power-geometries that mediate her mobility across the spaces of indie film culture. The dual labels of "It Girl and fashion "muse", first applied in the early 1990s (and that endure at the time of writing)

construct and reproduce postfeminist gendered stereotypes. Drawing on the "accidental" quality of her fame, the labels rapidly adhered to Sevigny's public image have thus far proven impossible to shift, despite her efforts. Sevigny's emergent fame from within underground fashion and club cultures defines her as authentically deriving from them, as sanctioned by the press and editors as gatekeepers; yet this also serves to determine the themes and scope of the coverage that she will receive. Place images—particularly in relation to fashion industries and shopping habits—function to affirm and reproduce both the It Girl and muse labels, by positioning Sevigny within flows of exchange and commodity.

The labels at once speak postfeminist notions of the allegedly "self-made" nature of women, as it is expressed through the consumption of fashion and beauty products. To be the author of one's own image, or so Sevigny's press coverage suggests, is to engage with commodity culture. However, in explicit attempts to attempt to author her own image more literally—for instance, in rebutting the label of It Girl, or expressing her discomfort with various media practices—the labels appear to be even further reinforced. It appears that being self-made, for Sevigny, does not extend to the management of her own star text. These dynamics of categorising and labelling Sevigny function on the basis of policing look, personality, and social behaviour. Any value that may be derived from a sense of authenticity could, within the It Girl framework, ultimately be revoked due to perceived "infractions". Further, in Sevigny's case, the "It Girl" and "indie chic" labels have reportedly restricted her mobility within the film industry, in attempts to cross over into more mainstream production. Additionally, the label has limited the ways in which Sevigny is discussed and represented in the media. The enduring implacement of Sevigny therefore poses several challenges to postfeminist culture, which places primacy on commodity culture and consumption as being a determinable and evidentiary source of female agency.

It is worth considering the ways that Sevigny's stardom speaks to the problematic ways that alterity and authenticity are configured for women,

both in indie culture and in broader terms. "It Girls" and "muses", by definition, are rare figures that are thought to demonstrate qualities over and above other women. The sense of authenticity that Sevigny's star text derives from these labels, and various co-productive relationships with place, holds the potential to differentiate cultural products. This makes stars like Sevigny particularly valuable in promotional terms, especially for industries that trade on distinction from notions of mass standardised culture. While implacement and fixity may offer both cultural and financial value in some instances, it also leads to concerns around the ways that indie stardom, for women, may work to reproduce gendered stereotypes and unequal power relations. Sevigny's implaced stardom demonstrates that even within supposedly subversive and creative spaces, conformity and standardisation may still prevail.

Summary: New York City and Place Identity

To conclude, the various forms of implacement, localisation and fixity demonstrated in press coverage of Sevigny has broader implications for the understanding of indie film culture. First, the performance of Sevigny's stardom is exemplary of the place-ecosystems that work to form notions of "independence" on which indie trades as a film and consumer culture. These findings, not least in their acknowledgement of the structuring nature of the New York, Los Angeles and Utah divides, echoes the findings of Chapter One that demonstrated the saliency of place and geography to indie. Just as the distinction between periphery regions and urban centres generated a sense of alterity and promise for the early years of the Sundance Film Festival, similar dynamics serve to pit Sevigny's implaced stardom against notions of a homogenising, consuming Other. This serves to highlight a common series of discourses that are both reflected and reinforced by media coverage, which exist at the intersection of publicity management and journalism. Together, these common discourses open the potential to further consider how geographic spaces and place attachments come to organise the market for indie films.

Second, Sevigny's implacement points to a series of dynamics between place, stardom and geography, which appear critical to maintaining notions of authenticity and creativity in relation to New York City's lived, social, and economic territories. Although not directly causal, there is some suggestion that the vibrancy of place represented in Sevigny's place image correlates to enduring notions of the city as being a creative hub. This can be seen to form something of a mutually reinforcing loop, and one that was necessary for certain art worlds and scenes to cohere geographically in productive ways. However, this also serves to broaden the conceptualisation of the industries that work to shape and render indie. Sevigny's implacement as an "indie star" traverses promotion and print cultures, along with retailers and fashion houses, which generally fall outside the remit of film cultural analysis.

Last, this analysis serves to highlight an underrepresented aspect of cultural analysis in relation to indie film, as one stratified and intersected along gendered lines. These findings challenge the simplistic notion that indie film culture is a space of female empowerment and authenticity. Instead, they show how even within this space, women can be objectified, limited, and constrained by gendered stereotypes. The dynamics of Sevigny's star text suggest that indie might not offer its promised sense of individual freedom, in the same way that celebrity more broadly is not democratic. It is generated through the demarcated borders of social worlds, that are always 'some-where', and that depend for their very function on dynamics of inclusion and rejection. Even as indie film culture appears to profess to embrace difference, creativity and originality, Sevigny's emplaced stardom is demonstrative that the activities that surround, converge, engage, and create within it may not, in practice, bear out such values.

Chapter 4: The Festival Experience: Learning About Film Culture Through Visual Marketing and Merchandising

Introduction

This chapter is focused on the examination of "out-of-home" (OOH) advertising and merchandising at Sundance Film Festival, and the ways that these forms interrelate to produce ind ie as a geo-located cultural environment. Based on fieldwork conducted at Sundance in January 2019, the chapter is concerned with elucidating the role that advertising and retail play in dressing Park City for the festival, and further, act as sources of cultural learning about the nexus of brands that form indie. The origin of this perspective draws on a felt distinction between how the festival appears as something of a neatly contained branded entity from the outside, versus what it feels like to become immersed in its discursive, material, and social spaces. To be an attendee at the festival is to overtly search for a variety of intersecting brands that signal to indie film culture taking place, which usually manifest in the form of OOH advertising on lamp posts, buildings, posters, street banners, and window wraps. In this process, the visual identity for the festival formed more than simply a means of navigation. Instead, it spoke to a range of meanings about the spaces of the festival, its governing brands and discourses, and its perceived cultural and physical borders. In the perusal of advertising, aligned retail spaces and merchandising, there appeared to be a process of learning and evaluating involved in brand engagement, in terms of fleshing out the meanings, lineage, and perceived values of featured brands and their products. In the festival environment, brands converged to form synergies and collaborations in the provision of experiential events, which served to further compound the need to re(orient) oneself to a range of symbolic meanings and hierarchies of distinction. This chapter will consider the ways that OOH materials and merchandising may serve as learning resources that flesh out what indie film culture is (and where it is), at particular times. In an exploratory approach situated at the nexus of advertising, social learning theory and indie film

research, it will also consider the way that experiential marketing and merchandising play a role in learning about the spaces of indie film culture, and one's own place within it.

It is necessary to offer insight into the interrelated nature of Sundance Film Festivals and the geographic sites where it is located, in order to fully explain the significance of OOH advertising and retail. In Chapter One, this project analysed the relationship between Sundance Film Festival from its inception in 1978 (as the Utah/US Film Festival) and its regional location, demonstrating how its geography served as a basis for the reinforcement of valuable core-periphery distinctions for indie film culture. Following on from this, Sundance Film Festival in 2019 can be seen to continue many of the same structuring discourses and themes, forming a co-productive relationship with leisure, tourism, and retail industries in and around Park City. To offer a sense of scale, in 2019 the festival event drew at least 122,000 people to the city over the course of a ten-day event (Monson et al., 2019). In stark contrast to Chapter One, the festival is no longer an "emerging" event in an initial growth phase. In 2019 the relationship between Sundance, Park City, and its surrounding sites such as the Sundance Resort and Salt Lake City, together reflect Harbord's (2002) conceptualisation of film festival events as "implicated in the structure, design and use of cities" as "part of the fabric of city life and its annual calendar" (p. 61). From a tourism and leisure perspective, festivals form part of what Urry (1995) terms the "spectacularization of place", which stages, presents, and dresses places to cater to tourist expectations, in the hope of attracting the "tourist gaze" (p. 139). The styling of Park City forms part of its annual re-territorialization as both event and spectacle, and plays a key role in rendering the overall consumption package of the festival. The significance of the event as a tourist attraction, leisure site, as well as to the fortunes of indie film culture, thus poses a unique challenge for promotional industries and professions—such as creative and graphic designers, product designers, visual merchandisers, and experiential marketers—to create a sense of coherence amongst various Sundance brands, and those that converge with it.

When referring to the "Sundance Film Festival" brand, it refers to far more than simply the Sundance Institute logo. Every year the festival takes on a new overarching theme that guides the design of a core set of visual assets, which all relate visually in varying degrees to each other. These assets range from banners, ticket stubs, programs, the lamp posts down Park City's main street, through to vinyl wraps, billboards, and a range of audiovisual media that is shown prior to film screenings. The visual identity of the festival is also made into a wide range of souvenir merchandise, from key chains through to keep cups, note pads, and make-up bags. Visual design for the festival is resolutely evidence-based. As Sundance creative director Luis Farfán points out, design is based on marketing data, which analyse target audiences and develop strategic campaigns (in Bourton, 2019). The creative team of graphic designers, copywriters, and various content specialists (with experience across print, video, digital and social media) then develop what Farfán describes as a "little universe" of texts, which "provide an enjoyably seamless and unified experience across all channels" (in Bourton, 2019). The aim of visual marketing at Sundance, according to Farfán, is to "provide the best possible experience to the tens of thousands of festival-goers and film fans on site… [and] also to those that can't make the actual event" (Bourton, 2019). The visual identity of the festival is therefore not only critical to its appeal as a tourist location, but also serves a complex array of stakeholder needs in the production of a style that will resonate across panel events, pop-ups, theatrical screenings, premieres, parties, and of course serve general navigational requirements. In other words, the visual marketing process can be described as a relatively explicit and purposeful act of mediation across multiple modalities, with perceived unification and coherence of brand identity forming a key principle of design.

While the visual design of the festival is overseen by a large creative team, the implementation and placement of materials on the ground lies within the remit of "experiential marketing". Broadly, experiential marketing encompasses a range of strategies that focus on curating and enhancing the emotional and sensorial experiences of brands (Tafesse, 2016). In practice,

this may include the design and event management of pop-up retail, product activations, and street shows (Tafesse, 2016). This form of marketing is most often related to experiential purchases, which are events (or series of events) that are positioned to consumers as the acquisition of "life experiences" (Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003, p. 1193). Experiential marketing is closely aligned with curating brand experiences by framing the consumer scene to enthral and persuade (Hackley, 2013, p. 3). According to Brakus et al. (2009), brand experience relates to both "internal consumer responses (sensations, feelings, and cognitions)" and "behavioural responses evoked by brand related stimuli" such as marketing ephemera and material environment (p. 52). While the notion of brand experience may offer the impression of speaking to a singular, controlled identity, it is important to note that the festival is a convergence of multiple brands and sponsored events. Experiential marketing, as it occurs within the buildings of Park City, can take on very different manifestations. Pop-up events, retail, parties, screenings, discussion panels and other festival zones can act as individual units of experience, which can be connected by consumers in particular ways depending on their motivation, purpose, and context of attendance. Under a governing festival brand, OOH advertising becomes even more significant by offering a central conceptual backbone to what might be otherwise seemingly disconnected phenomena.

Learning theory offers a series of organising frameworks for experiential marketers, although these accounts tend to demonstrate a fairly narrow conceptualisation of what learning entails. According to Tafesse (2016), experiential marketing is most successful when it incorporates four key factors: multisensory elements (perceptual experience), bodily performance (embodied experience), social interaction (social experience), and discovery/learning (epistemic experience). Epistemic experience is generally configured as events that allow for the firsthand discovery of information; for instance, test-driving a car, versus being told about a car's features. In relation to experiential marketing, notions of epistemic discovery and learning are foregrounded in the design of events where learning is made explicit, as part of a broader immersive strategy. Education is considered in

relation to museums, where consumers can learn about the history of brands, and in hobby environments where structured activities—such as arts and crafts—may be appropriate to prompt further purchases (Chaney et al., 2016, p. 5886). However, in activities ranging from the visual design of brand identity, through to the interior design of physical events, learning can be considered to manifest in several forms. Promotional texts, as Davis (2013) points out, by their very nature provide communicative links between message producers and audience consumers, which "link the linguistic to the social and the symbolic to the material" (Davis, 2013, p. 48). Promotion therefore also works to both render and constitute discursive models, which may elucidate various aspects of culture including social hierarchies and expectations, along with the symbolic resonances of products and brands.

By examining promotion through the lens of learning, there is further opportunity to broaden the understanding of *how* internal structures of knowledge and discourse (necessary for the social production of culture) come to be. Harbord (2002) posits that by acting as a nexus for film circulation through distribution, exhibition, competition and marketing, festivals have a crucial discursive function as sites "where the value of film is produced and are yet elusive to trace" (p. 2). The experience of the festival is also thought to be mediated by further structuring discourses emerging from promotion of the tourism and service industries, which serve an intertextual function between the festival event and its geographic site (Harbord, 2002, p. 60). Similarly, Newman (2011) argues that film festivals and spaces of exhibition, such as art house theatres, "generate and benefit" from rhetorics of distinction that set apart both indie film culture, and its audiences (p. 53). The question of how—as in, the mechanisms by which—such distinctions and aligned discursive structures become imbricated with the minds of consumers is one largely attributed to the concept of habitus. As a central concept in the work of Bourdieu (1984, 1986, 1993), habitus refers to the ingrained skills, dispositions, and habits that result from an individual's experience in the social world. It is described as an internalised, and often unconscious structures, that guide and support social practices and ways of thinking. Habitus is thought to shape perceptions of the world, and in guiding

social action, reproduces social structures; including those through which social inequality emerges and is perpetuated. For Harbord (2002), habitus—as a framework for explaining taste preferences—derives from routine patterns of consumption, social actions and experience, which festivals curate at various spatial levels (p. 3). The festival is thought to offer a "regularity of organisation" to certain assumptions, propositions, and discursive formations around taste cultures, which echo and conflict in productive ways to form habitus frameworks (Harbord, 2002, p. 61). Habitus remains a useful concept to consider the way that the social structures and hierarchies of distinction that co-constitute indie film culture are continuously (re)produced and reshaped. Yet, there remains something of a missing link between *how* the experience of the festival is designed and structured, in both material and discursive terms, and the formation of habitus frameworks—along with their particular textures, and differential qualities—in the minds of social actors.

This chapter is therefore concerned with the intrapsychological processes of spatialisation; that is, the mechanisms by which visual marketing and merchandising offer space for (and impact) the development of culturally specific knowledge and practices, and the ideological systems of differentiation that demarcate them. This approach is informed distinctly by the work of Vygotsky (1978), in the understanding of learning as a socially produced and necessarily environmental phenomena. According to Vygotsky (1978), the development of culture within an individual, and in the social sphere, is borne out by learning processes. Although initially referring to child development, Vygotsky (1978) argues that every element of cultural learning occurs on two planes: first, in embodied interactions between people in material spaces, and also, at an intrapsychological level. Vygotsky's approach stands apart from what might be constructed as more "behaviourist" approaches to learning, which understand factors such as operant conditioning and mastery to be at the core of skill acquisition. Behaviourist approaches suggest that learning is the result of the relationship between stimulus and response interactions, for instance through positive or negative reinforcement of behaviours. These approaches

tend to insist on a more passive position, where learning is something that is done to the learner, rather than being an active participant in the process. Instead, learning is here considered to be an active and inextricably social process, where language, cultural context, and social interactions are productive of cognitive development and knowledge. Vygotsky (1978) offers the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) to explain the difference between what a learner can do without assistance, and what they can achieve with scaffolding and peer guidance. The ZPD is considered to be the zone where learning most effectively occurs, acting as a bridge between the current knowledge and skill of the learner, and the potential development level that signals all they could achieve with guidance. Promotional design and experiential marketing for the festival, whether knowingly or otherwise, can be understood as attempts to scaffold forms of cultural knowledge within the ZPD. Through textual and material designs that temper and render social spaces, festival participants can be framed as learners who are encouraged to develop knowledge about brands (both organisational, and personal), the structuring discourses and expected social dynamics of the festival, and also about their own tastes in relation to a broader consumer culture.

One of the key mechanisms through which social learning is understood to occur is through language, and its connections between symbolic and material space. As a result, this chapter focuses on Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) as a specific mechanism through which learning occurs at the festival event. While often considered to be simply literary embellishment, metaphor is a cognitive function that people use to process, understand, and communicate abstract ideas (Landau et al., 2015, p. 4). Broadly, metaphor presents as describing one thing as another, and is made up of two parts: the concept that one is trying to understand (the target), and a concept that is used to help understand the target (the source) (Landau et al., 2015, p. 5). Often, target concepts are abstract, perhaps ambiguous, and complex. Source concepts, on the other hand, are usually easier to understand, more concrete, embodied, or pertaining to human sensory experience. Importantly, metaphors can be achieved through both verbal and non-verbal design. As

with all rhetorical figures, images can enable analogies to be drawn between its various elements through design, such as via proximity, symmetry, colour, overlays, and size (Phillips & McQuarrie 2004). They too enable new knowledge to be created by facilitating connections with long term memory, the conceptual mapping of source information to the target, and the creation of memorable analogical inferences that signal new knowledge and learning (Hummel & Holyoak, 2001; Phillips & McQuarrie, 2004; Lakoff & Johnson, 2003; Forbus, 2000).

In this strategic attempt to link the spaces of discourse and symbolism to concrete, material spaces and objects, CMT is particularly relevant as a strategy of meaning creation to branding, marketing, and aligned creative industries. In other words, CMT can be used by marketers and creatives to create meaningful brand experiences by linking the abstract world of discourse and symbolism to the concrete world of material spaces and objects. To borrow terminology from Kress (2010), marketers and creatives are presented with the need to create "modal ensembles" that complement and enhance each of its structuring resources. As Kress (2010) states, modal ensembles are used to convey "a specific message about a particular issue for a particular audience" (p. 29). The benefit of considering promotional materials as modal ensembles is that it highlights the situated nature and context of these forms; considering not only what the visual design conveys, but also the audience and context with whom it aims to communicate in complementary ways. In terms of visual marketing, the combined efforts of marketers, creative teams, and merchandisers work to form metaphorical rhetoric that aims to mediate direct experience at the Sundance Festival. Marketers can be considered as the "rhetor", which Kress (2010) defines as the "maker of a message" (p. 26). The rhetor assesses the 'semiotic requirements" of the issue (such as preferred meaning), the communication situation, audience characteristics, availability of resources, and methods of dissemination (Kress, 2010). Designers, on the other hand, amalgamate the interests of the rhetor alongside their design perspective (Kress, 2010).

In the case of Sundance 2019, Farfán and his team may be considered as designers who utilise a multimodal range of semiotic resources to offer an outward expression of the Sundance Festival brand. Both marketers (rhetors) and creatives (designers) are thus concerned with the construction of the marketing and branding message, its visual and emotive appeals, and enabling the most effective communication with targeted audiences. Indeed, Kress's (2010) conceptualisation of rhetor and designer is echoed in the job description for the position of Creative Director at Sundance (Entertainment Careers, 2021), which articulates the role as that of the "resident storyteller and keeper of our brand" (the designer) who works "under the direction of the Director of Marketing" (the rhetor). More specifically, the Creative Director "develops compelling creative that meets the marketing and business objectives of the organization and advances our brand strategy with innovation and consistency" (Entertainment Careers, 2021). Particularly given the situatedness and centrality of Sundance within indie film culture, knowingly or otherwise rhetors and designers are concerned with creating materials that facilitate learning; that is, enabling the learning of indie's prominent symbolic systems, attributed values, textual characteristics, and modes of connection with independent filmmaking.

This chapter will examine two interrelated modes of promotion and experiential marketing that together work to produce the Sundance Film Festival as a built environment, a site of indie film culture, and a site of consumption. The first is OOH advertising, which speaks to an overarching theme and visual identity for the festival. OOH advertising is an industry term that is used to describe any marketing material that is intended for either print or digital display outside of the home. Given the annual nature of Sundance, OOH advertising takes on a compounded significance as an ultimately disposable method of creating spectacle and reterritorializing the spaces of Park City (and other locations) as sites of indie film culture. Unlike theme parks, that can express brand themes and identities through permanent architectures, the themed "dressing" of the festival is removed following the 10-day event. As a result, removable OOH advertising is largely responsible at Sundance for expressing important structuring themes of the

film culture. In curating the festival's annual theme, billboards, posters, vinyl wraps, and other aligned advertising forms work to organise various interrelated symbolic expressions into discursive schemes. OOH advertising, as discussed earlier, covers an enormous range of resources that together work to "dress" the city for the Sundance Film Festival event. However, cumulatively, they can be considered as part of a distinct and curated marketing landscape of visual, psychological, textual, cultural, and symbolic material, within which consumers (attendees) move and interact (Hackley, 2013, p. 2). For Hackley (2013), these materials are thought to penetrate and frame the experiences of everyday life, with the intent of activating emotions and "engag[ing] consumer passions" (p. 2). Arvidsson (2006) takes a broader view, suggesting that these kinds of marketing activities are reflective of the integration and socialisation of brands into everyday life, "becoming a context for life" that influences everyday relations (p. 13). Given its somewhat impressionistic style, a singular ad may not be enough to draw links to the formation of perceptions around indie films. Yet, when brought together, the OOH ads at Sundance add to and reinforce a symbolic system of visual metaphor. Consideration will therefore be given here to the ways that OOH advertising works to form an immersive, persuasive, and informative ambiance to the festival, which integrates brand identities and brand-related knowledge into consumer's experiential environments.

In the second section of this chapter, retail merchandising will be examined in order to reveal the ways that the re-theming of the festival event becomes part of an overall product geography, through negotiation between multiple product lines and symbolic systems. Retail and merchandise will be considered as another aligned form of experiential marketing, that work to render and constitute the "root metaphors" of the Sundance brand. The consideration of retail experience and merchandising is situated within the broader remit of consumer behaviour.

It is important to note that the experience of festival retailing is configured somewhat differently to what might be termed "everyday" shopping habits, given the role of merchandising in signalling a sense of belonging to the

broader Sundance brand community. Souvenir shopping is understood here to offer an important, if not foregrounded series of appeals for tourists, which compounds the likelihood of encounter at the festival event. Broadly, souvenir shopping can enhance the attractiveness of certain tourist destinations (Kent et al., 1983; Wagner & Rudolph, 2010), making it an additional experiential site through which to consider dynamics of brand identity and appeal. The potential drivers of tourist shopping can also spur more overt search behaviours for products, which speak to perhaps more intensive methods of product evaluation than might otherwise be expected. As Timothy (2005) points out, souvenir shopping can be premised by five reasons: spending excess time or alleviating boredom, buying gifts for family or friends, a desire to obtain keepsakes, a quest for authenticity, or altruism. For these reasons, retail and merchandise at the festival takes on additional significance in experiential marketing terms, given its ability to potentially reflect and reinforce individual's perceptions of and feelings towards a destination (Kong & Chan, 2012). In this chapter, the comparison of branded goods will be considered in relation to the question of how the retail experience can help individuals to better understand their own preferences and identity amongst a nexus of converging brands.

Methodology and Approach

This chapter explores three key aspects central to Sundance Film Festival's impact on indie film culture. Firstly, it examines how Sundance utilises out-of-home advertising and merchandising techniques to construct unique representations of the discursive and material realms of indie film culture. Secondly, it investigates how these distinctive forms of advertising and merchandising function as sites of cultural education during the festival. Lastly, it explores how these educational activities collectively contribute to the formation and dissemination of knowledge and discourse surrounding indie film culture, particularly its ideological frameworks of distinction. Through this exploration, the chapter aims to illustrate how Sundance Film Festival's strategies in out-of-home advertising play a role in shaping and

promoting indie film culture; not only by creating a distinctive representation of its discursive and material spaces, but also by serving as spaces of cultural learning and knowledge production.

Sundance Film Festival was chosen as a case study for this work as the result of both practical and cultural concerns. In a similar manner to Chapter One, Sundance was chosen due to its significance in the development of indie's industrial infrastructure, and as a well-attended cultural site. Indie film culture can be analysed at the nexus of several annual award ceremonies and festivities, such as the Independent Spirit Awards, Gotham Awards, Telluride Festival, and in strands of larger festivals such as South by Southwest. Fieldwork at Sundance, versus other examples, was carried out in no small part due to issues of access, funding, and timing in 2019, when this work was carried out. However, it also served to "bookend" this project in broader terms, forming a source of comparison to Chapter One of this work. In particular, it aimed to evaluate the degree to which Sundance has become (and remains) a nexus point for a series of self-reinforcing logics around its regional location, and the degree to which this is still represented and reinforced through promotional schemes.

However, as Tzioumakis (2017) notes, emphasis on Sundance can serve to over-emphasise the festival's relationship to indie as opposed to other formative institutions. It is acknowledged here that this forms a potential risk, and it is necessary to explain that the findings considered here are not indicative of all indie film culture's manifestations and cultural sites. Indeed, OOH advertising and merchandising practices at other festivals and events may not operate in the same terms, or with the same sense of coherency, as they do at Sundance Film Festival. Further, given that there is a different visual and conceptual theme for Sundance each year, there is a risk that close textual analysis of these materials may give the impression of being true of all Sundance events, rather than the fieldwork attended here. While the findings of this chapter are relevant to Sundance 2019, it is acknowledged that they may not be necessarily applicable to all past and future Sundance experiences. This exploratory project can perhaps be used

as a blueprint for further investigation into other physical events and cultural sites of indie, and form a source of productive comparison.

Attendance at the festival event was considered necessary for several reasons. The first derives from a tradition of "localised" film festival studies, which attempts to "understand how the festival is actually experienced, on the ground and in real time" (Lee, 2016, p. 122). In this work, methods associated with anthropology and ethnographic fieldwork are utilised to examine the cultures, politics, and economics of film festivals as social experiences (Lee, 2016, p. 123). In earlier ethnographic works focusing on Sundance Film Festival, Ortner (2013) and Dayan (2000) combine participant observation with interviews in order to best understand the industrial and cultural dynamics of the event. However, in this case study, the decision was made to avoid interviews at the festival event given that the focus was on illuminating contextualising factors that were primarily spatial, geographic, and historical. Also, given that the fieldwork was limited to a ten-day event, there were concerns that any time taken to organise suitable and fruitful interview participants might detract from the aim of the research, which involved navigating the festival experience as a consumer. The decision was made to experience the festival as an attendee and, if necessary, set up suitable interviews following the event. Ultimately, such interviews were found to be unnecessary, particularly given the publication of an interview piece that explained the creative direction around the visual identity of the festival (Bourton, 2019).

The second reason for in-person attendance at the festival is the transitory and temporary site-specific nature of OOH promotional materials, and associated retail pop-ups. As Dayan (2000) points out regarding Sundance, the most unexpected feature was the sheer volume of print marketing materials that are made available for the event. Dayan (2000) writes, "a Niagara of printed paper was spelling out meanings, offering captions, telling and retelling daily events until they reached a stable, paradigmatic form" (p. 52). Mirroring Dayan's (2000) view, although attendance was necessary to capture these materials in person, the subject matter did not require

interviews during festival time in order to collect or analyse the high volume of ephemera available. Therefore, borrowing a standard method for fieldwork of this kind, during the festival event data was captured through photography, observation, field notes, and the collection of artifacts for later analysis (Kozinets et al., 2004, p. 660). The path taken through the festival and its events mirrored a consumer journey that other attendees might reasonably be expected to take, by creating a festival itinerary, attending screenings and events, and observing retail spaces.

Objects were then catalogued and examined using close textual analysis. Both OOH advertising forms and merchandise were approached as forms of communication that leverage signs in a range of ways to construct meaning. Close textual analysis therefore looked for patterns in the design of imagery, and in language of advertising materials. It also read for ideological constructs, at the nexus of language and image. Identified patterns in technique and discourse were placed in relation to their production contexts, including industry literature focusing on the visual design of the 2019 festival.

In addition, advertising materials and merchandise were considered in relation to their physical situation where possible; that is, the design, positioning, size, and scale of the materials as they exist within the built environment. This was considered necessary to more deeply understand their function as in situ learning materials. This view draws from Kress' (2010) work on learning and cognition. Kress (2010) states that cognition and reasoning depend entirely on metaphors rooted in sensorimotor experience. Metaphors form links between bodily interactions and the matrices of memory, emotion, and language (Kress, 2010). Site photography was used to capture data for this aspect of the analysis, which are represented here as figures. Considering these elements in situ facilitated a more accurate analysis at the intersection of visual marketing practice, learning design—in the manner of the design of material resources and their modes of knowledge transmission—and situated film culture.

Out Of Home Advertising: Learning About the Spaces of Indie Film

According to Brakus et al. (2009), brand experience relates to both "internal consumer responses (sensations, feelings, and cognitions)" and "behavioural responses evoked by brand related stimuli", such as marketing ephemera and material environment (p. 52). In order to elucidate the Sundance brand experience, this section will begin by explaining how entry to the branded space enables the activation of behavioural responses and internal affective frameworks in particular ways. The first introduction to Sundance Film Festival, as both a governing brand and event, is the aptly called "Gateway Centre" in Park City. The brand experience of moving through the Gateway does not only offer the ability to access what might otherwise be exclusive, controlled space; it also offers a means through which an individual's sense of place, in a broader cultural scheme, can be elucidated. Even when attending a single screening or event, it is nearly impossible to avoid the conceptual scaffolding provided by the ticketing experience, given that all passes must be picked up in physical form prior to attending events. The Gateway Centre, which at any other time is the Park City local council building, is for the duration of the festival wrapped in branded vinyl across all its glass surfaces (Figure 4). Its dressing is reminiscent of Urry's (1995) claim regarding tourism: that places are "being restructured as centres for consumption" through economies of signs (p. 1). The Gateway becomes the nexus and symbol of cultural and economic consumption at the festival. It is repurposed by the festival for the function of ticketing as a point of economic and knowledge exchange, but it is rebranded, restyled, and re-territorialised by the work of visual marketing.

Figure 4: The Gateway Centre, Park City: Sundance 2019.

Note. Source: Personal collection.

Emblazoned with a sensibility of unruliness and vibrancy, the Gateway cuts an imposing figure on the Park City landscape for the duration of the festival; but, otherwise, would be far more humbly situated in the picturesque, heritage-style town of 19th-century buildings. Walking through its doors at the opening of the festival is, in some contrast to its more usual year-round operations, a chaotic endeavour. The interior swarms with volunteers, ready to offer recommendations for screenings, restaurants, parties, and events. For the uninitiated they act almost as instructors, demonstrating where to go, how to make best use of the events and the day, and even offering information on little-known films. Programs, film and event flyers, and innumerable advertising ephemera litter nearly every available surface. While one may enter the Gateway relatively unencumbered, it is almost certain that one will leave entirely laden with paper, lanyards, and program resources that bear the Sundance brand (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Collected materials from the Gateway Centre.

Note. Source: Personal Collection

In the process of moving through The Gateway—as it might be considered in literal, and metaphorical terms—is something of a conceptual reframing, in terms of subjective individual identity. Donning the festival lanyard and pass signals to others a sense of belonging at the festival, as being part of the Sundance brand community. It of course, in more practical terms, enables entry to the social spaces and events through which indie film (and other aligned media including advertising and television) is produced both culturally and commercially. While signalling a common brand identity to others, however, there is also a certain reframing of individual identity that can take place. The collection of an industry pass, for instance, can turn a researcher into a credentialled part of the indie film community. In both design and discursive terms the Gateway works to activate the Sundance experience, offering the means and method through which the intrapsychological processes surrounding Sundance-Miramax indie film culture can occur. While accommodation, food, leisure and retail activity may

enable casual glances or even photo opportunities with OOH advertising, the Gateway forms a key point of knowledge (and perhaps even identity) exchange.

Upon leaving the Gateway to explore the festival's various dispersed events, the role of OOH advertising as a marker of "Sundance territory" becomes even more necessary. While advertisements that adorn bus stops, buildings, or other material structures may blend into the background of daily life, OOH advertising is necessary at Sundance to signal a sense of cohesion across what is otherwise a broad spread of individual events and locales. Despite what the contained scales of the festival map might suggest, Park City demonstrates a considerable spread, particularly for someone on foot, of approximately 18 square miles (roughly 46 square kilometres). The map does not include the surrounding mountain resorts and adjacent open spaces, but solely contains the commercial and residential zones throughout which the festival's events are dispersed. The notion of attending "Sundance" as a singular contained event is therefore somewhat deceptive in material and geographic terms. The embodied experience of attending Sundance poses an interesting comparison to the kinds of discourses evident in Chapter One of this project, which spoke to its "intimate", small, and localised nature. In contrast, a specific charter of branded, vinyl-wrapped shuttle buses are necessary for the event, traversing multiple routes across the City. While certainly performing a useful navigational function to (re)orient oneself to the sites and spaces of the festival event, OOH advertising also forms something of a territorial function. Where the advertising is, and is not, is more than a sign of potentially becoming lost; it is a space where ideas about the festival territory, and what constitutes it, are called into being.

In terms of operating as metaphors, OOH advertising facilitates several different kinds of encounter that work to relate concrete ideas to abstract concepts. However, this relationship is not necessarily one-directional, as would be suggested by the application of concrete experiential qualities to

more nebulous conceptual themes. The target of the metaphor, or the concept that one is trying to understand, can also be influenced by the source, and vice-versa. For instance, this is particularly demonstrable in the design of OOH advertising for the festival, and in its subsequent positionings throughout the material realm of the event. It can be taken that the governing theme, "risk" forms mutually productive analogies with the eclectic and unruly design of the materials (which will be analysed in further detail shortly). The design, through its particular qualities, can also come to influence certain impressions of risk as a target concept. Further analogies can be drawn between the design of the materials and their presentation within the surrounding environment. And, beyond this, the various metaphorical resonances drawn from the materials can work to flesh out notions of "independence" more broadly, which also forms a governing theme of the festival. Together, it can be understood that the dynamics of metaphor, as interrelationships between mutually productive target and source elements, can work to create conceptual maps in the minds of learners (or attendees, or receivers). These "modal ensembles" of meaning (to borrow a term from Kress, 2010) together work to create memorable systems of inference and meaning that signal new knowledge and learning about brands, and the cultures with which they co-produce.

To expand, the design of the materials forms conceptual interrelationships between the notion of risk, punk design aesthetics, and the Sundance brand. Figure 6 offers a view of the spread of advertising materials that adorn lamp posts throughout Park City, which together mark the streets with both literal and conceptual signs of indie cultural activity.

Figure 6: Out-Of-Home Advertising Design: Lamp Post Banners, Sundance 2019.

Note. Source: Bourton, 2019.

Taken together, the various forms of OOH street advertising speak to a symbolic system of visual metaphor, which fleshes out the broad concept of "risk" through association with punk—as a visual style, and countercultural ideology. While all forming distinct pieces of design, there are verbal and non-verbal commonalities that work to group them as part of a cohesive Sundance brand identity. All make use of multi-layered design, foregrounding the process of their making and creating. It is generally thought in art that leaving brush strokes is a sign of foregrounding the construction of something; and even though the designers used software rather than brushes, the ads offer signs of the layered digital process of their construction. The base images appear to be film stills, filtered to present photocopier-like black and white watermarks. All the banners bear idiosyncratic black smudge-marks, as if a copier has gone awry and left its

own distinct imprints. The next layer of design is a gradient colour transparency that blends lurid tones of hot pink, orange, blue, yellow, and violet. The effect is almost as if the colouring or development of photographs (using traditional film) have mutated, leaving violent discolorations on the image. Six of the banners contain these (dis)colourations within rectangular or square blocks, which overlap in an unruly and disorganised fashion. Such layers harken to the spontaneity of assemblage and collage utilised in Dadaism, a movement which spoke to artistic freedom, rebellion, and iconoclasts. It is notable that there is no sanctity in relation to the film still images that form the base layer; they are rendered roughly and aligned with the idea of the surprising, contingent but ultimately beautiful mistakes that can occur in the process of creation. The top layer is common across all banners and acts as an important anchor for meaning; that is, regardless of the differences in design, the font choice and Sundance logo in the top left corner provide a common link between each ad, which in situ forms part of the makeup and boundary of the festival sites and spaces. The result is to foreground the making and construction process of design, with multiple effects and filters forming metaphoric associations with handmade, DIY culture, along with notions of contingency, surprise, and spontaneity.

There is a distinction between the advertisements being implicitly related to or "like" punk aesthetics, versus any kind of more overt determination that the materials "are" punk. The advertisements form a bricolage of design elements, offering the effect of a memory or imagined idea of punk style, in an attempt to render sensibilities around being unencumbered by rules and expectations. The notion of forming more metaphorical associations to punk coincides with the intent of the designers, who aimed to draw inspiration from punk fanzines of the late 1970s and 1980s in the creation of 2019's brand identity. Farfán states that the visual identity of the festival drew on "historical origins", such as "making zines or flyers on an old Xerox machine and having the black ink streak down your pages or taking pictures with old film and then later discovering that you didn't wind the film-up right" (Bourton, 2019). Duncombe (in Triggs, 2006) describes zines as "little publications filled with rantings of high weirdness and exploding with chaotic

design" (p. 70). Of course, the design and practices of the Sundance brand identity—which are, ultimately, advertisements that offer symbolic value to the festival and its spaces—are far removed from the production of fanzines. During the British punk era (approximately 1978 - 1984), zines were produced independently, and distributed by independent record stores such as London's now infamous *Rough Trade* (Moore, 2004). The design of zines were idiosyncratic in terms of layout and quality of production, typified by handwritten or collaged font, "unruly cut-n-paste" and "uneven reproduction" (Triggs, 2006, p. 70). Zines, in 2019, form a far more known entity not least due to various forms of reproduction in popular consumer culture. Together, the media can be read as drawing associations to both an imagined punk mentality and identity, and design characteristics that have come to identify zine cultures.

Experientially, visual design has the potential to offer the Sundance brand a sense of spontaneity and rule breaking, along with idiosyncrasy, unpredictability, shock, excitement, awe, and a do-it-yourself attitude. In its function as conceptual metaphor, visual design and its punk sensibilities enable the organisation of information about the festival and film culture, the mobilisation of cognitive resources in relation to it, and the overall enhancement of ideas and concepts (Soporoy & Dillard, 2002). This is not just in relation to the notion of "risk" as a somewhat broad, overarching theme, but also in relation to the Sundance brand, its sponsors, and the particularly cultural realm that it operates within. These readings are, of course, generated from close textual analysis of the materials as a group, rather than indicative of the way that such materials are experienced at the festival event. However, reading the advertising this closely also speaks to broader level sensibilities around the tone and textures that are available in experiential terms; whether this is a sense of rebellion, unruliness, tenacity, challenge, alterity, or opposition. These elements of punk iconography and style, whether recognised as distinctly "punk" or otherwise, enable a series of nonverbal cognitive associations that hold the potential for the viewer to draw similarities; the degrees of which are entirely determined on previous contexts and learning regarding both the Sundance brand, and punk as a

subcultural form. In this instance, Sundance's OOH materials serve several purposes for the cultural construction of contemporary "independence", by drawing from punk's rich source of iconoclastic styles and design features.

Considered individually, and situated within its particular setting, each example of OOH advertising forms its own relationships with the spaces around it, and as a result offers multiple modes of interpretation to the brand and festival. Each example of street advertising is designed to stand out and to be looked at, punctuating the landscape with vivid bolts of warm, lurid colour against the wintery white and grey of Park City in January. As Figure 7 illustrates, the visual design draws attention to itself, particularly when considered in situ. Alongside its positioning, the design appears almost to be encouraging of photo opportunities as an object of admiration, with tourists and media alike carefully lining up the perfect shot contrasting the ads against Park City's snow-capped peaks.

Figure 7: Out-of-Home street advertising design in situ: Park City, 2019.

Note. Source: Bourton 2019.

In this way, the Sundance OOH advertising in situ stands quite apart from notions of "ambient" media, which in a more subliminal sense may fade into the background of daily life. The aesthetic opportunities offered by the advertising seem almost social-media ready, not only offering the potential

for the beholder to demonstrate that they are at the event, but also to speak to hierarchies of taste through symbolic association. In the example provided by Figure 7, a figure is captured in a seemingly unposed and candid manner that exudes a sense of awkwardness. The framing of the figure is reminiscent of press coverage in relation to Chloe Sevigny, discussed in Chapter Three of this project. Sevigny, as a "cool" icon, is considered to demonstrate a kind of "uncool cool" that existed in some opposition to seemingly more false, synthetic or "posed" qualities (Sexton, 2013, p. 78). As Sexton points out, "her coolness was perceived to be an integral component of her personality... many journalists noted her hoarse laugh, ungainly posture…, unconventional looks and her candid interview style" (Sexton, 2013, p. 78). In relation to the seemingly unposed nature of the character in Figure 7 (which, also, is reflective of a broader trend of the images in the Figure 6 advertising set), the imperfectly candid state of the figure seems to invite the viewer to look, particularly in juxtaposition to the picturesque, white-capped scenery of the surrounding mountains and city. The example offered by Figure 7, considered aside from the broader advertising set, is similarly useful as a conceptual metaphor through which to flesh out more eccentric and candid qualities of the brand identity and film culture.

The range of presentation and form of OOH advertising across the festival sites offer a certain quality of "scaffolding" to learning about various discursive and experiential sensibilities of the film culture. As noted at the outset to this chapter, festival advertising can be understood through Vygotsky's (1978) lens of Zones of Proximal Development (ZPD), which works to explain the gradations of learning that can take place towards the attainment of deeper cultural understanding. Aligned closely with pedagogical notions of "scaffolding", ZPD refers to spaces where, with guidance, learners can develop the sensibilities, knowledge and skills needed to carry out tasks or achieve goals that would be otherwise difficult without unassisted effort (Wood et al., 1976, p. 90). Scaffolds provide structure, that is guided to some degree by the assessment of learners' pre-existing knowledge frames, that support the attainment of new knowledge

and skills until such time as they can reproduce behaviours on their own (Pea, 2004). In terms of both ZPD and scaffolding as aligned concepts, there is an "optimal" level of achievement to which the provision of various learning resources and instruction (both formal, and informal) are aimed towards. Due to the complexity of brand identities, materials, and activities at Sundance, it is difficult to pin down precisely which ideal outcomes would guide such scaffolds. However, broadly speaking, outcomes could be to gain knowledge about independent films available for sale and distribution, or, to encourage attendees to attend festival events. Different variations of OOH materials, in terms of types, size, and a range of appeals, may not only be appealing to the eye, but work to serve a number of varied learning outcomes in drawing conceptual metaphors and harnessing discursive and semiotic frameworks.

Conceptualisation of OOH materials as offering a scaffolding function to cultural learning can help to explain the gradation of intensities of recognition and meaning that can take place. To expand, repeated exposure to OOH materials at the festival event hold potential to lead towards more deeply engaged appraisals of the festival brandscape (as something of an extension to brand recognition or awareness), and to flesh out a more multifaceted view of the structuring discourses that render its meaning. This is supported by different sizes, styles, and positioning of the OOH advertising across the festival event. For example, another series of OOH materials—what I will term here as "building banners", for lack of an industry standard terminology—offer a striking space to enhance the Sundance brand identity. These banners boast a similar purpose to lamp post signage, but given their size more distinctively work to dress and restyle generally ordinary buildings such as schools that have been repurposed for the festival. Banners are positioned in ways that facilitate more detailed viewer engagement, which is also enabled by their increased scale. Figure 8 offers a set of banners that adorn the exterior of the "Eccles Theatre" entrance, which usually operates as Park City High School.

*Figure 8: Building banners at the Eccles Theatre: Sundance, Park City, 2019.*

Note. Source: Personal Collection.

Prior to entering any Sundance event, patrons wait in lengthy lines; the theatre must be cleared, bag checks and security screenings are conducted by security officers with metal detectors, and tickets must be validated prior

to entry. The banners become part of a recognisable scenery when navigating the festival sites or waiting to enter events. The film stills that form the base of the banners in Figure 8 are more distinctive, preserved, and offer better potential for recognition. Yet, aside from the potential to recognise the films, the ads work to scaffold and ground certain metaphorical qualities around the concept of risk through the addition of anchoring text. The banners read, "risk conflict", "risk dissent", "risk judgment" and "risk criticism", which can be applied through inference to the film stills featured on the poster. More broadly however, the text fleshes out the concept of risk as being inherently resistant in the pursuit of individual endeavour. The ads evoke a sense of rebellion, provocation, and courage in the face of adversity, and to be uncompromising in the pursuit of creative expression. In demonstrating an explicit honesty regarding the possible negative outcomes of risk, these banners form a more determinable effort to flesh out a lucid spectre of brand personality and meaning, by grounding conceptual metaphors of design with evocative text. Another reading of the banners is through the lens of brand community, in that the acknowledgement of such difficulties may be generative of support for artists who put themselves "out there" in the pursuit of their art. These designs serve to scaffold patrons to make deeper evaluations of the Sundance brand, by offering a perceivable sense of honesty and authenticity around the difficulties of creative expression. These brand resonances also may apply to the screenings, for which the individuals experiencing these banners are waiting in line.

There is space to consider an additional possible outcome for OOH advertising as learning materials, which is the "unaided" recognition of brand associations and aligned products in the brandscape. Put differently, while the films featured on the building banners in Figure 8 may not necessarily be recognised, there is room for perhaps more experienced learner/beholders to connect them with more specific cultural histories and provenance. For instance, in what might be perhaps a humorous nod to the films' key themes of gender nonconformity, the striking use of fluorescent yellow and pink is reminiscent of the cover to the Sex Pistols' (1978) iconic punk album *Never Mind the Bollocks: Here is the Sex Pistols* (Figure 9).

Figure 9: Cover art for the Sex Pistols album "Never Mind the Bollocks".
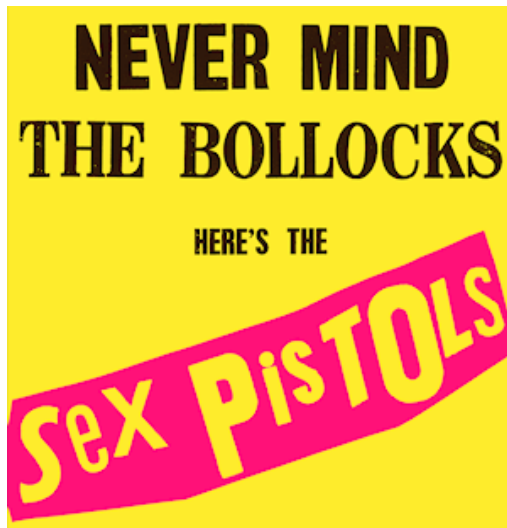
Note. Source: Discogs, 2023.

The film *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* (John Cameron Mitchell, 2001), pictured on the first banner in Figure 8, is perhaps the most overt in its rejection of "the bollocks". The film narrates the situation of the main character Hedwig (John Cameron Mitchell), a trans person who has suffered a botched gender reassignment surgery that has left an "angry inch" of male genitalia. Each film pictured on the banners also nods to punk, and not just in their rejection of culturally conservative gender norms. *Hedwig* is a rock musical that draws overtly on the punk oeuvre, in songs such as "Tear Me Down" and "Exquisite Corpse". *Pussy Riot: A Punk Prayer* (Mike Lerner & Maxim Pozdorovkin, 2013) is a documentary of Russia's most famous riot grrrl punk band. *The Runaways* (Floria Sigismondi, 2010) is a biographical film about the "girl punk" band of the same name, with infamous songs such as "Cherry Bomb" and "Queens of Noise". The banners hold the potential to achieve one of the key aims of metaphor, which is to lead individuals to "rethink old material in light of new categorizations… or to consider newly discovered phenomena in terms of what is already available" (Scheffler, 1979, p. 129; Davies & Chun, 2003). Even without knowledge of the films, the context of the festival may lead a viewer to presume that these are stills from independent films of a particular kind, or to read something of the traditionally punk themes displayed in image, design and the aggressive bodily stance of the

characters. However, beholders that demonstrate deeper recognition, may form something of an ideal outcome for rhetors (as the constructors of metaphor) in that they intertextually connect like products almost independently, and enact knowledge of the close associations of the festival with these products. This signals to a perhaps deeper awareness of the origin "myths" and stories of the Sundance brand, which may be as the result of repeat visits or involvement with indie film culture more broadly. This kind of in-depth brand knowledge and awareness of symbolic systems may be considered both a valuable and ideal learning outcome, towards which the design of OOH advertising can serve to conceptually scaffold in the festival environment.

Negotiating (Brand) Identities in the Retail Space

This section will examine the ways that the conceptual metaphors formed by the festival's exterior environments are negotiated in retail spaces; both in terms of how new facets of the Sundance brand are amalgamated into pre-existing conceptual schemes, and in the ways that individuals may situate themselves in relation to it. Despite claims to a singular, overarching theme for the annual festival, Sundance demonstrates multiple competing product lines, designs, and appeals that cater to a broad range of audience tastes and desire. This variety and range of product, as it exists underneath the common brand identifier of "Sundance", is demonstrative of a broader series of expectations around products and retail experience. Davis (2013) suggests that cultural and industrial producers balance between standardising production, and presenting offerings that speak to "pseudo-individuality" to generate sales (p. 31). The role of promotional culture, within this rubric, is thought to be in the identification goods that require standardisation, and in the promotion of like forms as different (Davis, 2013, p. 31). Rather than being a detriment to brand associations, the variety of product lines demonstrated by Sundance can be understood (within reason) as offering a certain "richness" to the structuring metaphors of the brand. Phillips & McQuarrie (2004) argue that richness is perhaps the most

productive form of metaphor in marketing, offering "a matter of ambiguity, not in the negative sense of opacity or confusion, but in the positive sense of multiplicity and polysemy" (p. 120). Of course, notions of multiplicity and polysemy relate distinctly to the advertising of indie films through the trailer format, as discussed in Chapter Two of this project. In the retail environment, multiplicity can be found to influence shoppers by encouraging exploratory and overt search behaviours (Howard & Sheth, 1969; Berlyne, 1960), which details a more active kind of evaluation and judgement of products competing for attention in retail environments. At the level of learning, the diversity of product lines offers a potential to reimagine and reinvigorate the structuring metaphors and richness of associations that are valued within the Sundance brand, and indie film culture more broadly.

The design of retail spaces and products plays an essential role in elucidating merchandise as diverse product offerings, while still maintaining central themes that reinforce the felt value of the brand identity. In order to explain how retailing and merchandise can perform such functions, it is necessary to elucidate the ways that these dynamics present as part of broader flows of capital and consumption around the "Sundance" brand. Sundance Film Festival, as described in Chapter One, is managed by the not-for-profit Sundance Institute that aims to "champion and curate independent stories" (Sundance Institute, 2021). The theme of "risk", therefore, can be understood to have particular resonance to the Sundance Institute brand, in alignment with their advocacy goals to support under-represented filmmakers. Yet, while the festival's OOH advertising may speak to a sense of coherent visual identity through design, as the previous section demonstrates its variations in style and physical form necessarily offer multifaceted conceptual metaphors that render brand meaning. These various designs, despite speaking to an organising theme in the form of "risk", further proliferate into retail merchandising in the form of keep cups, keychains, makeup bags, canvas shoppers, mouse pads, and more. Signalling even more diversity of product offerings, the current year's themed products are situated beside chosen items from previous years' festivals. This festival merchandise, along with other novelty products that

are not necessarily "Sundance" branded, are offered separately to the Sundance lifestyle brand that has bricks and mortar stores across America. The retail chain, once owned by Broadreach Capital Partners, was sold as a majority stake in the Sundance Holdings Group to private equity firm Webster Capital in 2018. The product lines of the lifestyle brand are aligned with and sold out of the Sundance Mountain Resort, which was sold by previous owner Robert Redford to Broadreach Capital Partners and Cedar Capital Partners in 2020. All of these iterations of Sundance exist in relation to the Sundance TV channel, which is owned by AMC Networks. In a similar manner to the difference between the perception of the film festival as something of a contained, "intimate" unit (versus its actual spread), the retail offerings of Sundance demonstrate separately owned and managed brands that continue to co-exist under a central, profitable banner.

The associations of place, in relation to the Sundance brand, form one of the primary ways in which otherwise disconnected entities are amalgamated to coincide within an overarching brand. The co-existence of various brand associations, stakeholder requirements and revenue streams under the banner of "Sundance" as a recognisable, overarching entity, can be understood through the lens of what Davies and Chun (2003) term "root metaphors" (p. 9). The name "Sundance", with its multifaceted systems of symbolism and meaning, can be understood as a root metaphor from which all brands that share its name draw, and serve to elaborate and reinforce. In this framework, Sundance can act as a target through which more abstract associations become connected and concretised in the construction of modal ensembles. Place, as demonstrated throughout both Chapter One and Three of this project, offers perhaps the most coherent series of metaphorical association in the retailing environment to offer a sense of coherency and meaning. The result of this, as will be discussed shortly, is the enduring formation of a product geography; that is, a concept that refers to systems that connect places with certain products and categories (L'Espoir Decosta & Andehn, 2018, p. 16). Retailing and merchandising serves to further ground the product geographies of Sundance to indie culture, through retail experiences that in various ways work to emplace

products in relation to regional place associations, in a mutually influential relationship. The remainder of this section will consider the way that product geography manifests in the presentation of two retail environments: the Sundance Resort, and the flagship merchandise store.

The Sundance Resort offers an exclusive retail proposition, not least in its mountain location in North Fork Provo Canyon in the Wasatch Range, 35-40 miles (about 56-64 kilometres) outside of Park City. Founded by Robert Redford in 1969, the Resort became renowned as a hub for the Sundance Institute as the site of its art colony-style filmmaker workshops. During the festival, the Sundance Resort hosts a range of intimate (yet well-attended) screenings at its prestigious screening room, nestled in amongst log cabins, a picturesque lake, and pristine snow drifts. The retail and souvenir store on-site, "The General Store", forms a popular draw for attendees who make the trip from Park City to attend screening events. Offering organic clothing, items from local producers, and prominently displaying a commitment to fair trade commerce, The General Store epitomises the notion of a branded space that is "structured by brand logic and strategies, and understood and expressed through the language of branding" (Banet-Weiser, 2012, p. 5). Themed in a pioneer-style, 19th century log cabin, the Resort's retail experience is one that appears inextricable to the regional and local heritage of Sundance—as a resort, a festival, and an icon of indie film culture (Figure 10).

Figure 10: Shopping at the Sundance Resort: Sundance Film Festival, 2019.

Note. Source: Personal collection.

The store is a picture of rustic Americana, evocative of a series of mythologies around a founding frontier and pioneering mythologies. Decorative cowboy boots and hats strategically adorn the shelves and walls. The merchandise offers a humble relationship with the interior design of the log cabin, with most products demonstrating a complementary palette of muted earthy tones. Products rest on heavy wooden shelves made of thick, roughly-hewn slabs. Together, the retail spectacle offered by The General Store, appears to be designed as a destination where the origin myths of Sundance can be reenacted. According to L'Espoir Decosta and Andehn (2018), destinations can offer a sense of experiential authenticity by encouraging visitors to become immersed in product myths and narratives. They write that certain media can "become facilitators of an intimate connection between the nature of a place and the products that are produced there" (16). The General Store appears to serve something of this textual and mediating function, serving as a conduit through which the origin myths of the Sundance brand become material. In many ways, the retail experience tells the story of a pioneering and frontier heritage that is harnessed to provide a root metaphor of independence. In a co-productive fashion, the Sundance Mountain Resort and the pioneer mythology converge in symbolic terms to form an origin "source" of indie film culture, a wellspring that from which its structuring ideologies can be found to emerge.

The evocation of pioneering and frontier mythology can be read as an enduring metaphor that draws on historical notions of place and regional development. For Knox & Marston (2016), regionalism "often involves ethnic groups whose aims include autonomy from a nation state and the development of their own political power" (p. 47). Utah, as the "Western Frontier" offers a cultural landscape rife with such associations that are in direct opposition to the core regions that are part of hegemonic governmental systems. This notion has long underpinned the conceptualisation of the Sundance-Miramax era as a distinct form of pioneering, independent activity. Similar discourses were evident in the B2B trade press analysed in Chapter One, from the outset of the festival in 1977.

However, one account revealed during data collection for Chapter One is exemplary of the kinds of place and product mythologies that, 28 years later, remain at the core of the Sundance brand. In a feature reviewing the 1991 Sundance Film Festival, Byrge (1991) links the perceived rough-and-ready schema of independent filmmaking to the pioneering spirit of the original settlers of Park City. Byrge (1991) describes early pioneers in Park City as the first "independents" and "frontier adventurers" to seek their fortunes at the site" (p. 12). While Byrge (1991) posits that "There aren't many real things about ski communities, especially those to which hordes of Hollywood people trek every year", the "snow-swept tombstones" of Park City's frontier adventurers are found to offer a more real comparison to the plights of independent filmmakers. They go on to say that "The frontier dreamers who are laid to rest here […] could have appreciated the audacity of doing something that everyone back home said was foolhardy" (Byrge, 1991, p. 12). The symbolic association of prospecting in Byrge's (1991) account serve to compound the more implicit undertones of prospecting in relation to the festival more broadly, as a site where treasure can be unearthed. According to Kress (2010), "In advanced capitalist conditions, the market actively fosters social fragmentation as a means of maximizing the potentials of niche markets" (p. 20). Here, part of the maximisation of the niche markets formed over time through America's regional economic development are harnessed as a means of product differentiation. While pioneering myths certainly offer romantic visions of struggling independent filmmakers, it is a symbolic scheme that draws distinctly on the unequal distribution of resources across America's regions; in particular, the development of niche, localised, and speciality markets—for instance, pioneers—seeking refuge from consuming, capitalistic, and industrialised Other.

In commercial exchange, a cultural transfer is also performed that adds value and meaning to the products and signs of indie film culture. In terms of learning about the origins of these sensibilities, The General Store is exemplary of the kinds of experience that scaffold brand knowledge and value propositions through elements of design, both materially and in the products themselves. At the most basic level the brand can be seen to draw

on common tourist tropes regarding adventure and pioneering mythology, where "going off the beaten path", or "treks through faraway lands might distinctly bring on eureka moments of self-realization" (Popp, 2013, p. 63). For example, Figure 11 offers a canvas bag purchased from the Resort store.

Figure 11: Canvas bag purchased from the Sundance Mountain Resort: Sundance Film Festival, 2019.

Note. Source: Personal Collection.

With a simple white drawing against black canvas, the bag displays an 8mm camera in the surrounded by the words "Sundance Mountain Resort - Art, Nature, Culture". The founding mythologies of the Sundance brand are here condensed, and speak to a certain asceticism; however contradictory such claims might first appear in application to what is essentially a consumer good. Rasmussen (2008) describes asceticism as a "soulcraft", where a spiritual home is sought beyond global consumerism (p. 499). Echoing the tourist trope of finding oneself in nature and adventure, ascetism is in line with "earth-honouring" ethics, through which a more spiritual, true and genuine authentic self can be found (p. 506). Taken more literally, asceticism is a lifestyle of extreme self-denial or abstention from worldly pleasures, and it is often done for religious or spiritual reasons to seek out enlightenment. However, in this case, consumers are invited to participate in a fantasy of

individualism that promises spiritual and creative growth, even as it is premised on consumption. In a much similar way to the metaphors of punk in the visual design for the festival - the simplistic design and logo speaks less to the overtly consumeristic practices of tourist shopping and retail, than it does to the amplification of the wilderness myth; that is, a return to nature as a source of purification through anti-consumerism, and a return to a true source of creativity at the nexus of art, nature, and culture.

In contrast, the retail environment for the flagship store at the Sundance Film Festival offers a far more typically commercial endeavour. The pop-up retail in Park City is bustling, bright, and often chaotic. In many ways, the form and function of the festival's retail offering is part of a standard "exit via the gift shop" formula for cultural events. Most of the souvenir merchandising at Sundance coincides with that found world-over, such as fridge magnets, coffee and "keep" cups, notebooks, pens, badges, canvas bags and t-shirts. Although referred to broadly under the remit of "merchandising" in Sundance Institute economic reporting (Sundance Institute, 2019), at a public-facing level these items are deemed "collectibles" (Sundance Institute, 2021). As part of a broader scheme of product differentiation and the construction of perceived value, notions of the limited-edition nature of the items are compounded by the changing nature of the visual identity and theme for each festival, drawing comparison to music tour merchandise that signals to attendance at a particular concert. As the festival merchandising site attests (Sundance Institute, 2021), the items provide an opportunity to "take a piece of the festival home with you", as a keepsake memory of what is otherwise transitory and experiential. Opportunities to purchase these keepsakes are manifold, with a flagship pop-up shop located on Main Street in Park City, plus mixed size festival stalls in each of the major theatre locations. Stalls are positioned at the entrance to screenings, which conveniently boast the longest waiting times. At the Eccles Centre, the coiled queue patiently waiting to attend a screening provides at least six access points to the festival stall at the rear. This positioning enables a broader experience and range of contact with merchandising, which may not only include purchase behaviours, but also browsing products with no intentions of buying, talking

with other shoppers and assistants, and acting as a point of conversation with fellow attendees (Jones, 1999). Perhaps given the busy nature of the retail environment, materials appear designed to quickly capture attention. Figure 12 precisely demonstrates one such eye-catching purchase, which offered a recurring set of iconographies across a range of product types.

Figure 12: Bag purchased from the Sundance Film Festival flagship store: Sundance Film Festival, 2019.

Note. Source: Personal Collection.

In the comparison between the two products in Figure 11 and Figure 12, despite the marked difference in retail experience the root metaphors of the pioneering nature of the Sundance brand become clear. The bag's imagery features an illustrated image of a cowboy riding a bucking horse, which resonates with several brand associations for the festival. Even as aesthetically they exist in contrast, and technically speaking form two distinct brands under different management, both draw on spectres of Americana that perpetuate the myths of the American West. In one way, the cowboy figure can be read in relation to the history of Utah as a ranching and pioneering frontier. Another reading is that the cowboy is representative of Robert Redford's iconic role in *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, from

where the Sundance name was first derived. The third offers more ephemeral qualities of danger, risk, independence and freedom, which resonate conceptually with the broader governing themes of the festival in 2019. These elements are brought into alignment under the Sundance brand through the white calligraphy-like Victorian style framing, bearing similarity to the hanging wooden signs adorning the saloons of classical Western films. The return to this anchoring, root series of associations around the Sundance brand again demonstrate the value—in promotional, cultural, and economic terms—of being perceived on the periphery. It is premised on the notion that social fragmentation and unequal development is at the core of what enables niche markets such as indie to emerge and thrive. In the retail environment, in trading on root metaphors of regionality and distinction from an urban Other, the brands echo each other while allowing for new, additional facets—such as the theme of "risk"—to become part of the brandscape through consumer exchange, and in the execution of shopper behaviour.

The retail experience at Sundance demonstrates how place-based product geographies can become self-reinforcing systems of knowledge and affect through commodity exchange. As Banet-Weiser (2012) explains, when brand narratives become successful, they move beyond a direct relation to individual products. Instead, they become stories with their own lineage, around which individuals can position themselves in some relation (Banet-Weiser, 2012, p. 4). Such practices, according to Slater (1997) are a fundamental part of the framework of market societies, where consumers become defined by their ability to consume and their consumption practices (p. 27). The consumer choice between a Sundance Festival t-shirt or a Sundance Resort bag, for instance, can therefore take on additional significance in rendering a sense of self through products. It is through precisely such processes of exchange that brands become, according to Arvidsson (2006), "part of the mundane context of action within which we become subjects" (p. 5). The process of consumption offers multiple opportunities to not only compare and evaluate the conceptual metaphors and brand knowledge inherent to product design, but also to discern through

distinctions of personal taste, certain subjective qualities of identity. This can be understood through the lens of individual consumer "image management", which are contested and produced through the symbolic associations of brands. As van Zoonen (2013) points out, while multiple possible pathways of meaning and identity are available, there is a pervasive structural tendency towards the management and control of singular, authentic identities (p. 49). The echoing of brand epistemes and symbolic resonances through multiple co-existent product lines is premised on search, evaluation, and comparison behaviours being enacted in the search for a singular, genuine identity. While undoubtedly calculated and analysed by merchandising managers, the perceived diversity of goods on behalf of the consumer - within boundaries and expectations of brand, use-value and pricing - aims to maximise the probability of brands resonating throughout commodity culture. Knox and Stevens (1993) could be speaking to the dynamics of shopping for wearable merchandise, when they state that "humans master themselves from the "outside" through symbolic, cultural systems" (p. 15). Instead, and with particular relevance at the conclusion of this chapter, Knox and Stevens (1993) reimagine this process as a form of knowledge application that is activated in the desire to identify and construct "real selves". In doing so, certain knowledge structures that make products mean become formulated, evaluated, and potentially even worn as a sign of belonging to a brand community.

Conclusion

Each year, Park City is transformed by the Sundance Film Festival, as a paramount and iconic institution of American indie film culture. The scale of the endeavour, in both event planning and experiential marketing terms, is somewhat betrayed by the cohesive sense of brand identity offered by the "Sundance" label. Whether referring to the Sundance Film Festival, the Sundance Channel, the Sundance Institute, the Sundance Resort, or even *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, the Sundance brand demonstrates a productive core of interrelated qualities such as sincerity, authenticity, and

independence. In this chapter, the out-of-home advertising (OOH) and retail merchandising of the 2019 film festival are demonstrated to play a combined role in fostering the continuing development of brand epistemes, along with the symbolic associations traditionally associated with the film culture.

While generally considered separately, the experiential qualities of OOH ads and festival retail are considered here to offer multi-channel modes of learning. The analysis suggests that promotional activity, situated across interrelated dimensions of material, social, and discursive spaces, creates structures for helping to navigate the film festival as a significant cultural arena in which indie films circulate, and through which meaning is produced. The industries that create these materials demonstrate convergences and synergies across seemingly disparate forms, which are not necessarily directly linked to the promotion of a specific film text. Despite the multiplicity that occurs and works to structure this scheme, there are a series of root metaphors deriving from place and geographic imaginaries that can echo meaning across separate brands. Together, these forms interrelate in visual and product design terms, to scaffold frames of cultural and consumer knowledge about the Sundance brand as a governing institution and icon of indie film culture.

To summarise, the remainder of this section will discuss how the case study supports and extends the central ideas posed at the outset of this chapter. The first section, "Out of Home Advertising and Indie Film Culture" focuses on explaining the ways that Sundance Film Festival utilises out-of-home advertising and merchandising to create a distinctive representation of discursive and material spaces of indie film culture. The second section, "Spaces of Cultural Learning", elucidates the ways that OOH advertising and retail merchandising act as spaces of cultural learning at Sundance Film Festival. Last, "Regional Differentiation" outlines the ways that these forms of learning together interrelate to render knowledge and discourse about indie film culture, particularly its ideological systems of differentiation.

Out-Of-Home Advertising and Indie Film Culture

The analysis of both OOH advertising and retail merchandising at Sundance 2019 supports the idea that such forms can work to construct distinctive and co-productive discursive and spatial architectures. Visual and experiential marketing plays a significant role in a complex reterritorialisation of Park City, and adds additional layers of meaning to the long-established place brand of the former mining town. Experiential marketing and product design together converge to create a tourist spectacle, within which a "Sundance" indie brand community—and their structuring discursive and symbolic qualities— can connect, network, and thrive.

This is particularly illustrated in the dressing of buildings and street signage, which highlight and foreground architectures that may otherwise blend into the background of daily life. Given the spread of events across Park City, Salt Lake City and the Sundance Resort, OOH advertising becomes particularly salient as a method of both physically and conceptually bordering the territories of the festival event. However, while serving navigational functions, the design and positioning of OOH advertising draws attention to certain artistic and symbolic qualities. This form of experiential advertising can be understood, therefore, to offer conceptual and material spaces where multiple competing ideas about the festival, and indie film culture more broadly, can be called into being.

Sundance retail and merchandising, while participating in the extension of OOH designs into consumer goods, additionally offers space for discursive and experiential brand qualities to be negotiated. The provision of multiple product lines that cater to different tastes and buyer dispositions encourages exploratory and search behaviours, through which products and design are evaluated and judged. In the process, discursive, emotive, and experiential formations may be introduced or concretised. Diversity of product lines and experiential qualities of retail spaces offer opportunities to reimagine and reinvigorate the structuring metaphors associated with the Sundance brand, as synonymous with a particular lineage of indie film culture. Although the

film festival is a transient experience that undergoes annual renewal and reimagining, the Sundance brand attempts through further retail, leisure, and television ventures to preserve its legacy beyond direct ties to the film culture. In doing so, various brand stakeholders harness and (re)structure metaphorical systems of meaning into modal ensembles, which activate consumer behaviour in a range of ways.

Spaces of Cultural Learning

The above analysis supports the assertion that OOH advertising and retail merchandising offer modes of learning. However, this learning is not in necessarily formal or instructional terms; although, further investigations into the added impact of the festival's conferences, panels, discussions, and explicitly "how-to" events may serve to redress this balance. Instead learning is found to occur mainly in the realm of metaphor, symbolic association, and schema formation, through the creation of modal ensembles of visual design, language, and material situation. In other words, the visual and experiential marketing process can be described as a relatively explicit and purposeful act of knowledge transfer across multiple modalities, with unification and coherence of brand identity forming a key principle of design.

The analysis posits here that merchandise and OOH are one of many modes through which inner intrapsychological resources can be transformed, remade, and change the potential for future actions. Sundance film festival acts as but one case study where multisensory and interactive learning about new films, old films, and film cultures can take place almost at every street corner. Even when attending a single screening or event at the festival, it becomes nearly impossible to avoid the conceptual frameworks provided by the ticketing and screening experiences. As described in the previous chapter, both foot and vehicle traffic are funnelled in particular ways during the festival as part of the event management. The strategic provision of multiple interrelated advertisements, along with varied product lines, can serve as scaffolds towards a deepening understanding of

the film culture in terms of its heritage, governing brands, and dynamics of taste. It becomes apparent that the festival's spaces of film culture—whether in terms of promotion or otherwise—are not only something to be read, but something which are continuously constructed and produce meaning.

In practice, the design of the festival's iconography and merchandising forms a series of conceptual relationships between notions of risk, punk, independence and alterity. The overarching festival theme foregrounds the making and construction process of design, with multiple effects and filters forming metaphoric associations with punk, subcultural and DIY culture. Yet, merchandising across varied product lines offers further facets to the brand, that signal to the convergence of art, nature, and culture in the aspiration for authenticity. Despite their varied aesthetics, at the root of these metaphors is a return to pioneering and frontier foundational myths of the Sundance brand, which are closely related to American geography and regionalism.

This chapter primarily focuses on conceptual metaphor as a mediating factor in the festival experience, and the ways in which these strategies may work to render frames of cultural and consumer knowledge. The modal ensembles considered here are fundamentally interrelated with embodied experience and the specific to the sensory modalities in which they are encountered, which is thought to transform experience into knowledge. As a result, the qualities of experience described here are situated to the 2019 Sundance Film Festival. There is room for further individual or comparative analysis to be undertaken at different festivals and events, to add additional facets to these findings. Further analysis to consider the potential roles of alternative pedagogies, such as peer learning, may also offer benefits for the broader analysis of film festivals as spaces of education.

Regional Differentiation

The analysis provided here supports the assertion that cultural learning fosters structuring discourses around indie film culture, with in relation to its

systems of product and brand differentiation. In particular, it demonstrates the way that certain elements of discussion around tourism and regionality have are reiterated, to form the basis of narratives around which discussions on indie take place; both metaphorically, and in material terms. The findings demonstrate the reiteration of core-periphery logics that are also reflected in Chapter One and Chapter Three of this project. The findings of this chapter pose a further consideration regarding notions of "indie-ness" as being defined in direct opposition to Hollywood. Instead, the findings of these chapters cumulatively suggest that these distinctions—and patterns of industry more broadly—are signs of embedded structural inequality along geographic lines. The resonances of this opposition, between core and periphery regions, find profitability (in both consumer and cultural terms) in the product myths that surround and converge with indie.

In particular, the analysis again highlights the role of place as a primary method of constructing and comprehending metaphor. The logics and myths of regional development permeate the modal ensembles of the festival's OOH advertising and merchandising, acting as a "root metaphor" upon which a range of product designs, symbolic structures, and consumer value propositions can be built. Promotional industries, therefore, can be understood to harness, iterate, and reaffirm the symbolic resonances of place, in order to situate products within the market. At the same time, these ensembles offer a language and knowledge system through which to think and talk about places, which together form a reinforcing loop. Beyond Sundance Film Festival, this work offers insight into the ways that social actors come to organise and attach meaning to space and place, and in turn, how these structures come to influence the experience of media products.

In addition to these considerations, this chapter also offers the potential to consider the ways that the Sundance brand extends into other international markets, and into homes—both through the Sundance TV channel, and in the Sundance lifestyle brand. There is evidence to suggest that in the preservation of an idealised Sundance legacy, that symbolic systems of

meaning transfer well beyond the confines of the festival event. Furthermore, aside from Sundance, there is certainly potential for analysis that focuses on other festivals or ceremonies such as Telluride or the Independent Spirit Awards. Combined, these works may offer additional insights into the brand logics and systems of learning that structure indie.

Summary: Learning About Indie

Overall, OOH advertising, the retail environment, and product merchandising are demonstrated in this analysis to offer units of experience, which can be connected in various ways through nodes of exchange along the consumer journey. Together, this suggests that imagined structures of indie film culture can be learned and built via experience, particularly in leisure and tourism. In this way, the chapter offers insight to the larger aims of the project, in terms of attempting to determine *how* film cultures emerge over time. In the analysis of OOH advertising, retail experience and product design, it illuminates mechanisms of conceptual metaphor and modal ensemble through which structuring discourses and value propositions of indie are made material.

Through this analysis the Sundance brand can be understood both as a series of key stakeholders and assets for indie film culture, and further, for a range of brands and sponsors that converge with the Film Festival event. This signals to the need for broader consideration of the ways that various brands may take up, reiterate, and perpetuate the discursive and material architectures that form indie film culture. Even more so, the findings serve to underscore the importance of research into visual identity, experiential marketing and product design, as they interrelate with the flows of media culture. Here it is not the work of Sundance Film Festival, as a monolithic entity, that structures its spaces; but labour from a much wider range of marketing, branding, and design professions that are largely underrepresented in the analysis of film culture.

Conclusion: Promotional Studies and Film Culture

This project is about American independent cinema - or "indie", as it is otherwise referred to in industrial, cultural, and consumer terms – but it does not address indie in the same manner, or with the same point of focus, as the works that have preceded it. In this project, promotion renders the material, practical, and discursive spaces of indie film culture, working to produce it in a constant process of construction and negotiation. In the four snapshots of promotional activity that form this work, various intersecting promotional industries have been seen to converge in the production of indie as a cultural and consumer culture. The analysis of these convergences have offered a way to explore and map the cultural and commercial terrain of the "Sundance-Miramax" era; which at the conclusion of this project, seems decidedly less coherent as category than it did at the outset. By specifically focusing analysis on contextualised nodes of activity, each chapter serves to highlight that indie-as-place is not one definitive centre of experience and felt value. It is not necessarily understood in the same way by all individuals, and it its brand associations can be slippery. Indie is not, therefore, a static classification that is either accurately or inaccurately represented by the work of promotion. Rather than pointing to distinct spatial and discursive architectures that can determinably be defined as "indie", each case study speaks to impressions of meaning, resonances of symbolism, and a range of experiential frames that may be taken up in response to the work of promotion. While there are some core thematic underpinnings at the nexus of the promotional activities and materials described here, the perhaps more distinctive findings of this work point to the ways that promotion negotiates tendencies towards singularity with a plurality and possibility; and, thereby, offering multiple modes of experience and points of entry to engagement with the film culture.

The remainder of this conclusion will address each of the project's two central propositions in detail, to demonstrate the tensions between singularity and multiplicity that are negotiated throughout promotional forms. Subsequently, it will elucidate several ways that promotion is integral to the social production of spaces, which have together come to characterise indie film culture.

Promotion and Culture

Promotion shares a powerfully interdependent relationship with the development of indie film culture and has remained core to its operation as both a cultural and consumer category. In the four case studies presented here, promotion has been demonstrated to have a co-productive and fundamentally interdependent relationship with indie film culture. Furthermore, the case studies also reveal something of the range and scale of promotional practices, industries, and materials that together create indie. In Chapter One, promotional activity occurred at the nexus of public relations and film industry news media. The results demonstrated the imbrication of promotion in the provision of competitive market intelligence that aimed to serve business relationship management, compared to perhaps more traditional paid advertising forms in the trade press. While Chapter Two focused on the more explicit advertising form of the trailer, the questions of who and what was being promoted were unclear. Trailers formed brandscapes where several promotional interests and brand identities could be seen to productively intersect. Chapter Three returned to the work of publicity and press agents, as often invisible forces of image-management in the formation of celebrity. The focus on the construction of stardom through place, however, revealed manifold promotional interests and activities, such as magazines and newspapers, cultural intermediaries, fashion houses, retailers, and of course the celebrity in question. Chapter Four considered out-of-home advertising, retail, and associated merchandising in the context of the Sundance Film Festival 2019. The analysis revealed multiple converging professions that worked to promote the festival and other stakeholder brands, not least including creative directors, merchandising

managers, marketing professionals, graphic designers, and product designers. Traditionally, the film industry's gatekeepers—producers, major studios, and critics—are thought to hold significant power in determining a film's (or film culture's) success. However, the findings of this project suggest that a broader, and more diverse set of influencers are involved. While the project certainly supports the idea that such industries are not only related to, but integral to the spatial manifestations of indie, it also serves to express the granularity and interdependence of various promotional aims to its construction.

Analysis further revealed that promotional dynamics are inherently context-dependent, meaning that both industries and individuals strategically design promotional activities and materials to navigate various spaces, each with its unique intentions. To say that promotion renders film culture is to acknowledge the range of discursive and material architectures that such forms might take. As a result, this project further opened the consideration of what indie promotional materials might be thought to look like, and how they might be experienced. For Chapters Two and Four, this necessitated a shift towards more experiential strategies to try and understand the specific situations in which such materials would likely be encountered. In this experiential view, affective qualities such as contingency, surprise, ambiguity, and curiosity are prioritised in the text/viewer relationship, rather than cognitive elements such as pattern recognition, information processing, and problem solving. Focusing on the experiential qualities of brands formed an implicit challenge to the traditional view of goal-directed, cognitive evaluation that has come to characterise some views of film advertising, both in relation to indie and more broadly. Configuring analysis through experiential frames—particularly for the film trailer, out-of-home advertising, and retail experiences—demonstrated that the (re)structuring powers of promotion lie not only in conveying certain information to targeted audiences. Instead, it also resides in the creation of immersive and emotionally resonant experiences, and offered insight into the ways that promotion serves to productively frame the consumer journey and consumption experiences of indie films. While supporting the proposition,

this project also serves to broaden the notion of what precisely is being experienced and engaged with when talking about film cultures, and the role that these elements have in the formation of these spatial manifestations.

The findings demonstrate that influencing purchase decisions is not necessarily the entire goal of promotional activity; indeed, direct sales—whether of film tickets, merchandise, or otherwise—are not at the centre of every promotional activity. Taking this view, the implication for promotional studies is to broaden the range of discursive and spatial architectures that can be analysed under the rubric of promotion. An example from Chapter Four can be found in the way that OOH advertising dresses Park City for the annual Sundance Film Festival. The function and purpose of this advertising, rather than an attempt to influence a direct sale of a particular product, speaks more to brand awareness, brand identity, and brand experience. The curation of different product lines and displays in retail environments, even though sales are inherently at the core of such exchanges, can also be considered through the lens of learning, as consumers navigate various brand qualities, histories, and symbolism in the evaluation of products. This project therefore suggests that in this interrelationship between promotion and film culture, the former holds a number of promotional goals (and likely has more effects outside of those goals) that are open for further analysis.

Spatial Structures

This project demonstrates that promotion shapes discursive and material structures that correlate to specific enduring qualities and social practices of indie. Through the case studies presented here, it becomes apparent that there is a wide range of promotional industries that act in concert to produce the discursive and spatial architectures of indie film culture. The analysis of the various promotional texts and manifestations discussed throughout this project point to a range of spatial dynamics that echo themes of independence. However, these do change over time and are in a constant

state of flux, rather than forming static qualities of independence that can be categorically applied to the film culture.

The first and perhaps most foundational of these structuring themes, which is echoed throughout the case studies that form this project, is regionalism. More specifically, a series of core-periphery logics are iterated in various forms throughout all the promotional media considered here. Drawing from economic geography, core-periphery relations speak to dynamics of uneven spatial development that characterise free market economies. In this rubric, the development of urban economies is posited in relation to regional (or "periphery") economies, that do not have the same access to the clusters of resources that characterise the core centres. Regionalism therefore comes to symbolise a sense of localism; of smaller practices and niche products, within which value is found in a sense of alterity from the "mass" standardised consumption practices of the urban cores. In each of the chapter case studies, regionalism in various ways presents as a way to signal distinction through alterity and opposition, and also aligns with ideologies of authenticity and originality.

In Chapter One, core-periphery logics were at the core of the trade press's positioning of the emerging Utah/US Film Festival in 1977. The iteration of these logics in trade press served to embed regional symbolism with the emerging infrastructure of indie film, and framed its perceived value in notions of opposition to the urban centres of New York and Los Angeles. In Chapter Four, similar core-periphery sensibilities manifest in merchandising through pioneering and frontier mythology, as a root metaphor at the core of the Sundance brand identity in 2019. Uneven development, of course, occurs within urban centres as well. Chapter Three demonstrated similar core-periphery dichotomies through the place images in press coverage of "indie darling" Chloe Sevigny. In Chapter Two, the trailers for *She's Gotta Have It* and *Gummo* foregrounded a focus on under-represented minority cultures, positing an implicit challenge to hegemonic studio filmmaking. Although the exact dynamics of these qualities shift in each example, these

structures form a series of root metaphors that are echoed across the case studies of promotion examined here.

In a fundamentally aligned manner, place also emerges as a sign system that shapes the discursive and material architectures of indie. Through the spatio-promotional approach utilised here, indie film culture—and the fashion, music, film, art, and literary cultures that converge with it—cannot be considered as a disparate unit of cultural activity divorced from place. In signalling to a series of attachments, ideologies, and histories that become imbricated with geographic locales over time, place becomes a method of elaborating and adding symbolic value to core-periphery logics. Chapter Three, for example, highlighted the ways that place images served in press coverage to temper notions of indie stardom. Sevigny's stardom was found to be part of a performative rendering of territoriality and imagined place borders. The performance of Sevigny's star text illustrated in Chapter Four was not only exemplary of the place-ecosystems that work to form indie as a markedly different quantity to that of Hollywood, but was also demonstrative of the competitive market practices, and consequent productive tensions, surrounding the place-based cultural industries that underpin it. Publicity, stardom, and place were found to interrelate in ways that idealised periphery (sub)cultures, and therefore worked to symbolically structure the market for independent products. Chapter Four demonstrated that while retailing at Sundance forms adhered to a more formulaic experience of retail shopping, there was a range of distinctly place-based epistemological, emotional, and social values that were aligned with the brand through product and retail design. Place therefore emerges from this project as a symbol of systems that can organise the market for indie films and consumer goods, particularly through its function as part of branding and image-management.

Place and regionalism are also tied to notions of authenticity, as a particularly prominent value-proposition that can be brought to the fore in the promotion of indie products. Authenticity is a symbolic construct with significant cultural and moral value, that speaks to notions of genuineness, creativity, originality, and the supposed existence of a unique and real "self"

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from which these qualities emerge. As a broad and often unexamined concept, authenticity—not necessarily as a lucid, cognitive construct, but as a structure of feeling—emerges as a strong unique selling point for indie films (and the film culture) within this scheme. Broadly, authenticity is discussed in relation to indie films as a key concept in debates surrounding the inclusion of independent films within the film culture. Authenticity, within this rubric, is configured as a sense of verisimilitude with "real life" and the representation of groups that would otherwise be overlooked by mainstream filmmaking. Within these discourses, authenticity and autonomy become intertwined with (and indeed, in no small manner arise from) the perceived regionality of films. Those made outside of the "core" regions of Los Angeles and New York, and autonomous from the influences of the major Hollywood studios (or "The System") are traditionally thought to be more honest and authentically representative of American life. However, the work of this project serves to expand the notion of authenticity as not only an ideological construct, but an organising factor in the market for cultural products that is bound up with core-periphery logics. It is found here to be a necessarily functional element of consumerism, and forms part of the value-building process for marking indie consumer goods apart. As such, case studies have elucidated its relevance and saliency to the promotion of indie products.

While place and geography can offer a sense of authenticity to indie products, it is also illustrated in broader terms throughout the case studies. At a broader level, images of authenticity can be configured through claims to origin, heritage, and provenance. In Chapter Three, Sevigny's sense of authentic indie-ness is in no small part garnered through press coverage that frames her as emerging from the subcultural milieu of New York City. While the resonances of place certainly play a role in these dynamics, it is also the sense of credibility and conferral of authenticity that point to a sense of authentic origin from the milieu of Lower Manhattan. Similarly, the trailers examined in Chapter Two make similar claims to provenance through the elucidation of an author-brand. In the amplification and configuration of the directors' brand identities, both trailers suggest authenticity through the

author-figure as a source of creative expression. It is important to note with the latter example, however, that authenticity is also contextual. Its manifestations are subject to change, and this is demonstrated elsewhere in the trailer format. Both trailers also highlight the plurality and heterogeneity inherent to the form. Ambiguity, multiplicity, and a sense of infinite possibility are harnessed and amplified in the trailer examples, in a particularly postmodern configuration of what it is to be "authentic". Broadly, however, the examples offered here play a significant role in organising the construction of promotion, and therefore in perceived consumer values and experiences as they pertain to indie film culture.

Importantly, the findings of this project also point towards the reinforcing nature of these symbolic, discursive, and material systems of meaning. Rather than promotion forming a one-way mode of influence on indie film culture, these various implacements invariably serve to reproduce and reinforce the intertwined symbolic structures of place, periphery, and authenticity. Chapter Three demonstrates that Sevigny's star text reifies the notion of New York City as a hotbed of creative activity, not only for independent film production, but also, for fashion, art and music as mediums that converge with her idiosyncratic star persona and personal style. Yet, Sevigny's star text is also influenced by the same notions of authenticity that are produced from implacement in these social worlds. Problematically, this example also illustrates the ways that the discursive and historical structures of place can be used to reinforce exclusionary systems.

Chapter Four demonstrates the ways that promotional forms inherently and explicitly manipulate the material presentation of spaces in targeted and intentional ways. The structures formed by these manipulations can also feed back into notions of place. The co-productive nature of these relationships necessarily opens analysis to consider broader stakeholders from outside the film industry who directly benefit, or have some control advantage, in the rendering of space and place. For this reason, the analyses provided here included non-traditional film culture stakeholders such as local film commissions, tourism, and retail/lifestyle brands. This

historical and situated picture of the development of indie's infrastructure somewhat shifts the notion of its traditional stakeholders, and therefore the formative interests in its development.

Concluding Remarks

In summary, the integration of spatial perspectives from economic geography, film and media studies, promotion and related fields provides a rich foundation for examining the intricate relationships between promotion and indie film culture. These perspectives illuminate the ways that social practices, materiality, discourse, and mediation intersect and co-constitute the spaces of film culture—and, simultaneously, the dynamics of promotion. This approach highlights the high level of integration of promotional elements to the spaces of daily life and culture, which holds implications for further analysis of promotional industries. The result of this perspective, as posited throughout this project, is that indie film culture—with promotion and its media as a central structuring component—does not inhabit space. Instead, film culture *is* space. It is a spatiality that is inextricable from temporality, which is necessary to account for the simultaneously co-existing and mutually productive stabilities, heterogeneities, demarcations, and contingencies that together render film cultures such as indie over time. Similarly, film promotion is not dropped into this space, but emerges from it and is inextricably bound to it. Promotion both results from and thrives within the interaction, multiplicity, and pluralities inherent to space, shaping its distinctive contours. Given this perspective, the project supports the view that the analysis of promotion necessitates consideration of the imagined, physical, and cultural spaces from which they emerge, to gain a fuller picture of their operation and influence.

The attention to promotion afforded in this project has led to a range of possible avenues for further examination. The first relates to more in-depth examination of systemic inequalities, as they are produced by the relationship between promotion and media cultures. Given this project's focus on elucidating the spatial relationships between promotion and film

culture, there remains multiple avenues for exploration beyond its scope that considers: a) analysis of a broader range of promotional industries, activities, and materials; and b) deeper consideration of how the experience of promotional/cultural spaces are rendered at the interaction of factors such as age, race, class, gender, disability, and ethnicity. The second avenue relates to the considerable overlap noted between the promotion, media, tourism, and leisure industries, and the ways in which promotion serves to frame experience at these intersecting nodes. The introduction of spatial mechanisms to the analysis of media/promotional cultures offers even further opportunity to consider the role of spatial designers, architects, and urban planners as playing a role in the structuring of spatial experience. In both cases, analysis requires a shift from the consideration of film culture as solely being about movies, and instead taking a broader view of the range of industries that frame the cultural production of film.

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