

‘Let’s Team Up’: Adding Exclusivity and Value by enrolling ‘fans’ in the design, production, promotion and consumption of cultural products

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The contemporary marketplace for cultural products including music, fashion and video games is characterized by oversupply and intense competition (Power 2010). As a result, global firms and local independent producers struggle to differentiate and sell their goods and services. To date, however, little is known about the structures and spatial dynamics of the strategies that cultural producers develop and employ to stand out in the crowd. In particular, the practice of involving consumers into specific stages of the product life cycle remains poorly understood by geographers (Grabher et al. 2008). This presentation will consider the mechanisms through which luxury brands and local entrepreneurs team up with consumers to generate distinctiveness, value and brand loyalty. Drawing on empirical research and examples from media outlets, the evolving nature of these relationships will be explored, including transition from co-production to co-promotion. By extension, the paper will highlight how interactions between producers, consumers and other actors are facilitated and enhanced by specific physical and virtual spaces such as the home, workshops, performance venues, the street, social media websites and online forums. The aim will be to move towards a typology of consumer involvement and better understanding of the role they play as agents of difference in the marketplace.