

“MARKETING HAS TAKEN A BIGGER PICTURE PERSPECTIVE AND NOT TURNED THE WHOLE SERIES INTO ANOTHER ‘MARKETING EXERCISE’ ”



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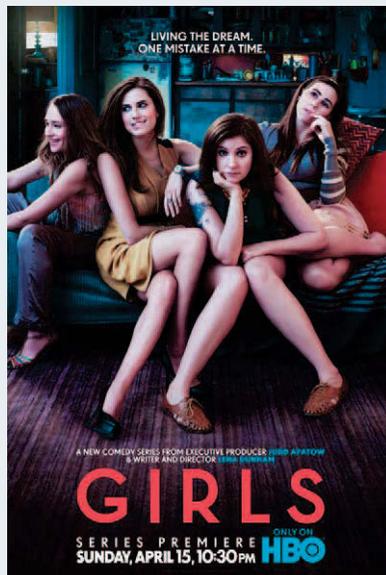
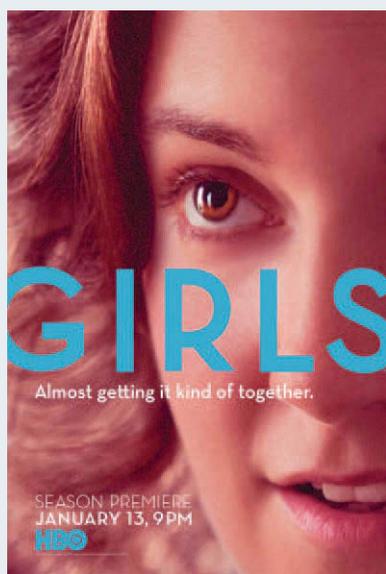
Real girls, **real life**

She's everywhere: on TV, in *Vanity Fair*, at Grumpy's having coffee, winning at the Golden Globes and operating the laundry down the road. Lena Dunham and her HBO 'Girls' show have taken over not only the air, but also the entire media landscape

> **DUNHAM'S** done it 'organically' with no marketing strategy per se, but just by being herself and showing the world a new cool as being who you really are is what we're so desperate for in popular culture. The Kardashians and the 'Big Brothers' have faked it for long enough, even 'Sex in the City' (as fabulous as it always will be) wasn't real enough for the 20th Century as Carrie just continued to rake in more Manolo Blahniks in every episode.

In case you haven't started watching yet, HBO 'Girls' is about a group of 20-something girls who struggle, really this time, with everything 20 and 30 something year olds scuffle with including diets, men and work. But what makes the series a must-watch is the writer, and star, Lena Dunham's depiction of girls and boys we all know, or want to be, or can't help being. Away from fantasy and in with some hardcore realism is what the world needs now.

What's been the success of 'Girls', not only in America but across the neighbouring continents, is simply that for the first time marketing has taken a bigger picture perspective and not turned the whole series into another 'marketing exercise' that consumers, fans and engagers can see right through. 'Gossip Girl' used every marketing ploy known to man, including an array of fashion from the show that is supposed to make consumers have a feeling of 'have to have' and giving the characters idiotic online personalities that 'fake tweet' their



Girls: Created by and starring Lena Dunham
Girls is a comedy-drama following a group of twenty-something's living in New York City

feelings. Consumers watched and forgot what they saw in another mind-numbing media experience.

'Girls' skips all that and just encourages the subculture to swell: and so it did and does. Hannah (Lena Dunham's character)

loves a blow out, so salons across New York offered blowouts in preparation for Season 2 that aired in the US mid-January, and the new spinning studio with a spiritual backbone, Soulcycle, offered free rides for 'Girls' fans. Interestingly enough these were planned by brands, or let's call them fan-brands of 'Girls', as consumer-encouraged-content of 2013 opposed to the TV kingpins bombarding consumers with clenched content that doesn't really offer you anything new: kind of like getting another branded pen as a gift.

The target audience – let's say 20 something to forever 40 – both on – and off-line, is more than ever using an integrated approach to the way they consume media. No longer just on the computer, or the phone, they are finding reading material and media secrets through friends and friends' access to subculture reading (from subways, to minibuses, to barbers). So now they're learning about the characters on Twitter, on their illegal download torrent and from their girlfriend's diary – not only from the series itself. And so they are also further engaging with the characters they are themselves, and the ones they see on TV, through Instagram (promoting a feed that just gives HBO consumer insights without having to even pay for it) and YouTube (previews and behind the scenes). It doesn't stop; the culture

seeps through every fibre and continues to surface online with serious fan pages and offline where the culture's beacons showcase themselves like the Bridget Jones of the new decade.

Combine all this information and you have what Seth Godin so aptly named 'a tribe'. But 'Girls' go beyond a tribe. HBO has said that they have a greater number of 'secret watchers/fans' than ever before and that means the subculture has picked up the cool, used it and thrown it back into the ring for another round. So where 'Sex and the City' may have had a female dominated fan base, 'Girls' have captured the boys by making it about the boys all over the girls, as opposed to the girls all over the boys. The other reason is for the first time on TV you have nudity where the bodies are, surprise surprise, not perfect. And that gives the engager a whole new experience to tweet, talk and tattle about.

Whether you like the show or not, or whether you believe it to be a true depiction of reality, what you cannot argue with is that culture, popular culture that is, has long been at the mercy of marketing where marketing acted as the bullying ex boyfriend. The new relationship is a different sort of Hannah and Adam situation where they are simultaneously winning and losing, but for the greater good of themselves. But for that to make more sense you'll have to watch, or keep watching.

Daniel Scheffler is the owner of The Idea Consultancy. He studied at VEGA, B Comm Marketing/Communication and B Honours Branding. His focus now is on management consulting, idea generation and strategic planning.