Barbie Movie Campaign Breakdown

I. COMPANY OR ORGANIZATION BACKGROUND

In March of 1959, the doll “Barbie” launched at the American Toy Fair in New York City (Holland, 2016). The doll, wearing a black-and-white striped bathing suit and a blonde ponytail, became the first mass-produced toy doll in America with adult features. Barbie was created by Ruth Handler, the co-founder of the toy company Mattel (Holland, 2016). She became inspired by watching her daughter play with paper dolls and realized there was a lack in the market for a toy that allowed girls to imagine adult versions of themselves; thus, Barbie was born (Holland, 2016). From then on, Barbie has had over 250 careers, from rock star to doctor. There have been celebrity Barbies, famous collectible Barbies, Barbies on the cover of magazines, and so on (Holland, 2016). Barbie was just the first in the doll line, as in 1961, Barbie’s on-and-off boyfriend, Ken, was introduced. Although there were other black Barbies before, the first official African American Barbie wasn’t created until 1980, alongside a Latina Barbie (Holland, 2016). In 2016, to address ongoing criticism of Barbie's diversity, Mattel launched Barbie Fashionistas, which came in four body types, seven skin tones, 22 eye colors, and 24 hairstyles (Holland, 2016). Mattel continues to release Barbies with differing bodies as well as branching into making Barbies of important historical women figures (Holland, 2016).

II. MISSION STATEMENT (BUSINESS GOAL)

- “Since 1959, Barbie's purpose has been to inspire the limitless potential in every girl” (Mattel, 2024).
- Mattel specifically mentions representation and empowerment as well (Mattel, 2024).
- This mission statement reflects their history, where they have made lines of dolls that reflect different bodies, as well as highlighting important historical women.

III. BRAND POSITIONING

To: Girls ages 3-11 and their parents (Kuklenko & Shestopalova, 2023).

Brand is the: iconic doll brand (Mattel, 2024)

That: Empowers self-expression and imagination through a line of diverse dolls, with a multitude of careers, bodies, and stories (Mattel, n.d.)

Because: It is important to show representation through products that better reflect the world kids see today to empower young girls (Barbie, n.d.)

IV. STATEMENT OF PROBLEM OR OPPORTUNITY

Although Barbie was seen as one of the most recognizable dolls, Mattel started to face problems in recent years with competitors and the digital age. In the early 2020s, Mattel saw setbacks that impacted its stock and financial performance (Miller, 2024). The rise of digital toys and entertainment provided a challenge for traditional toy sellers as kids shifted their focus towards online gaming or virtual experiences (Miller, 2024). Another challenge faced was the negative attitude perceptions about Barbie, as many saw Barbie as perpetuating negative beauty standards and being outdated (Pal, 2024). These two things combined raised concerns about the company being able to stay relevant in the rapidly evolving market. If Barbie wants to continue to be relevant to children, it has to adapt to modern storytelling and markets to regain its audience. The shift is going to have to focus on not just being seen as a traditional toy company anymore. This problem will have to define a new era for Mattel while keeping the importance of the Barbie mission statement and brand positioning of empowerment and diversity for young girls. This new direction will actually help in emphasizing and returning to Barbie's original mission statement and realigning itself further within the diversity field.

V. RESEARCH

Most Likely Research Goals:

- What are people's current perceptions about Barbie?
- What does “feminism” mean in the modern world?
- How has digital media shifted the media landscape?
- How can Barbie adapt to this landscape?

Primary Qualitative Research:

- Conducting consumer surveys and focus groups to see what parents with young girls think of the doll. This was probably shown through specific trigger words or phrases such as “outdated” and “progressive” (Pal, 2024).
- Research with focus groups on what parents look for and take into consideration when buying toys or entertainment for their kids.

Primary Quantitative Research:

- Surveys on the attitude perceptions of those who know the Barbie brand. Showing these attitudes through percentages based on demographics and positive vs. negative attitudes.
- Market research surveys on what kids are buying and engaging with when it comes to entertainment nowadays, and how digital media is affecting that. This can be done by collecting what kids are engaging with and seeing what percentage of it is traditional versus digital. This can be shown through percentages based on demographics, like age.

Secondary Research:

- Looking at studies on feminism in the modern world and how this affects females
- Looking at studies that look at what problems modern women face when it comes to sexism

- What is popular in the cultural landscape of digital media and within competitive toy markets

This research is mostly hypothesized based on what Mattel would likely need to know to make the campaign successful. These research objectives and goals help align with solving the problem stated that Barbie is facing, and what research they can do to be able to address it.

VI. SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS (SWOT)

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESS
- Iconic brand and historic. Has stood the test of time and remains popular (Mattel, 2024) - Recognizable as one of the most famous doll and toy brands amongst target audiences, little girls, and their parents (Holland, 2016) - A wide range of dolls is diversifying the toy market with different clothes, careers, and bodies (Mattel, n.d.) This includes the "Fashionista" line, which includes dolls like the first blind doll with a cane.	- Associate Barbie with unrealistic beauty standards, with past dolls like the "Babysitter" Barbie that had a "Don't Eat" diet book (Gold, 2021). - Lack of bridging the cultural gap. Barbie is starting to fall out of style, with declining sales in the products (Miller, 2024) - Barbie is still associated with the old Western beauty standard. People still think of Barbie as the white, blue-eyed, thin, blonde depiction of outdated beauty standards rather than modern ones (Gold, 2021).
OPPORTUNITIES	**THREATS**
- Modernization with digital media. More girls are turning to digital means of entertainment (Miller, 2024) - Growing niche of adult communities to capitalize on nostalgia. Almost 75% of consumers are more likely to buy a product if it evokes nostalgia (Amra & Elma, 2025) - Brand collaborations are becoming a bigger trend, with 60% of people driven to purchase things now out of fear of missing out on limited edition collabs (Thompson & Murphy, 2024).	- Intense competition with other toy companies like Hasbro, Lego, and specifically Bratz (Miller, 2024) - Increase in price around production and sales not making up for it (Miller, 2024) - There is a shift away from physical toys as children are becoming more focused on digital entertainment (Miller, 2024)

VII. STRATEGIC INSIGHTS

- Barbie has the advantage of being a historic and iconic toy brand. Barbie is producing dolls that have an increased amount of diversity, more so than other toy brands in certain areas (Ras, 2024). However, people's perception of the brand is still skewed negatively, with many still seeing Barbie as a representation of old, toxic beauty standards, and that Barbies aren't a good role model for little girls (Pal, 2024). Barbie has to produce a massive message to Barbie lovers and haters that shows that Barbie is now a modern, more inclusive version of beauty and empowerment for girls.
- Barbie is having a problem with bridging the cultural gap and adapting to the modern world. This is seen through declining sales in recent years (Miller, 2024). If Barbie wants to appeal to a more modern audience, they have to integrate more cultural moments and modern milestones as a part of the Barbie brand.
- With a trend of children turning towards more digital aspects of entertainment and people as a whole flocking into digital spaces, Barbie has to find a way to integrate into a digital space instead of staying strictly traditional. Social media is becoming more popular, with over double the engagement over the last few years (Mehta, 2018). If Barbie wants to gain significant impact, it is going to have to implement digital media into its campaign strategies. Barbie is going to have to transform beyond just the doll.

VIII. COMMUNICATION GOALS

- Re-establish the relevance of Barbie in the modern world (Layne-Avery, 2023).
    - Barbie is falling out of relevance, and it is affecting sales and causing competitors to get an edge in the market. Barbie has to use this campaign to make a mark on the modern stage,

- Make Barbie seen as a more inclusive, progressive, feminist role model than previously thought (Layne-Avery, 2023).
    - People still see Barbie in a negative light when it comes to body image and inclusivity. Although Barbie is producing more inclusive dolls, people are not resonating with the shift. Barbie needs something bolder and new to reconnect with these audiences.

This aligns with Dove's mission statement of representation and empowerment for young girls. This will further emphasize its mission statement while putting Barbie back as a leader in dolls and role-modeling for young girls.

IX. COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVES

- Create buzz about Barbie through social media across Barbie's social channels and create a widespread cultural conversation. Do this by leveraging viral social content and driving conversation among target audiences (Shorty Awards, 2023). Measure this through getting at least 20 million impressions and 1 billion views on hashtags. Do this throughout 2023 in the lead-up to the campaign drop date.
- Shift public perception of Barbie by focusing on feminist themes, representation, and progressive values through strategic messaging and partnerships to address modern views (Miller, 2024). Measure how people feel about Barbie after the campaign through social media and news engagement. Do this throughout 2023 for long-term brand impact.
- Create an engaged and loyal community that participates in Barbie conversations and interacts with content by providing moments audiences can actively engage in, whether through participation or self-expression (Lee, 2023). Grow social community by 1

million followers and generate around 2 million in engagements. Build this community throughout 2023 with means to keep engagement further.

The objectives help specify the goals into something measurable and actionable. This reflects on the brand's mission statement by still focusing on Barbie as an empowerment symbol, but now in the modern age. By building a community online and partnering with other brands, Barbie will be able to reach a whole new audience worldwide.

X. TARGET AUDIENCES

- Gen Z/Millenial women (Van der Meer, 2023). This focuses on younger women who have some type of association with a doll, positive or negative. The younger audience is more likely to be on social media apps as well as have more progressive views when it comes to politics and brands' role in messaging. Millennial and Gen Z women are also starting to have children lol and are mothers to young girls who would want a Barbie doll.
- LGBTQ+ community (Van der Meer, 2023). By focusing on underrepresented communities, Barbie can transform beyond women and the traditional values the brand is perceived to have, and into more progressive communities. Not to mention, Barbie has already been a more established icon in the queer space (Puc, 2023).

This section was hard, as almost every source listed that the target audience was everyone. The main slogan in the trailer was, “If you love Barbie, this movie is for you. If you hate Barbie, this movie is for you.” The main actress, Margot Robbie, also said, “If you feel indifferent about Barbie or haven’t thought about Barbie in years, this movie is also for you” (Dockterman, 2023). This movie was trying to hit everyone, so I focused on breaking the biggest core audiences I saw into chunks and focusing on what I saw as the most important. Younger women were obviously

the main focus, but there was also the LGBTQ+ community, which was said to be one of the biggest considerations as well.

XI. CURRENT AUDIENCE BRAND PERCEPTION

- Gen Z/Millenial women have mixed reactions when it comes to the Barbie brand. Although some have a deep nostalgia and fondness for the dolls, others still see them as concerning for body image and diversity of the dolls themselves (Miller, 2024). In the 2010s as well, many girls played alongside dolls other than Barbie as competition grew and Barbie became more outdated (Miller, 2024).
- LGBTQ+ audiences also have a complicated relationship with Barbie. Although many found their queerness through Barbie, and the doll became an outlet for play and fun, no matter the gender of the enjoyer, others have not so fond memories (Puc, 2023). Some in the community remember Barbie as being the embodiment of gender norms and the pressure to demonstrate those norms by playing or not playing with her (Puc, 2023).

XII. DESIRED AUDIENCE BRAND PERCEPTION

- Barbie is progressive, feminist, inclusive, and relevant.

This perception not only reinforces Barbie's mission statement, but it also helps bring Barbie into the modern world of relevance and helps more people see that Barbie has changed for the better.

XIII. KEY MESSAGES

Single-minded Message

- Barbie is an inclusive and progressive cultural brand that empowers others.

Audience-Specific Messages

- Barbie makes me feel empowered and seen as a young woman in today's world
- Barbie makes me feel included and is progressive as a brand in today's world

These connect back to the communication goals of being culturally relevant as well as being seen as a more inclusive, feminist, and progressive brand. The female audience should feel empowered and seen as a young woman, while LGBTQ+ members should feel included and see the progressive nature of Barbie compared to other toy brands in a modern world.

XIV. CREATIVE PLATFORM

- Barbie launches the *Barbie* movie. A theatre-released movie experience made by Warner Bros., with iconic Barbie dolls coming to life on screen. The movie incorporates what Barbie is and what Barbie stands for. The campaign takes a multimedia approach that paints the whole world pink.
- The movie launches to push Barbie into the modern world to remind women and LGBTQ+ members that Barbie is progressive, inclusive, and feminist. Barbie is in your corner and a role model for you.

This is a creative platform that addresses Barbie's key messages and audiences. This aligns with their mission statement of being a brand that stands for inclusivity and empowerment while bringing it into the new world in a big way with a full-length film. It fits the cultural relevance of digital entertainment becoming popular and bringing a lot of eyes to Barbie's new progressive ways.

XV. STRATEGIES

The breadcrumb strategy: release new pieces of information, slowly, that build gradually over time to keep audiences engaged (Peters, 2023).

- This keeps audiences interested throughout instead of releasing everything and having audiences forget by the time the movie releases.

Leverage partnerships (Layne-Avery, 2023)

- By partnering with brands, Barbie can increase the cultural relevance of the brand. This also increases the reach of the campaign to audiences worldwide.

Leverage nostalgia for adult interest (Layne-Avery, 2023)

- Leveraging nostalgia will create an emotional response that will cause people to better resonate with the brand and want to go see the movie. As seen before, nostalgia marketing also causes people to want to consume a brand's product more.

Leverage social media for a broadened reach (Miller, 2024)

- Social media is an ever-growing platform, specifically for younger women and LGBTQ+ audiences. By focusing on a creative digital media campaign, it can broaden the reach and help target key audiences more efficiently.

Focus on diversity and women (Miller, 2024)

- By focusing on diversity and women within the campaign, audiences will be able to see the rebrand of Barbie being a progressive brand. Failing to show diversity and women's empowerment could be detrimental to the brand and movie performance.

Include community engagement and involvement (Layne-Avery, 2023)

- For the campaign to continue to be relevant, there has to be community engagement to help in sharing and adding to the campaign.

XVI. TACTICS

Partnerships

- Partner with as many brands as possible across a wide variety of markets (Earned/Paid media). Partnering with over 100 brands, releasing over the year, Barbie will reach a variety of markets and increase awareness of the movie and brand. This will make it hard for anyone not to know about the movie, as well as capitalize on limited-edition

Barbie-themed items. Some of these collaborations will be with Aldo, Impala Rolleskates, Gap, Ruggable, Crocs, Bumble, Burger King, and Xbox, all clad in pink (Dockterman, 2023).

- Partner with news outlets like The Times, The Washington Post, and Variety to explore the movie's progressive themes and Barbie's pop-culture relevance (Earned media). By partnering with global publications, Barbie can get the word out about the movie while also discussing the representation and feminist ideas in the movie that connect with audiences (McClintock, 2023).
- Hire and partner with strong, diverse, female creators and leaders in the entertainment industry (Paid media). Hire Greta Gerwig to direct, get female writers, include trans actors, and hire Margot Robbie as the main Barbie with Ryan Gosling as the main Ken (Pal, 2024). By having the lead team behind and in the film be mostly a diverse female cast, Barbie is already setting the stage for what the themes in the film will be. The star-power names will also bring in audiences who are already fans of these A-list actors and directors,
- Partner with popular female artists like Billie Eilish, Lizzo, and Dua Lipa for a Barbie soundtrack for the movie (Paid Media). Release certain artists and tracks as the campaign goes along to keep interest. This emphasizes the women-led project and the empowerment and diversity of the brand and film (Peters, 2023).

Social Media

- A selfie generator developed in partnership with PhotoRoom, with the first selfies featuring the Barbie cast members like Issa Rae and America Ferrera (Layne-Avery, 2023) (Owned/Shared/Paid media). After the initial post, encourage others to use the

filter. This will help boost engagement and create a community that will make organic buzz around the movie.

- Produce content featuring partnerships, movie-inspired dolls, building on trailers, movie themes, and scene recreations (Owned/ Shared media) (Shorty Awards, 2023). Get the paparazzi to get shots of the actors in the outfit to start hype for the movie with the looks alone. By doing things, Barbie keeps the hype up over a longer period of time and keeps audiences engaged and talking

Outside Social Media

- Bring childhood dreams to life by creating the Barbie Malibu Dreamhouse in real life in partnership with Airbnb (Layne-Avery, 2023) (Paid/Shared media). By doing this, it capitalizes on nostalgia while also creating an engaging experience for communities to talk about.
- Bring Barbie's looks into real life with Margot Robbie's press tour outfits (Layne-Avery, 2023) (Paid media). These looks feed on the nostalgia of the old doll outfits and create the sense that if you see the movie, you will see your childhood come to life. This will get more people to want to see it based on nostalgia and the iconic looks on the carpet.

Overall, Barbie did a great job when it came to tactics for the campaign. A majority of this campaign relied on paid media, which is a risk since some can see it as forced and fake, but for Barbie, it worked out perfectly. By branching into multiple markets, Barbie took over the world in pink and made a cultural moment of the summer.

XVII. KPIs

To measure the first objective, measure how many impressions the posts get, as well as how many people engaged with the hashtags on the posts up to the movie release in July.

- Although we do not know for sure what their goal was, we can assume they far exceeded it, with posts getting 179 million organic impressions, and the hashtag #BarbietheMovie accumulated an impressive 4.6 billion views (Shorty Awards 2023).

To measure the second objective, measure how people are reacting on social media and news engagement. Do this by looking at key sentiments in comments, social posts, polls, and surveys.

- This was achieved by the end of the movie; Mattel found that there was an overwhelmingly positive sentiment towards Barbie after the movie and campaign (Shorty Awards, 2023).

To measure the last objective, measure how many followers the socials get, as well as how much increase happens in social posts and engagement of Barbie partnerships.

- This goal was hit with there being over 7.6 million organic engagements, and the social following count rose by over 3 million (Shorty Awards, 2023). The movie also had a billion-dollar revenue, and there was a huge surge in merchandise sales (Shorty Awards, 2023).

Overall, these are good measurements that Barbie could use to see if they were on track and hit their communication goals. Through these measurements, Barbie can see if their tactics worked and if they reached their communication objective in the end.

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