

Emerging Media Solution (MVP)

In recent years, the beauty entertainment industry has become oversaturated and ironically, almost colorless. From representation that lacks shade range to content creators adopting similar muted or minimalistic color palettes for their channels and blogs. This act of catering to the masses and only acknowledging the fringe topics when it will be profitable often excludes groups of people who desire to be spoken to regularly and not as a rare occurrence.

This neglected area of the media is where I would like Hello Weirdos to take on the task of creating content. **It will be a space where the sarcastic meets the artistic. Where intellect meets eyeliner.** A place where those who identify as members of the counter culture of the beauty community are considered first priority and not an afterthought for profit. I credit YouTuber Jackie Aina as being the reason I became interested in the social issues revolving around representation and negative stereotypes in beauty media. Recalling that as journalists, we are given the opportunity to set the agenda for conversations and be gatekeepers for institutions and this was the conversation I wanted to highlight while discussing one of my hobbies.

My research into beauty and book blogging by African American millennial women has proven to be slim in platforms that combine all three categories as well as a lack of a less feminine design across all beauty blogging. I noticed across social media platforms that there was an underlying implication that the prominent figures that are not business owners are vapid and merely pretty faces. Being someone whose intelligence has been questioned based on my interest in my appearance, I wanted to change the narrative.

This realization is what inspired me to marry book and beauty reviews through mixed media as opposed to solely creating video content on what will be **Hello Weirdos.**

Hello Weirdos is also the platform where I have chosen to unveil my passion project that was also inspired by noticing an area of the media that had been underserved. The current way that digital books

capitalize on their platform is mimicking the flipping of pages, search for content, highlighting words and search for definitions.

During my research, I noticed the integration of audio, slideshows, quizzes, videos and pop up features in children's books. While I felt that those features made a better use of the capabilities of a mobile device or tablet, they still did not satisfy the storytelling element that I was seeking, but instead made the products more educational. The next round of my research brought me to game/book hybrids that were more like storytelling apps that were a modern revival of the choose your own adventure books. The implementation of maps and the ability to change perspective between characters were some of the key features that these products boasted. The app Device 6 in particular intrigued me because while it was a puzzle app, you solved the mystery through the text, which turned and flipped on the page. I was getting closer to what I was looking for: storytelling that made use of the words themselves as art. The best way to describe my desire for digital storytelling is to combine the dynamic nature of lyric music videos with the artistry of storytelling.

I believe that interactivity goes beyond tapping on the screen but also engaging the reader to a point where you are demanding their attention by causing them to turn their device or bring it closer their faces for a more intimate experience. My initial experimentation with this idea of drawing the audience in for a more intimate experience actually began earlier this year in the spring during my final photography projects. I wanted to combine a visual experience with the written word and exploring typography.

I have downsized my ideas since its first inception and have decided it will be an **interactive chapbook** that will combine art, prose and the discussion of heavier topics. Over the course of my studies at the University of Georgia I realized that I had begun working on these two concepts of a blog and a book separately and now realize that they can function stronger together.

This will be the highlighted feature of the art portion of the site and be a place of discussion about the topics of sexual assault, mental health and relationships. These are all topics that are not traditionally combined with beauty entertainment but I am excited about experimenting with the balance of the two. The style of the chapbook will mirror that of the site in color palette in order to coordinate but be able to standalone if it is ever expanded and published as a full book.

As the tagline of Hello Weirdos states on the homepage, my project aspires to combine beauty, books and a little bitchiness in order to cater to those who identify as “other.”

I feel that the strengths of my project is that it is catering to an untapped market. Brands like Fenty Beauty has shown that when you provide minorities with quality options, they greatly support the efforts of the brand. I fit my target audience but I am still eager to expand my horizons and I think that will keep my content relevant and evolving. The combination of book reviews, beauty reviews, traditional blogging and my literary efforts creates what I feel is a unique mixture of topics that expands across audiences.

The improvements that I have considered is how I will approach video content since it is the medium that I feel the least confident in. Compared to the video based platforms that possess similar aesthetics, they might be perceived as more dynamic because they only require listening as opposed to reading and easy access to content is attractive. My primary goal of improvement for the chapbook also revolve around my editing skills.

My future opportunities with this project are that my video editing skills will improve and that will only add to the appeal of my writing skills. Because I am not content in only regurgitating topics that solely appeal to me and I have not strictly confined myself to one topic, my website will have a smaller risk of becoming stagnant. This variety also gives me more opportunities to partner with brands and thus create a profitable website without relying on a hosting platform that would censor my content and take a portion of the profits. The opportunities for the book are to become a full body of work that would be able to become a separate stream of income to support future endeavors.

The threats to my project are driving traffic to a new website and once readers interact with the site, keeping them and creating returning readers because of the fast pace of life we are currently living in. This threat also applies to the chapbook as well as the topic being too heavy for certain readers and they exit the piece before finishing.

My current timeline is adding more content to the site, which is currently live and accessible, and testing that during August. During this time I will be revising the chapbook in order for separate testing at the end of August. After analyzing my results, I plan to reiterate and retest before presenting my final product in December 2018.

User Research Method Report

In order to best reach a large sample of my potential audience, I will take advantage of my combined social media following of roughly 1,500 on Instagram, Twitter and Tumblr for a broad analysis of my engagement across those platforms since they would be my organic audience.

Following that I plan to send more targeted requests to review the site to my followers followed by a survey to identify any user problems, design improvements and overall suggestions.

I am in a FaceBook group affiliated with the website CollegeFashionista of roughly 2,400 members that I can pull data from as well in case my prior tests do not yield enough results.

Lastly, I plan to recruit some of my fellow Emerging Media students for desktop assessments of my site. I trust that their opinions would be more in line with the back end concerns and user design issues that the average reader might not notice. That testing will be followed by an in person interview and brief survey.

I currently write for a successful blog and have direct contact with the founders who I can receive extra feedback from an industry perspective.

I plan to use Qualtrics, Bit.ly, and Survey Monkey as my tools for my research.

Competitive Advantage Report

Part I. Market Research

Who is Hello Weirdos?

The target audience for Hello weirdos is an African American woman between the ages of 18-25. She has finished some college if not already acquired a degree and is educated enough to care about social and political issues alongside pop culture. She is in the infancy stages of her career so her annual income ranges from \$35,000 to \$45,000 not including any of her side hustles. She is living on a budget but saves in order to treat herself and wants an unbiased, well informed opinion about products that she's interested in. She resides in the Southeastern area of the United States but is interested in travelling as well as activities that aren't deemed traditionally southern.

She loves music, art, literature, beauty, movies but also dissecting the social issues and meanings within those areas. She is conscious about the world around her and often punctuates her thoughts with memes or pop culture references. Her preferred places to shop include indie brands and online boutiques. The brands she's drawn to include Goodbyebread, O'Mighty, and Valfre. She does not limit her fashion choices to one look but experiments with different eras and styles and is always hungry for the next source of inspiration

She identifies as someone who is part of the counter culture and often has to practice code switching in order to navigate through the different social groups she interacts with. She wants a voice that speaks directly to her and not as an afterthought. She desires to consume content that presents and intelligent discussion about important issues in one moment and lighthearted anecdotes in the next. The Hello Weirdos reader is looking for relatable content that also presents an attainable lifestyle.

While the primary target audience is African American women, the beauty of Hello Weirdos is that there are topics that appeal to readers of various races, genders and locations because the goal is to create a safe haven for those who don't always fit in.

Pt. II Product Comparison

Market Saturation Evaluation

A major strength to my project is that there are no standout competitors that combine the same specific content and aesthetic that I am working on producing. However there are two YouTube channels that I feel are the most similar, Anarkee and Snitchery, in that they appeal to makeup-lovers that aren't always interested in mainstream products and styles. The creator behind Snitchery is an artist and has recently begun sharing that on her platform and the creator behind Anarkee features similar products and subtle similarities in aesthetic as Hello Weridos. Anarkee has gained 3,846 subscribers and 177,848 views on her channel since 2016 and Snitchery has gained 188,335 subscribers and over 4.2 million views on her channel since its creation in 2012. These numbers qualify as indicators of success in my opinion as well their partnerships with major brands that align with their own brands.

My product differs in that it requires the audience to actively engage with my content, whereas purely visual/auditory content can be used as background noise or be tuned out in certain situations. My product puts my art and writer's voice in the forefront. I believe that my product can be successful at a slightly slower rate only because I am making use of an independent platform that requires a little more self promotion on my part.

In regards to similar traditional blogs, once again there are no prominent sites that combine the same content in that same manner in which I am and the trend currently is a lighter, more feminine design which sets me apart in the female market. While it has been inconvenient for my research purposes, it is encouraging that no other blogs have created this particular niche in that market in the way that I intend to do so. The blog Black Girl Nerds, is the closest in direction and content since they appeal to a population of African American women that do not completely identify with the mainstream interests that is shown through their entertainment, book and technology related content.

The brand boasts 147,720 followers on Twitter and 10,887 followers on Instagram and a podcast with a current five star rating among listeners. The blog has also been featured for its work in larger print publications and well as garnering their own red carpet interviews. These are all indicators of success.

This blog's success has been a slow yet fruitful build and highlighted my need for a social media plan in order to drive even more readers to my site. I believe there is room for my own success in this market if I succeed in my marketing and promotion.

Competitor Research

Snitchery

This YouTube channel is owned by Eleanor Barnes and appeals to the 18-24 year old female market. Her channel currently has 4,246,690 video views and 188,332 subscribers which she has gained since September 2012. She makes \$65-1,000 a month from her channel and \$783-12,500 yearly but she has noted that the bulk of her income comes from sponsored content and brand partnerships. Current keywords that link to content on her channel are: Tattoos, wigs, weight loss, asmr, boy beat, skincare, hair and makeup, all of which reflect her most successful videos on the platform.

Her social media persona reflects a mix of colorful girliness with the edginess of tattoo culture. She promotes her work via Instagram and Twitter and similar social media platforms to drive traffic to her channel. According to SocialBlade it is projected that her channel will continue in a positive direction, nearly doubling in subscriber count in the next year according to her current statistics.

Black Girl Nerds

This media brand includes a YouTube channel, Apple podcast and blog of the same name. Jamie Broanax is credited as creating the blog in February 2012. The target market has a wider range of 18-40 since the creative staff also ranges and caters to readers across that spectrum. The variety of platforms creates greater accessibility and therefore greater financial opportunities. The blog which is the foundation of this brand supports itself by allowing advertisers to share ad links, banners and sponsored content on the site. The brand also has a Patreon account which allows supporters to gain access to exclusive or early content in exchange for a monthly donation starting at \$3 that goes towards the blog and podcast's maintenance.

The keywords that are currently associate with the brand are: twitter, podcast and fancon. The design of the blog is in the traditional style with the most recent content being extra large and at the top with more articles and videos as you scroll down the page. There is a simplicity to the design and a fuchsia ,

black, gray and white color palette that while not being as airy as other blogs, still aligns with what is traditionally deemed feminine. The site features cartoons of black girl nerds alongside the name in the header.

The primary method of the brand's distribution method relies on digital access either via the blog, Soundcloud, YouTube, etc. If the podcast is indicative of the audience's current attitudes the content, they are doing very well with five star reviews as well as being featured in other publications and receiving awards for the blog and the podcast.