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Will the Trolls become the next Minions?

Predicting the future based on Today's Data

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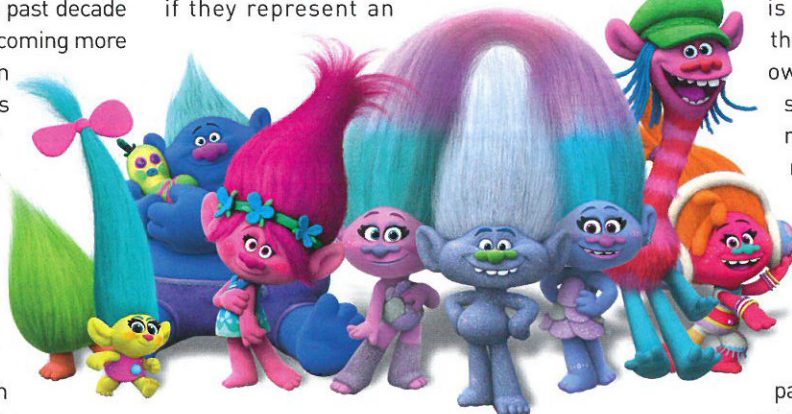
Market research should not only show today's market landscape, but also help to predict the future. Wouldn't it be great to know about the success of coming licenses based on the data we have now? So let's give it a try and take a closer look at what might happen with the Trolls later this year. There is a lot of excitement about this theme and the 1 million dollar question is whether the Trolls can live up to the high expectations they have raised.

→ We don't know for sure, because no one has seen the movie yet. But a look at the data shows us what has worked in the past. And when we assume that these successes happened for a reason then this allows us to look at the Trolls' potential from a few different angles. The first important factor is the gender issue. In the past decade we have seen the kids market becoming more and more gender specific: when we look at our current data, boys go for super heroes, and girls for beauty and engaging story telling. It is important to understand that this development does not come by accident, but is caused by gender specific needs and wants. Boys want heroes they can identify with who achieve something meaningful with special abilities the boys would like to have, too. No matter if it's Bob the Builder, Spiderman, or Cristiano Ronaldo: the mechanics are always the same. For girls it is less about identification, but about projection: they look for worlds they can dive into, with likeable characters, strong friendly relationships, and a beautiful environment. All the pink ponies and princesses work like that, as well as Monster High (nor as beautiful, though) or Violetta. Our data proves that children prefer gender specific licenses to neutral ones because their needs are addressed better.

So how gender specific are the Trolls?

Do they have a strong male character boys want to identify with? And «strong» in fact means physically strong, not just smart or funny. From what I have seen so far of the Trolls, I doubt this – so I dare say they will find

it hard to stand the competition of «real» boys themes like Star Wars. The Trolls are cute and with a lot of music, so we can expect them to attract girls more than boys, but again: can the Troll's cuteness compete with the excessive girlishness of other franchises in the market? The Trolls will win among girls if they represent an



imaginary world that is so attractive that girls want to get lost in it. But they have one drawback, though: they are not human. Non-human design codes like Hello Kitty can work well, but real affection is created by human heroines like Elsa. So the Trolls might become the next Hello Kitty, but they will definitely not become the next Frozen.

This takes us to the second important variable: What's the message?

When a boy wears a Batman or Messi shirt, his message to the world is clear: he shows who he wants to be. A girl's shirt conveys her concept of beauty and relationships, i.e. her dreamland territory. Now think about general audience movies like Ice Age, Madagascar, or Zoomania. They have cute animals, carefully designed characters and a wonderful story.

They were warming everyone's hearts and massive blockbusters at the box office, but they weren't as successful as licenses – because they lacked a strong, target group specific message. The truth behind this is quite simple: a movie must appeal to everyone, but a license does not. Buying merchandise is a much higher commitment than buying a movie ticket! The ownership we measure in our studies for these franchises is rooted in content products, not in merchandise or toys.

But can't the Trolls take the place of the Minions?

At first sight many facets of Minions and Trolls seem comparable: both are cute, funny, and not really gender specific in their looks and actions. But there is a significant difference, though: the Minions are so strange they escape any comparison, while the Trolls have a far more stereotyped cuteness that pushes them in the direction of a certain (girls) target group. In addition, the Minions were no story telling characters, but «just» dumb funny jokes all can laugh about. But the moment you tell a story, you give the character a target group specific twist. The Trolls come with a story, so they won't be as blank as the Minions. So the answer is no again: the Trolls won't become the next Minions, either. From today's limited perspective, the Trolls will work well for cinemas and all promotions around the movie release, but they may struggle as license. This will change, however, if the franchise gets a more female twist – with focus on girlish characters and story, and with a strong message girls can buy into.