

# Example by StudyDriver

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## Rise and Fall of MTV Example

The 1980s brought a new generation of fads and trends that changed the whole world, and most trends were set by the music industry. People emulated the style their favorite stars put off and were basically following everything a music star would do. This kind of praise for a music star has been going on for many decades. Yet, as time passed from the 1970s to the 1980s, the music seemed to become more about which advertisers could capitalize the most on popular stars instead of the true meaning behind the words and what the music stood for to the artist.

On August 1 1981, MTV: Music Television goes on the air for the first time ever. The Buggles “ Video Killed the Radio Star” was the first music video to air on the new cable television channel and the song really did embody what MTV was which was the rise of the greatest musical television empire that not only change how people understand music but was going to shape generations to come. As one of MTV’s creators John Lack Famously said “Ladies and gentleman, Rock and Roll”.

Since the launch of MTV in August of 1981, music changed from the freedom of artistic expression to advertisement filled commercialism. An example of this would be that when in the 1980s, some felt that the

average music video would lose the music and be more focused on the story, image and style that improved the look of the music star or stars. Another example of MTV commercialism is shown through some of the actions of Michael Jackson, such as his Motown 25 performance where he performed the moonwalk, his Pepsi TV commercial, and his selling of the song "Revolution" to Nike for another TV commercial. All of these events took place from 1982 to 1987, the years that made MTV pivotal. His Pepsi TV commercial shows that his MTV influence gave him a chance to make money for himself and the Pepsi Corporation alike.

Everyone remembers Michael Jackson's red leather jacket covered with zippers and the sexy style of Madonna. MTV, or music television, nationally publicizes these images and entertainers, and others like them. The station also promotes an idealized teen lifestyle, reflecting the images of these famous artists, which contrasts with the realities of the Generation X lifestyle. While some view the station as "illustrated radio" or an entertainment network for viewers' pleasure, others more accurately assess it as an advertising enterprise that endorses products and promotes attitudes. The advertisements that are both hidden in videos and placed in regular slots, influence viewers. Whether or not MTV critics agree with these "messages" that the network sends out, it has become a huge franchise generating large profits and great popularity. During the 1980's, MTV grew from being strictly a music video station to an original, three-station network that became the choice of several generations of viewers and the advertisers who court them. MTV's entertainment, commercialism, and messages satisfy and influence many types of viewers, giving them a healthy sense of group identity.

In 1981, MTV became one of the first stations to be able to appeal to such a populous audience as the twelve to twenty-four-year-old age group. The chief operating officer of Warner-Amex Satellite Entertainment Company (WASEC) felt that there was "a body of young people being ignored," hence the company designed MTV. Although at first success was unpredictable, the MTV network fought off competition by such competitors as the powerful Turner Broadcasting System. "There isn't room for two or three services doing the same thing," commented MTV's Bob Pittman. Later, the MTV network came out with VH1, or Video Hits One, a music station for older viewers, and Nickelodeon, a children's service station. "MTV was dealing with the labels, not the artists," states R. Serge Denisoff.

A perfect example of this advertising scenario is Michael Jackson's "Beat It" video. In the early 1980s, the already popular pop singer came onto the screen wearing a red leather jacket and a sparkling glove. He introduced an ankle-flicking dance style that moved to the beat of his pop-style music. Soon children across America were wearing replicas of the clothes and "moon-walking" down the schools' hallways. In this scenario, Michael Jackson, pop music, red leather jackets, dancing, and Motown Records all became popular. With so many brands and agencies wanting to place their ads on MTV, the network itself needed to advertise its own information and existence in some way to increase its own profit. The network began to air animated segments after commercial breaks that endorsed the MTV logo.

Over the years, the MTV logo has seen three different iterations. The first MTV logo was designed by Manhattan Design in 1980. This original logo featured a slightly abstract design of the letters "MTV" complete with a gloved hand holding a musical note. This logo, however, only lasted for a year, and was never actually around when MTV finally launched. In 1981, the channel switched their logo to a design more similar to the one we are now familiar with. This design featured a large "M" with a much smaller "TV" positioned at the bottom right corner of the "M". Beneath this were the words "Music Television"<sup>[footnoteRef:6]</sup>. This was the logo used by the station until 2010 when the MTV began their transition away from playing music videos. At this point, the channel chose to remove the words "Music Television" from the bottom of the logo, though not much else about the logo changed except for the fact that the height of the logo was squashed in a little. The design of the MTV logo looks much like the design elements you see in graffiti art. This resemblance to graffiti is no coincidence, as both MTV and graffiti tap into many of the same ideas of freedom and rebellion and both are geared toward the same, young audience. Another significant design element of the MTV logo is the size and prominence of the "M" in the logo compared to the other two letters. In the beginning of MTV, the entire focus was on the music. In every way, the channel lived up to the name "Music Television". It comes as no surprise, then, that the designers of the MTV logo chose to make the "M" in the logo much more prominent than the "TV"

Lastly, one interesting aspect of the MTV logos design is its lack of dependency on a color scheme. The base logo is designed using only black text, though the channel has featured the logo in a variety of colors throughout the

years in various promos. This ability to change the color scheme of their logo at will has served as a valuable marketing tool for the channel, allowing them to stay as diverse as the music they spotlight. MTV has long relied on its recognizable logo and the channel it represents to move music up and down the charts. However, there are also plenty of examples of the channel leveraging the popularity of their logo to move products as well. The MTV logo has been featured on a wide variety of products, ranging from clothing to duffel bags to notebooks. MTV's ability to launch product lines based almost entirely on the popularity of its logo is certainly not unusual; creating product lines centered around a popular logo has been a lucrative business model for countless brands. Aside from appearing on products, though, the true testament to the popularity of the MTV logo is the impact that it has helped leave on the music world. The MTV logo has been the standard for a channel that has been introducing us to new artists and breaking barriers since 1981. In this way, the MTV logo will forever be memorialized as one of the most important and popular symbols in pop culture.

Everyone knew what a DJ was but what was a VJ? MTV wanted to go with more album-oriented rock at first featuring more well known and established bands. The problem was they found out their audience was younger than they thought so they moved into more top 40 based music. Another problem was a lot of the music in the top 40 was by unknown new singers and bands. There was also new styles of music people really didn't know including "New Wave" and more electronic dance-based music. This leads them to use younger presenters to introduce these new videos and artists and the term "video jockey" or "VJ" was coined. Some of the first VJs at MTV were: Mark Goodman, Nina Blackwood, Alan Hunter, J. J. Jackson, and Martha Quinn. The VJs would start to become celebrities in their own right and sometimes MTV would use "guest VJs" such as Adam Ant, Billy Idol, Phil Collins, and Simon LeBon. Arguably one of the most famous VJs of all time would be "Downtown Julie Brown" who was the host of the Club MTV show from 1987 until 1992. Her full name is Julie Dorne Brown and had been a dancer on Top of the Pops. The show she hosted was one of the first that exclusively played dance music.

If there was a breakout star for the MTV era, it would have to be Madonna Louise Ciccone who could be considered the Queen of Pop. Sure, Michael Jackson could be considered a breakout star when it came to MTV but he had already been famous for years. Madonna capitalized on the new artistic expression that could be used

in music videos and the music could be tied to fashion and art. She had a few big hits in the early 80s with songs like “Burning Up” but they were mostly club based songs. She then released “Holiday” which was the third single off her album and her first international top-ten hit. She had a unique style that included a lot of lace tops, shirts over Capri pants, fishnet stocking, jewelry, bracelets, and bleached hair. This would influence the style for a lot of girls all over North America and the world. Her next studio album, “Like A Virgin” would push Madonna to the next level. The title track “Like A Virgin” would push her popularity and introduce her controversy. The video for “Like A Virgin” agitated a lot of conservative organizations but increased her popularity. Madonna would be the first woman to sell over 5 million copies of an album. The album would end up a certified diamond and would sell over 21 million copies.

MTV was instrumental in sharing her music and image but she would push things even further with a little performance at the still-new MTV Video Music Awards. Madonna would perform “Like A Virgin” which started out with her on top of a wedding cake and would end up with her rolling around the stage for the majority of the song. It’s considered one of the most iconic performances in the history of MTV and by critics. The performance skyrocketed her popularity and increased her fame overnight. These were the days when entire careers could be made in one show or performance. With very few things to watch on TV, there was a good chance a large majority of the country was tuning in and one big moment could launch careers of singers, bands, comedians, and performers.

Before the launch of MTV, it was difficult to imagine seeing your favorite music artists on a 24-hour basis, seven days a week. The music world at the time was a vastly different one, and there was no cable station that could broadcast music entirely without having some competition from other programming schedules. That system made news networks such as HBO and CNN sure successes, right from their launch, and music videos were not seen as things worth watching, or worth any value at all. That all changed with the advent of MTV. Coming with cheaper music videos, the initial thought was that it would not change the entertainment industry, and yet here we are. The evolution of music videos is all thanks to the network, and it is among the reasons we get to enjoy high-quality music videos today. That also led to the creation of the current phenomenon that is girl bands and

boy bands, all packaged to appeal to teenage audiences and younger people. In fact, the rise of these groups is a direct effect of the cable network. Record companies found alternative methods to market their artists as well, through the use of music videos (even elaborate ones). They were also able to do this without the reliance of live performances, which was an important skill for past artists to have. It invented reality TV. This is among the more unpleasant realities of modern-day programming, especially from the mid-2000s going forward. MTV was, however, at the forefront of the game, and they started reality TV long before the rest of the world caught up with them. In fact, they started a series in 1992, through a documentary-soap opera hybrid known as *The Real World* and *Laguna Beach*.

In addition, a side effect of that reality TV was promoting ideals such as LGBT rights, since these shows began to feature LGBT cast members in prominent roles on the show. It achieved an enormous amount of influence. Love them or hate them, you cannot deny that pop culture among young people is largely influenced directly by boy bands and girl bands – they are one of the most concentrated forms of video culture. In addition, MTV effectively diminished the power of radio – that had a direct implication on the avenues bands would use to find success. In fact, it made TV to be the dominant source of searching and seeing new music, therefore reducing reliance on the radio – a major implication considering the powerful extent that radio has in America.

By the mid-1990s, the majority of MTV's daily schedule was devoted to programming that was not related to music. Its sister station VH1 had been broadcasting adult-oriented rock videos since 1985, and it soon filled the vacuum, with original content such as *Pop Up Video* and the documentary series *Behind the Music*. MTV Networks launched MTV2 in 1996, with the intention of recapturing the spirit embodied by their "I want my MTV" advertising campaign in the 1980s. MTV2 started with the same free-form structure that characterized early MTV, but it soon shifted to genre-specific programs. By 2005 MTV2 had followed the same course as its parent network, with the bulk of its schedule consisting of reality shows, celebrity coverage, and comedies. While music had a reduced presence on MTV, videos remained important to the network and its image. Beginning in 1984, MTV honoured achievement in the format with its annual Video Music Awards. *Total Request Live (TRL)*, an hour-long interview and music video show, debuted in 1998 and anchored the weekday lineup. By the early 21st century, however,

MTV increasingly sought to position itself as a destination for music on the Internet. Its Web site offered streaming video and audio content, and in 2007 it launched Rhapsody America, a joint venture with RealNetworks and Verizon Wireless, as a subscription-based alternative to Apple Inc.'s wildly popular iTunes service; in 2010 it was spun off as the independent company Rhapsody International. Partly because of the popularity of viewing music videos on the Internet, TRL was canceled in 2008, though it returned in 2017.

It was the early-1980s, music videos had emerged at the intersection of technology and popular culture. Music videos were all the rage, and MTV was the hippest cable-TV channel on the planet. But nowadays, MTV is just one of many cable-TV and online channels competing for the eyes and ears of young people. Viacom's flagship network is no longer a cutting-edge source for music or entertainment. Viewership, especially among the 20- and 30-year-old Millennials that marketers covet, has been on a steep and steady decline. "There's a tendency with Millennials to avoid establishing a relationship with a cable provider, at all costs," Joseph Abruzzo, chief exploration officer at Havas Media North America, said in a phone interview from New York. "Millennials aren't going to pay for shows they won't watch, and everything they want nowadays can be found online."

That translates into less time watching linear television and more time on sites such as Google's YouTube, Netflix, Facebook and VEVO, among many others. To win over Millennials, networks must offer programming that is at once edgy and well-produced. Reality television no longer draws. Some of the most-talked-about shows on Twitter include *The Walking Dead* on the AMC Networks (AMCX), *Game of Thrones* on Time Warner's (TWX) HBO, *Pretty Little Liars* on Disney's (DIS) ABC Family, and *American Horror Story* on 21st Century Fox's (FOXA) FX network. "Traditional media must rethink their strategies in order to stay competitive," Michelle Lynn, chief insights officer of Dentsu Aegis Network Americas, said in a phone interview. "Everything is competing for your time today, and with mobile you can tap into anything...wherever and whenever." MTV's programming has struggled to capture Millennial audiences. Shows like *Catfish*, *Broke A\$\$ Game Show*, *Awkward* and *Eye Candy* are criticized for offering characters and plot lines that are juvenile, trashy or just plain vulgar. "People stay glued to the TV for *Scandal* or *Empire*," said the UNC student Jones, referencing shows on ABC and Fox. But what does MTV really have to offer these days? The channel hasn't had a major hit since *Jersey Shore* - and hardly."

There's so much to cover with the history of MTV over the years that we could be here for days. I was mainly wanting to cover the period from its conception and launch into the 80s. Over the years there would still be many monumental videos and moments that would become significant parts of pop culture. Heading into the mid-90s the play of music videos started to drop big time. Between 1995-2000 music videos were played 36.5% less. Music videos went from being played at least 8 hours a day to down to 3. The advent of reality television switched the focus on MTV with shows like Singled Out, The Osbournes, Punk'd, Pimp My Ride, that piece of crap show with Jessica Simpson and Nick Lachey, up to the juggernaut that was Jersey Shore. MTV would eventually stop playing music videos as with the advancement of YouTube and online sources there would be no point. Everything could be accessed instantly, and no one was going to wait around to watch something on TV not knowing when it may or may not be played. The history of MTV shows how it is a cultural institution and acts like the backbone of the 80s. It's when artists were able to really express and present themselves beyond just the music. Music videos created a new way that artists could connect with their fans and evolved into a brand new art form. A lot of times a good video could make up for a crappy song. And a great song could become epic with the right music video. The 80s was this great explosion of pop culture and MTV was absolutely at the forefront of this new revolution.

MTV had to move away from just music television and began showing sports, news, sitcoms, cartoons, game shows, documentaries, reality shows, and other programs. MTV officially dropped "Music Television" from its corporate logo in 2010, which was a belated acknowledgment of what had been obvious for year: MTV had lost its focus on music programming and shifted its focus to reality programming in an attempt to keep up with the young generation (Collins, 2010). Since the successful launch of its first reality series Real World in 1992, the network continued to reduce music programming and produced more and more reality programs. Jersey Shore, a reality series following the lives of eight housemates spending their summer at the Jersey 2 Shore, was launched on MTV in 2009. The show garnered record ratings and became MTV's most viewed series telecast ever. The ratings success of Jersey Shore, along with the popularity of other MTV reality shows such as Teen Mom, has made the network a target of criticism by various groups who perceived MTV programming as a negative social influence on the young generation. For example, some called the lifestyles presented in Jersey Shore detrimental (Matheson, 2011); some blamed MTV for spreading the message that it is not shameful to become pregnant at a



young age and encouraging young generation to become famous and make money by appearing on reality programs (Stewart, 2011).

Despite the controversy, MTV continued with its reality programming strategy hoping to attract more young viewers. As the TV industry faced challenges from the Internet and other new technologies, Jersey Shore saved MTV from a ratings slump. However, as the show's fourth and fifth season started showing signs of fatigue, MTV had to end Jersey Shore after its sixth season and started preparing for a life after Jersey Shore. MTV created spinoffs of Jersey Shore, such as Snooki & JWoww, The Pauly D Project, The Show With Vinny, but none of these spinoffs' ratings equaled those of the original. After Jersey Shore concluded, MTV turned its cameras on West Virginia for Buckwild, a reality series following the lives of nine young adults who create their own unique ways to enjoy life. The show is a rural version of Jersey Shore and trailers of the show became controversial even before it debuted in January 2013. With an average of 3 million viewers per episode (live + 3) in its first season, MTV renewed Buckwild for a second season (Patten, 2013). However, following the tragic death of a cast member, MTV opted not to move ahead with the controversial reality show. The rating success experienced by Jersey Shore created an over-emphasis on one night for MTV; how to build out new nights and create a more balanced programming schedule and how to live a life after Jersey Shore have become the network's biggest challenges.

The majority of MTV programs currently on air are reality series. Some of the critical issues that need to be examined include: What is the competitive advantage and disadvantage of the reality 3 programming strategy? Should MTV invest more in scripted series and acquisitions? How can MTV stay competitive and profitable in the industry? In addition to competition from other networks, MTV's ratings are also facing challenges from delayed-viewing technologies such as DVR and online viewing platforms such as Netflix and Hulu. These technologies had been seen as threats to the TV industry, but more and more TV networks have embraced and taken advantage of these new technologies to create new revenue streams and promote their programs on multiple platforms. MTV has put some of its shows on MTV.com, iTunes, Netflix, and Amazon Prime. The network recently launched its own MTV mobile app, which allows viewers to check MTV schedules and watch MTV programs on their phones and tablets.

MTV, formally known as Music Television, is one of the most viewed networks on television today. Roughly thirty-three years old, it has changed the American culture drastically in more than just one way. Specifically targeting teens and young adults, the MTV network provides all of the most up to date gossip on celebrities, highlights the latest fashion trends, promotes versified lifestyles, and defines the music industry of our generation. However, this so-called “idolized network” has not always been this way. The American culture has been affected by MTV through the creation of the network, the transformation from simply just music television to inappropriate reality shows, and the promotion of inappropriate content