

Buzz marketing for movies assignment

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Buzz marketing for movies Iris Mohr Tobin College of Business, St. John's University, 8000 Utopia Parkways, Jamaica, NY 11439, USA KEYWORDS

Motion pictures; Movies; Marketing; Promotion; Buzz marketing Abstract In today's dynamic entertainment environment, movies are struggling to stay afloat and remain profitable. Challenges such as piracy, digital theft, competition, overlapping movie campaigns, media fragmentation, and audience saturation are forcing marketers to stretch their film budgets and make every dollar as effective as possible.

With more and more entertainment options crowding peoples' lives, marketers must search for innovative ways to reach movie audiences. By breaking through the daily clutter and noise, and capturing peoples' attention to the point that talking about a movie becomes an enjoyable experience to share, buzz marketing is one such promotional posture that drives audiences to theaters. In order to achieve success with buzz marketing, however, marketers must recognize the role it plays in the context of movie differentiation strategies to support the company's overall approach.

To that end, this article analyzes buzz marketing as it pertains to six movie differentiation strategies (differentiation with cosmetic movie features, differentiation to reach market segments, growing a movie segment, positioning to support the movie image, positioning to extend the movie image, and differentiation via non-traditional channels) and offers steps for its successful implementation. ?? 2007 Kelley School of Business, Indiana University. All rights reserved. 1. The marketing challenge Today's movie <https://assignbuster.com/buzz-marketing-for-movies-assignment/>

marketers confront a difficult reality: the game plan by which they've played for years is being challenged and there is a call for new, innovative ways to drive box office sales. Under the historically used traditional model, corporate marketers spend marketing dollars on messages aimed at a target audience. The marketing team creates a message, purchases media, and sees that the message is delivered to personal and business customers. Given the fragmentation of media today, however, it is becoming increasingly difficult for E-mail address:edu marketers to promote movies using the traditional model.

In the United States, for example, what was once a handful of television stations has now proliferated into more than 1600 broadcast and cable outlets; similar trends are underway in Europe, as well. Cable fragments the broadcast audience, TiVo users are zapping through 30-second commercial spots, and online advertising is on the rise. This sort of fragmentation makes it more difficult to generate an impact, accumulate sufficient reach and awareness, and plan promotional campaigns in general. Added to this fractured landscape, multitasking has become increasingly common across the board.

While surfing the Web, the typical US teenager engages in an average of two other activities, one of 0007-6813/\$ – see front matter ?? 2007 Kelley School of Business, Indiana University. All rights reserved. doi: 10. 1016/j. bushor. 2007. 04. 001 396 which is often homework. Reportedly, some 80% of business people also multitask while performing workrelated duties (Greenspan, 2004). In concert with this, there is an increasing trend for consumers to “ switch off”; they are ever more selective about what they <https://assignbuster.com/buzz-marketing-for-movies-assignment/>

watch and the advertising messages they trust. As Court (2004, p.) cites, according to Yankelovich Partners, 65% of consumers feel “ constantly bombarded with too much advertising,” 69% are “ interested in products and services that would help skip or block marketing,” and 54% “ avoid buying products that overwhelm with advertising and marketing. ” To add, television and movie lovers are witnessing a revolution in digital home entertainment. With it, a growing number of people are turning away from neighborhood cinemas in order to stay home and be entertained by new technologies and advanced personal theater systems.

Consumer electronics manufacturers, IT vendors, and movie companies are lining up to extol the virtues of Blu-ray and HD-DVD, the proclaimed successors to the current DVD format (Thomas, 2006). According to Gnoffo (2005), by the end of 2004, Forrester Research estimated there were TiVos and other DVRs in 6.5 million US households, up from 1.9 million in 2002. That number, the firm claims, will climb to almost 50 million by 2009, representing 41% of all US households.

On another front, the popularity of Netflix, an online subscription service boasting 3 million users, prompted both Blockbuster and Wal-Mart to offer similar services whereby people rent DVDs for an unlimited time for a monthly fee. While it's true that DVDs may be a cash cow for studios, theaters suffer when patrons skip the cinema experience and wait for those releases at home. Needless to say, given the increase in entertainment options, the movie-going experience needs to be far more compelling to draw in audience members.

Moreover, this challenge is not likely to subside, but rather grow more compelling: as discussed by Charny (2005), a recent study by Informa Research Services indicates that 125 million people ??? about 5% of all cell phone owners ??? will be watching television on their handsets by 2010. In addition, the Digital Lifestyles 2006 Outlook from Parks Associates (Scherf, 2006) estimates that US consumer spending for online entertainment, including on-demand gaming, music, and video services, will grow by 260% in the next five years.

In this frenetic and competitive environment, marketers must search for innovative ways to reach and attract movie audiences. Buzz marketing is one such promotional posture that is capable of breaking through the existing noise and clutter of the marketing scene, to capture peoples' attention to the point that talking about a movie becomes an enjoyable I. Mohr experience to share. Essentially, buzz marketing mimics the traditional marketing model in that it sends messages to targeted audiences through varying media.

Under the buzz marketing model, however, the entertainment marketer injects the audience and media with a jaw-dropping, movie-related message that is so interesting and exciting that it causes the information to spread like wildfire. That appealing element of exhilaration represents the essence of, and key to, buzz marketing, and differentiates it from the traditional marketing approach. Among its many attractive qualities, buzz marketing is a low-cost, far-reaching mode of promotion.

This being the case, entertainment marketers' interest in the method is rising as media fragmentation continues and movie marketing costs increasingly spiral upward. Buzz marketing also satisfies studio executives who are confronted with steadily mounting marketing costs, and are thus challenged by existing promotional tactics in search of more mileage for fewer dollars. 2. Buzz marketing encompasses word of mouth and viral marketing At the core of buzz marketing is the phenomenon of word of mouth (WOM), the process by which an individual influences the actions or attitudes of others.

As indicated by the following quotes on the value of word of mouth (<http://www.geocities.com/WallStreet/6246/quote6.html>), academicians have long been aware of the power of WOM on consumers' preferences and actual purchase behaviors: " Forget about market surveys and analyst reports. Word of mouth is probably the most powerful form of communication in the business world. It can either hurt a company's reputation...or give it a boost in the market. Word-of-mouth messages stand out in a person's mind....

Quite simply, we find messages more believable and compelling when we hear them directly from other people, particularly people we know and respect. " ??? Regis McKenna " Word of mouth seems to be a frequently used riskreduction device; and this source of information is particularly sought for in situations characterized by high uncertainty. " ??? Johan Arndt " Word of mouth tends to be highly persuasive because the sender apparently has nothing to gain from the receiver's subsequent actions. ??? Leon G. Schiffman and Leslie L. Kanuk Malcolm Gladwell (2002), author of the <https://assignbuster.com/buzz-marketing-for-movies-assignment/>

national bestseller *The Tipping Point*, says WOM is so powerful because ideas, behaviors, messages, and Buzz marketing for movies products sometimes behave just like outbreaks of infectious disease. Similar to how an ill person can start a flu epidemic, so too can a small but precisely targeted push cause a fashion trend or the popularity of a new product. According to McKinsey & Co. Ramsey, 2005), approximately two-thirds of all economic activity in the United States is influenced by shared opinions about a product, brand, or service. On the basis of aggregated data and interviews with various WOM marketing experts, eMarketer (www.emarketer.com) estimates that almost 50% of online marketers will engage in some form of WOM or viral campaign in 2006. A recent survey of marketers, which asked what type of digital media they were either using or were planning to use, found that exactly two-thirds cited WOM (Ramsey, 2005).

The nature and scope of the Internet, as well as other messaging devices, has inspired marketers to deliberately attempt to stimulate or simulate the WOM process by designing marketing campaigns with characteristics that attract audiences and encourage individuals to pass along a message. Also known as buzz marketing and viral marketing, these tactics create the potential for exponential growth in the message's exposure and influence (Wilson, 2000).

Though the terms buzz marketing and viral marketing are often used interchangeably with WOM communications, the following discussion points highlight clear distinctions between the three. 397 information, and thus very effective in influencing customers' product-related decisions. One explanation for this strong influence is that opinion leaders are perceived as <https://assignbuster.com/buzz-marketing-for-movies-assignment/>

having nothing to gain financially from their purchase recommendations, and are thus inherently trusted. That is why word of mouth is so effective.

In effect, when opinion leaders initiate WOM, they send a free, credible, and targeted marketing message. 2. 2. Viral marketing Viral marketing, a high-tech and “ impersonal” variation of WOM, is an Internet-driven strategy that enables and encourages people to pass along a marketing message and engage in word of mouth, creating the potential for exponential growth in the message’s exposure and influence. Like a virus, this tactic takes advantage of rapid multiplication to explode a message to thousands, even millions.

Viral marketing depends on a high pass-along rate to create a snowballing effect. A widely cited first example of viral marketing is Hotmail, a company now owned by Microsoft, which promotes both its service and advertisers’ messages in every e-mail sent by patrons using the technology. 2. 3. Buzz marketing With media undergoing a vast change in a world where aggressive television ads, flashy websites, and glossy brochures compete for consumer attention, it is necessary to bridge WOM with technology (e. g. the Internet, mobile phones, MP3 players) and “ outside the box” thinking. Buzz marketing is the practice of gathering volunteers either formally by actively recruiting individuals who naturally set cultural trends, or informally by drawing “ connectors”: people who have lots of contacts in different circles, who can talk up their experiences with folks they meet in their daily lives. These people can be experts, members of the press, politicians, celebrities, or well-connected customers others rely on for information.

Unlike WOM, whereby opinion leaders are internally motivated because of their knowledge, those spreading buzz may or may not be experts, and may be spreading buzz on a host of different things that are injected by marketers. Buzz marketing captures the attention of consumers and media to the point that people talk about the brand, because the message is perceived as entertaining, fascinating, and/or newsworthy. In order for this to occur, however, there must be something interesting, clever, amusing, catchy, or remarkable enough about the message such that WOM fuels fast distribution via technology to create a “ buzz. Clearly, this requires clever marketing

2. 1. Word of mouth communications WOM communications, also referred to as opinion leadership, is the process by which one person (the opinion leader) informally influences the actions of others, who may be opinion seekers or opinion receivers. The key characteristic of this influence is that it is interpersonal and informal and takes place between two or more people, none of whom represent a commercial selling source that would gain financially from the exchange of information (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2007).

WOM implies personal or face-to-face communication, although nowadays it may also take place via telephone conversation or within the context of an instant message or e-mail. As individuals, opinion leaders specialize in the product categories (e. g. , travel, automobiles) about which they offer information and advice, and often read special interest magazines to broaden their expertise. By the same token, when other product categories are discussed (ones in which they do not focus), these individuals are likely to become opinion receivers, occupying that position due to lack of knowledge in the subject area.

Opinion leaders are a highly credible and powerful source of consumer 398 and creativity. Successful buzz marketing efforts so capture the attention of individuals that they talk to others interpersonally via acquaintances, friends, co-workers, and family members, and impersonally on the Internet in the form of message boards, chats, polls, user ratings, and member stories. As a result, more buzz is ultimately generated. Practitioner writings suggest that buzz is usually something that combines a wacky, jaw-dropping event or experience with pure branding to get people talking.

According to McKinsey & Co. , and as reported by firm strategy consultant Renee Dye (2000), motion pictures and broadcasting are two categories that are highly driven by buzz. Consider, for example, the 19th season premiere of The Oprah Winfrey Show, which aired in the fall of 2004. This episode created considerable buzz when Pontiac gifted each audience member with a new G6 sedan, and was remarkable enough to be noted by TV Guide as one of the greatest moments in television history. According to comScore Networks (“ Oprah Giveaway,” 2004), traffic to the Oprah. om website and GM’s Pontiac. com increased dramatically after the talk show host’s giveaway program aired on Monday. Behold, the power of buzz. I. Mohr dispersed buzz can serve as more valuable than concentrated buzz. In effect, if managers are interested in fast-forwarding the development of WOM, they might want to consider decreasing the concentration of buzz marketing tactics, in order to free up resources that can be used to more widely diffuse the desired message across multiple communities.

Interestingly, via two Web-based surveys used to collect data regarding buzz marketing agents’ word of mouth communication practices, Carl (2006) finds <https://assignbuster.com/buzz-marketing-for-movies-assignment/>

that “ as predicted by recent discussions of everyday communication in the communication literature, effective WOM and buzz marketing is not rooted in the marketing of a particular brand, product, or service, but rather is based on everyday relationships and conversations of people discussing other matters” (p. 30). Most recently, Liu (2006) uses actual word of mouth information, or buzz, to examine the dynamic patterns of WOM to explain box office revenue.

The results show that WOM activities are most active during a movie’s pre-release and opening week, and that movie audiences tend to hold relatively high expectations before release but become more critical in the opening week. The volume of word of mouth offers significant explanatory power for box office revenue, both in the aggregate and for the early weeks, in support of a theory that WOM functions in the movie market primarily through an informative effect on awareness. . The literature on buzz marketing Despite the recent surge in trade books on buzz marketing (e. g. , Buzzmarketing; The Anatomy of Buzz: How to Create Word of Mouth Marketing; Grapevine: The New Art of Word-of-Mouth Marketing; Unleashing the Ideavirus; Buzz: Harness the Power of Influence and Create Demand), academic research on the subject is still in its infancy. Among the extant literature, Thomas (2004) offers a conceptual framework with information on how to build buzz.

Defining buzz marketing as the amplification of initial marketing efforts by third parties through their passive or active influence, the author argues the ultimate buzz is delivering exceptional value, what is known as the relative advantage of the offer. When this is achieved, the offer itself will be the buzz. In creating exceptional value, Thomas stresses the importance of integrating <https://assignbuster.com/buzz-marketing-for-movies-assignment/>

customers into the process of product development, with the objective of surprising buyers with added or unanticipated value.

This, in turn, evokes customer delight, an emotional response which results in the highest levels of customer satisfaction, higher retention rates (customer loyalty), and higher buzz levels. Providing a unique perspective, David Godes and Dina Mayzlin (2004) suggest that firms interested in adopting buzz management as an element of their promotional mix consider the following: in many cases, 4. The advantages of buzz Most businesses fail to realize the potential of buzz. As such, they instead turn to other promotional venues that are more costly, since they appear more promising.

A confluence of factors, however, helps make buzz an attractive promotional posture in driving audiences to movies. Next, five of these aspects are highlighted. 4. 1. Buzz cuts costs While cost increases, rather than decreases, are now the norm in most business arenas, buzz marketing campaigns reduce costs because customers advertise by engaging in conversation about the product. Buzz marketing campaigns involve no national media buys and expensive creative components such as radio or television. This can represent a significant competitive advantage, in a day and age when promotion costs are steadily and rapidly spiraling upward.

As cited by Galloway (2006) in the Hollywood Reporter, Nielsen Monitor-Plus estimated that: “ the major studios spent nearly \$3. 5 billion ??? \$3490. 5 million, to be exact ??? on media buys in Buzz marketing for movies 2005, compared with \$3324 million the previous year.... The average cost of marketing a studio picture rose to \$36. 2 million in 2005, compared with

\$34.4 million the year before ??? even as perpicture negative costs dropped from \$62.4 million in 2004 to \$60 million last year. " 399 about, to the point that it becomes a great conversation piece.

Consider the recent remake of *The Omen*, which opened on 6/6/06. The uniqueness of the date, with its sinister sixes and an unusual Tuesday premiere, provided the film with a fun and creepy marketing hook. While Tuesday openings are not something to which the movie-going public is accustomed, the marketing department at 20th Century Fox highlighted the date tie-in and emphasized the atypical day of the week. As a result, curious and eager customers turned out in large numbers on opening night, with the movie selling out across the country.

4. 2. Buzz reduces risk

As the typical movie budget is stretched to its breaking point, motion picture players, especially those with particularly limited funds, seek to not only achieve the greatest "bang" for their buck, but also utilize avenues which entail the least amount of risk. The low cost factor of the Internet makes it a perfect choice in this regard. For film companies with small budgets, a buzz marketing campaign is a much safer bet financially than a huge marketing budget that possesses risk. According to Emanuel Rosen (2002), author of *The Anatomy of Buzz*, stimulating talk is very successful for some companies.

One of the best things about word-of-mouth campaigns, he adds, is that they typically involve low levels of financial risk.

4. 5. Buzz adds credibility

Importantly, to make buzz work, the person one listens to must be discriminating, and know something the audience does not. Otherwise, that

person is not adding anything of value. When a friend, neighbor, coworker, or family member tells about a great movie, it is believable because the person is viewed as objective concerning the information or advice given.

Intentions are perceived as positive because no compensation was received for pitching the movie. In essence, buzz marketing is successful because of the “credibility factor”; that is, trusting people we know because we are in a relationship with them. 4. 3. Buzz increases visibility In an environment cluttered with multiple options and plenty of noise, buzz marketing can achieve valuable differentiation by making movies visible. This can be achieved through providing viewers with exclusive film clips, in which movie stars talk about what went into filming specific scenes, and how they were shot.

Alternatively, visibility may translate into live webcasts from movie premieres, during which celebrities answer questions submitted online by fans. In the case of Mission Impossible III, Paramount reached out to Yahoo users by asking them to send in Tom Cruise trivia, and providing them with an online segment entitled “The Top 10 Things You Never Knew About Mission Impossible III,” whereby Tom Cruise and the film’s director, J. J. Abrams, revealed secrets from the set. To reach avid Web browsers, Internet-related activities (e. . , video blogs, text blogging, photo blogging) not only increase visibility at low cost, but also foster strong relationships with fans by bringing them back to the website repeatedly, to participate and get involved. 5. Buzz marketing applied to movies Buzz building plays a tactical role within the context of movie differentiation strategy. Movie differentiation, a variation of product differentiation, involves modifying <https://assignbuster.com/buzz-marketing-for-movies-assignment/>

either a physical or non-physical element of the movie to achieve a competitive advantage. According to

Dickson and Ginter (1987), product differentiation is best viewed as offering a product that is perceived to differ from the competing products on at least one element of actual product characteristics, and/or through advertising directed at establishing perceptions of both physical and non-physical product characteristics. Once a movie differentiation is in place, buzz marketing plays a role in cutting through the clutter and capturing the attention of consumers and media. Buzz marketing could be combined with other marketing tactics that support overall strategy.

Movie differentiation strategies include: differentiation with cosmetic movie features, differentiation to reach market segments, growing a movie segment, positioning to support the movie image, positioning to extend the movie image, and differentiation via non-traditional channels. Next, each of these is examined in more detail. 4. 4. Buzz starts conversations Whether true or false, it has often been said that there's no such thing as bad publicity. For its part, a buzz marketing campaign relies on people (i. e. , the general public) to be the catalyst for promoting the movie.

This requires, however, that marketers provide individuals with something worth talking 400 I. Mohr subculture: a set of people with distinct, religiousbased behaviors and beliefs. Mel Gibson's controversial film struck a chord among moviegoers. Focusing on the last 12 hours in the life of Jesus of Nazareth, The Passion of The Christ made a huge impact at the box office when it was released on February 25, 2004 (Ash Wednesday), earning more

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than \$375 million during its theatrical run. Working under a limited budget for A-list stars and marketing spending, Mel Gibson set about creating and spreading buzz among the faithful.

To that end, Gibson's production company hired several Christian marketing companies to work various segments of the potential audience. According to Baker and Lobdell (2004), the official Passion movie website was full of suggestions: for churches to buy blocks of movie tickets, and invite congregation members and their friends to attend screenings; to ask theater owners if pastors could address audiences after screenings, and hold question-and-answer sessions; to give Passion-related sermons on themes such as forgiveness and everlasting life; and to distribute Passion-themed New Testaments.

5. 1. Differentiation with cosmetic movie features

Consumers cannot evaluate a movie in the absence of seeing it. Instead, they turn to cosmetic movie features for guidance (e. g. , movie stars, producers, directors, trailers, genre, storyline). To the extent that cosmetic features are insufficient, and audiences lack their own experience or knowledge to make judgments, they turn to social acquaintances or mega-stars to tell them. To prepare for such a contingency, creative marketers could rely on “connectors,” including award-winning celebrities, reporters, directors, talk show hosts, and other powerful Hollywood players, to spread positive buzz about the movie.

Alternatively, marketers can find ways to get people to talk about the film. For example, fans who visited the Mr. and Mrs. Smith official movie website, and chose to accept the prominent “Get the Broadband Experience” free

offer, were able to view DVD-quality trailers and behind-the-scenes video extras, images of stars Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie, a plot synopsis, character bios, and other content, all of which could be displayed in a fullscreen format. The site also included links to find local show times and buy theater tickets, and a “ send to a friend” option to encourage buzz.

Often, audiences turn to critics for determining which movie to see.

According to the Wall Street Journal (“ Town and Country,” 2001), more than onethird of Americans actively seek the advice of film critics, and approximately one of every three filmgoers say they choose films because of favorable reviews. Given the relationship between reviews and box office success, studios often strategically manage the review process by excerpting positive reviews in their advertising, and delaying or forgoing advance screenings if they anticipate negative feedback.

As described by Renee Graham (2001), the desire for good reviews can extend so far as to even lead to deceptive practices, as when Sony Pictures Entertainment invented the critic David Manning to pump several films, such as *A Knight’s Tale* and *The Animal*, in print advertisements.

5. 3. Growing a movie segment

Once a movie establishes its dominant position in a segment, it may then try to attract more consumers to that segment. In the case of *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*, marketers first targeted Greek??? Americans at parades around the nation and employed an email campaign directed at people of Greek heritage.

Buzz spread via free merchandise and through preview screenings, held in Greek communities for associated festivals, churches, and other

organizations. Unlike many bigger pictures, the movie was shot with a \$5 million production budget, yet managed to earn an astounding \$240 million-plus in theaters. Due to the approachable humor it portrayed, *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* was appealing to a wide audience, and thus easy to grow beyond the Greek community market segment. With each passing week, positive buzz expanded the film's run to new screens and new market segments nationwide, attracting bigger audiences.

Remarkably, *Greek Wedding* achieved this feat in a season filled with mega-budget studio competition, including *SpiderMan* and *Star Wars Episode II: Attack of the Clones*. Typically, when a movie stirs controversy and/or deals with conflicting themes, the buzz it generates creates an opportunity to grow the market segment. In the case of *The Passion of The Christ*, buzz was so great that it attracted audiences beyond churchgoers, whose curiosity was piqued by publicity surrounding the film. The main controversy stemmed

2. Differentiation to reach market segments

Generally speaking, an audience favors the movie that best serves its particular configuration of needs. With clusters of audiences sharing similar preferences, producers may want to build a dominant position in a defensible niche among moviegoers where the strengths are greatest. In fact, the advantage of focusing on a distinct segment could prove to be tremendous. Consider the movie *The Passion of The Christ*, which aimed at a “religious” Buzz marketing for movies from what some perceived as an anti-Semitic sentiment in the portrayal of Jewish involvement in Jesus' death.

While many critics took this position and decried the depiction, others did not agree and were open in stating so. Ultimately, the movie segment grew because people sought closure to determine for themselves whether or not anti-Semitism was, indeed, embraced in the film. In the case of *Brokeback Mountain*, gay-rights groups embraced the film much as churches embraced *The Passion of The Christ*. GLAAD, the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation, established an online *Brokeback* resource guide, with links to articles and support groups for gay cowboys and farmers.

In addition, celebrating the movie's multiple award nominations, the Human Rights Campaign issued "Oscar party kits," which contained promotional *Brokeback* posters and cards that read "Talk About It" to encourage discussion of gay rights. 401 packages. Winning game wrappers read "Congratulations!" and indicated the prize level, including one grand prize which consisted of a trip for four adults to King Kong's stomping ground, New York City, as well as three night hotel accommodations and spending cash. 5.

5. Positioning to extend the movie image

Often, movies act like brands in offering a mixture of symbolic, functional, and experiential benefits, which makes it possible for them to extend their image to the marketplace. This being the case, buzz marketing can be combined with cross-promotion and merchandise tie-ins to support the movie's image and increase box office sales. Consider the tightly orchestrated cross-promotions for *Shrek 2*. The studio's merchandising campaign involved 80 companies in all, which paid fees estimated at \$250,000 and also pledged millions of dollars apiece for media buys to promote their tie-ins during the film's first few weeks in theaters.

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Original and licensed songs were recorded for the soundtrack by some of the world's best-selling musical artists, and Shrek action figures, video games, DVDs, and books were readied to flood the marketplace. Well over a year before the film debuted in theaters, DreamWorks announced that Universal Studios would soon add a Shrek 4-D ride to its theme parks in California, Florida, and Japan, and that the ride was intended to promote Shrek 2. A special home video release of Shrek 3-D, packaging the original movie with a 3-D feature, was also launched during the week of the sequel's theatrical opening.

Taken together, Shrek 2's positioning strategy created successful buzz. Companies that are masters of good buzz often push products via major events. Consider, for example, an occasion that unites the worlds of fashion, entertainment, and cars, with the glittering city of Hollywood serving as a backdrop. Each year, General Motors hosts a star-studded, high-profile affair to benefit charities and highlight its current model lineup. Dubbed the "General Motors Annual GM Ten Charity Benefit," the fifth version of the event, held in 2006, drew many of Tinseltown's young, hip A-listers to frolic amid the company's newest vehicles.

Among the celebrity catwalkers were Eva Longoria, Lindsay Lohan, Carmen Electra, Mischa Barton, and Joy Bryant. The event also assembled some of the biggest names in fashion to dress the show's participants: Gucci, Versace, Dolce & Gabbana, and Oscar de la Renta were just some of the luxury brands that contributed to the cause. This approach works on two levels. First, from a cost perspective, the brands receive free publicity, as the event captures a wide audience. Second, involvement suggests that

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participating brands have obtained the celebrities' seal of approval. 5. 4.

Positioning to support the movie image

Positioning diverges from differentiation in that while the latter focuses on actual differences, the former relies more heavily on intangible elements.

Ries and Trout (2001) reflect this unique emphasis: " Positioning is not what you do to a product. Positioning is what you do to the mind of the prospect" (p. 3). The strategy of positioning to support the movie image was utilized in the promotion of *House of Wax*, a 2005 remake of the 1953 horror classic. In this case, buzz was created because the storyline killed off real-life socialite Paris Hilton, who played the feature role of Paige Edwards.

To highlight this plot feature, *House of Wax* filmmakers created posters and T-shirts bearing the slogan " See Paris Die May 6. " Moreover, via the *House of Wax* website, Paris Hilton promoted the " Paris Hilton Podcast," whereby she invited visitors to countdown the movie's opening and join her as she shopped, partied, posed, and publicized in the days leading up to the movie's premiere. Other examples of positioning to create buzz involve Peter Jackson's *King Kong*. In anticipation of the summer blockbuster, the USA Network sponsored a sweepstakes that boasted a grand prize of a VIP trip to New York City to attend the film's premiere.

Toshiba, too, hosted a promotion, entitled " Catch the Beauty, Capture the Beast. " The campaign drove consumers to an Internet site, [www.](http://www.capturethebeast.com)

[capturethebeast. com](http://www.capturethebeast.com), to learn about the film and Toshiba products, and participate in a national sweepstakes that offered thousands of prizes, including the chance to win \$1 million. Nestle also went ape for *King Kong*,

introducing a limited-edition King Kong bar and a special edition King bar, which featured a King Kong-themed instant win game on specially marked 402 I. Mohr to get a product out to the market.

It is a clutter-free tactic that varies in possibilities. Buzz marketing is about making your message so compelling, so entertaining, so fascinating, or so newsworthy that people want to talk about it. Otherwise, it represents nothing more than another message fighting for attention, adding to the existing marketing clutter. Clearly, buzz marketing requires creative thinking. So, how does a movie or brand get people talking? The following steps can help minimize resources and increase the chances for success: 5.

6. Differentiation via non-traditional channels

Unlike in the past, when WOM traveled only in a single-utterance setting (i. e. , heard once and never again), buzz is now initiated by text messaging, emails, chat rooms, message boards, websites, and blogs. Good or bad, movie talk can stay recorded forever. Technology serves as a big asset in drawing attention and accelerating buzz, if what is delivered becomes a conversation piece. Consider the partnership between Budweiser and New Line Cinema's *Wedding Crashers*, which sponsored a feature on the movie's website entitled "Crash the Trailer." Through downloading personal photos, the interactive feature allowed viewers to "place" themselves and friends in scenes from the film's trailer, and then save and e-mail the edited result to others. Of all potential examples, the marketing phenomenon known as *The Blair Witch Project* perhaps best illustrates the vast extent to which the Internet is able to spread buzz. Debuting in theaters on July 30, 1999, the film was released following months of publicity, including a groundbreaking <https://assignbuster.com/buzz-marketing-for-movies-assignment/>

campaign by the studio to use the Web to suggest that the events depicted were real.

Shot like a documentary, Blair Witch is a fictional account of three film students who investigate the centuries-old tale about a witch who, over the years, has been blamed for several gory and unexplained murders in Maryland's hinterlands. The students, filming their every step for movie audiences, get lost, and get more than they bargained for when the Blair Witch, or something, stalks them to the end. In limited release, The Blair Witch Project dominated its competition in pertheater average revenues. Shot for a meager \$35, 000 by writers/directors Daniel Myrick and Eduardo Sanchez, the film was acquired by Artisan Entertainment for \$1. million, and marketed for only \$25 million. Prior to the movie's release, the three main actors were listed for a time as " missing, presumed dead" on the Internet Movie Database (<http://www.imdb.com>). As the film opened, Artisan's team intentionally limited the number of theaters in which it debuted, spurring demand and sustaining solid buzz. The Blair Witch Project was very positively received and went on to gross over \$248 million world-wide, making it one of the most successful independent films of all time, along with Halloween and The Texas Chain Saw Massacre. ??? Determine the potential reasons for success.

Many movie sequels like Spider Man, Star Wars, Shrek, and Austin Powers act like brands. It is important to ask: What is unique about the brand? What is the value in the brand? What does the brand communicate to consumers in terms of benefits, features, and quality? What advantages does the brand offer? ment support a buzz marketing strategy. People's view of what is <https://assignbuster.com/buzz-marketing-for-movies-assignment/>

entertaining, fascinating, or newsworthy is influenced by the world in which they live. As such, it is wise to explore how the brand fits in today's macroenvironment: the economy, technology, society, government, and competitive environment. Giving people a great story to tell. If you want people to talk about the brand, give them a reason to do so. Giving people something to talk about is how the brand gets noticed, and represents the essence of buzz marketing. ??? Examine whether forces in the macroenvironment ??? Find a "buzz" hook. The crux of buzz rests upon ??? Determine how buzz should start. Many firms recruit consumers to serve as natural trendsetters to do the buzzing for them. Alternatively, some marketers rely more on connectors like Oprah, Tom Cruise, Dr. Phil, and Paris Hilton, whose contacts in different circles can help spread buzz quickly.

Still other marketers will focus on capturing the attention of consumers and the media. buzz. Drawing people to a website requires sufficient "likeability" to get viewers to do the work for you by spreading the buzz. This may require that the website promote product giveaways, provide for effortless transfer to others (i. e. , be easily e-mailed, linked, or downloaded), scale easily from small to very large (popularity drives success), exploit common motivations and behaviors (e. g. , funny content motivates people to ??? Examine the role of viral marketing in spreading 6.

Implementing buzz marketing Buzz marketing is one of the promotional postures, along with traditional media (television, print, and radio), that a company should employ when trying Buzz marketing for movies share with others), utilize existing communication networks, and take advantage of others' resources (people become the medium, free of charge). 403 Carl, W. <https://assignbuster.com/buzz-marketing-for-movies-assignment/>

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In order to entice customers to interact with the brand, firms can: utilize a brief survey which, when completed, entitles the participant to a discount (e.g. , 15%) on a follow-up purchase; hold a contest that fosters consumer involvement in a product category; or simply feature a puzzle that draws consumers to the brand/company website. and something for audiences to talk about. For example, Cingular's humorous television spot promoting Star <https://assignbuster.com/buzz-marketing-for-movies-assignment/>

Wars Episode III: Revenge of the Sith created buzz because it featured Chewbacca struggling to alter his monotone grunt as music producers recorded his voice for a Star Wars ringtone.

While nearly all of the promotional partners for Sith had the rare opportunity to feature Star Wars characters in their commercials, the Cingular spot was widely viewed as the favorite that created a lot of buzz. ??? Examine possibilities for creating excitement, 7. Roll the credits While the movie industry is a vital part of the American economy, it is clear that in recent years, its economic future has been challenged. Whether because of piracy and digital theft, competition, overlapping movie campaigns, media fragmentation, and/or audience saturation, marketers must face the challenges of the media industry in the new millennium.

In taking on this monumental task, marketers need to be more selective with media, wiser as regards spending money, and in tune with creative, innovative strategies to propel box office sales. Buzz marketing is one such new-world promotional posture that can help drive consumer interest and draw audiences to theaters. References Baker, B. , & Lobdell, W. (2004). A tie-in made in heaven: Mel Gibson tapped into a church-based marketing network that has been waiting for a religious film like his ' Passion of the Christ. ' Los Angeles Times, A1.