

Time to Get Active

CONSUMER GLOBAL INSIGHT

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Nu Metro Films in South Africa recently promoted *The Hangover Part II* via a digital activation that involved local entertainment bloggers taking their own Hangover-style party marathon and broadcasting the experience on blogs, Facebook and Twitter. Charlotte Archer, marketing manager at distributor Nu Metro Films, talks to MediaCom South Africa's Cherylann Smith about why they did it, how they created engagement with young, male film-goers and what has been learnt from the experience.

Cherylann Smith: Why did you decide to run this type of activity for this film?

Charlotte Archer: South Africa is an incredibly diverse market – we have many different cultures here – and a lot of the times the promotions that are done in other markets don't work here.

At the same time the first Hangover film had been incredibly successful. Audiences attendances stayed high for weeks rather than dropping after the first weekend, indicating the power of word of mouth for this franchise. We wanted Hangover Part II to enjoy the same success.

The competition for audiences has become fiercer, even since the first Hangover film was released. There is a lot more content fighting for the same cinema going audience – especially the core 16-24s that might watch Hangover. We needed to do something different alongside our classic media to stand out from the crowd.

CS: *What did you do?*

CA: Our aim was to create something really different that said this film is coming. We knew traditional media would create awareness but we wanted to appeal to the core 18-24-year-old male who might go with his mates or his girlfriend.

We needed to speak to them in a way that would titivate and excite, creating an illusion of chaos while also ensuring our content was in line with the spirit of the film.

We identified key voices in the digital realm that had a following. Since people follow people not brands we recruited entertainment bloggers Dan Nash and Mike Sharman.

Dan is owner of new media specialists Rubiks Room and owner of South Africa's number two entertainment blog www.bangersandnash.com while Mike is the owner of digital communications agency Retroviral with extensive experience of blogging, shooting and seeding videos online.

We arranged for them to attend the premiere (accompanied by a stuffed tiger) and then enabled them to spend the rest of the night engaging in activities that created a South African experience drawing inspiration from the film's major themes.

All the while they were creating content for our consumers with posts streamed onto their blogs, Facebook pages and Twitter feeds. In total we reached 36.000 social media fans who then spread the word via their own feeds.

Working alongside the traditional media, our digital activation helped Hangover Part II perform 20% better than the first film at the box office, an impressive result!

CS: What did the activation deliver for your brand?

CA: Digital PR and social content is most likely always right for a campaign or product if seeded and targeted to an influential few who have a targeted audience, especially if it has a general positive sentiment. When social bloggers talk positively about a product, they build a natural positive brand positioning within the market. Influencers can evolve a brand's perception and create a sense of aspiration within this space.

CS: What did you learn from the experience?

CA: The main learning for me as a marketer is just how much the marketing landscape has changed from monologue to dialogue. It's also reinforced my perception of the power of endorsement: If someone takes time out of their day to engage with you, not just like your brand, that's incredibly powerful.

For us as movie marketers, there is a consumer expectation that we will be ahead of the game, so it's vital that we embrace these techniques and environments.

CS: Can you apply these techniques to all the films that you promote?

CA: Although South Africa is very diverse, at the end of the day a young person is a young

person whether they are white, Zulu or Xhosa but at the same time there are little idiosyncrasies that we are learning to integrate into our campaigns.

Obviously some films lend themselves far more to this type of content or activation. When the content doesn't lend itself to a consumer-driven campaign, however, that's when we need to be more creative. We need to challenge ourselves more and ask how can we target 50-year-old females, for example, in a way that doesn't feel flat or doesn't engage. In the case of the Hangover II the content did lend itself to a consumer-driven campaign – but the point was to get the target audience talking about the film and endorsing it through word of mouth – more effective with the target audience than conventional media.

CS: How do you envisage activation working alongside your traditional media activity?

CA: Our strategy going forward is to integrate the various elements of our campaign so that there is an over-riding strategy and a stronger link between what we are doing virally and what we are doing traditionally. This results in a more impactful message being communicated to the consumer. So our cinema materials need to have a Facebook link or a QR code. The message must be on every piece of material in a way that shows the consumer that we're trying to create a conversation with them. We're not just trying to get to them by bombarding them with our messages.

In the South African market, integration with mobile is also very important. This can be as simple as SMS short codes, or as advanced as Augmented Reality. The key is to get the basics right and build from there.

Ultimately, social PR and digital is not about a platform, but more about the conversation and a culmination of all channels driving a strong unified message bringing all the pieces together seamlessly.

CS: How do you see activation being used in the future?

CA: I think that when we see more budget shifting from buying banners and buttons to creating amazing content that people naturally want to share, we'll be heading in the right

direction.

It is imperative that integration not be perceived as repetition across platforms, but rather as each channel working together closely toward the campaign objective.

The future of activation is in reaching people by targeting by interest and behaviour, with a relevant message in order to get them to talk about a film or in order to do something and then selecting the right channels according to the role they perform.

Alongside our activation we need to leverage banners and creative with segmented messaging to drive people to those conversations and activation.

Longevity is key to success – recruiting consumers campaign by campaign is a dead community. Retention and building strong long-term relationships with consumer communities will move customers towards becoming brand fans.

CS: What advice would you give to someone who hasn't gone down this route?

CA: There's a saying that you remember 10% of what you read, 20% of what you hear and 80% of what you experience. Getting consumers to experience your brand or content or product is incredibly effective. It makes your brand part of their social space.

Brands have to remember that it's no longer enough to just talk to consumers we need to get them to experience our brands.

The right approach will vary from category to category. In our case it's our content that enables consumers to contribute to the campaign and makes them feel they are participating in the message not just being talked to or at.

Experience is the key to marketing in the future. A social campaign is not about having a Facebook page. It's about having meaningful conversations over a period with the right people, giving them remarkable content so that they will share it. It's a shift from advertising

to social influence.

But most of all, start small, get the basics right. You don't have to be everywhere at once, but wherever you are, be present, consistent and 'wow' your audience continuously so that our community will participate and grow.

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