

Marketing of Films through Social Media: A Conceptual Framework

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to provide some insight into how social media is used to most effectively market movies. Social media saves time and money while increasing theatre attendance, which has experienced decline over the past several years, especially in the young adult demographic. Social media can effectively target different demographics to come to theatres to watch movies provided they are able to address them effectively and create a wow factor which will drive their interest.

Key words: Social media, Demographics, IMDB (Internet Movie Database), Marketing

1. INTRODUCTION

Marketing is an essential part of a movie's success in theatres. Without proper marketing development, a movie with fantastic plotlines, characters, actors, sets, and special effects may fail to attract an audience. With video piracy and file sharing sites gaining popularity producers and production houses look to make back all of their money and more during theatrical runs. But with movie theatre attendance relatively down, many producers/production houses are trying to cut back on budgets. Although blockbuster box office receipts are always desirable, some are re-focusing their efforts to secure large profit margins. Low-budget movies have much to gain. By determining the most effective methods to increase attendance and profits, producers/production houses will be able to have more successes and reduce the fear of losing money on a project, keeping them in business and the entertainment industry alive.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Producers and production houses have traditionally used theatrical trailers, posters, hoardings etc... to market their films. These have been effective to a select crowd who have been movie buffs and who frequent theatres. Will this suffice and will it be sustainable in the long run? The movie makers should look at alternatives to market their films. This does not mean that they give up the traditional methods of marketing; they need to look at methods to complement the traditional marketing. Considering the reach the digital channel will be a perfect option. Companies and various businesses are increasingly using social media to market their products which has given them positive results. If this is the case, why do not the movies? This would open up a whole new segment for the movie makers.

3. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The primary objective of this study is to explain conceptual framework of marketing of films through social media.

4. SOCIAL MEDIA AND MARKETING OF FILMS

Social networking use is steadily increasing among the key demographic of teen and young adult moviegoers (Millennials, 2010). The continuing popularity of social media has opened direct channels to potential customers that were not previously available to movie marketers. Sharing sites such as YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter have increased the spread of information to lightning speeds. Using social networking to its fullest extent in a marketing campaign allows studios to create a two-way discussion with potential viewers. This is different from the traditional one-way marketing of trailers and billboards. Nevertheless, encouraging discussion on the Internet can have either a negative or positive effect on the success of a movie. Because reviews and opinions travel so fast, good word-of-mouth can replace expensive large-scale marketing efforts and yet achieve excellent results (Business, 2011).

There are several ways of using social media websites for promoting movies. Some examples of this include creating Twitter accounts for the movie, and tweeting updates, premieres, actor/actress interviews. A marketing company might also make a Facebook page for the movie, encouraging people interested to "Like" their page and share it with their friends. YouTube can be used as a platform to not only shows trailers, but also

to create a channel dedicated to all official promos for the particular movie. By actively utilizing each channel of social media, a movie that would not normally garner a nationwide release might earn one. For example Hindustan Unilever made an ad on Lifebuoy soap titled *“Help a child reach five”* which was a huge hit on YouTube. Here the makers also encouraged viewers to share the link with others. Although this ad was related to the cause of creating awareness about diarrhoea, it created a huge impact for HUL.

Apart from this, movie makers can create exclusive websites for the film which will also showcase the trailers, star interviews, behind the scenes etc... which may interest some viewers. Moreover these websites could have their movies listed on IMDB and provide a hyperlink directing the visitor to see the listing which also will have trailers, storyline and more importantly reviews. This will give the makers additional mileage.

Despite all these efforts, many theatres still face a declining audience due to the prevalence of video piracy which is not being effectively controlled. Piracy is an ever-growing fear amongst movie makers. Former president and CEO of the Motion Picture Association of America, Bob Pisano, was quoted as saying, *“I don’t care how much you talk about it, you can’t compete with free”* (Berglund, 2012).

Although social media costs less than traditional marketing campaigns, it is unclear exactly when the campaign should be rolled out. Wheaton (2011) argues that companies are spending too much time talking with consumers on social media sites than actually marketing the brand. Wheaton takes the stand that brands should be built on a solid foundation through means of traditional marketing. Only when the brand is established should social marketing campaigns be used to improve customer relationships (Wheaton, 2011).

The opposing side believes brands can be established through social media campaigns before turning to traditional advertising. This method of advertising was adopted by Perfetti Van Melle, the company behind Mentos gum. In deciding how to market the rollout of a new gum product, Mentos UP2U, the company decided to do the initial advertising on Facebook. They created a fan page for the product, and held promotions and giveaways for people who “liked” the page (Elliott, 2011). The goal of the social marketing campaign is to build awareness first, and then rely on good word of mouth to make the traditional advertising campaign successful (Elliott, 2011). This works well as long as the target audience for the product is the same as the majority of Facebook users. Likewise HUL and Google made ads exclusively for the digital media. This can be effective as long as the makers are able to target the movie to the right audience.

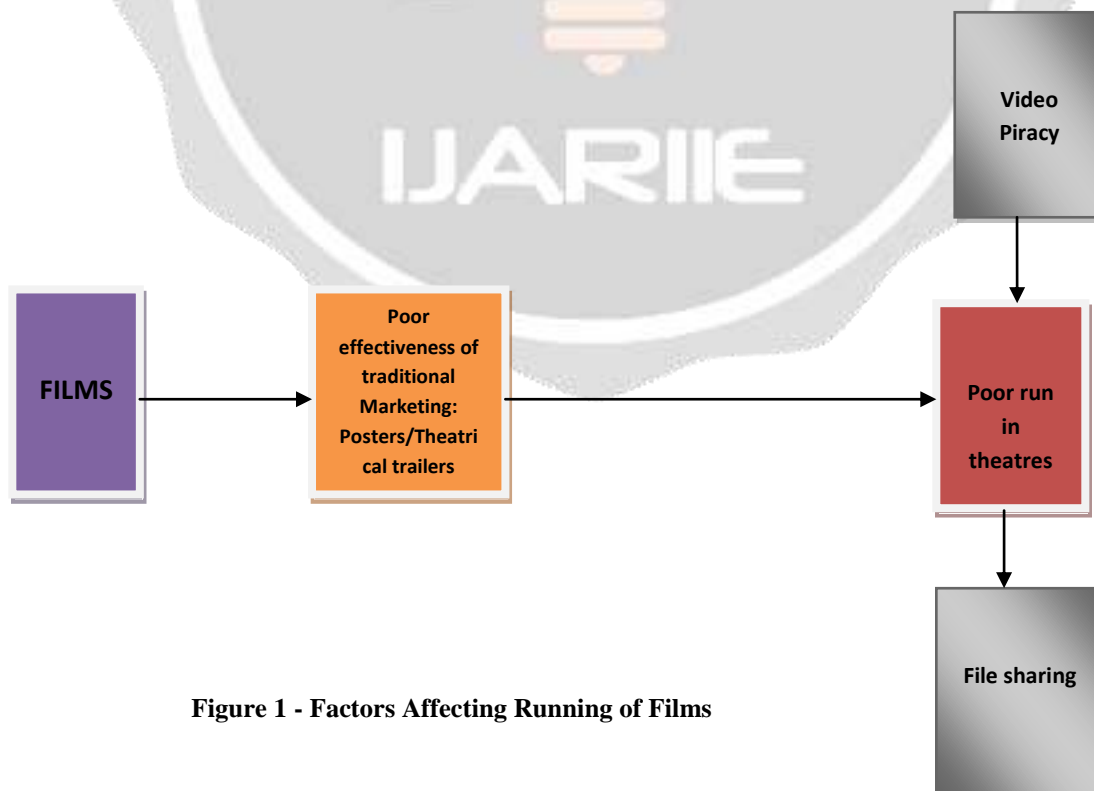


Figure 1 - Factors Affecting Running of Films

The above figure depicts the factors responsible for poor run of the films. The factors include poor effectiveness of traditional Marketing: Posters/Theatrical trailers, video piracy and file sharing through websites. The following figure explains how social media can be used to have better run of the films in theatres along with traditional marketing.

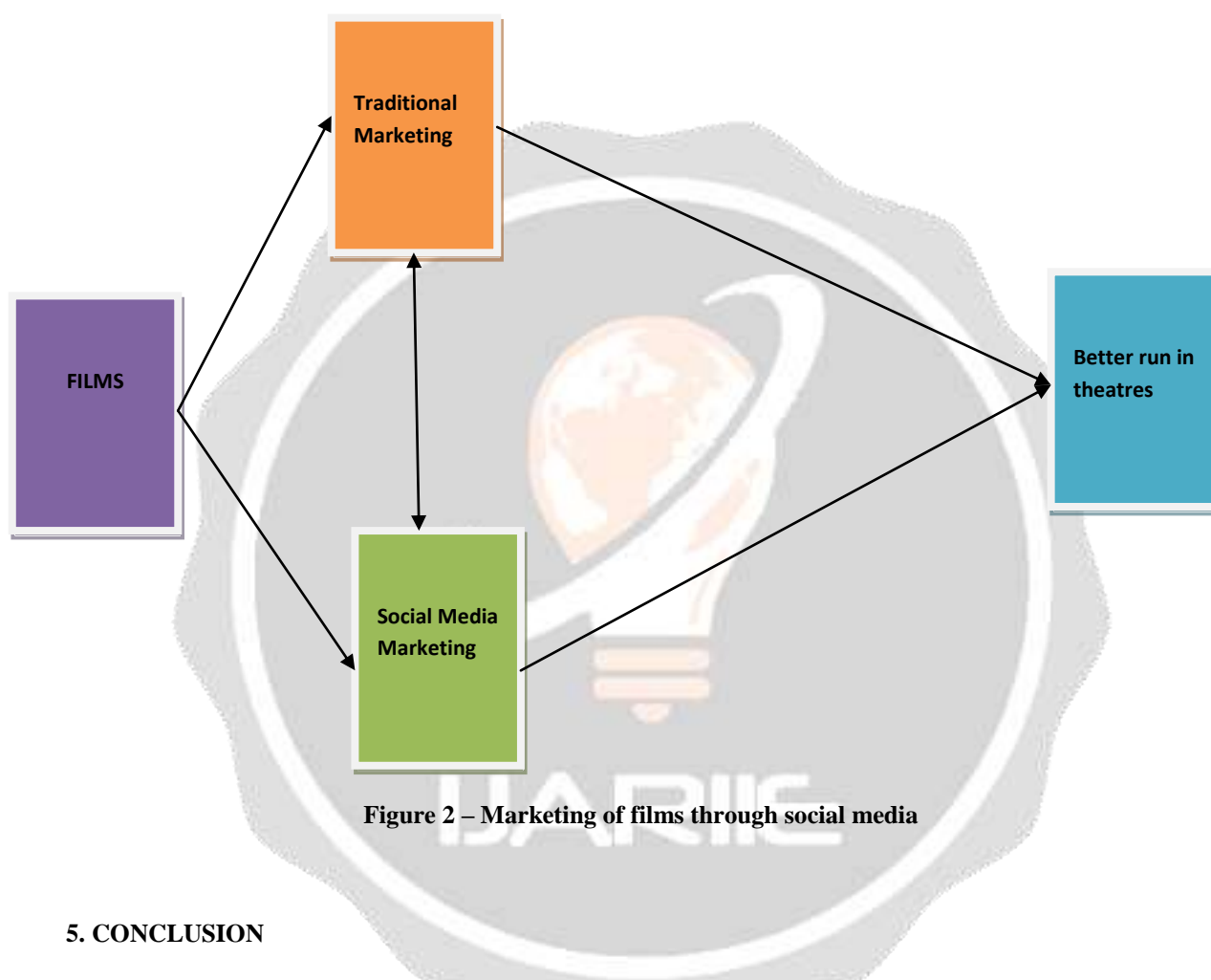


Figure 2 – Marketing of films through social media

5. CONCLUSION

The movie industry is currently struggling to reverse a decline in ticket sales. One opportunity for increase is using social media websites to access the younger demographic. The key to this marketing strategy is to understand that this group of moviegoers is open to being involved in the movie and its release. If they feel a sense of ownership over its success, they are more likely to bring their friends and pay to see a movie in theatres.

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