



COLUMBIA TRISTAR FILMS UK WORKED EXCLUSIVELY WITH MSN THROUGHOUT APRIL-JULY 2002 TO LAUNCH SPIDER-MAN ONLINE...

OBJECTIVES FOR THE LAUNCH OF SPIDER-MAN

Columbia TriStar Films UK set its marketing sights high for the launch of Spider-Man in the UK. It wanted the tale of the wall-climber to be THE blockbuster of the summer, and accordingly booked across the obligatory bus-backs and TV ad breaks.

"We wanted to have a campaign of such magnitude as to be seen as the event movie of the moment - especially considering Star Wars had been released the month before," says Stuart Williams, marketing director for Columbia TriStar Films UK.

Columbia were keen to use internet marketing for the movie, and drew on the deep internet expertise within Sony Pictures Digital Entertainment (SPDE) to look for an appropriate online partner. SPDE is an operating unit of Sony Pictures Entertainment and oversees the activities of the studio's digital production and online assets.

SPIDER-MAN ON THE WEB WITH MSN.CO.UK

Columbia TriStar Films UK previously carried out promotional campaigns online - running competitions through media owners, for example - but the stakes involved in ensuring Spidey triumphed over Obi-Wan Kenobi and company warranted trying a new approach. "We'd done promotional deals with internet partners for a few years - but given our aggressive objectives for Spider-Man, we felt it would be good to do a paid deal," says Williams. MSN was an obvious solution to Columbia TriStar Films UK's need - its media pack bulges with selling points such as its 11.1 million visitors per month in

the UK (Nielsen, June 2002) and Hotmail's 7.4 million users in the UK (MSN Internal data), making it the most popular free web-based email service among Brits.

However, Williams says it was the MSN UK ad sales team's understanding of the finer points of his marketing objectives that really impressed him. "We spoke to all the major UK portals but felt that MSN understood the concept of 'event marketing' particularly well," he says.

As a result, the paid online activity was carried out exclusively with MSN UK.



The campaign was also being audited by independent researchers Dynamic Logic - a first too for MSN UK - and was being treated as a test run by marketing personnel at Columbia TriStar Films and Sony Pictures across Europe. The onus was very much on MSN UK to convert its own hefty vital statistics into good news for the web-slinger.

THE WAY THE CAMPAIGN WORKED

Soft-launching early in the year with the inclusion of the film's trailer in the MSN Entertainment Channel, the three month campaign broke on April 5, in advance of the film's June 14 UK launch date.

MSN UK's largest ever campaign on behalf of a single client, the activity drew on elements from throughout its portfolio. The engine room of the campaign was the microsite with dedicated editorial content, as the client wanted to use the online element of the campaign to enable consumers to interact with the Spider-Man brand.

"The MSN customer base represents the portion of the audience who are early adopters - people who like to have the opportunity to see the content early. This was working in tandem with what we were doing with the rest of the campaign," says Williams.

Other elements - all of which linked to the microsite - included dedicated pages at MSN UK, a premium Hotmail newsletter, rotational homepage coverage and a downloadable Spider-Man "skin" which could be used to decorate Windows Media Players. A wide range of banners was used, such as the skyscraper and expanding formats on the homepage and the Entertainment, Games and Sky Sports channels. Even Hotmail had a regular banner and a special 250 x 250 format served, while the homepage featured a Hockey Stick link on June 13 and 14.

The competitions were also essential to generating the consumer excitement needed to truly turn the film into an event. First up was a competition to win tickets to see the film's premier in Hollywood on April 19, which received about 16,000 entries. The popularity of the competitions grew alongside awareness of the film in this country, and the final competition, to win tickets to the UK premier, generated 61,642 entries. In all, three competitions received about 106,000 entries during a three month period, and the LA and London premier competitions both broke all previous records set on MSN UK.



HOW THE CAMPAIGN PERFORMED

But, when the campaign had finished on July 3 and the dust had settled, did the smashed records and the new banner formats actually meet the client's objectives?

One of Columbia TriStar Films' core aims was to bolster its database, and this doubled in size during the campaign exceeding the client's expectations.

The partners were also expecting to reel in about 200 million page impressions - another beaten target.

The Dynamic Logic results, gathered from 1508 respondents, also revealed that MSN UK had a significant effect even as far as ticket sales.

Ben Grass, director of internet and wireless at Sony Pictures Digital Entertainment Europe - and one of the people watching the outcome of this test run - says: "We expected to see this enhance awareness building in advance of the more traditional marketing efforts, but we

didn't expect to see it influence the perception of the movie and people's decision to see it by this much. Purchase intent among MSN users shifted up by 23% as a direct result of the online campaign."

This 23% is particularly impressive in light of the AdIndex MarketNorms survey carried out during the second quarter of this year, which found 3% to be the average uplift in purchase intent as a result of an online campaign.

This comparison continues for brand favourability, which rose by 12% in the MSN campaign, against an average of 1%; and aided brand awareness (MSN - 7%; market norm - 5%).

MSN AND COLUMBIA TRISTAR FILMS UK INTO THE FUTURE

Since the end of the Spider-Man campaign Columbia TriStar Films has worked with MSN UK on Stuart Little II and is currently running a sizeable push for xXx on the portal. And, with MSN available in 34 markets and

18 languages, there is great potential for pan-European campaigns going forward.

"MSN is well positioned in a number of countries, which helps as you're looking to drive maximum economies from a purchase like this," says Grass.

For Williams, though, the Spider-Man campaign revealed MSN UK's USP to be as much in the depth as the breadth of its coverage.

"The benefit of online is that you can create a resource that's accessible to people at any time. This gives them the option to explore the cast and crew and develop a deeper and richer understanding of the film's background - a vast number of the page impressions were editorially driven. The campaign wouldn't have been such a success without this aspect working in tandem with the other elements."

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