

Social Media Marketing in the Film Industry

A Senior Project

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Kerynne Tejada

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to evaluate social media marketing and its impact on the relationship between the users (audience) and movie profiles (production studios). The research from this study was to help understand if social media would help promote movies. A survey was conducted to determine what social media people were invested in, how they learned about movies, and if a movie's social media profile had any impact on people. The results of this study can be used to develop a production studio's marketing plan with the usage of social media.

Ch 1: Purpose of the Study

A key part to a movie's success is how well it has been marketed. Before there was the Internet, production studios had to advertise to their audiences through print media. Billboards, buses, and streets were plastered with hand drawn posters. Once cinema became a bigger industry, trailers were introduced to help promote future films. The business soon expanded, not just for film but also for advertisement agencies and departments. Without these types of promotion, film has the potential to fail in attracting an audience and losing money spent by studios. Today, both groups are extending their campaigns to the usage of social media in order to gain a higher profit and larger audience.

The researcher was interested in seeing what social media tactics movie studios can use in order to increase awareness of their movies. The trends that will be analyzed will be focused on the digital usage that production studios have used to expand their marketing campaigns. Overall, the study seeks to identify what type of content and social media campaigns impact current and potential movie audiences the most.

Production studios compete against each other to have their film be the most profitable in box office earnings. To attract more attention and beat the competition, studios must spend more money on promoting the films. It is hard to go somewhere and not see a movie advertisement. In order to gain a higher gain, knowing how to market and where to market is key. This study will help studios see how different marketing can help a movie gain a bigger audience and larger net profit overall and how to effectively use social media in order to achieve both of those goals.

The biggest impact that social media has is that it allows for people to connect with others in sharing and communicating ideas. When print media was only used, people were limited to taking what they saw and process it in their own way. With the usage of social media,

people are allowed to not only share different marketing campaigns but can create an environment where they can discuss with others what they think and how they feel about the movies. This new extension will allow current and potential audience members to have a deeper and more meaningful relationship with the movie and the production studio.

Ch 2: Literature Review

Movies are a way to portray culture, education, leisure, and propaganda by influencing how one thinks and feels. They are so powerful that they can even influence a nation's wealth and outlook. In a paper by S C Noah Uhrig, titled, "Cinema is Good for You: The Effects of Cinema Attendance on Self-Reported Anxiety or Depression and 'Happiness'", Uhrig proclaims that movies can be both beneficial for human's mental health and also for the economy (as cited in Shah, 2011). However, people would not know if a movie exists if there is no type of promotion for these movies. An entire industry of film promotion was made to in order for more people to hear about current and upcoming movies. The purpose of this study was to provide movie studios with relevant information about how to market new movies in an effective way with social media. Works on the current industry, social networks, and marketing trends were examined to further understand the context for how to use social media to advertise movies.

Impact of Movie Promotion

Production studios are best known for their movies when more people know about them. This is known as film promotion or film marketing. The best way to do that is to that is by promoting the movies through marketing collateral. Studios will spend approximately one dollar more for every two dollars that is spent producing a film, which is approximately four billion dollars a year (McGlade, 2013). The more money production studios spend to make a cinematic piece, the more they are willing to get the movie known.

Digital Media

With the introduction of the Internet and electronic technology, production studios were able to market their movies in a new form—digital media. By going digital, production studios expand their relationship with their audience by making advertisements more entertaining. Print media, including posters and billboards, had to stick out and catch the attention of passers-by all while giving as much information about the movie in one still image. Moving images have a higher chance of getting someone to notice the advertisement because they had to actually stop and concentrate on what is being displayed.

Trailers were the original form of digital media to promote a movie. When they were first created, they were no more than spliced collections of film stills that were placed at the end of features (Fear, 2013). Today, trailers are one- to three-minute long visuals that display images, clips, and sound from an upcoming film. These parts that are shown represent and promote the overall tone and genre, story, and star(s) (Finsterwalder, Kuppelwieser, & Villiers, 2012). Seen before a film, on television, or online, trailers help convey what the movie is all about in order to entice audiences.

Social Media – What is it?

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, “social media are forms of electronic communication (as Web sites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (as videos)” (“Social media,” n.d.). Social media consists of websites and cellular applications that connect people with one another. The main demographic of those who do

participate in social media are users aged 18-29, making up 83% of Internet networking users (Brenner & Duggan, 2013).

	All internet users	Ages 18-29	Ages 30-49	Ages 50-64	Ages 65+
2/1/2005	8%	9%	7%	6%	
8/1/2006	16%	49%	8%	4%	1%
5/1/2008	29%	67%	25%	11%	7%
4/1/2009	46%	76%	48%	24%	13%
5/1/2010	61%	86%	61%	47%	26%
8/1/2011	64%	87%	68%	49%	29%
2/1/2012	66%	86%	72%	50%	34%
8/1/2012	69%	92%	73%	57%	38%
12/1/2012	67%	83%	77%	52%	32%
5/1/2013	72%	89%	78%	60%	43%
9/1/2013	73%	90%	78%	65%	46%
1/1/2014	74%	89%	82%	65%	49%

Figure 1. Demographics of Internet users as of January 2014 (Pew Research Center)

Recently, production studios and advertising agencies are utilizing social media outlets as a way to promote upcoming films. In addition to targeting current audience, these studios and agencies will have the opportunity to broaden their market by reaching to social media users who could in turn become potential audience members. According to research conducted by Chong Oh, “the more a movie studio is willing to engage with its followers via social media the more likely it is to have a higher WOM [Word-Of-Mouth] volume. This subsequently increases the likelihood of having a higher opening-weekend box office performance” (as cited in Science 2.0). With the usage of social media, production studios will be able to hone in on personal interests by connecting with fans while building awareness of their product. It also allows studios to be more intricate and involved with their movie campaigns by building their brand awareness. Overall, the cost compared to

traditional print or digital media marketing is lower. Four social networks that production studios have used to promote their films are Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Snapchat.

Facebook, which was only founded ten years ago, is the most-used and known social network on the Internet and on mobile devices. Facebook allows users to upload and share content, connect with others, and get updates from various profiles via notifications. Currently, 86% of Internet users aged 18-29 are on Facebook (Brenner & Duggan, 2013). This social network lets studios make likable pages for their movies. Once “liked,” followers have the opportunity to get notifications on updates and new campaign content. This can range from articles about the upcoming movie to photos to sweepstakes. Most of the posts that are circulated are news, reminders, photos, clips, trailers, and any relevant press coverage of the movie (“Filmmaker Media Guide,” n.d.). The posts that are created can be liked, shared, and commented on by anyone who has already liked the page. By doing this, Facebook furthers the relationship between the production studios and its audience by allowing discussions to take place between the two and also between audience members. Since this is currently the largest social media network, this is where most studios promote on the Internet.

Twitter is an online website and mobile application where users can express ideas, word, and/or pictures they want within 140 characters. There are around 27% Internet users between ages 18-29 that have a Twitter profile (Brenner & Duggan, 2013). Tweets can also be favorited, retweeted, and tweeted back at. Many movie studios tweet updates, articles, and Users can engage with movie studios and the movie’s profile, or Twitter handle, by doing any of the three listed actions. This allows for a conversation to take place between the two profiles.

YouTube is a networking site and mobile application that let's users watch and upload videos. These videos are originally created and distributed to share with others. Movies studios first used YouTube as another way for people to watch their trailers. However, since multiple videos could be posted to a channel, studios have become more intricate with viral campaigns. Multiple trailers are made to show different scenes of a movie while delivering the same product. Clips can also be shared to display what type of movie audience members are in for. YouTube has allowed production studios to share their videos with audience members without the audience having to wait to see it.

Snapchat is a mobile application that allows users to send up to ten seconds of videos or images, also known as snaps, and messages, or chats, to other users. Once the receiver has seen the snap, it is deleted from the receiver's inbox and cannot be seen again. Users also have the ability to add stories to the "Recent Updates" that are available for 24-hours for others to see. Recently, the company has joined other social media channels in advertising film in order to make more money. The company states they would like to provide an environment and "deliver an experience that's fun and informative, the way ads used to be" (Snapchat, 2014). Ads will be placed in their "Recent Updates" section and will be available for users to see until they have viewed it or once the 24-hours are down. Instead of targeting users, ads will be available for all users, thus increasing their potential audience to people who are interested in the movie and are users to people who are just Snapchat users.

Ch 3: Methodology

The goal of this study was to determine the effectiveness of promoting a movie through the usage of social media. Most movies today are using social media to expand their movie marketing campaigns. However, new strategies using the current social media can be implemented in order to maximize audience/studio relations and film awareness. The objectives of this study include:

- Determine what social media outlets audiences are using to learn more about movies
- Determine what content audiences are looking for on a movie's social media profile i.e. ticket buying, videos, pictures

Data Collection Plan

To collect data for this study, a survey was given out to men and women between the ages of 18-29. The subjects were randomly selected, given a link via Facebook and/or email. Each subject was given instructions before the survey was given out. The survey was split into three sections: 1) what social media outlets they participated in, 2) how they learned more about the movies via social media and interacted with said profiles, and 3) what type of content they were looking within profiles. All subjects were given the same questions to gain an unbiased understanding of audiences' interactions with the sites and profiles.

Data Analysis Plan

Responses to the survey questions were analyzed and comments were also noted. The answers were collected and determined where audiences received most of their information about movies. In addition, answers showed what type of content audiences visit the sites for.

Ch 4: Results

The survey was able to draw in 162 random respondents; however, only 156 respondent's answers could be analyzed to fit the age group focus of the study. Each respondent answered a series of six questions to gauge their social media usage and movie preferences. At the end of the survey, comments, questions, and concerns were also recorded when submitted. This online survey was sent out to the general public, including students and faculty at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo and members of the Disney College Program Alumni Association. Overall, majority of participants were highly involved in using social media, but only a few were actually interactive with a movie's social media profile. Below are questions asked in the survey.

1. What age are you?

This question was asked to establish that all survey takers were in the age range that the research focused on. A filter was placed when analyzing the results to get only those that were between 18 and 29.

2. What social media outlets do you partake in?

Participants declared how many social media apps/websites they use by checking what specific outlets they were involved in. This helped gauge whether the participants had experience of navigating the environment and usage of the basic functions. The outlets included Tumblr, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Pinterest, and Twitter. The least used outlet was Tumblr with 65 out of 156 participants, while the most used channel was Facebook with all 156 people using it. More than 50% of those surveyed used all outlets listed except for Tumblr. Instagram was used by 88.54% of participants, Snapchat had 84.38% of participants, Twitter had 52.08% of participants, and Pinterest had 41.67% of participants. From least to most used social media, participants partook in Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, Pinterest, and Tumblr.

What social media outlets do you partake in? Check all that apply.

Answered: 156 Skipped: 0

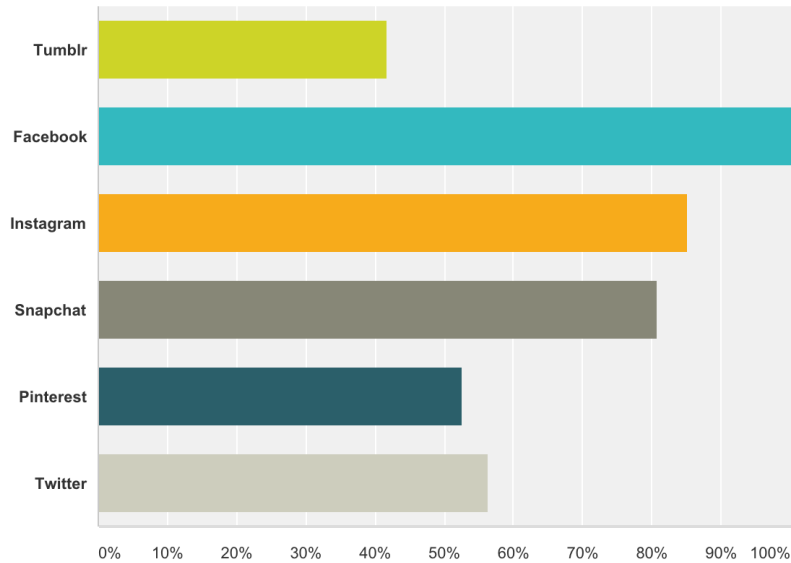


Figure 2. Social media outlets used by participants.

3. Rank in order of most common to least common way you learn about movies.

It was found that the most common to least common way to learn about movies was through social media, family and/or friends, IMDB, other online resources, and finally Fandango. Social media was the first pick to learn about movies with 54 out of 156 (34.62%) participants choosing this medium. Out of 156 people, 53 participants, a 33.97%, chose family and friends as the second first choice. IMDB, a site dedicated to information about the movie industry was the third pick for top place to learn about movies with a 19.23% of participants choosing this option. The last two top picked choices were other online resources and Fandango, with 9.62% and 2.56% of participants, respectively. The results show that people are initially interacting with social media in terms of movie learning.

	1	2	3	4	5	Total	Score
Social media	34.62% 54	35.26% 55	15.38% 24	9.62% 15	5.13% 8	156	3.85
Family/Friends	33.97% 53	39.10% 61	18.59% 29	6.41% 10	1.92% 3	156	3.97
IMDB	19.23% 30	12.18% 19	32.69% 51	22.44% 35	13.46% 21	156	3.01
Other online resources	9.62% 15	8.97% 14	23.72% 37	32.69% 51	25.00% 39	156	2.46
Fandango	2.56% 4	4.49% 7	9.62% 15	28.85% 45	54.49% 85	156	1.72

Figure 3. How participants learn about movies.

4. How often do you visit a movie’s social media site?

Contrary to what people indicated in the previous question that they learn about movies through social media, people rarely visit a movie’s social media site. Only 54.59% of participants did specify that they do visit a specific movie’s site. Out of 156 people, only two did say that they often visit the site.

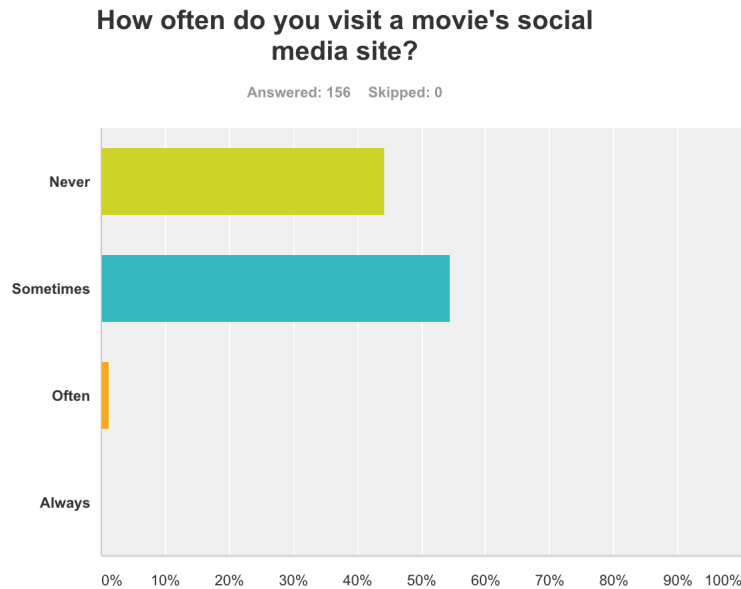


Figure 4. Amount of visits to movie’s social media site.

5. What type of content are you looking for on a movie’s social media site?

Overall, participants were looking for videos, pictures, and behind the scenes content on a movie’s social media site. Videos were sought out by 120 participants (76.92%). Pictures were wanted by 89 (57.05%) of 154 participants. Behind the scenes content had a 54.49% of participants seeking this out on a social media channel. Giveaways and contests/promotions were not as sought out for content, with only 27.56% and 26.28% responses indicated, respectively. Other content that was suggested by those surveyed included cast interviews or information, music featured in the movie, and release dates and locations.

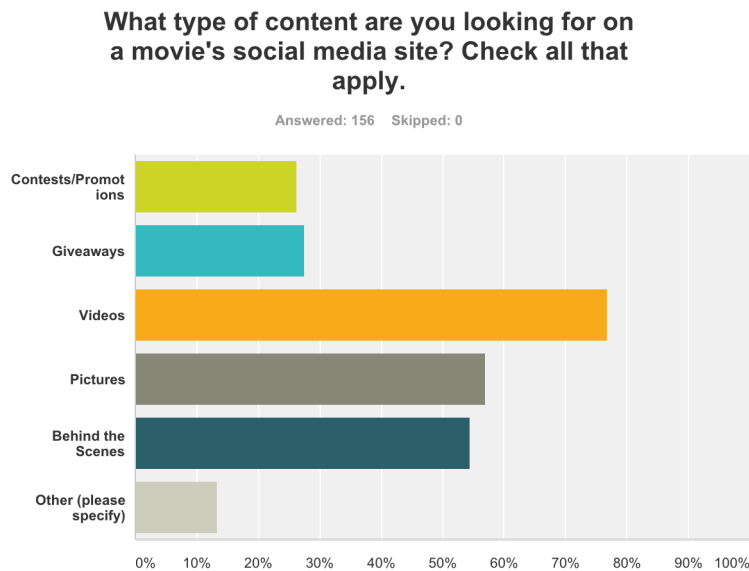


Figure 5. Movie’s social media content.

6. Any other comments, questions, or concerns?

Participants had the option to give an open-response answer to any questions, comments, or concerns that they did have after taking the survey. A few gave different social media channels like YouTube and Pinterest. Some people also indicated that IMDB was a main source to get details on a movie.

Ch 5: Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to analyze social media marketing and how it affected the relationship between the users (audience) and movie profiles (production studios). Since most people use social media as a means of communicating, utilizing it can help develop relationships between audience members, movies, and production studios. Social media consists of distributing content that will give the audiences a chance to gain an in-depth look at different aspects of the movie. This can include photos and videos, articles, promotions, or behind-the-scenes content. The survey revealed that even though people were present on social media and did learn about movies via social media, they did not necessarily interact with movie profiles that production studios set up.

In order to conduct the study that this conclusion was drawn from, questions were properly formed in order to gain an unbiased opinion. Multiple revisions were made to the survey, which was then sent out to the general public. Males and females between the ages of 18 and 29 were encouraged to take the survey since that is the age group most prevalent using social media. Those who did participate determined what content they would like to see on profiles and what would draw them back to those types of campaigns.

Most participants said that they were most likely to learn about movies through social media, which gave evidence that this medium does have an impact on moviegoers. The second first-choice that participants learned about movies was through family and friends. Since family and friends and social media made up almost 70% between people's first and second choice, it can be concluded that these two are the most popular ways to learn about movies. Furthermore, a majority of participants with a 54.59% did sometimes visit these channels to learn more about the movie and content that surrounded said movie. In these channels, people were mostly looking

for videos, pictures, or behind the scenes content. Other suggested content included reviews, trailers, and information about the actors of the movie. This suggests that people would be interested in visiting these profiles if they had more diverse content in addition to what they already supply. Overall, a relationship was proven to exist between audience members, movies, and production studios. From the results, studios will be able to implement new marketing strategies using social media as an outlet to interact with audiences.

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