

Sony Pictures' The Emoji Movie

Problem

How does a movie with well-recognized, digital characters stand out from the rest of the summer hits and attract a broad audience?

Solution

By putting together an interactive OOH campaign that introduces the characters in a fun and creative way.

Background

Sony Pictures was looking to introduce an original concept, The Emoji Movie. When the marketing plan was first executed, the film was tracking with very low interest due to what was perceived as outdated and disinteresting subject matter. There was a long way to go to before the film could have a successful opening.

Objective

The overall objective of the marketing plan was to reach a broad audience and make The Emoji Movie number one at the box office on opening weekend. OOH's role in the campaign was to leverage cool and interactive creative that would introduce the characters early and let people know the movie was coming out on July 28th.

Strategy

Since these characters were born from digital, the company wanted to be sure to include their native landscape. In New York, an interactive digital experience stood out using a digital screen and facial recognition software in the heart of Times Square. As people were looking at the screen their faces would show up and be transformed into an emoji, which was powered by the software. This allowed a large audience to interact directly with the characters and share their personal experiences on social media. It was so popular that it was also included in the general campaign, complete with a roadblock execution for Good Morning America on July 13 from 9:30 am to 11:30 am. There was a perfect opportunity to launch the digital bulletin campaign for World Emoji Day on July 17. The timing was ideal, as it fell two weeks before opening weekend. Traffic and weather data were used to trigger specific creative based on the prevailing conditions, ultimately painting the emoji's non-verbal landscape. For example, if the temperature was over 80 degrees in a specific market, utilizing NOAA.gov for real time weather conditions, the "devil" emoji was posted in that market. When traffic was moving slowly, based on INRIX data for current traffic, the "poop" emoji was rotated in. A teaser campaign was launched two months prior to the general campaign to raise awareness and show off the characters. Large format media and frequency formats were used as part of the teaser campaign in



Los Angeles and New York. This OOH introduced the four main characters, Gene, Hi-5, Smiler, and Poop, and the actor or actress that voiced them. In Chicago, San Francisco, and Dallas, one high profile wallscape was selected in each market to drive buzz. The Los Angeles and New York bulletins utilized creative that mixed the characters in with other popular emojis to advertise the film's upcoming arrival in theaters. The general campaign effectively leveraged the marketing assets in the top five markets through a mix of large format and small format OOH. The smaller frequency formats reintroduced the four main characters and introduced two new ones, Steven and Jailbreak. The transit and poster formats were included in five of the top box office markets and made-up 26.33 percent of projected box office traffic. In an effort to cover a deeper market list, digital bulletins extended into an additional 14 markets. At this point, there were 19 total markets that covered 50.52 percent of the projected box office sales. Digital and static mall kiosks extended into another three markets, bringing the campaign to 22 total markets with a 55.61 percent projected impact on the box office sales. The OOH used in the teaser campaign delivered 506.2 target rating points (TRPs), not inclusive of malls, double deckers, or any other unmeasured media. It achieved a reach of 39.8 percent and a frequency of 12.7. The high frequency gave the audience the opportunity to see each of the different creative executions three times during the course of the teaser campaign. For the general campaign, OOH delivered 593.8 TRPs, not inclusive of malls, double deckers, or any other unmeasured media, and achieved a reach of 51.5 percent and a frequency of 11.5. As a result, seeing one of the characters from this film on the street was unavoidable.

Plan Details

Markets: Top five: Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, San Francisco, and Dallas

Flight Dates: Teaser May 8 to June 4, 2017; General July 3 to July 30, 2017

OOH Formats Used: Kiosks, Bulletins, Barricades, Digital Screens, Shelters, Wraps, Double Deckers

Additional Formats: Print, TV, Radio, and Digital. OOH was 17 percent of the overall budget.

Target Audiences: Kids and parents, age 6 to 49

Budget: \$5.4MM

Results

The high reach and frequency of this campaign, along with its fun nature, created some online buzz. The Daily Billboard blog caught both the teaser and general campaign and included some photos on its blog. The dynamic digital bulletin campaign that responded to traffic and weather triggers received quite a bit of press as well, including Ad of the Week on *Cream Global* and Editor's Pick on *Creativity-Online*. The film over-performed and ranked number one, making just over \$25 million on opening weekend. As of August 28, 2017, the movie had a lifetime gross of \$76.8 million.

Testimonials

"In today's advertising world it's all about data science and how that helps validate advertising buys and campaign performance. Sony's The Emoji Movie OOH utilized data with a more important purpose, contextually relevant creative triggered by multiple data sets in real time while still branding and introducing a movie and characters." -Ian Dallimore, Director of Innovation & Digital Strategy

"For The Emoji Movie campaign, the interactive and dynamic digital executions paired with the dominant OOH presence created so much buzz! Everywhere you went, you couldn't escape the characters. We are very happy with how The Emoji Movie OOH campaign turned out." -Julie Manard, VP Media, Sony Pictures

Additional Information

- [Digital Billboard Blog \(extra photos\)](#)
- [OOH Ad of the Week: Sony 'The Emoji Movie' \(USA\)](#)
- ['The Emoji Movie' Billboards React to Real-Time Traffic and Weather With Smiley Faces and Poop](#)

Audience Metrics

Target Audience TRPs: Teaser: 506.2; General: 593.8

Target Audience Reach: Teaser: 39.8 percent; General: 51.5 percent

Target Audience Frequency: Teaser: 12.7; General: 11.5