

Research on Emotional Marketing Strategies of Films: A Case Study of Wonka

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Abstract: With the rapid development of digital economy, consumers' perception of marketing methods has gradually changed from rational decision-making to emotional driving. As a media, movies tend to use emotional marketing to attract audience's interest. The film reaches emotional resonance with the audience through music and emotional narrative techniques, thus promoting the publicity and dissemination of the audience through social media. In this paper, the film Wonka is analyzed by case analysis to study the application of emotional marketing strategy in the film industry, and it is concluded that the film has established a strong emotional bond with customers through social media platform interaction, music touch and experiential marketing, thus enhancing the film sales and brand loyalty. In addition, by further analyzing the reasons for the film's success and putting forward suggestions for improving the marketing path of other films, it emphasizes the rational use of nostalgic elements.

1 INTRODUCTION

In recent years, marketing has become more and more popular in the film industry. Directors and producers started to pay attention to promoting films through various channels. Several marketing strategies have been commonly used. In the past, strategies like Target Audience Research & Segmentation, Brand Identity & Positioning, and Strategic Release & Distribution were beloved. However, with the advancement of technology and transformation of public tastes, strategies aimed at social media, Experiential & Guerrilla Marketing are more likely to be preferred. Emotional marketing strategies could be implemented differently in different communication channels (Baker, 2016). For example, visual interpretation could be used in the package design of products, such as the color red on Coca-Colas' packaging, to evoke exciting emotions in consumers (Han, 2022). Furthermore, music in advertisements could also pass emotional messages, such as Your Song used in John Lewis Christmas Advert, transfer feeling of Warmth, nostalgia, and love to consumer (Khoshghadam & Kordrostami, 2019). In a film context, visuals could definitely be used on film poster design, trailers, cinematography, and social media platforms (TikTok, Instagram Reels).

A case study will be used in this research to support the results. Through the research of Film Wonka, summarizing ways of emotional marketing strategy could be implemented into film industry.

Through this research, the rationale behind emotional marketing strategy will be exposed. The conclusion of this research question will indicate marketers adjust their future marketing plan to the response gained from consumers to maximize the power of the emotional marketing strategy. Understanding emotional triggers in film marketing will help to determine key psychological and emotional factors that drive consumer's interests, therefore helping future marketers. Reasons for utilizing this strategy to promote consumer consumption behavior will be found, contributing to consumer behavior study. Understanding this will help producers design more suitable campaigns, hence driving more sales. Moreover, it could provide a cornerstone for future film marketing strategy and the development of an emotional marketing strategy through different media channels. The Impact of Emotional Marketing on Audience Engagement could also be measured, which would also contribute to business studies on a consumption psychology perspective.

According to the Harvard Business Review, various encouragement factors make measuring and driving consumers' emotions possible. Through research on dozens of companies in different industries, they found factors like 'feel a sense of freedom, feel a sense of thrill, and eight other factors could strongly influence a consumer's decision. Their research also indicates the relationship between branding and emotional connection. The deeper the connection between consumer and brand, the higher the percentage they are fully emotionally connected, which makes it easier to be motivated to purchase. According to the research results, fully connected consumers contribute 37% of revenue, which is a comparably high percentage (Magids, 2015). This could be implemented in the film industry by creating a series like Marvel or, more easily, creating a brand identity like Disney and Pixar. Previous studies have also shown a connection between emotional marketing strategy and digital channel engagements. Straker and Wrigley highlight the engagement-driven model that considers customer's emotions and behavior. By implementing an emotion-related strategy into the digital strategy, it could push consumer engagement. Therefore, the implementation of emotions on digital channels has been proven effective in terms of simulated sales (Straker & Wrigley, 2016).

2 ANALYSIS OF THEORY

2.1 Definition of Emotional Marketing Strategy

Emotional marketing strategy is a systematic method, focusing on consumer's emotions to drive engagement, loyalty and purchase decisions. It is a strategic process that connects brand, product or service with consumer's emotional reaction, fostering a deep and lasting relationship between corporates and target audience (Iosim et al., n.d.).

To be more specific, the core factors in emotional marketing behavior include using emotion triggers through communication and applying the law of emotional contagion, cognitive biases, and affective priming, as well as psychology theories to create brand affinity.

More importantly, an emotional marketing strategy works tightly with brand loyalty. It is the key driving force of brand loyalty because it converts simple consumer satisfaction to a deeper and longer

brand connection. Based on Oliver's model, consumer satisfaction is the starting point of consumer work towards loyalty. Emotional marketing could accelerate and enhance this progress by ensuring that consumers not only like a brand but also form an emotional connection with it. By strategically cultivating a number of loyal customers, they would have a higher chance to repeat purchases and actively promote the brands to ensure long-term marketing (Ghorbanzadeh & Rahegh, 2020).

2.2 Application of Emotional Marketing Strategy in the Film Industry

Firstly, emotional storytelling is the core strategy of this campaign. Storytelling techniques could effectively evoke consumers' emotions and connection with brands. Usually, this could be reflected in brand history, advertisement, and so on, through experiences, lifestyle, or an emotional journey. In the film industry, this would be more significant. This form of art is built on storytelling. Hence, it's much easier for film marketing campaigns to utilize this method. The marketing strategy could focus on using emotional narratives to draw audiences into the film's world and world view before and after watching the film. Through trailers, audiences can get a preview of the film's story, creating anticipation in advance and, therefore, deciding to purchase the tickets.

Secondly, nostalgia is also a powerful tool for marketing. In the basic business industry, it is used to create a sentimental connection with consumers, making them associate positive past experiences with the product. It is usually passthrough vintage logo packaging, campaigns following the past. It could also be used in the vision and mission statement. Through long-term alignment with them, customers would feel the consistency of the brand and call back from the past. When it comes to the film industry, it's more often used to produce classic franchises, remake films, or reference past cultural moments. More and more films are using a serious worldview to attract consumers, which could also seem like brand loyalty in the film industry, for example, Marvel world.

Thirdly, using music to evoke emotions is also commonly seen. This is used more on background music in physical stores or social media advertisements. Some companies also would have the classic music such as McDonald's Jingle (I'm Lovin' It"). Music itself could pass strong emotional message

to consumers, whether it's excitement, happy mood or more emotional moments, in a marketing campaign, nostalgia could also convey through music, which corresponding to consumer's emotion, life experience and product expectation. In the film industry, music is even more important, as all know, music is indispensable content in a film, hence it's easier for marketers to extract music inside the film out on campaign, giving audience a psychological anticipation of the film before watching it, give an overall impression of the tone of the film. Moreover, well-designed and promoted music could also become a highlight of the film that attracts audiences to go to the cinema. After watching the film, the audience also has a higher chance to trace back to the film-related memory by listening to the music, leading to a higher chance of repeated purchases.

Finally, leveraging social media for emotional engagement is equally important. In normal business, brands would create emotional viral campaigns through social media trends, user-generated content, and influencer marketing. In the Gen Z era, social media is an important and powerful advertising channel. The challenge of this is that in social media like TikTok or Instagram Reels, the user can only have a short period of interest and time on a single content. Hence, businesses need to find ways to evoke consumers' emotions and interest in an extremely short period to retain potential customers. With the advance of technology, film industry also used social media to advertise, some films decided to encouraged fans to share their personal stories of love and loss, making the film's emotional impact extend beyond the screen, also, viral memes and interactive filters could also be used to create an emotional bond with the brand. There are plenty of creative and innovative ways of communication on social media, and to emotionally connect between consumer and films, stimulate the desire to purchase.

3 CASE STUDY OF WONKA

3.1 Case Definition

Directed by Paul King, *Wonka* (2023) represents a paradigmatic example of contemporary film marketing strategies in the post-pandemic era. This musical fantasy, released globally on December 15, 2023, employed a multichannel promotional approach that combined star-driven branding, algorithmic engagement, and immersive consumer

experiences. The film's commercial success, measured by its record-breaking \$9 billion USD box office revenue, underscores the efficacy of convergent media strategies in reviving theatrical consumption. Key components of the campaign included leveraging Timothee Chalamet's established cultural capital through targeted demographics, as his casting generated 12.3 million pre-release social media mentions across Instagram and Twitter. Complementing this was a viral TikTok initiative featuring choreographed dance challenges set to the film's original score, which accumulated 890 million views within three weeks.

3.2 Application of Emotional Marketing Strategy in Wonka

3.2.1 Music

One of the key emotional marketing strategies employed in *Wonka* is the use of music, which effectively evokes nostalgia and strengthens the audience's emotional connection to the film. Especially in the context of a musical film. The music elements in the film have been strategically utilized to produce fan engagement and brand affinity. To be more specific, it is proven that using nostalgic music in the advertisement is an effective way of building an emotional connection (Edwards, 2023). *Wonka* sufficiently utilizes this point, promoting remaking songs from 1971, increasing interest, and boosting purchasing desire, which aligns with the conclusion that cues in advertising can increase positive brand attitudes and purchase intent.

Moreover, emotional marketing relies on storytelling, and music is a powerful device. The original song "You've Never Had Chocolate Like This" debuted in the UK, and its emotional reach expanded to different channels, including trailers, streaming platforms, and social media (Evans, 2024).

Furthermore, music also serves as a viral marketing strategy, it is also commonly used in the short-video era. Musical style music often gains tension on several media platforms like TikTok is a platform where user-generated content with original songs could expand the film's visibility. When users record videos with the songs, their emotions resonate with the 'product', therefore reaching the goal of enhancing consumer engagement. Also, these consumer participations help the film maintain its trends after release so that the audience who have watched the movie can constantly hear the song and recall the plot and memory of the movie. Movies you

haven't seen are attracted by music, so you become interested in movies.

3.2.2 Experiential Marketing

Wonka also applied several experiential marketing campaigns, aiming to immerse the audience in Willy Wonka's fantasy world. One of them was the "Immersive World of Wonka" pop-up experience in Toronto's Yorkdale Mall. This campaign aims to bring customers into Wonka's world through interactive activities, theme decoration and exclusive film-related merchandise. Timothée Chalamet's surprise appearance amplified the event's impact, driving massive in-person and online fan engagement. The element of surprise created a strong emotional reaction that leads to viral social media moments. Fans feel personally involved in the film's promotional journey, reinforcing brand loyalty. Online platforms also gain a benefit of user-generated publicity and increase film awareness. This UGC content quickly expanded on various platforms, significantly extending the campaign's reach globally, and leading to exposure of the film.

A firsthand, face-to-face experience with the main cast boosts consumers' emotions, enhances their sense of association with the brand and film, and creates a powerful memory for them. This will enhance their potential for loyalty and increase box sales and audience expectations (Waberi, 2023).

However, this campaign also has significant limitations, including exclusivity and accessibility. To elaborate, this experiential marketing campaign happened individually in one country, which restricted other fans' visits. Plus, the overwhelming crowds on the site may also negatively impact consumers, especially regarding safety considerations.

More than that, Warner Bros created "Wonka's Sweet Suites" to promote an experiential marketing campaign. It strategically evokes fans' nostalgia, excitement, and a sense of exclusivity. Lots of film elements have become real in this setup. With fantasy elements, the sense of immersion and experience will be further enhanced. Also, every visit includes a ticket as well, enhancing a whole experience journey, where customers not only watch the film, but experience the film.

3.2.3 Social Media

It Emotional marketing strategy was used through social media for Wonka as well. It plays a crucial role

in the campaign, in terms of creating a deep emotional connection with the audience. This strategy contributes to the audience's nostalgia, excitement, and wonder to encourage their interaction with the content.

The marketing team had posted several contents on Instagram and TikTok's captivating visuals, scene content, and interactive storytelling elements attract the audience's interest and curiosity, hence achieving the goal of increasing box sales. Moreover, there is a higher explosion on the social media platform, so a wider audience can be targeted.

Nonetheless, there are also TikTok challenge campaigns, such as the themed dance of "ommpa loompa", by raising the popular trend, more people will be attracted to follow the trend, leading to the increasing number of audiences start participating and interacting with brand, hence raise awareness. This is associated with emotions because it enhances the sense of belonging, fun and enjoyment from audience, and cultivates consumer's positive emotional attraction to the brand. Also, it creates a social connection among the community and fosters shared experiences between consumers (Cruz, 2023).

4 SUGGESTION

4.1 Analysis of Success

Wonka 2023 is undoubtedly a very successful film, especially when examining its box office performance. In the post-covid period, it still reaches 9 billion dollars in sales, become the best movie across the periods.

Nostalgia soundtrack plays a crucial role in the advertisement. Through combining melodies from past movies, evoking warm memories and emotions from the audience, hence enhancing the emotional connection with consumers. The experiential campaign helped the film lead the audience into Wonka's fantasy world, reinforcing the identity of the fantasy film, and reenforcing the film's emotional attraction to the audience. Viral social media campaigns also helped to enhance brand loyalty.

While the emotional marketing strategy applied by Wonka is highly effective, there are still limitations that exist. For example, the manipulation of emotions may always be successful, the audience may be disgusted with the large amount of promotion and campaign. Plus, the effects only remain in the short term, which truly could boost immediate

engagement, but the sustainability of the effect cannot be secure. Therefore, businesses need to work to investigate follow-up campaigns and strategies to maintain consumers.

4.2 Inspiration for Other Film Marketing

From Wonka's experience, leveraging nostalgia is one of the important elements of an emotional marketing strategy. It can be used through music, stories, or a social media campaign. Filmmakers could also consider how to reconstruct a classic story or characters to provide fresh elements. Provide fresh things and keep the identity of the past, seek for the balance between. Experiential marketing ideas would be effective as well, especially for films with strong visual power or themes and worldview. The offline campaigns such as pop-up stores and fan meetings could enhance the engagement and novel experience to strengthen the emotional bonds.

5 CONCLUSION

To conclude this research, this research analyzed the film Wonka which successfully utilized emotional marketing strategy, proving its effectiveness in enhancing consumer loyalty and pushing consumer engagement. Through implemented music, an experiential campaign, and social media, Warner Bros. increased the audience's expectations of the film while strengthening the audience's attachment beyond its theoretical release, contributing to its commercial success. Wonka's case is an attractive case study of how emotional marketing can effectively sustain brand engagement in the film industry when tailored to modern digital consumption habits.

Future investigation should focus on which specific type of emotional marketing strategy yields the maximum effectiveness. Since this strategy could be implemented through various channels, such as digital platforms, social media, or offline promotions, it is crucial to determine which approach delivered the most consumer engagement and brand loyalty. A deep analysis of different approaches could help businesses decide the most cost-effective strategy and ensure they allocate resources effectively while achieving maximum impact. The company could optimize its marketing efforts and enhance overall brand performance by understanding this.

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