

DIGITAL INNOVATION IN DISTRIBUTION

Case study

Monsters

Distributor: Vertigo Films

Release Date: 3rd December 2010



Monsters is a low-budget film written, directed, and shot by British director Gareth Edwards, who also notably created the film's VFX on his home PC.

To promote the theatrical release, the film's distributor, Vertigo Films, teamed up with the digital agency

Thinkjam to conceive a location-based campaign that would draw on the film's central themes.

The activity was through the location-based social networking site 'Foursquare', and was designed to boost overall visibility of the film and add an element of something new and exciting to the main, more traditional PR campaign, which tied in with the 'infected zones' elements of the film. All activity was intended to drive people to the cinema on the night of release on December 3rd.

Aims

Key aims were:

- a presence on the latest platform in social networking
- continuous direct communication with customers
- to raise awareness of cinemas showing the film and their locations
- to drive / encourage bookings at those cinemas
- to develop fun and exciting promotions with potential to tie-in activity for Foursquare members
- to have the option for developing further promotions for members and also encourage new members

Wider aims included:

- fuelling debate and discussion around the film
- highlighting the film's originality and unique filmmaking process
- pushing Gareth Edwards as a talented director to watch
- generating insightful features
- generating sustained coverage on both mainstream and niche tastemaker sites

Regional Tour Activity

To coincide with director Gareth Edwards' UK tour, infected zones were created in each key city. This was supplemented by offline activity whereby a number of volunteers handed out flyers with campaign imagery and Foursquare information.

This was a test run of the overall campaign that would be taking place in the coming weeks, with 'Infected zones' created in:

- Bristol

What is Foursquare?

Foursquare is a location-based social networking website (www.foursquare.com) and set of mobile applications.

The concept is for users with GPS-enabled smartphones to 'check-in' when they are at certain venues. This allows their friends to see where they are or have been, and lets people leave tips and reviews about places they have visited.

Along with the social interactions, it also allows users to interact with venues - who can track the visits, and also offer incentives for visitors and repeat visits.

| Cost items | Budgeted cost | Actual cost |
|---|----------------|----------------|
| Set up – page build, infected areas and seeding | £5,975 | £5,975 |
| PR integration and links | £6,400 | £12,500 |
| In cinema branding, dispatch etc | £4,500 | £4,510 |
| Barcodes / ticketing solution (estimated) | £2,000 | £0 |
| Experiential activities | £11,000 | £6,890 |
| TOTAL | £29,875 | £29,875 |

- Glasgow
- Nottingham
- Cardiff
- Greenwich Observatory

The Foursquare presence was publicised through the official *Monsters* Facebook and Twitter channels



Campaign Stage 1: Education / teaser

The teaser press release was sent out to notify online publications of the Foursquare initiative. Information remained vague at this stage, with fans only being made aware of 'infected zones' being created in select Vue and Cineworld venues across the country, as well as a number of independent zones.

What happened this week:

- Teaser Press Release
- Infected zones created in the vicinity of venues
- Random Infected zones created independently of venues, in heavily populated areas
- Vue and Cineworld began to tease activity via social network channels
- Tips were left in all Vue and Cineworld venues making people aware of the local infected zones. Fans were forwarded to an email address where they could claim posters and merchandise.

Campaign Stage 2: Adventure

This week users were engaging with the promotion, logging in to infected zones across the country. Random prizes were awarded to those who emailed the email address left in all infected zone tips. To reward early adopters, an exclusive clip was made available through Foursquare. The exclusive clip also warranted a second press release which helped entice publications to push to the Foursquare profile for readers to catch a sneak peak.

What happened in this week:

- Exclusive clip breaks exclusively on Foursquare
- The exclusive clip generated a second press release from Thinkjam
- Consistent press pushes for news on foursquare activity
- More in-depth tweets from Vue and Cineworld

Problems faced

The key promotion for the release was to run the Foursquare activity over consecutive weeks and although the end result was not what Vertigo had hoped for, it still raised awareness, generated PR coverage and drummed up a wealth of buzz in appropriate forums.

The campaign required early buy-in from exhibitors, as specific sites needed to be identified for Foursquare set-up. This was a problem as:

- the exhibitors were yet to adopt Foursquare (i.e. register their sites

Campaign Stage 3: The Big Reveal

For the week before release, the 10 swarm sites that would be giving users the discount code were revealed. This was done via the full trade press release as well as a general PR release which generated further news stories.

| Vue | Cineworld |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| Birmingham City Star | Birmingham Broad Street |
| Bristol Cribbs | Cardiff |
| Cheshire Oaks | Edinburgh |
| Leeds Light | Greenwich (O ₂) |
| Westfield | Sheffield |

What happened in this week:

- Trade press release
- Full PR press release
- Seeding across key forums e.g. Money Saving Expert, Specific student forums

Campaign Stage 4: Swarm!

For the week of release, the campaign unleashed limited infected zones that, when checking in as part of a group or 'Swarm' and unlocking a badge, allowed bulk discount on tickets. All PR messaging included links and information of the Foursquare presence. The activity was covered by select press invited down to Vue Westfield.

What happened in this week:

- Continued Press Pushes
- Tips left in all venues across the country, urging users to visit the swarm sites
- Local locations will also be left tips, letting people know of the one-off event
- To encourage press involvement, infected zones would be created in local areas e.g. Blue Fin Building (also capitalises on Southbank location)
- Dec 3rd - Photo opportunity at swarm sites

- with the social network)
- the site list was not confirmed with Vertigo's sales team until two weeks prior to release.

Vertigo found exhibitors sceptical to begin with, but they achieved buy-in from Vue and Cineworld.

To assist the exhibitors' understanding of Foursquare they were provided with a 'How To...' guide to registering their venues with the network, and to work around the venues being confirmed late on in the campaign, Vertigo had to adapt their overall strategy without confusing the fans.

Despite all this, in the end the biggest problem on the release date was the weather, with up to 10cm of snow causing major transport issues and low turnouts for films across the board.

Results

The film's box office for the opening weekend was just over £1m. Overall performance of the film was affected by the extreme weather. For the weekend of release there were no prints in Ireland or Edinburgh due to courier deliveries being suspended. Vertigo estimate to have lost 30% of opening Box Office due to the weather.

Although the night of 3rd December didn't produce the number of check-ins to the cinemas that had been anticipated, the overall coverage it received, and its contribution to the increase in awareness of the film in the run-up to the release, was a huge success.

Vue Westfield was the most successful with 42 check-ins on the evening, despite very poor weather conditions. There were also increased check-ins at Vue Leeds, Vue Bristol and Cineworld Edinburgh.

Conclusion

The learnings of working with Foursquare have been very positive and it was an innovative way to engage with a smart, up-market audience, such as that for *Monsters*.

For future films, if they were to replicate a similar film campaign Vertigo may choose to use Facebook Places (a competing system that was announced after work on the campaign had begun). Due to its integration with Facebook, Places has wider awareness.

Crucially, Vertigo have learnt to built into the campaign resilience to any issues of late venue confirmations by the exhibitors.

Despite the disappointment, both Vue and Cineworld have expressed an interest in doing something similar again, and the project has left two lasting benefits.

One is that Vue and Cineworld are now conversant with Foursquare and other location-based social media, which they may adopt for other, smaller campaigns to encourage cinemagoers.

Another is that Vertigo can use their relationship with the Foursquare users who participated, analyse the interactions with exhibitor sites, and glean data from the Foursquare system regarding their target audience.

