**How ‘God's Not Dead’ Used Facebook to Create a Christian Indie Hit**

**Social media expert Ash Greyson tells us why movie marketing is flawed and how to fix it**

The astounding $9.2 million opening weekend of “God's Not Dead” – the Christian indie movie no one had ever heard of –  wasn't the result of divine intervention.

The movie that upended the establishment to become last weekend's fourth highest grossing film on fewer than 800 theaters deployed one of the most sophisticated social media campaigns this year. It was a grassroots effort that helped the studio target and turn out sold-out crowds.

“Social media was critical with this,” Russell Wolfe, CEO of Pure Flix Entertainment, the company behind the $5 million film.

They got results by drilling down into data, identifying not only Christians, but likely Christian moviegoers and then flooding them with promotional materials for the film. They went even deeper, identifying people who listened to Christian music and particularly to the Newsboys, a Christian pop group featured in the film.

“The problem historically has been that people think because someone is a Christian, they're more likely to go to a Christian movie,” Greyson said. “They may be more likely to go to a Christian movie than a horror movie, but they still may never go to the movies.”

Greyson also segmented the audience into a series of buckets, based on their affinity for the eclectic film's cast. It's a list that includes Kevin Sorbo of the '90s show “Hercules: The Legendary Journeys,” Dean Cain of “Lois & Clark: The New Adventures of Superman,” Shane Harper of the Disney Channel sitcom “Good Luck Charlie” and cameos by the Newsboys and “Duck Dynasty”s’ Willie Robertson. All of them boast large social media followings. Fans of those entertainers received targeted ads featuring clips or images from the film with their favorite performer.

“We created custom environments for all of these groups where people had nothing to do beyond buying tickets or sharing clips,” Greyson said.

When it came to choosing his online advertisements, Greyson told various platforms that he wanted their most disruptive products. Instead of banner ads, he asked for spots that started playing instantly or that stopped and restarted if a person took a break from using a service at mid-point.

It also meant shunning television nearly entirely save for a few spots on the popular Christian broadcast “The 700 Club” on Up TV. Greyson believes that television spots are too broad, offering limited value for money.

Greyson's team has also worked on “Son of God” and other titles and came highly recommended to Pure Flix. However, his new bosses looked stunned during a meeting last summer when he promised he'd deliver 500,000 fans for the film on Facebook. He exceeded those projections wildly. A page for the picture currently boasts more than 1 million likes, and Facebook ads for “God's Not Dead” have generated more than a billion impressions.

Analysis of other Christian films in the past

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Movie title | Number of theatres shown | Mainstream popularity of cast | Christian values |
| The passion of the Christ | 3,400 | High | Very high |
| Heaven is for Real | 2,400 | Moderate | Very high |
| Son of God | 3,200 | Low | Moderate |
| God’s Not Dead | 800 | Moderate | Moderate |
| I Can Only Imagine | 2,800 | High | Low |

But Greyson doesn't want to stop with marketing. He's talking to film clients about getting involved in projects at the script stage and beginning the social media conversation earlier to poll audience members about everything from lines of dialogue to casting choices.

The movie went on to make $64 million in total revenue.

Questions – 18 marks

a. Define the term *market segment [2 marks]*

b. Describe two ways the market for the movie “God’s not Dead’ was segmented *[4 marks]*

c.(i) Prepare a perception map of Christian movies based on ‘mainstream popularity of cast’

and ‘Christian values’ *[4 marks]*

(ii) using the result of (i), comment on the usefulness of a position/perception map [2 marks]

d. Analyse the benefits of a niche targeting strategy for businesses like Pure Fix

Entertainment *[6 marks]*