

Prometheus drops the ball with an ESPN campaign



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Last night, my husband and I were watching SportsCenter hoping to catch a glimpse of coverage on the Stanley Cup Finals. Strangely, we were treated instead to a “first look” marketing piece for the new Ridley Scott movie, “Prometheus.” The piece interspersed commentary from ESPN personality Stephen A. Smith with clips from the movie and promotion of the hashtag #areyouseeingthis. While I’m all for branded campaigns and interesting new ways to market products or brands, the connection between ESPN and the movie is pretty non-existent.

Overall, the viral campaign for Prometheus has been really interesting. My favorite part is the old Paris Metro stop that was turned into a Prometheus-themed scene for riders to view as they passed by. There are viral clips and videos featuring Michael Fassbender and Charlize Theron’s characters, fake advertising for the technology in the film, an interactive site for the technology company, and even a faux TED talk. All these things work within the concept of the movie...but an ESPN advertorial doesn’t seem to fit in the mix.

ESPN recently inked a deal with Twitter to offer advertisers integrated packages that include promoted tweets and trends along with ESPN’s ad coverage around events, like the Global X Games, NBA Finals, World Series, and the Super Bowl. That makes sense to me—who better to promote the biggest sporting events in the world than the biggest sports cable network in the world? But trying to shoehorn a co-branded movie promotion into the ESPN mix feels like it’s reaching a little too far. Next thing you know, they’ll have Sigourney Weaver running commentary on the Heat versus the Celtics.

Just because you can market in a certain way doesn’t mean that it’s right. The Prometheus marketing team undoubtedly wanted to cash in on ESPN’s popularity and huge audience to drum up more buzz for the movie, and I can’t blame them—they understand their demographic and know that many viewers who are tuning in to SportsCenter are likely to be interested in the movie. But if you look at all the elements of their overall marketing campaign, having an ESPN-branded bit sticks out like a sore thumb.

When you create a marketing plan, **it’s important to make sure that your content makes sense in every channel.** If the piece doesn’t really fit and you go for it anyway, what originally sounds like a fantastic opportunity could be more confusing than intriguing to your audience, overshadowing your message and even turning people off from what you intended. Will Prometheus suffer from a not-quite-right campaign with ESPN? Definitely not, but it makes me wonder what else ESPN is willing to put their name behind that doesn’t quite fit.



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