

DIGITAL INNOVATION IN DISTRIBUTION

Case study

Motherhood

Distributor: **Metrodome** Release Date: **9th April 2010**



The UK Film Council's Digital Innovation in Distribution awards were intended to get distributors thinking about more unconventional, long-lead, digital marketing strategies. The awards encouraged participants to innovate and experiment, and be prepared to take risks.

It was not necessarily expected that all projects would prove successful, but instead it was hoped that where they were not, there would still be learnings to be taken from the experience.



Motherhood is an independent comedy, written and directed by Katherine Dieckmann and starring Uma Thurman. Its release was planned as a day-and-date release (where it is made available through home entertainment alongside the cinema release, as opposed to after a theatrical-only window).

The strategy would see it aimed at a defined online market, minimising the wastage often associated with a broad release.

'Online young mothers' is a well-defined market with dedicated channels. The plan was to create innovative, engaging online activity to interact with the target market.

One of the concepts for this was trialling 'house parties' as a word-of-mouth dynamic for this market. Metrodome received encouragement from the UK Film Council to explore this house party dynamic, so the number of proposed house parties increased from 20 to 200.

Partnership with Mumsnet

Metrodome worked closely with *Mumsnet* (www.mumsnet.com), the biggest parenting website in the UK. They were the distributor's official online media partner, and in return Metrodome gave them presence on their website and also inserted a voucher offer in the DVD for their new book. As a result Metrodome was able to gain additional value from them.

In the five weeks leading up to release Mumsnet provided the following coverage:

- Stickers throughout the site offering people the chance to attend a special preview screening. This screening was well received and people posted comments on the site afterwards
- An advertorial on their home page for two weeks and then another advertorial in their chat section for a further two weeks
- Online advertising on their homepage the week before release. 100,000 guaranteed page impressions.
- A Motherhood competition which gave the film coverage on their homepage as well as one month's placement on their competition page
- Two newsletter insertions which went out to 75,000 people.

Through this partnership, Metrodome achieved in the region of 1m page impressions from a £7000 spend, and gained a very positive association.

Polling showed that the profile did not necessarily lead to DVD purchase or theatrical attendance but it certainly achieved a huge over delivery on the investment by way of coverage – especially at a time when Mumsnet became seen as the primary website for mothers online, receiving great press coverage and forging strong links with all political leaders.

The campaign

Metrodome released the film on one print initially on 5th March, which gave them the benefit of national press reviews. They then held six special screenings using digital prints on the 13th March (the day before Mother's Day and a day that they christened 'Mother's Day Eve'). These screenings were regional and were exclusively with one exhibitor, Apollo cinemas.

All other platforms released on 8th March including VOD, iTunes and PPV.

Metrodome used the existing trailer for in-cinema trailering and online opportunities, with minor amends on the voiceover. This was trailered online, as well as in 35mm and digital format theatrically.

Media was targeted towards online advertising which reached out to mothers. There was also limited print advertising (two ads) supporting the DVD release in parenting magazines and in national press for the day of release – these were requested by the retailers.

Metrodome created a new date for Mums' diaries called Mother's Day Eve. This day was designed to give mums the night off from family life and to have some time to themselves, to spend with their friends. Mums were given two options - they could either go out for the evening (screening), or stay in (DVD) depending on babysitting requirements.

Going Out

Metrodome worked with Apollo cinemas to offer mums free popcorn and a drink with every two tickets sold.

Staying In

Metrodome gave away 20 house parties which consisted of a £100 Asda voucher and a copy of the DVD so that mums could organise a girly night in with friends.

In addition to this they also gave away an additional 180 DVDs as runner-up prizes so that mums could set up their own house party screenings with friends.

House party competitions ran on a large number of websites and these included promotions on the *News of the World* and *The Sun* websites.

In order to help explain the idea of Mother's Day Eve to mums, a manifesto was created which laid out a set of tongue-in-cheek rules for husbands and partners to follow. Mothers were then encouraged to post their suggestions and contributions for the manifesto on *Motherhood's* social networking pages in order to engage with the audience and create a fun and friendly forum.

Mothers were also encouraged to go online and share their house party experiences through social media and parenting websites reviewing the film.

ACTIVITY	Cost
Sponsorship/paid media on Mumsnet	£7000
Facebook ads	£3000
Website build, alterations and hosting	£2070
Ad and voucher pack design	£1500
Agency fee (Organic)	
promotions	£8500
online PR	£3000
Brand agency fees	£2000
Cameo Emma B	£480
Additional supermarket voucher	£100
Promotional stock	£300
Preview networks	£300
Mumsnet screening	£640
Exit polling	£350
DVD polling (200 DVD sent out)	£255
DVD insert polling	£560
TOTAL	£30055

The screenshot shows a website for the film 'Motherhood' with a corkboard background. At the top, it says 'Uma Thurman There are no hero-acts in... MOTHERHOOD IN UK CINEMAS MARCH 2010'. Below this are several promotional cards: 'OFFICIAL CINEMA PARTNER APOLLO CINEMAS', 'SHOPPING LIST ON DVD ON DEMAND AND ITUNES FROM 8TH MARCH', 'MOTHER'S DAY EVE (13th MARCH) WIN A HOUSE PARTY OR ATTEND A SPECIAL SCREENING', and 'COMPETITIONS & FUN STUFF Funny Kids videos Win lots of great prizes'. The main content area is titled 'MOTHER'S DAY EVE' and contains a manifesto with four rules: 'Dad has to put the kids to bed in order to let Mum get ready for her night out', 'Emergency phone calls only (FYI) - these do not include calls dialing where the TV remote is', 'A 10-min 6er Mum in the morning (FYI) - A lie-in nearest post box', and 'Mild hangers should not be reentered upon by partners/hubs and wets be treated with sympathy'. There are also sections for 'GIRLS OUT', 'STAYING IN', and a form to enter for a chance to win a £100 Asda voucher and a copy of the DVD. The form asks for the user's full name and email address.

Metrodome worked closely with an online PR and promotions company to push the trailer and clips, seeding them across entertainment, film and mainstream media sites. The trailer was launched on *The Sun* website, which gets over 30 million visitors a month.

In order to get mums on board in supporting *Motherhood*, a voucher pack was produced which included discounts and offers for top brands, allowing mums to treat themselves for Mother's Day. Metrodome directed mums to register on its website and promoted the voucher pack via their social networking pages, online PR agency and through viral emails. The voucher pack was given away free without purchase, in return an email address being data captured.

There was a second premium voucher pack which was obtained through the DVD where a screen linking through from the menu supplied a code and a URL. This voucher pack repeated the same offers but with additional premium offers. Vouchers included money off at hairdressers, restaurants, spa breaks and days out for the kids. Metrodome sent out 415 voucher packs in total – they had hoped for greater uptakes but found that voucher sites weren't keen to promote branded vouchers packs.

Metrodome set up fan pages on Facebook and Twitter in order to engage with their audience, enlist their support and promote the voucher pack. The Facebook page was focused around building an environment where mums could interact with fun content, and post their own comments and opinions about their personal experiences, thus building a community.

In order to increase the fan base on Facebook, Metrodome took out an ASU ad which appeared on a users profile page. This ad was targeted towards married women aged 25-45. This helped to grow the fan base significantly from 100 fans to 1,372.

Metrodome set up a *Motherhood* competition on a separate Facebook page where they encouraged mums to post their funniest kids videos. The funniest video won a Stokke stroller worth £729. This competition was seeded out through another Facebook fan page and also ran in an advertisement on Netmums to drive traffic to the competition page. However, Metrodome found it hard to engage mums with this competition: the fact that there was some effort to be made proved an obstacle for them.

A website (www.motherhoodmovie.com) was built to host basic content such as synopsis, cast and crew information and the trailer. It was also used to host and promote the voucher pack offer. Visitors were encouraged to register as soon as they entered the site, and all the key brands and offers were highlighted on the home page. Metrodome also featured its Mother's Day Eve promotion, ran a competition to win a house party, flagged up its DVD message and included a section on Apollo cinemas so that visitors could find their nearest cinemas taking part in the Mother's Day Eve screenings.

Working with partners

The brief for agencies was to link with large brand partners to achieve profile for the film, create online marketing opportunities and coverage within the young mother community.

Metrodome began the campaign using an agency that they subsequently felt were not capable of delivering for this particular brief, so Organic was appointed to take on the promo aspect as well as the PR. However they too found, as with the previous agency, that brands were not interested in supporting the film unless they could be assured an over delivery on coverage through a large media spend.

The voucher pack promotion achieved some subscriptions and a reasonable array of offers. The pack did not achieve traction on a large scale, but both agencies did manage to secure good prize funds from relevant brands.



In the end brands weren't interested in association – they wanted cost-effective, guaranteed coverage

Metrodome

Online profile was strong, through the competitions, although it was found that most media were reluctant to refer to the DVD giveaways as 'house parties' and just saw them as competition stock. The exception was in cases where the agency had good prior relations, and here they were able to ensure that the house party message was carried.

Reflecting on the campaign

The campaign began three months ahead of release. However, Metrodome found that at some points the elements of the campaign that were reliant on the performance of external partners were delayed, due to the difficulties with their suppliers.

Metrodome approached the campaign with multiple strategies, combining traditional techniques with more innovative approaches which had a key focus on online and innovative digital activity. In general, the more innovative approaches were less successful – either in terms of consumer engagement or in terms of gaining media coverage. However, Metrodome did achieve excellent cut-through and an over-delivery on certain segments of the campaign which followed more traditional dynamics, for example the media partnership with Mumsnet.

Of all the campaign's elements, the house party was by far the hardest thing to achieve. Metrodome could not get media or competition winners to engage with the concept. Metrodome also found it hard to engage media in the Mother's Day Eve message, although the message was pushed through their advertising and partnership with Mumsnet.

Twenty house parties with £100 voucher packs were given away. Despite this, Metrodome experienced difficulty in getting any meaningful feedback from participants. Most seem to have had difficulty arranging the house parties, or were simply not prepared to.

180 DVDs were given away with no vouchers – however, despite being provided on the condition that they were for house party screenings, winners took the DVDs to be competition prizes and again were reluctant to follow through with the house party dynamic.

This may in part be attributable to the fact that, as a demographic, young mothers are busy and have responsibilities which can be inflexible.

As a day-and-date release, the single public theatrical screening was not a large element of the strategy. However, the film's performance at the box office was disappointing, and reaction to this did not help the campaign. Nevertheless the key part of the release, home entertainment, was much more encouraging.

Taking all factors into consideration, Metrodome cannot claim the overall campaign was a success, but there were successful elements.

Metrodome felt that the part of the campaign where they had most success was in creating a profile for the release within the target market with minimal wastage. However, the more innovative approaches did not deliver to expectations – both the media and the winners were found to be resistant to the house party concept, either the participants' perception of the effort involved, or from the media's view that it was too complicated for a competition dynamic. Although profile was achieved this did not necessarily convert into purchasers.

Metrodome felt that this marketing campaign was overly ambitious. Despite this, they are philosophical, believing ambition to be a good thing and realising that innovating carries risk - with the lack of precedent giving a sense of taking a campaign into uncharted waters.

STATISTICS

DVDs sold in first week (approx)	6000
DVDs sold as at 20/09/10 (approx)	15300
VoD revenue (approx)	£10000
Facebook fans	1372
Website unique visitors	2668
Voucher pack downloads	415