

PBS: Masterpiece Downton Abbey

Problem

How does a TV show make a splash in the country's largest market?

Solution

Create a mobile experience that connects with viewers in multiple locations across New York City.

Background

PBS: Masterpiece Downton Abbey, an established television drama import that had been gaining in popularity, was returning for a fourth season. The continuing growth and success of the show was of critical importance, as it had become a major driver for awareness and support of PBS in an increasingly difficult fundraising environment. As such, PBS challenged the planning team to create an OOH program that would provide significant local market impact in New York, within a limited budget, that would drive both buzz and tune-in. The timing of the campaign would coincide with a major Downton Abbey event at the New York Times Center near Times Square, featuring Julian Fellowes, the show's creator, and several cast members.



Objective

The Downton Abbey audience is incredibly diverse in its demographic makeup. Therefore, the planning team made it an objective to attract and use the show's "superfans" as a base from which to expand the reach of the campaign. Additionally, the OOH campaign needed to be so compelling that it could be relied upon to be the catalyst for a heavy PR and social media push, extending its presence to online, mobile, print, and broadcast, if possible. The team examined ways to leverage the close timing between the campaign and New Year's Eve to their advantage as well.

Strategy

Since the available budget was not sufficient for any sort of mass distribution concept, the team decided a mobile format would be most efficient for reaching several high-traffic locations. The media would have to be highly contextual and speak directly to the "superfan" to generate the desired response. With those criteria in mind, the team conceptualized a mobile, multifunctional event space where fans could engage with the brand: The Downton Abbey Tea Truck Experience.

The Tea Truck concept aimed to draw crowds of fans who would share their experiences via social media using the designated hashtags (#DowntonPBS, #Teatruck) and pick up a critical mass of press coverage to serve as a proxy for broadcast advertising. The below-freezing and snowy weather expected during the campaign ensured that an extra element of brand goodwill would be imparted by bringing hot cheer to cold New Yorkers.

The Tea Truck itself as a mobile billboard and was wrapped in the backdrop of Highclere Castle (the show's setting) in front of which fans could photograph themselves to appear inserted into the show's key art along with images of the show's cast. Cos-

tuned brand ambassadors acted as footmen and maid-servants around the truck, providing proper tea service to passersby. Fans who approached the truck could walk away with specially branded cups of the same hot tea served on the show and tea biscuits. Individually wrapped and branded teabags were distributed, along with postcards with tune-in information. A video screen mounted on the truck displayed specially produced content which detailed the making of the show. The video both attracted consumers and entertained them as they waited in line to be served proper tea.

The campaign also employed a digital Times Square bulletin unit located directly behind the New Year's Eve ball drop prior to and during New Year's Eve, knowing that all eyes would be focused on it during that period, and that it would be captured in a significant portion of photos taken by those in Times Square and shared en masse by extension.



Plan Details

Market: New York (Manhattan)

Flight Dates:

- Food Truck: December 9 - 13, 2013
- Times Square Bulletin: December 9, 2013 - January 5, 2014

OOH Formats: Wrapped vehicle, costumed brand ambassadors, video display, branded food and drink items, branded take-aways, Times Square digital billboard

Results

The success of the Tea Truck portion of the campaign was demonstrated across multiple KPIs:

- The daily allotments of giveaways were exhausted well before the completion of each campaign day, signifying a higher than anticipated audience engagement. Fans continued to be photographed at the truck even as it was preparing to leave each day.
- A significant volume of social media exposure was tracked across Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and Vine. Careful examination of photographs showed that certain fans of the show visited the Tea Truck in multiple locations over multiple days. Enough was generated to become a featured local affiliate WNET RebelMouse page: <http://www.thirteen.org/program-content/teatruck-social-buzz/>
- There was significant press pickup of the Tea Truck in outlets including *Gothamist*, *Huffington Post*, *Variety*, *New York Daily News*, *New York Post*, *AM New York*, and *TIME*.
- The show premiere was the highest rated drama premiere in PBS History and showed a 39 percent increase in average audience (over 4MM viewers) over the previous season's premiere episode: <http://www.pbs.org/about/news/archive/2014/downton-abbey-4-premiere-national-ratings>

