



# Theme Edition – Academy Award Winners

*A glimpse behind the online life of some of the Oscar winners of 2009, including Slumdog Millionaire, The Curious Case of Benjamin Button and Batman: The Dark Knight.*

Dear Reader,

In this March edition of the Goviral newsletter, we will have a look behind the scenes on some of the best movies from the recent Academy Award show. Online videos have long been a source of constant entertainment for an increasing global audience. Movie trailers are no exception. The digital platforms offer unique potential for the marketing of motion pictures by allowing for an abundance of extras, background insights and to promote the general buzz on social networking sites behind the road to the red carpet.

Enjoy.

## Slumdog Millionaire

Box Office result - US (February, 25<sup>th</sup>): \$99,557,539  
Box Office result – UK (February 27<sup>th</sup>): £24,186,275

*An eighteen-year-old from the slums of Mumbai finds himself competing on the game show "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire," where the questions he must answer offer a look back at his earlier life. The show's host, however, insists that he must be cheating and takes steps to force young Jamal to admit that a boy from such an impoverished background could not possibly possess the knowledge necessary to win the show's top prize.*



The big winner of this year's Oscar Show was Slumdog Millionaire with an astonishing eight wins out of the ten Academy Awards it was nominated for. Goviral was involved in the UK seeding of one of the most successful films of 2009 and offers some unique insights in the digital campaign behind the success.

To create awareness, the trailer was released 6 weeks prior the movie premiere. Additionally, a short **flash game** was released four weeks later to gain extra momentum to the campaign. This game involved a 'Who wants to be a millionaire?' style of questions and answers where fans could test their knowledge about the film. To date, the content has attracted more than 500,000 views globally and reached 145% of its target for the trailer in UK, the target market.

Finally, by the movie premiere, a **micro blog** was launched, allowing the film's audience to not only rate, but also review, Slumdog Millionaire and share these reviews through social networking. To date, more than 2,300 shared their reviews with others, the majority of which were highly positive reviews, embracing the movie and recommending it to their friends and networks. Some features of the **campaign website** were partnerships with Statravel, offering flight tickets to India and iTunes, from which the musical score from the film can be purchased.

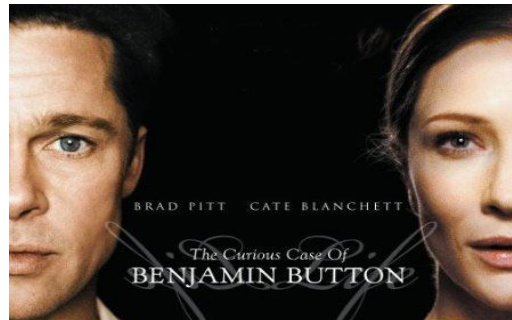
Trailer

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## The Curious Case of Benjamin Button

Box Office result (February, 25<sup>th</sup>): \$124,313,838

*Benjamin Button's life begins at the close of World War I, when he is born with the body of an old man. As the years pass, however, Benjamin discovers that he is gradually becoming younger even as he grows older in experience and wisdom--a situation that informs his relationship with the lovely Daisy, who reenters his life periodically as they grow closer together in physical age.*



The digital strategy behind The Curious Case of Benjamin Button has been less extensive than Slumdog Millionaire, but video sharing sites and social networking sites have definitely played a role in marketing the film. A lot of content, particularly 'behind the scenes' related content, can be found all over the internet, which allows both for users searching actively for content, or merely activating it on other platforms they move around in like MSN, Facebook or Youtube.

In the few months Benjamin Button has had the movie trailer online, it has so far generated more than 5,5 mio. views globally over the five largest video sharing sites, which indicates a very high level of interest. This is not to mention the myriads of smaller, and more contextual sites, where it picked up, such as movie review sites, fan sites and social networks.

A brief Technorati search reveals that Benjamin Button has already been discussed, mentioned or in other ways communicated in approx. 15,000 blogs globally. This has not been part of the online distribution strategy, but is one of the positive side effects of proper content. The majority of these blogs are small microblogs, most likely with a limited amount of readers. However, the blogs contribute to

making information search easier to the user, as well as strengthening the feel of “*Everybody seems to be talking about this...maybe I should look into it as well?*”.

Some of the most impressive features of this film are the visual effects applied to digitally age Brad Pitt. The crew behind the visuals reveals some of the extensive work they have done in order to reconstruct the aging process [here](#).

[Trailer](#)

[Additional trailer](#)

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## Batman: The Dark Knight

Box Office result (February, 25<sup>th</sup>): \$533,192,086

*Gotham City appears to be heading toward a relatively crime-free future, because of the efforts of Batman, District Attorney Harvey Dent, and Lieutenant Jim Gordon, and Bruce Wayne hopes he will soon be able to abandon his secret identity. The arrival of the terrifying Joker, however, whose actions are motivated solely by his desire to outwit the Caped Crusader, forces Wayne to continue in his role as the city's best hope against the powers of evil.*



Starting to build awareness for the release of a new movie is the norm. But, when Warner Bros. built their viral marketing campaign on a schematic multi-level platform a year before the July 2008 release date, they not only caused a stir, but also created a universe for Batman fans to organize themselves around in a cohesive, active, and self-sustaining community. Warner Bros. positioned the audience not simply as the consumers of advertisements, but as interactive partners in the advertising campaign itself, telling a real and fictional story that could be influenced by participants' ideas or actions.

The setup can be described as an alternate reality game (ARG), and treated the fictional world as if it was real by involving fans with the characters and plot of the story. Gotham City came to life through the creation of websites containing information about it, such as newspapers, cab companies, churches, TV stations and even subways. The multi-platformed campaign combined advertising, scavenger hunting, role playing, and social media tools to empower the fans by allowing them to create a Batman universe for themselves.

As can be seen, the campaign has been much more than just releasing a movie trailer. Nevertheless, different versions of the trailer have been released to further grab and hold the attention of the dedicated crowds. Over the five largest video sharing sites, trailers for the Dark Knight have generated more than 32 mio. views! Obviously, it has had much longer time to do this, than the other two trailers.

The Technorati result for The Dark Knight is also very high, although maybe not as impressive as for Benjamin Button, since it had longer time to generate interest. More than 27,000 blogs in all the languages of the world have one or more posts concerning this particular Batman movie. This is also an indicator of how much the fan crowds are talking about the movie. A large part of these blog posts were written, when fans were trying to decipher the different games and riddles of the initial viral campaign, thereby collaborating to solve the puzzles.

The campaign applied for the resurrection of the Dark Knight certainly was a masterpiece. If the box office result is any sort of indicator of the success of the online strategy behind the film, Warner Brothers won the ball. Obviously, Batman has had much more time to sell tickets, so only time will tell the end result of the other strategies.

Read more about the Batman campaign in an in-depth analysis and walkthrough in Goviral's book The Social Metropolis [here](#).

[Trailer](#)

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## Insight

Some of the best advertising a motion picture can get is winning an Oscar. Although the internet might not play a role in whether or not a movie receives any awards; it plays a huge role in spreading the content across platforms, countries or social segments, which in turn affects box office results.

According to an [online video study](#) from Advertising.com, the three types of content consumers are most likely to stream generally are news clips (48.6%), music videos (47.4%) and movie trailers on the third place (32.6%).

An [analysis from Dynamic Logic](#) of 57 movie campaigns for in-theatre releases reveals that online movie ads perform among one of the highest industries in positively raising Aided Brand Awareness (+9.8) and Brand Favourability (+4.3) on average.

Dynamic Logic further gives a couple of heads-up for online trailers:

***“Leverage the “buzz factor” early to generate awareness.** Each new movie is a new brand, so raising awareness is an important first step. The more people are aware of a movie early on before competitive and secondary factors increase their role in the decision-making process, the greater the number of people who will be able to consider the movie as the release date approaches.”*

***“Rich media, especially online video ads, are highly recommended.** Ads showing movie trailers can also be an appealing draw as they entertain as well as inform consumers. By providing a “sneak peak” of the movie trailer, ads with video can be powerful influence on potential movie-goers. They have the ability to raise awareness and provide enough information that the consumer can evaluate whether or not they want to actually watch the movie.”*

So, there is no doubt that distribution of movie trailers online is a very important source of attracting movie-goers and for creating awareness and interest in the launch of a new movie.

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Kind regards,

Frederik Thestrup, Editor

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