

TARGET PRACTICE

Finding the right audience for a movie oftentimes means looking beyond the obvious. **BY CINDY MULKERN**

ON THE COVER: Key art from four of this year's most anticipated films. (Clockwise from top left) Twentieth-Century Fox's "Me, Myself and Irene," Warner Bros.'s "The Perfect Storm," Universal's "Nutty Professor II: The Klumps" and Buena Vista's "Dinosaur."

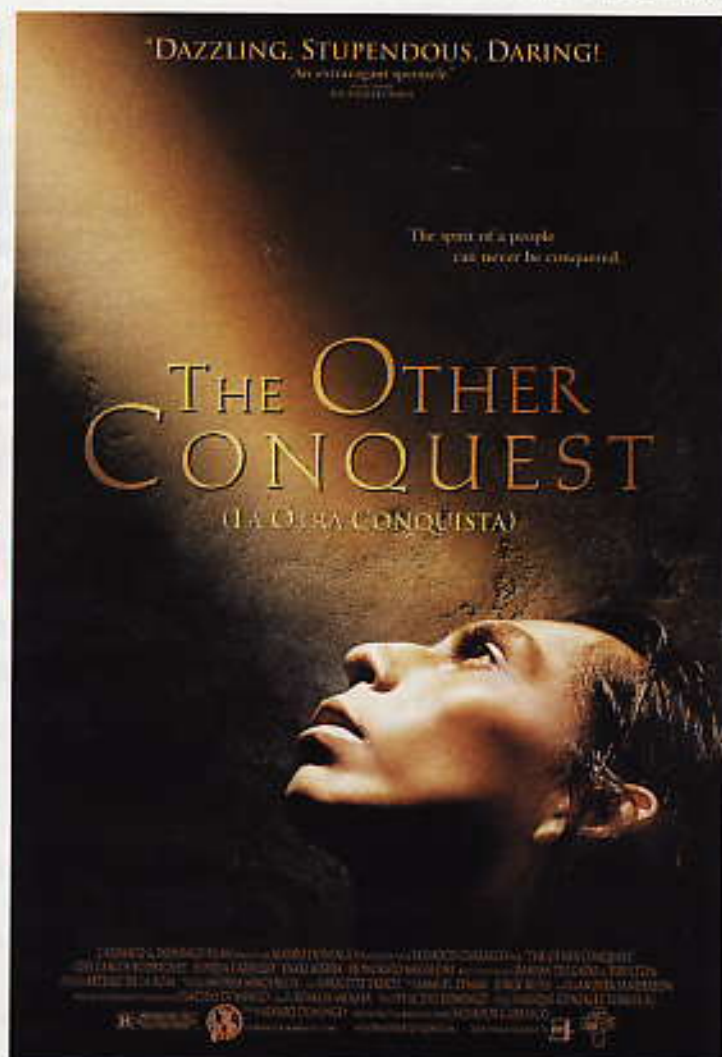
To target or not to target? Some make millions nurturing specific clientele. For others, the allure of mass marketing is just too appealing. As a result of this debate, niche marketing has become one of the industry's hottest buzzwords.

What constitutes a customized marketing niche? Are there benefits to catering to it? "Compared to a massive campaign aiming for 100% awareness, a niche marketing budget must be more strategic," says Valerie Van Gelder, executive vp of marketing for Screen Gems.

Lions Gate Films, for example, has pinpointed a core audience for this summer's "But I'm a Cheerleader." "It is a teen comedy romance,"

says Mark Urman, who, along with Tom Ortenberg, serves as co-president of Lions Gate Releasing. "But the twist is that it's kind of a gay love story. The content is certainly gay-friendly, if you will. So our efforts are aimed toward gay media and organizations."

Both Hombre D'Oro's "The Other Conquest," which traces the bloody aftermath that results following the 1521 Spanish conquest of Mexico, and Screen Gems' upcoming "Girlfight," which features a Latina heroine in the boxing world, are courting a Latino niche market. Screen Gems' recently released "Black and White" was marketed to an African-American core audience as was New Line



BREAK ON THROUGH: Although certain releases are considered niche films, distributors strive to reach a larger audience. (Clockwise from right) "The Other Conquest" used key art with both English and Spanish titles; the upcoming "But I'm a Cheerleader" is marketing to a large audience, focusing on young women; and New Line's "Love & Basketball" targeted the teen market.

Cinema's "Love & Basketball."

But often the distributor must go past the obvious niche choices. Age demographics can be as important as ethnic or sexual preferences. "In addition to a core audience, we're finding 'But I'm a Cheerleader' also has broad appeal for females 18-24," notes Ortenberg about the comedy, which focuses on a high schooler who is sent to an "intervention" camp when her parents suspect that she might be a lesbian. "But an audience is typically reached through mass media. So we must creatively reach that demographic as well."

New Line faced a similar challenge with "Love & Basketball." Believing its romantic drama, which follows a pair of childhood sweethearts who are each striving toward a professional basketball career, would appeal to 13- to 17-year-old girls, it insisted on a PG-13 rating. The company then strategically targeted this audience. "We marketed on the TV shows

they watch," explains Joe Nimziki, president of marketing for New Line Cinema. Nimziki targeted shows such as ABC's "Making the Band," UPN's "Moesha" and the WB's "Buffy the Vampire Slayer."

Although New Line specifically targeted young females, it also took steps to cater to young males, fearing the title's "love" aspect might alienate them. "[Boys] wanted to hear about basketball," continues Nimziki. "So it's a bifurcated campaign dealing separately with boys and girls."

This theory carried over to the adult male/female market. "We skewed the key art more so between men and women than black-and-white audiences," suggests Robert Friedman, New Line's co-chairman of worldwide marketing, acknowledging that the love story vs. sports story dilemma was a concern.

Niche marketing requires constant statistical research. For example, if an upcoming

project is going to target the Hispanic youth market, you need to know that Hispanic teens — who are, in many ways, redefining current mainstream culture — are America's fastest-growing youth segment. According to American Demographics magazine, 18% of all babies born in 2002 will be of Hispanic origin, and by 2005, Hispanics will represent the largest ethnic-youth population in the United States. Hollywood take notice: Hispanics spend 6.5% of their entertainment budget on movies, theater, opera and ballet, compared with 4.7% for Caucasians.

Overall, the teen demographic is consuming magazines in record numbers. According to the Magazine Publishers of America, there are 233 magazines aimed directly at 12- to 17-year-olds with Teen People listed as No. 1. But marketers need to know that Latinas read Latinagirl, African-American women read Honey and Asians read A Magazine.

TOP 25 NETWORK TV SHOWS RANKED BY MOVIE-AD REVENUE

RANK/PROGRAM/NETWORK	AVG. RATING/ SHARE*	AVG. WKLY AUDIENCE (MIL.)*	\$ (MIL.)	REVENUE IN 1998 (RANK)
1. Friends (NBC)	15.7/26	15.7	\$32.5	\$29.0 (3)
2. ER (NBC)	17.8/29	17.7	\$26.9	\$36.7 (1)
3. The Tonight Show (NBC)	N/A	N/A	\$21.7	\$22.7 (5)
4. Ally McBeal (Fox)	9.7/14	9.6	\$20.9	\$18.4 (6)
5. Frazier (NBC)	15.6/24	15.5	\$19.9	\$16.6 (7)
6. The X-Files (Fox)	9.4/14	9.4	\$18.7	\$25.1 (4)
7. The Late Show With David Letterman (CBS)	N/A	N/A	\$13.6	\$14.7 (10)
8. Just Shoot Me (NBC)	8.7/14	8.7	\$13.4	\$14.7 (9)
9. NFL Monday Night Football (ABC)	13.9/22	13.9	\$13.3	\$13.3 (12)
10. DateLine NBC (NBC)	8.7/15	8.6	\$12.4	\$12.7 (13)
11. Saturday Night Live (NBC)	N/A	N/A	\$12.0	\$10.7 (15)
12. Will & Grace (NBC)	8.8/14	8.8	\$11.8	N/A
13. The Today Show (NBC)	N/A	N/A	\$11.2	\$8.6 (23)
14. The Drew Carey Show (ABC)	9.9/16	9.9	\$11.0	\$12.5 (14)
15. Fox Night at the Movies (Fox)	N/A	N/A	\$10.5	\$14.1 (11)
16. Dawson's Creek (WB)	3.9/6	3.9	\$9.8	N/A
17. 20/20 (ABC)	10.6/19	10.5	\$9.8	N/A
18. Super Bowl XXXIII (Fox)	N/A	N/A	\$9.6	\$9.1 (20)
19. Law & Order (NBC)	10.1/17	10.1	\$9.4	N/A
20. Jesse (NBC)	13.7/22	13.6	\$8.6	N/A
21. The Practice (ABC)	8.9/15	8.9	\$8.4	N/A
22. Party of Five (Fox)	7.2/11	7.2	\$7.6	\$10.1 (16)
23. Buffy the Vampire Slayer (WB)	3.6/6	3.6	\$7.3	N/A
24. Dharma & Greg (ABC)	9.3/16	9.3	\$6.9	\$9.7 (18)
25. The Simpsons (Fox)	8.1/13	8.1	\$6.8	\$8.4 (24)
TOTAL			\$334.0	\$287.1

*Tracked Jan. 1, 1999, through Dec. 31, 1999. Ratings and audience numbers are for the 1998-1999 season.
Source: GMR and Nielsen Media Research

TOP 25 CABLE TV SHOWS RANKED BY MOVIE-AD REVENUE

RANK/PROGRAM/NETWORK	\$ (MIL.)	REVENUE IN 1998 (RANK)
1. Sportscenter (ESPN)	\$9.4	\$7.1 (1)
2. Music Videos (MTV)	\$3.9	\$5.3 (2)
3. After Hours Videos (MTV)	\$3.9	\$3.9 (3)
4. World Wrestling Federation (USA)	\$3.4	\$1.6 (16)
5. TRL (MTV)	\$3.3	\$1.5 (18)
6. MTV Jams Countdown (MTV)	\$3.2	\$1.9 (11)
7. World Class Championship Wrestling (TNT)	\$2.9	\$1.8 (13)
8. WCW Thunder (TBS)	\$2.7	\$1.5 (19)
9. The Jeffersons (Nickelodeon)	\$2.7	N/A
10. Saturday Night Live (Comedy Central)	\$2.6	N/A
11. Pro Basketball Games (TNT)	\$2.5	N/A
12. Law & Order (A&E)	\$2.5	\$1.4 (22)
13. Behind the Music (VH1)	\$2.5	N/A
14. Real World (MTV)	\$2.3	\$2.5 (4)
15. ER (TNT)	\$2.2	N/A
16. Happy Days (Nickelodeon)	\$2.1	\$2.2 (6)
17. Loveline (MTV)	\$2.1	\$2.1 (7)
18. I Love Lucy (Nickelodeon)	\$2.1	\$1.7 (15)
19. The Brady Bunch (Nickelodeon)	\$2.0	\$1.7 (14)
20. Hot Zone (MTV)	\$1.9	N/A
21. The Howard Stern Show (E!)	\$1.9	\$1.3 (24)
22. Bewitched (Nickelodeon)	\$1.8	\$1.5 (20)
23. Biography (A&E)	\$1.8	N/A
24. Road Rules (MTV)	\$1.8	N/A
25. Nick in the Afternoon (Nickelodeon)	\$1.8	N/A
TOTAL	\$69.3	\$41.0

Tracked Jan. 1, 1999, through Dec. 31, 1999. Source: GMR

You must also subdivide by like-interests. "Black and White," with its hip-hop story line and music, for example, prompted time on BET and the Box. "Love & Basketball" also took advantage of these specialty cable networks as well as sports-oriented programming.

Additional audience research might suggest an impact on key art. Specialized films, by definition, are usually limited in the impressions they can make. "Popular wisdom would say that diluting your message by changing artwork in various mediums is not wise," says Van Gelder. "Now having said that, where 'Black and White' was really tricky is that it was 'black and white.' We used the hip-hop stars in hip-hop magazines to show fans their favorites were in this movie. Those faces didn't appear in the newspaper ads. We went with a broader sell, highlighting all the cast."

Niche marketing certainly has found a wealth of opportunities on the Web. If you can define a niche group, you can find a Web site wooing it. Lions Gate knows there are several gay Web sites such as **www.PlanetOut.com** suitable for "But I'm a Cheerleader." For "Love & Basketball," New Line linked with teen Web sites such as **www.sikids.com**, the Sports Illustrated site for kids.

Marketers appreciate the myriad of promotional and advertising opportunities, although they do believe the Web is so saturated that they must do more than the obligatory Web site to make a splash for their films.

Distributors marvel at the amount of movie information available on the Web, thrilled that people are paying attention. Yet, they fear what can emanate from Web sites over which they have no control. "Our internal, archival

scrapbooks have tripled in size because now, basically, there's 'I've got an opinion.com,'" says Urman. "Anybody can cover the entertainment beat. It is wonderfully democratizing. We used to slave for weeks to get Time Magazine to devote two inches to a movie. We're not as dependent now on these periodicals. We get attention from people who from the get-go are interested. You can't totally control the quality of the facts or what they're saying — but at least they're there."

"It's scary that you can no longer hold your product close to the vest," Van Gelder adds. "Marketing is about selling your message, getting people into the theater and not showing your hand. Internet reviews appear within an hour of a screening. Strategies regarding critic showings have gone out the window."

Van Gelder isn't ready to give up on

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NET WORKING

Specialty Web sites claim they've found the audience being sought by film marketers.

The mysterious world of Web marketing. It's here — but it's not. Opportunities abound. But no one's quite sure what to do with them. Its value to niche marketers, however, seems like a slam dunk.

Take Click2Asia.com. Launched in 1999, it offers Asians worldwide — as well as anyone interested in Asia — common Web ground in Chinese, English, Korean and Japanese.

Have an Asian-themed movie? Look no further for your core audience. A total of 64% of Asian households are online. Asians represent half of the world's population. It is estimated that by 2001, the Asian-Pacific rim will surpass Western Europe as being No. 2 in Internet use.

If connecting to African-American culture is your interest, there's NetNoir.com. Launched in 1995 to serve African-Americans, Africans, African-Caribbeans, Afro-Latinos and others of similar ancestry, the site boasts that African-Americans constitute the fastest-growing online community: 1 million new users in 1999 — a 36% growth rate. NetNoir receives 8 million page views monthly.

Both Click2Asia and NetNoir are mining Hollywood for both content and advertising as they continue to define their sites' possibilities. Finances are pivotal to the evolution. Everyone is adept at banner ads, but beyond that, who pays for what? Partnerships, sponsorships, outright space buys and bartering scenarios are



(From top)
Click2Asia.com targets Asian-Americans, providing everything from entertainment to politics. African-American Web users have NetNoir.com, which was launched in 1995.

all being bantered about.

"It's a work in progress," says Sherri G. Sneed, president of the entertainment division at NetNoir, who left Magic Johnson Entertainment to join the Web site. "It's in everyone's best interests to make this work. It's proceeding with caution while thinking outside the box — limited only by our creativity."

NetNoir has already made solid inroads in the feature-film world, having synched with Warner Bros. on "Three Kings" and "A Time to Kill" and with Screen Gems on "Black and White"; up next is Paramount's highly anticipated "Shaft."

One of the Internet's best selling points lies in its ability to track consumer interest — always a nebulous concept.

"With print or radio there's no quantifiable way to demonstrate a campaign's success," points out Vincent Tam, vp of business development for Click2Asia. "Online, we can trace the responses to trivia questions, sweepstakes entries, chat sessions. We can effectively analyze a partnership."

Click2Asia's first movie involvement — partnering with Columbia TriStar Home Video for its DVD/VHS Jackie Chan-produced hit "Gen-X Cops" — worked out so well, the Web site is knocking on more Hollywood doors.

"The 'Gen-X Cops' microsite shows the trailer, posts trivia questions, offers star chat sessions and the

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possibility to win a trip to Hong Kong to meet Jackie Chan," explains Tam, referring to just some of the ways Click2Asia has promoted the movie. "We're creating very integrated sponsorship and promotional programming — far more than just a banner ad."

Consumers can also order the movie by linking to DVDExpress.com. "We begin the loop in terms of interest in the movie and end with the ability to

buy tickets or the movie itself," suggests Tam.

With so many Web sites and choices available, what's a marketer to do? Enter Marc Schiller, co-founder and CEO of Electric Artists, a consulting company that has found success in matching recording artists to Internet possibilities. It's now advising movie companies about the best way to reach core fans through Internet avenues.

"Studios have found that a URL doesn't automatically bring a new audience," explains

Schiller. "We expand the audience base by taking the message directly into Internet communities of interest created around people's lifestyles."

According to Schiller, "interruption marketing" — the idea of blasting a message in front of people — doesn't work on the Web. "People go to the Internet to get away from traditional marketing methods, to search out their interests on their own terms," he says. "This is a dialogue, not a monologue. Film and television look at the Internet

as another broadcast pipeline, but people don't want that one-way message marketing. They want to speak."

Schiller has his own definition of "niche" marketing. "We go to a core audience early with an insider's look into the film," he says. "They're empowered to become — if they want — advocates for the film in their Internet communities. There's an energy, because everyone wants to be an insider and know something before everyone else."

Electric Artists defines this "hip" core audience as a "street team." Schiller recently assembled a vibrant street team for the film "Beyond the Mat," an Imagine Entertainment project about wrestling.

"Kids put up posters in dorms and on campuses," says Schiller. "You couldn't do it for every movie. I don't think there would be a street team around 'My Dinner With André.' It's definitely for the 'Star Wars' types of properties."

Ultimately, the bumpy adventure of marrying the Internet with film holds benefits past the business possibilities.

"I'm very passionate about this business," explains NetNoir's Sneed. "For all minorities, this is a distribution channel we can control."

Sneed's ultimate goal is to bring original programming to NetNoir over and above partnering with already-established productions. "I got into this because I wanted to see more diversity and positive images," she continues. "I think the market understands this. Many venture capitalists are looking to be a part of this niche marketing."

Sneed realizes she has to wait for others to mirror her enthusiasm. "I still find myself defending it. 'Oh, you're a dot-com person.' No, I'm still a filmmaker. I'm just trying to take the best of what existed there and bring it on to the net." — C. M.

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marketing mainstays. "I still think people go to the movies because they saw a trailer in a movie theater," she insists. "To me, it remains one of your most effective and targeted marketing tools. You're playing to an audience already demonstrating a willingness to spend \$8 on a movie."

The Screen Gems marketing chief is also not totally convinced that the Web is effective in convincing someone to actually go to the theater. "I read the New York Times, Newsweek and Time every morning on my computer," Van Gelder continues. "I buy all my CDs, books and gifts on the Internet. I'm a big user, but I still don't get my movie information from it."

Ticket-buying motivation comes from an amalgam of sources. Once marketers have

usurped all the usual outlets — including the Internet — to reel in that target audience, the key to a movie's success might just be remembering that there's a bigger world out there.

"We've always believed 'The Other Conquest' was for a broader audience than just Latinos," emphasizes Richard Ingher who, with colleagues Linda Goldenberg and Barry Glaser at Specialty Entertainment, marketed the Mexican film that successfully opened on 76 L.A. screens in April. "It's appealing to art house audiences and to English-speaking audiences in general. You try to create a campaign accessible to all. The movie's message is that the spirit of a people can never be conquered. That works in every language."

According to Van Gelder, "Girlfight" has a similar universality. "It has mainstream appeal as did 'Rocky' or 'Saturday Night

TOP 25 SYNDICATED TV SHOWS RANKED BY MOVIE-AD REVENUE

Rank/Program	Average Rating	\$ (Millions)	Revenue in 1998 (Rank)
1. Friends	6.4	\$19.8	\$5.0 (8)
2. Seinfeld	6.1	\$12.3	\$11.0 (1)
3. The X-Files	5.1	\$6.3	\$7.2 (4)
4. Home Improvement	5.0	\$5.3	\$10.2 (2)
5. Ricki Lake	3.3	\$5.3	\$5.0 (9)
6. The Drew Carey Show	N/A	\$5.2	N/A
7. Frasier	5.3	\$4.8	\$5.4 (7)
8. Jenny Jones	3.1	\$4.3	\$3.9 (10)
9. Mad About You	2.6	\$4.2	\$7.2 (3)
10. World Championship Wrestling	N/A	\$3.8	\$2.6 (14)
11. The Jerry Springer Show	6.3	\$3.7	\$2.0 (20)
12. ER	4.1	\$3.2	N/A
13. The Simpsons	3.8	\$3.0	\$6.5 (5)
14. Xena: Warrior Princess	3.8	\$2.2	\$3.1 (12)
15. 3rd Rock from the Sun	N/A	\$1.8	N/A
16. Hercules: The Legendary Journeys	3.6	\$1.8	\$2.9 (13)
17. Entertainment Tonight	2.7	\$1.7	N/A
18. The Rosie O'Donnell Show	3.6	\$1.7	N/A
19. Living Single	2.0	\$1.7	\$5.7 (6)
20. Extra Entertainment Magazine	3.7	\$1.5	\$2.3 (15)
21. NewsRadio	2.2	\$1.5	N/A
22. The Oprah Winfrey Show	6.3	\$1.5	N/A
23. WWF Shotgun Saturday Night	N/A	\$1.4	\$1.7 (24)
24. COPS	2.1	\$1.3	N/A
25. V.I.P.	2.9	\$1.3	N/A
TOTAL	No Total	\$100.6	\$81.7

Tracked Jan. 1, 1999, through Dec. 31, 1999. Ratings and audience numbers are for the 1998-1999 season. Sources: *CNN* and *Nielsen Media Research*

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Fever' — the classic 'somebody-coming-from-nowhere' transformation theme," she believes. "Our challenge is to show it's not just about boxing the way 'Saturday Night Fever' wasn't just about disco dancing."

Reinforcing the idea that mainstream audiences shouldn't be omitted from the equation is the \$2.3 million "Black and White" raked in during its first weekend in release. "Despite traditional wisdom saying it was a niche movie, we really felt it would lend itself to crossing over," says

Friedman. "It's about two upper-middle class families in a story all people can relate to. As a result, in addition to using traditional media like BET, the Box (and) the sports networks, we went broader. We then went out on about 1,200 screens, and it worked."

"This included 400 theaters targeted to the crossover audience," adds Nimziki. "I think we pulled off something that historically isn't done a lot: cross these urban films over to a mainstream audience. What's great is not only did the white audience give it a

chance, but, based on exit polls, they liked it."

Blending niche marketing and an expanded concept together into a cohesive force can be an art — especially when allocating marketing dollars.

"The targeted media embraces you so vigorously editorially that that's where you need to spend the least," says Lions Gate's Ortenberg. "Obviously, we'll advertise 'But I'm a Cheerleader' in gay publications. But we'll also have strong editorial coverage there. It's frequently and

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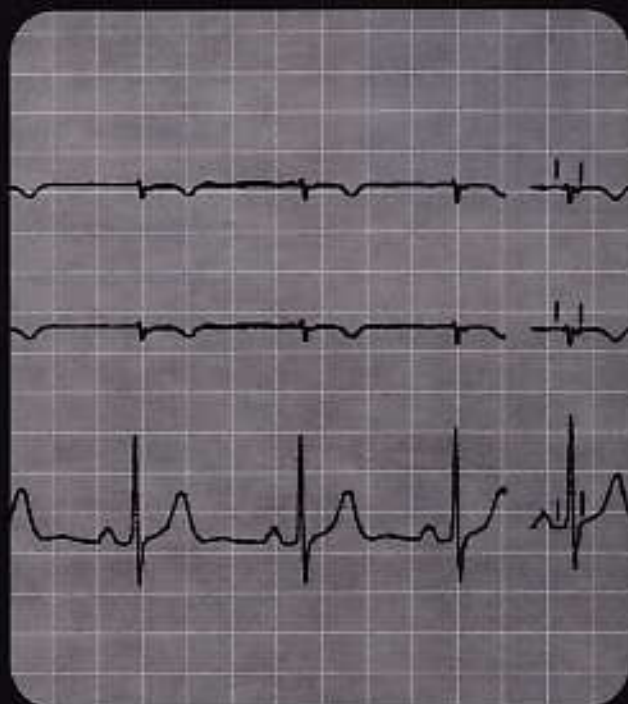
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