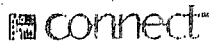


## Chapter Case Study

### JAY-Z AND BING: THE CAMPAIGN TO CONVERT JAY-Z DECODERS INTO BING USERS



When Microsoft needed a strategy to boost people's use of its Bing search engine, it found an oddly perfect vehicle in an integrated marketing campaign—one that also has been called a “transmedia event.”<sup>44</sup> The ad agency that Microsoft hired proposed that the Bing campaign could work in conjunction with the new campaign for another of its clients: Jay-Z, the rap star and dominating producer, who wanted a global marketing strategy for the publication of his memoir, *Decoded*.

The creative process that led to this innovative marketing campaign—integrated in more ways than one—started with the ad agency, Droga5. It had these two separate mega-clients: Microsoft wanted to drive more users to its search engine, and Jay-Z wanted a way to promote his memoir. Proposing a new kind of synergy, the agency developed a plan to transform each client into the other's promotional vehicle.

Using outdoor advertising, search engines, a broad media strategy, and open source publishing,<sup>45</sup> Droga5 staged a month-long “transmedia” scavenger hunt, before the book was actually released. Jay-Z sent out clues through Facebook, Twitter, and a Bing page that told fans where to look for enormous versions of the individual pages from his book, pasted onto public locations. A facsimile of each of the 320 pages in the book would appear in a real-world location (e.g., New York, Los Angeles, New Orleans, Miami, Detroit, London) that reflected the story being told on that page. For example, a bronze plaque bolted to the wall of the Marcy Avenue apartment building where Jay-Z spent his childhood displayed pages 2 and 3 of *Decoded*, where Jay-Z wrote about the summer of 1978, “when I was nine years old.”

Fans plugged the clues that Jay-Z had released into the Bing search engine, to search for the specific locations where they would find pages. The clues could only be decoded (pun intended) through Bing's search and street-mapping interface. Every public posting of a *Decoded* page also featured the URL for [Bing.com/Jay-Z](http://Bing.com/Jay-Z), along with the Bing logo.<sup>46</sup> The plan also created a public art project; if a relevant location could not be found, it was conjured up and created.

In turn, the campaign engaged consumers in at least a dozen cities worldwide. The majority of the wall-sized mock-ups of *Decoded* pages appeared on building walls in New York's Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood, where Jay-Z grew up. There were installations at subway stops, on a boardwalk in front of a Brooklyn beach, and on the backboard of a basketball hoop in Bedford-Stuyvesant where Jay-Z hung with friends, all in reference to events or moments discussed in the book. Secured through a partnership with the outdoor advertising firm Clear Channel, enormous billboards appeared overnight, often atop dingy, store-fronted buildings, apartment towers, and other cityscapes.<sup>47</sup> Accordingly, fans could “walk through Jay-Z's life”<sup>48</sup>—both virtually through Bing and on the streets he once walked.

In New Orleans, a huge replica of pages 220–21 spread across the Orpheum Theater's roof, describing Jay-Z's reaction to Hurricane Katrina's devastation. In a guitar shop in the Chelsea neighborhood of New York, an electric guitar was imprinted with pages 100–101, which recalled Kurt Cobain and how he "OD'd on fame." In Gleason's Gym in New York City, the pages were imprinted on two punching bags. Imprints also appeared on the stage curtains of the Apollo Theater in Harlem; on plates in The Spotted Pig, one of Jay-Z's favorite restaurants; and on a billboard at a subway stop in Abbey Road in London. Then *Decoded* pages showed up in the lining of custom-made Gucci leather jackets; on the sky-blue, painted bottom of the concrete pool at Miami's Delano Hotel, with an excerpt talking about the rapper's hit, "Big Pimpin'"; and on the green felt surface of the pool table at the 40/40 Club, an upscale sports bar he owns.<sup>49</sup>

Over the course of a month, fans tracked down all 320 pages of the book, relying solely on the cues Jay-Z released through social media and their searches for the location on Bing. Bing's street-maps function helped those likely to get lost easily; it also enabled people who lived far from any of the sites to get a virtual visual tour of any neighborhood. Fans posted their photos of the found pages on the dedicated website. Through this collaboration, they assembled the entire memoir, even before any books were available on shelves. The first users to discover each page also became eligible to win a signed copy of the book and enter into a drawing for the grand prize: a trip to Las Vegas to see Jay-Z and Coldplay in concert on New Year's Eve.<sup>50</sup>

In addition to putting up the pages, Clear Channel helped build more buzz by running promotional spots, interviews on its radio stations, and exclusive videos of the performer on its websites. The campaign thus drew coverage in mainstream media as well, including *The New York Times* and *New York Observer*, which headlined its description, "Jay-Z's Book to Be Utterly Inescapable Thanks to Bing, Clear Channel."<sup>51</sup> The campaign was financed by Bing, not by the publisher of *Decoded*.<sup>52</sup>

The Jay-Z–Bing collaboration was clearly innovative. It drew rave reviews for its stunning creativity and novel approaches. But even more important, it was also effective. It converted millions of offline Jay-Z fans and prospective book buyers into online Bing users, and vice versa. In addition to winning two international awards at the Cannes International Festival of Creativity,<sup>53</sup> the campaign pushed Bing onto the global list of the top 10 visited sites for the first time. In numerical terms, it increased visits to the search engine by nearly 12 percent, many of them by new users.<sup>54</sup> Meanwhile, *Decoded* became a national bestseller and sat on that list for 19 consecutive weeks. The performer also picked up around a million new Facebook followers.

The prepublication event thus became a major cultural event. Celebrities like Ryan Seacrest and Snoop Dogg used their own Twitter accounts to get in on the conversation too. Snoop Dogg sent this tweet: "My big homie Jay-Z is hidin' pages of his book all over the world and fans gotta find it on Bing."<sup>55</sup>

The advertising agency's massive, cross-platform campaign to herald the publication of Jay-Z's memoir using the Bing search engine succeeded in reaching and engaging Jay-Z fans globally. Droga5's creative, transmedia campaign to increase the reach and name recognition of the Bing search engine using a connection with a popular musician succeeded in reaching and engaging search engine users worldwide. Thus, this masterfully integrated marketing campaign managed to push two mega-brands forward mainly by bringing them together. There are several postings on YouTube (e.g., [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XNic4wf8AYg&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XNic4wf8AYg&feature=player_embedded)) where you can learn more about the campaign and view some of the pages posted at unusual sites.

#### Questions

1. What different IMC components did the Jay-Z–Bing campaign use? Were these marketing elements integrated, in the sense defined in this chapter?
2. How might the various interested parties (e.g., Jay-Z, his publisher, Droga5, Clear Channel, Bing) measure the effectiveness of the campaign?