

Is ‘Deadpool & Wolverine’ this summer’s ‘Barbie’ movie? What marketers should know

Article

“Deadpool & Wolverine” comes out this week, following a number of cross-promotional activations that take advantage of Deadpool actor Ryan Reynolds’ ad prowess. Marketing

surrounding “Deadpool & Wolverine” borrows a page from the [pink playbook used by “Barbie”](#) ahead of its release a year ago.

“Deadpool & Wolverine,” like “Barbie,” is a movie created from well-known IP. It is self-aware, with Deadpool often breaking the fourth wall, much like “Barbie” did with product placements and its feature of Mattel in the movie. And, like “Barbie,” “Deadpool & Wolverine” is on track for a [record-breaking opening weekend](#).

But one feature sets these movies’ marketing campaigns apart: Ryan Reynolds’ [marketing agency](#) Maximum Effort is involved in many of its cross-promotional marketing activations.

- [Heinz](#) created a campaign playing off of the red and yellow coloring of “Deadpool and Wolverine” in an ad that appears to be a movie teaser but turns into a ketchup and mustard ad.
- [Heineken Silver](#) released an ad that similarly starts as a “Deadpool & Wolverine” teaser but becomes a beer ad.
- [Jack in the Box](#) included Deadpool in a 15-second spot where the character apologizes for and then cleans up a mess in a Jack in the Box restaurant.
- [“The Bachelorette”](#) released an ad playing off of Deadpool and Wolverine’s relationship dynamic—and their visual allure.
- [Aviation Gin](#), owned by Reynolds, released a limited-edition bottle “ginspired” by “Deadpool & Wolverine.”

Why it’s working: These campaigns take the “Barbie” movie’s approach of finding products with overlapping audiences and good brand recognition to create ads that cross-promote both the movie and the brand. In some instances, like Heinz and Heineken, product placements feel so integrated that the ads could be mistaken for movie teasers.

But these ads also borrow what works for [creator campaigns](#)—self-awareness and a feeling of authenticity—even if that authenticity has been manufactured by Marvel and Maximum Effort. The ads lean into being shameless promotions, taking advantage of Deadpool’s sarcastic on-screen persona and Reynolds’ funny off-screen reputation. The clips are popular on [social media](#) because they feel honest and creator-driven with Reynolds taking on the role of creator.

That rawness and honesty does leave the campaigns open to criticism. [“Deadpool & Wolverine”](#) is a corporate brand exercise that’s trying to convince you it’s one of your mates;

it's a supermarket masquerading as a skate park," wrote culture reporter Louis Chilton in The Independent. In other words, the campaigns are transparently attempting to mimic [creator authenticity](#), when it's clear they've been produced by massive marketing teams.

What it means for marketers: It may be too late and too expensive to work with Marvel on "Deadpool & Wolverine" products, but social media teams can still find ways to play into the cultural phenomenon of the movie, much like they did with "Barbie."

Marketers should watch social media feeds and look at audience trends to see if their brand's audience overlaps with Marvel's (similar to the approach Reynolds coyly mentioned in "The Bachelorette" spot). If the audiences do overlap, consider creative posts that acknowledge the film, even if just in featuring red and yellow, the same way brands featured pink last summer.

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