

CASE STUDY

Optus Goes Digital With Ricky Gervais for Netflix Australia Launch

Since 1992, Optus has delivered mobile and data services to 30% of Australia, making it the #2 telecommunications company in the country. This year, as a way to build customer loyalty, Optus developed an enticing promotion: six months of free Netflix access, dovetailing with the Australian launch of Netflix.

Of course, customer loyalty campaigns only work if people know about them, so Optus developed a digital-first YouTube campaign to raise awareness and get the word out. The company wanted something fun and edgy, so it partnered with content agency Emotive and media agency Starcom to connect with comedian Ricky Gervais on a collaboration.

“Optus had to disrupt audiences in an authentic and entertaining way to announce its partnership with Netflix,” said Starcom Managing Director Annick Perrin. “The Optus Ricky Gervais social video sensation, created by Emotive, has been a monumental success. We seeded this engaging content within social video platforms like YouTube and ensured Optus became the key partner for Netflix in Australia.”

The campaign was Optus’ most successful video campaign to date, and it even secured the #1 spot on the Australian YouTube Ads Leaderboard: Autumn 2015. This success inspired the brand to change the way it approaches content and video marketing.

Debuting a digital-first campaign

With the introduction of Netflix likely to resonate with young Australians, the marketing team realized any promotion and awareness efforts to reach them should take place where they are—online. In this case, that meant leading with digital content by developing a series of YouTube spots with Gervais, instead of a more traditional TV campaign.

This wasn’t an easy shift though, since the brand had never launched a campaign solely with digital content. It was a completely new approach to a product announcement, and there was plenty of internal pressure on the team to ensure that the efforts paid off.



About Optus

- Optus provides a broad range of communications services, including mobile, internet, and subscription television, to 10M+ Australians daily.
- Sydney, Australia
- www.optus.com.au

Goals

- Use Netflix partnership/launch to raise awareness around Optus
- Create loyalty with existing Optus consumers by offering free Netflix for six months

Approach

- Focused on digital, social, mobile first, instead of more traditional media like TV
- Gained insights into digital content creation and how creators are leveraging digital platforms to build brands, via the YouTube Brand Partner Program
- Implemented brand lift surveys to track campaign performance and optimize in real time

Results

- Drove 8X impact of traditional creative
- Earned 1.7M+ views for main Ricky Gervais YouTube video; four additional videos combined for 1M+ views
- Measured ad recall at 4X higher than traditional creative; awareness 7.5X higher than previous creative
- Increased searches for “Optus” by 165% and searches for “Optus & Netflix” by 255%

“Online, mobile-optimized content needs to be at the core of any marketing initiative, but with that comes the challenge of producing creative work that’s respectful of the audience whilst landing your message,” explained Nigel Lopez-McBean, Optus’ director, content marketing and creative services. “Brands are now rightly rewarded based on getting that delicate balance right.”

THE CAMPAIGN’S MOST POPULAR VIDEO

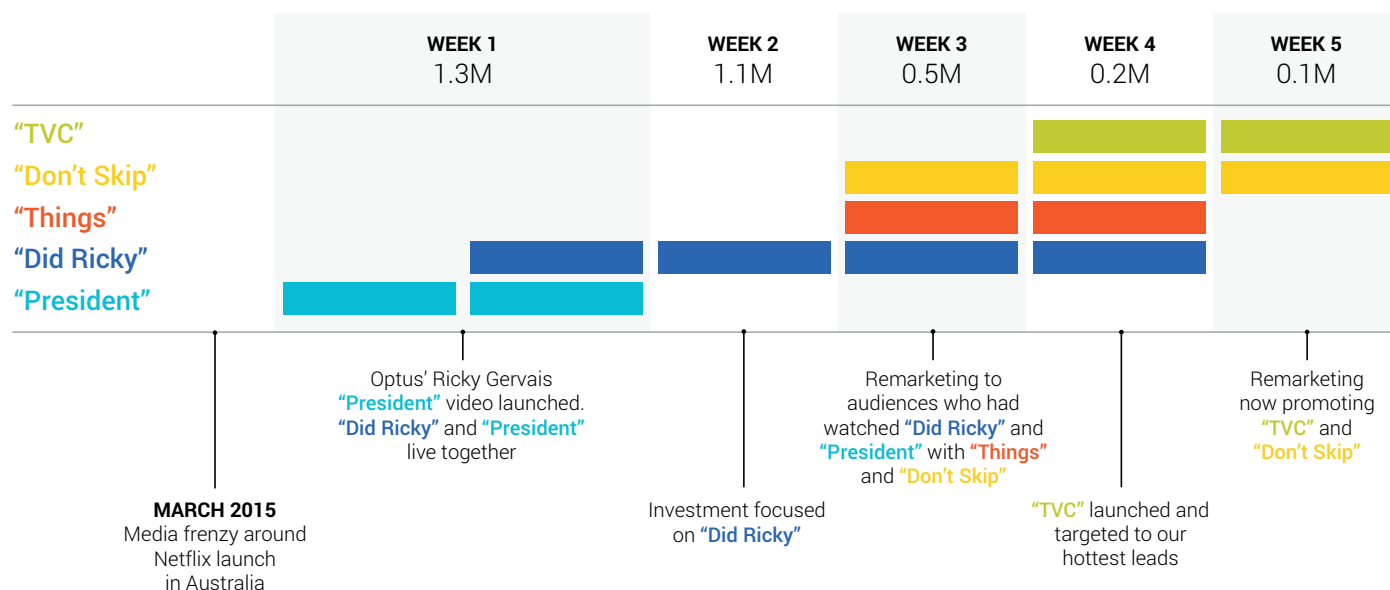


Implementing an “always-on” approach

YouTube requires a different kind of engagement model than traditional one-way marketing channels. Fans and followers expect a continuous stream of content and constant responsiveness from the channels they love. Recognising this, Optus created an “always-on” strategy that provided a steady stream of fresh content for the community to watch, share, and talk about.

Gervais produced five videos that would roll out over a five-week period. But instead of simply publishing one video per week, Starcom and Google’s campaign was designed to use remarketing to get the latter two videos in front of viewers of the earlier two videos, while a fifth video was saved for the hottest leads.

OPTUS' DISTRIBUTION TIMELINE



Optus and Starcom also used Google tools to measure the success of the campaign when it was still in-market. Brand Lift and Brand Interest surveys allowed Optus to measure brand metrics in real time, giving the brand a better understanding of awareness, consideration, ad recall, and search behaviours. And YouTube's standard measurements of watch time, views, and search volume allowed the Optus team to immediately see which videos were resonating with the audience.

Taking risks with content ...

Doing anything for the first time means risking failure, and the Optus marketing team knew the company might have a few detractors of an all-digital approach. What made the campaign even more precarious (and also more exciting) was the fact that Optus needed to relinquish control of the campaign's creative messaging in order to secure Gervais' participation. No scripts and no filters, which is just how Gervais likes it, but that can feel dangerous to a brand. There was even a risk that the final output wouldn't be brand appropriate.

"Ricky has an obvious disdain for advertising, which adds to his uniqueness and authenticity," said Lopez-McBean. "When it comes to advertising, he has a high level of integrity, which can be seen in the work

that he has done for only a limited number of brands such as Audi and PETA. For the campaign to be a success, we needed Ricky Gervais to be Ricky Gervais. He is one of the best comedy scriptwriters in the world and we had to respect his talent. This was crucial to ensuring he was properly invested in the process. It was his work as much as ours.”

... and reaping the rewards

The risks that Optus took with its all-digital campaign paid off. Ricky Gervais’ mass appeal, coupled with the excitement surrounding the Netflix launch and the campaign’s digital-first approach, resulted in 8X the impact of previous traditional creative. The main Gervais YouTube video garnered more than 1.7M views, and his four additional campaign videos gathered more than 1M views combined. On the brand metric side, ad recall was 4X higher and awareness 7.5X more than with previous campaigns. Optus also saw search interest in its name skyrocket 165%, while searches for “Optus and Netflix” grew 255%.

“We have been thrilled and amazed at the results of this campaign, both locally and globally,” said Starcom’s Perrin.

By adopting a digital-first approach, getting the right content creator onboard, and being smart about the content rollout, Optus was able to intrigue and satisfy loyal customers while enticing newcomers. Its partnership with Netflix increased brand awareness and uniquely positioned it among its competition as much more than a traditional telecommunications company. “The results of this campaign are a testament to the value of an audience-first approach,” said Lopez-McBean. “There’s an element of risk and clever media planning in producing work that not only drives awareness, but is received positively by the consumer.”