

Austin Powers: The Segmenting, Targeting, and Positioning Process

The marketing strategy behind Austin Powers entailed a broad scope of activities: promotions, tie-ins, movie trailers, online video games, etc. These different levers would help in moving the customer through the relationship stages. Before any of these efforts were undertaken, however, New Line first needed to segment their markets, in order to determine who would, and how best to, promote Austin Powers.

The segmentation process undertaken by Motion Pictures Company typically uses standard demographic variables such as age and sex. As New Line segmented and targeted their markets for Austin Powers, they knew that one of its likely targets, or core segments would be viewers aged 17-24. The criterion for focusing on such a segment was due to both its large financial size and likeliness of embracing the Austin Powers image.

Austin Powers, however, carried far more appeal than to attract only 17-to 24 year olds. The Austin Powers character –in his wit and irreverence – exhibited a great deal of charisma, becoming a widely recognized and liked pop cultural icon after the first movie. So while New Line realized that they targeted. A core segment of 17-to24 years olds, they also knew that Austin Powers could reach a range of viewers aged 6 to 60. The challenge then became the one of Positioning message to be broad enough to appeal the widest feasible range of segments, yet be targeted enough to catch the attention of individual segment groups?

New Line's answer to the problem was an integrated marketing campaign that developed many offline and online strategic partnerships. Central, distinct positioning supported both the campaign and the partnerships. The

Austin Powers movie and message, as marketed by New Line, appealed to the broadest range of segments. New Line's trailers and own promotion of Austin was less targeted towards specific segments, but instead promoted a central message of Austin being funny, irreverent, and not taking himself too seriously. This central positioning attempted to blanket the widest range of feasible target segments.

For more targeted messages, however, New Line used a series of strategic partnerships to reach specific demographics and segments. These partners were considered consistent with the Austin image, and were allowed to use the Austin image to create their own advertising message targeted toward their own customers. For instance, partnership with Heineken beer resulted in a series of advertisements ultimately targeting individual over 21 years who drank imported beer. Likewise the partnership with Virgin Atlantic targeted business travelers 25 and older, with ads and billboards placed in airports and travel magazines. To target younger, fast food eating segments, New Line partnered with Big Boy restaurants.

Ultimately, The Austin positioning message was more effectively tailored and marketed so specific segments (e.g. older business travelers) through such strategic partnerships and more specific as placement. Additionally, much of the cost of this sub-segmentation, targeting, and positioning was not passed to the New Line Cinema – the strategic partners usually took responsibility for creating the tailored advertising message and reaching their specific segments. Ultimately, New Line's approach to integrated marketing campaign and strategic partnerships –revolving around a distinct central positioning –effectively promoted the Austin brand to its entire range of targeted segments.