

## Company of the Month: Craze Marketing and the Crazy Frog

Britain has been invaded by frogs, or, to be precise, Britain has been invaded by the Crazy Frog. The crazy frog is a digital animation, a ring tone for mobile telephones and also a hit record. Many people find the image and the sound very annoying. The catchy tune gets into your head and you can't get rid of it. The Crazy Frog is everywhere!



In the first three weeks of May, the Crazy Frog appeared on television 36,382 times, an unprecedented level of exposure. The frog appeared in advertisements for the Crazy Frog ringtone and when the record was played on music shows. The music, which is a remixed version of the theme from the Eddie Murphy film, *Beverly Hills Cop*.

Music lovers complain that the Crazy Frog has dominated the Top Ten, pushing groups like Coldplay off the number one position.

The Crazy Frog advertisements started on satellite television channels but soon moved to mainstream terrestrial television channels. Many adults really hate the Crazy Frog. Articles in newspapers have called him 'the ugly amphibian which is driving the nation mad with irritation', but they have admitted that he is 'insanely popular'. Lots of people have complained to the Advertising Standards Authority that they cannot escape from the Crazy Frog. *Marketing Weekly* says that after more than 1,200 complaints to the A.S.A., it is the most unpopular advertising campaign.

A company called Mobile 9 has had great success with a little downloadable video which shows the Crazy Frog being destroyed.

The Advertising Standards Authority has responded that it can do nothing. The A.S.A. regulates the truth, honesty and legality of advertisements; it does not regulate the frequency of advertisements, even if they are very irritating. The advertising industry, which has been going through a very bad period, is very happy that a client is spending so much money on buying advertising spots.



One report suggests that Jamster, the creator of Crazy Frog, has spent more than £10 million on television advertising. At the same time, music programmes playing the Crazy Frog record are giving even more free publicity.

Of course, Jamster is very happy with all these complaints from adults. There is an old rule that ‘There is no such thing as bad publicity’. Every newspaper or magazine article, every television discussion of the phenomenon gives more publicity to the ugly amphibian. Jamster is rubbing its hands all the way to the bank.

It is not hard to figure out why the Crazy Frog is successful. The more he irritates the grown-ups, the more the teens in the target market are going to love it. The Crazy Frog is loved by teenagers and they love anything which irritates their parents and teachers.

## **How is Jamster making money?**

We all know that mobile telephones are popular with young teenagers. The advanced technology of the latest mobile phones means they can play polyphonic music, take still photographs and even record and show short video clips on their tiny screens. For a long time the mobile phone industry have been searching for a ‘killer app.’ an application of this technology which will bring in a lot of money.

A number of companies have developed which sell ringtones. Ringtones are the noises your telephone makes to alert you that there is a call for you. Popular ringtones have been developed from pop records, television and film themes, football chants and even emasculated classical music. A considerable industry has developed through the sale of these short musical compositions.

The unit price of an individual ringtone is quite cheap – about £3. The industry has recognised that it can make more money by creating a fashion craze for particular ringtones. The beauty of any fashion craze is that its period of popularity is very short. While it is popular, the industry makes a lot of money. When it becomes unpopular, the industry makes even more money by selling the next fashionable ringtone.

## **Brands and Crazes: brands**

In the olden days, when we lived in agricultural communities, there were no brands. We produced a lot of the food we ate, and we bought the things we didn’t produce from our friends and the neighbours we trusted. Brands began after the industrial revolution, when large populations moved from the country to large urban conurbations. These people no longer produced their own food. They bought things in shops. The goods were usually not packaged or branded.

A lot of shops started to sell ‘poor quality’ products. Customers began to distrust the quality of the products they were buying. The first brands were invented as a ‘guarantee of quality’. Customers could feel safe that if they bought Sunlight soap, they were buying a safe and reliable product.

Today, brands have a similar function as a guarantee of quality. But brands have become more than just a simple guarantee. The brands you buy define who you are.



Your preferred brand is an indication of your status. Talk to any user of an Apple computer. Secretly or openly, they believe that they are different and slightly superior to Windows users.

Apple, in their advertising, have reinforced this distinctive image. Apple are not the mainstream computers. When you buy an Apple computer, you are saying that you are not an 'ordinary', mainstream person.

The motor industry discovered, many years ago, that they were not selling metal boxes on wheels, they were selling status, they were selling dreams. Brands became very important. In Britain, Rolls Royce became associated with luxury and success. If you owned a Rolls Royce, everyone would know you were successful. If you were successful, you were almost 'obliged' to buy a Rolls Royce.

A good brand should have a long life. Think of the major brands which surround you. Most of them are old, long-established brands. The value associated with the brand is worth a lot of money to the company which owns it. A brand is not a product. A brand is an idea.

### **Brands and Crazes: crazes**

The idea of craze marketing is as old as marketing itself. Craze marketing is very different from brand marketing. When we establish a brand, it is a deliberately pitched concept that is, by its very nature, a one-hit-wonder or one-season-wonder.

A craze is a short attractive (or in the case of the Crazy Frog, an irritating) idea which is designed to have a short but successful life. Craze marketers are not planting a forest of oak trees which will mature in 500 years. They are planting a Leylandii hedge which will grow six feet tall in one year.

FutureBrand European chief executive, Patrick Smith, says: "I think that a craze has to be planned. Twenty years ago you could rely on guerrilla marketing and word-of-mouth to launch a product, but I don't think you can do that any more. Jamster is a perfect example of a deliberately planned campaign.

Last year, Jamster took more ad spots each month than any other advertiser; although this was only across niche cable and satellite channels (such as MTV). Then earlier this year Jamster changed its tactics and started to buy advertising spots on mainstream ITV1, taking 3,000 spots on the channel in the first two weeks of May. In the same period, Jamster carpet-bombed us with a total of 42,000 advertisements on all the different channels.

This policy has clearly been very successful. They have sold lots of ringtones and millions of records. But as we shall see in next month's 'Company of the month', this success has led to a backlash, a negative reaction which may lead to legal problems for Jamster.

## Activities:

### 1 Before you read the text

What noise does your mobile telephone make to alert you when you have a call?  
Would you consider buying a different noise? How much would you be willing to spend?

### 2 Vocabulary

Look at these extracts from the text. Check that you understand the meanings of the words and expressions underlined.

- The catchy tune gets into your head and you can't get rid of it.
- but soon moved to mainstream terrestrial television channels.
- the ugly amphibian
- discussion of the phenomenon
- Jamster is rubbing its hands all the way to the bank.
- The more he irritates the grown-ups, the more the teens in the target market are going to love it.
- they can play polyphonic music
- the mobile phone industry have been searching for a 'killer app.'
- and even emasculated classical music
- when large populations moved from the country to large urban conurbations
- they were buying a safe and reliable product
- Most of them are old, long-established brands.
- It is a deliberately pitched concept
- They are planting a Leylandii hedge
- Twenty years ago you could rely on guerrilla marketing and word-of-mouth
- Jamster carpet-bombed us

### 3 Discussion:

"A brand is not a product. A brand is an idea."

How true is this statement? Think of the international brands below. What ideas do you associate with them? Write adjectives beside each brand name.

- Volvo – safe, reliable, expensive, conservative, comfortable
- Virgin
- Marlboro
- Bacardi
- Gucci
- Disney
- Xerox
- Lufthansa
- Sony

## 4 Case study

Think of successful and unsuccessful examples of craze marketing in your region.  
What are the characteristics of these campaigns?