

## Research: movie titles: 'the curse of the number'

In the case of fast-moving consumer goods, a general rule for product or brand extensions is that they should tie in with the look & feel of the parent product as much as possible. The closer an extension stays to the brand core, the greater the chance image transfer will actually occur, and the greater the chance of success.

Research has shown that this does not wash for experiential products, such as movies. The key to success here is difference rather than likeness. Experiential products are generally consumed as part of consumers' urge to seek variety; saturation of experiences should be avoided as much as possible. The question that then arises is how moviemakers should deal with extensions. On the one hand it is key to capitalize on the success of a preceding film (as in the case of Pirates of The Caribbean and James Bond), but on the other, moviegoers should not get the feeling the sequel does little more than milk the original plot some more. Recent studies by Sood and Drèze have shown that the name of the sequel largely steers consumers' expectations into a certain direction.

Hollywood has taken abovementioned insights telling them to refrain from using numbers to denote sequels, and instead opt for subtitles, to heart. The reason behind that is that numbered sequels establish a direct link with the original, evoking ideas of 'more of the same'. New subtitles, however, give consumers the feeling a completely new plot has been thought up and put to celluloid. Apart from two experiments, the researchers that came to these insights also looked at movie reviews on the Internet Movie Database website (IMDb.com). On this website, they identified 317 sequels and analyzed the user ratings visitors gave these films. These ratings also showed that sequels with a subtitle were rated higher than numbered sequels.

### *Reference(s)*

Sood, S. Drèze, X., (2006) Brand extensions of experiential goods: movie sequel evaluations, Journal of Consumer Research, vol.33, December, p.352-360. \*

\* : available in the EURIB library.