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Top Gun: Maverick Positioning and Tracking

This coming Christmas, *Top Gun: Maverick* can appeal to families with the promise of a fun adventurous thriller for the younger kids and the nostalgia from the first 1984 *Top Gun* for the adult parents. As the sequel to *Top Gun*, with an IMDB rating of 6.9 out of 10¹ and ranked the 6th leggiest movie², *Top Gun: Maverick* has a great chance of having a successful release. The well-known cast including Tom Cruise and Miles Teller can bring in a wide audience. Tom Cruise is widely known for the *Mission: Impossible* movies, which appeal to the audience that loves fun adventure thrillers and action-packed stories. The *Top Gun: Maverick* trailer promises this adventurous fun and “need for speed” feeling from the first movie. Miles Teller is known for his work in *Whiplash* and *Divergent*, which the younger audience is more aware of. The theme song, “Danger Zone” plays to the audience’s nostalgia. There is also familiar imagery like Maverick’s aviator sunglasses and his signature leather jacket. Old fans may want to know why the Maverick is still just Captain. In fact, Tom Cruise’s character keeps that question clearly unanswered with “It’s one of life’s mysteries.” However, after 34 years, there is an extremely different audience to appeal to that may not be aware of the *Top Gun* movie. The cast is now older as well. *Top Gun: Maverick*, if to follow suit with its predecessor, would include sex scenes and violence. This does not really hit home with the parents trying to bring their younger kids to the theaters for some family bonding.

¹“Top Gun.” IMDb, IMDb.com, 12 May 1986, www.imdb.com/title/tt0092099/.

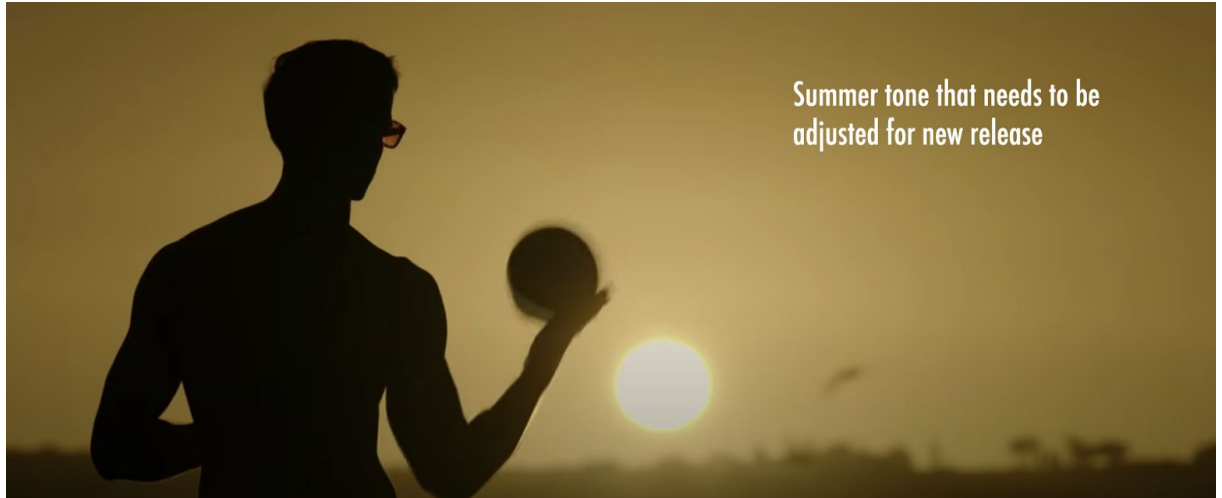
² “Leggiest Movies.” The Numbers, www.the-numbers.com/box-office-records/domestic/all-movies/legs/leggiest.

TOM CRUISE

Card with Tom Cruise's name
since it is recognizable and
Top Gun fans will associate
better

Playing at Nostalgia
with familiar imagery
from original





TOP GUN 2: MAVERICK Official Trailer (2020) Tom Cruise Movie

Currently, the trailer plays up the summertime fun tone, which includes the beach scene colored by the sunset with the silhouette of a male character spinning a football. This summertime setting may feel out-of-place during *Top Gun: Maverick's* new release during Christmas. Yet, the Christmas holiday can actually work in the film's favor since families tend to go to the movies together during this holiday. As for the aftermath of COVID-19, there may be a chance that there is an extreme rise in theater attendance with excitement of entertainment after social-distancing. However, with such a long delay, there may be a loss of any momentum. Since there will be a mass release of many delayed movies, there will be extreme competition around that time period. *The Croods 2* and *Tom and Jerry*, both animated family movies, will be released on the same day. These movies are far more kid-friendly, as opposed to *Top Gun: Maverick*, removing uneasiness the parents would feel.

Especially during this social-distancing period, promotion through the stars of the movie would be extremely beneficial. An Instagram live event with Tom Cruise and Miles Teller where they hold a Q&A and a live commentary on the first *Top Gun* movie with their followers and

potentially Instagram users in general. Anyone can pop into their shared live story and type in their praise, comments and questions, which will need to be filtered to answer coherent questions. Usually, these live events are just a natural discussion between the stars with a casual answering of questions when something piques the interests of the stars. Instagram users can share through direct messages with their friends, record the screen when something entertaining, funny and iconic occurs and even share on other social media platforms like Twitter. Earned media would propel this marketing execution mainly because excitement for future entertainment is in high demand. Shows on streaming platforms, such as *Normal People* and *Tiger King*, have grown massively through word of mouth. Since the audience is, currently, all at home, there are not as many distractions as there would be from movies and television. The virality of these online events have gone a long way, especially now when people are making short-form content commentary on Tik Toks and on other formats. However, it is hard to predict virality. So, the Instagram live event could be aided by the stars promoting the live event on their Instagram feeds and adding an advertising line in their bios prior to the event.



Thor: Ragnarok director, Taika Waititi held a successful live commentary of the movie on Instagram with a peak of 20,000 viewers

Since *Top Gun: Maverick* will have to combat the potential loss of interest of its original audience, it is important to keep the momentum. This Instagram Live event should occur closer to the end of the summer, when hopefully the theater business starts to return to its normal state, but people are still connected mainly online. There can also be a Christmas festive theme that the actors embody, changing the summer tone to a cozier family fun time. A surprising upside to this social media-based campaign can be that the movie will reach younger audiences, as they make the primary demographic of social media platforms. However, it can also target an older audience, specifically, Tom Cruise's fanbase and even the *Top Gun* fanbase following Tom Cruise particularly because they like his work. The actors should maintain a family-friendly manner when on Live and, perhaps, discuss the value and meaning of the *Top Gun* series. This can appeal to the parents and older audience since they can associate familiar faces like Tom Cruise with the experiences or connections they had with the original *Top Gun*. The downsides of an Instagram Live event are that there is not really a way to control how the audience reacts or how much they share. It will definitely target the fanbases of the particular actors, but not necessarily a wider audience. Having actors attend an Instagram Live should not cost much in the sense that celebrities are currently willing to entertain their fans, however, way they can.

However, the publicity or the marketing team in general may want to pay the actors to hit certain points when on Instagram Live. Regardless, it will not really take up a fraction of the larger advertising budget for the film. With a real-time actors Q&A, not only can the actors adapt to the current season that the movie will come out, but also sympathize with the pandemic situation that everyone is going through. In fact, this is a great opportunity to create a feeling of unity that is a core value when it comes to family. Success measurements would potentially

include the number of and retention rate of the participants of the Instagram Live Q&A. Signs of success could be that some part of the Instagram Live goes viral or if a potential Twitter hashtag is created and shared. Essentially, the more people are talking about *Top Gun: Maverick* and spreading through word-of-mouth nearing the release date of the film, the more successful the campaign will prove to be.