#Oscars2015: Who Won "Best Picture" (According to Twitter)?

[The Oscars](#) honor the best of the best achievements in the film industry; getting nominated for an Academy Award is an achievement in and of itself. The winning films, actors and directors are generally among the most popular of the year - but how popular are they on social media?

Are the "Best Picture" nominees leveraging Twitter in the most effective way possible? In other words, **who won "Best Picture" according to Twitter?**

Image from [Oscar Photos](#)

First: [The Nominees](#) for Best Picture!

- American Sniper
- Birdman
- Boyhood
- The Grand Budapest Hotel
- The Imitation Game
- Selma
- The Theory of Everything

- Whiplash

The Experiment

In order to measure how - and possibly, why - some movies marry artistic and marketing success, we combined **three different metrics.**
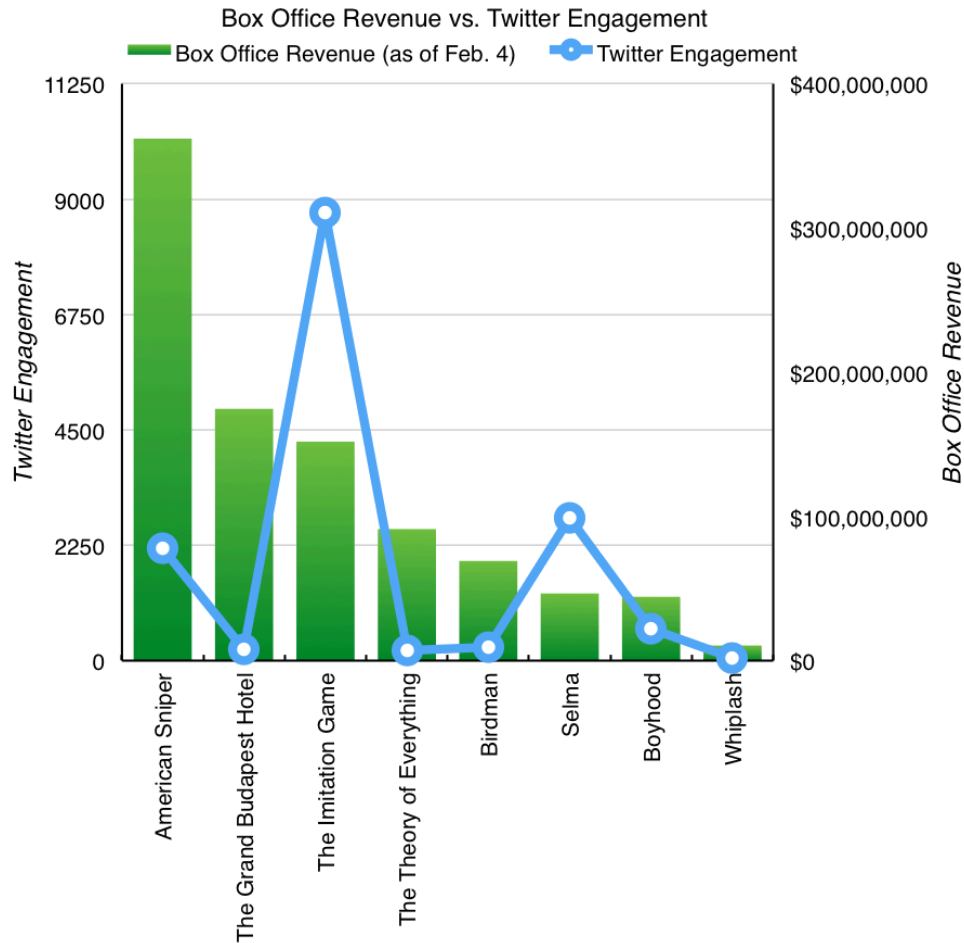
1. *Box office revenue (*as of February 11th)
2. *Twitter engagement* - the total replies, retweets and favorites on each movie's "official" self-congratulatory tweet for the nomination
3. *Buzz* - The total number of tweets using the movie title

Can bringing these three elements together uncover marketing insights that can be useful for everyone, regardless of their involvement in the film industry?
One might assume that the most popular or the most successful movie is obviously the one that'll get the most exposure on Twitter. However, that vastly underestimates the power of social media as a marketing tool.

The Results

In order to see which studios did a better than usual job on Twitter, *we compared the total engagement (Retweets + Replies + Favorites) of each movie's official tweet announcing their Oscar nomination for "Best Picture" award with their box-office results*:

Box Office Revenue vs. Twitter Engagement

Legend: Box Office Revenue (as of Feb. 4) — Twitter Engagement

Twitter Engagement axis (left): 0, 2250, 4500, 6750, 9000, 11250

Box Office Revenue axis (right): $0, $100,000,000, $200,000,000, $300,000,000, $400,000,000

Categories: American Sniper, The Grand Budapest Hotel, The Imitation Game, The Theory of Everything, Birdman, Selma, Boyhood, Whiplash

A. Just because a movie did well in the box office doesn't automatically mean it'll engage fans on Twitter

Example: *American Sniper* may have broken multiple box office records, and it may have brought in 770% more revenue than *Selma*, but *Selma* has 26% more engagement than *American Sniper*.

That's not to say that *American Sniper* did a poor job of reaching their audience outside of the theaters, especially since it still has the third highest engagement of "Best Picture" nominees. But, it certainly could've done a much better job.

Consider this:

American Sniper box office revenue: **$361,979,594**

Average movie ticket price: **$8.30**

$361,9979,594/$8.30 = *Approximately 43 million people*

Compared to:

Total engagement: **2,195 (Only .005% of *American Sniper* audience)**

Movies like *The Grand Budapest Hotel*, *The Theory of Everything*, and *Birdman*, brought in considerable box-office revenue, but neglected to engage their Twitter followers. Their dismally low engagement totals (226, 199, 264 respectively) indicate a *disconnect between their tweets and their audience*. There is only a .24 - mild positive - correlation between box office results and engagement totals.


Image from IMDb

B. However, box office success *does* lead to more people talking about you on Twitter

While we did point out some of *American Sniper's* flaws, the film did garner the most Twitter buzz compared to the other "Best Picture" nominees. But how much of that buzz was

inspired because of the movie itself? How much buzz can be attributed to the efforts of its marketing team?

It did succeed in having the first and third best January weekends in terms of box office revenue, and shattered a number of other box office records. If our analysis of this film provided another lesson, it's the somewhat intuitive notion that **success will increase your exposure, as shown by the graph below.**

"Best Picture" Twitter Buzz Throughout Nomination Month
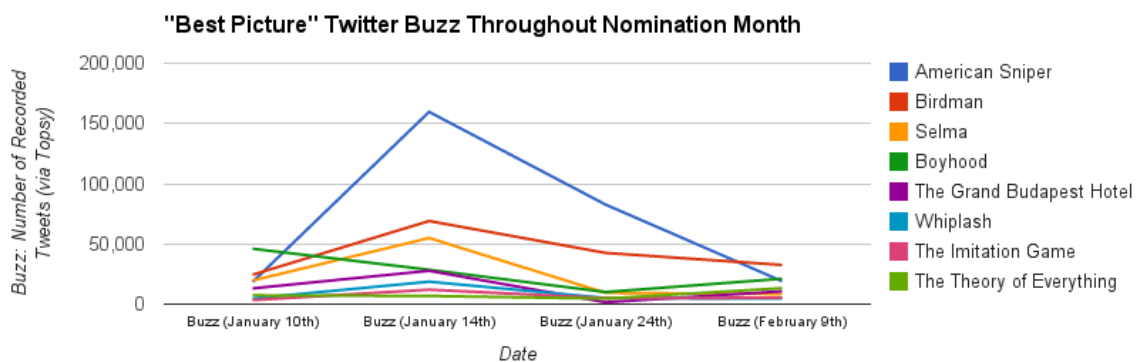
On January 14th, Oscars nomination announcement day, *American Sniper* blew all the other nominees out of the water in terms of buzz, generating over 150,000 tweets while the second most - *Birdman* - was tweeted about only 69,024 times.

But, marketing is also about finding ways to reach out despite a relative small in-theater audience.

Box Office Revenue vs. Buzz
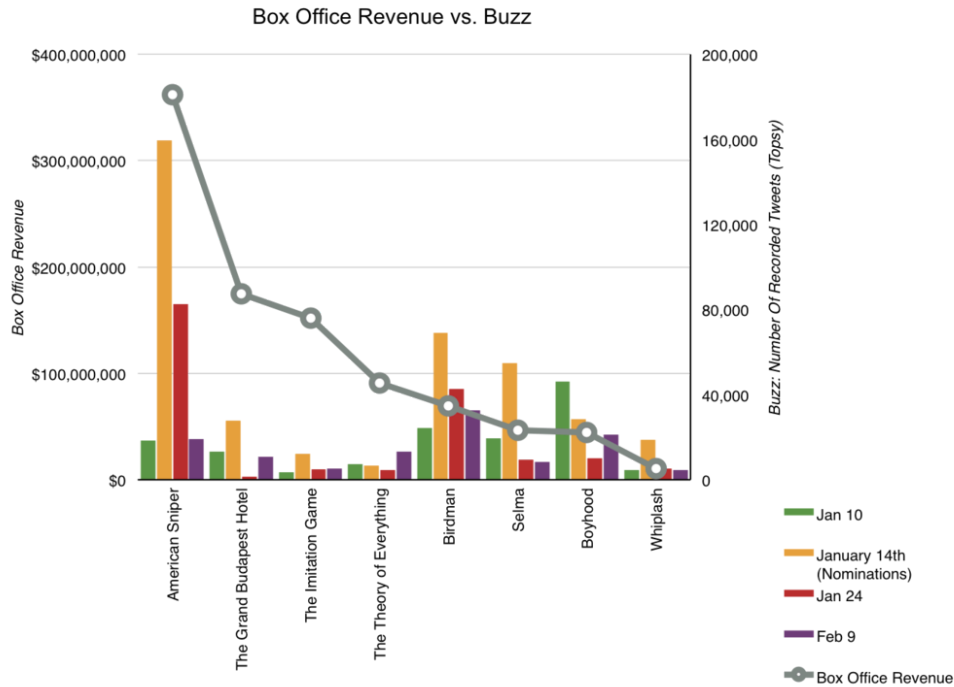
What marketing lessons can we draw from this case study?

There are two main takeaways to keep in mind:

1) **Make it personal.** The most successful movies - in terms of Twitter exposure - are the ones that created a *movie-specific Twitter account.* This allowed for increased flexibility and personalization. They did not rely on a cumbersome parent corporation to manage their social media marketing needs.

Twitter is fast and personal. *If the communication process is too slow or too broad, the message gets lost in an avalanche of more interesting tweets.* The common denominator for three out of the bottom four movies with the worst engagement?

They let the big movie studio - Fox Searchlight, Universal - tweet on behalf of them. Therefore, they were forgotten amid tweets for other movies, actors and directors for different awards on the same page.

2) **Play to your strengths.** Keeping it personal allows for a more specific marketing strategy, which enables films to capitalize on their **strengths**.

If you look up *Selma's* account, you will find a deluge of tweets focusing on justice, racism, and equality, which includes Oprah engaging in an active Twitter campaign: #SelmaTweetUp

>*Martin Luther King Jr. stood up for freedom. Who inspires you to [#MarchOn](#)? Tag them here. https://t.co/EfwBLV27F2*
>
>— *Selma Movie (@SelmaMovie)* [*February 12, 2015*](#)
>
>https://twitter.com/SelmaMovie/status/565690368201457664

The same thing happens with *The Imitation Game*, as its tweets serve as inspiration for the LGBTQ community, as well as a reminder of the forgotten genius of Alan Turing, a pioneer of computer science.

>*.[@HRC](#) honored The [#ImitationGame](#) with the Ally for Equality Award. Read more here: http://t.co/fExr0cv45L*
>
>— *The Imitation Game (@ImitationGame)* [*February 5, 2015*](#)
>
>https://twitter.com/ImitationGame/status/563137788552298496

These takeaways apply to brands across different industries. *Learning to recognize and subsequently focus on one's strengths can help create a much more powerful message than trying too hard to make a message reach everyone.*

Here at Encore Alert, we applaud those who end up on top in terms of social media success, but we especially admire those who are able to do more with less. For that reason, *Selma* is our [#Oscars2015](#) winner.