

Dow Jones Reprints: This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only. To order presentation-ready copies for distribution to your colleagues, clients or customers, use the Order Reprints tool at the bottom of any article or visit [www.djreprints.com](http://www.djreprints.com)

See a sample reprint in PDF format.

Order a reprint of this article now

## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

WSJ.com

ADVERTISING | MAY 10, 2005

# 'Star Wars' Tie-Ins May Lose Force

*Ads Based on the Same Film Run the Risk of Messages Getting Lost in the Shuffle*

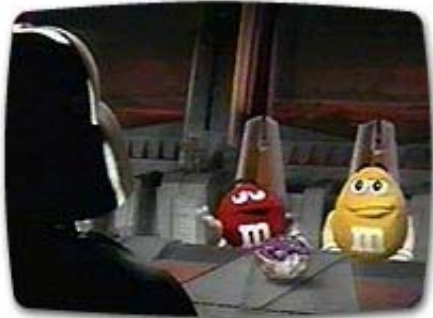
By **BRIAN STEINBERG** | Staff Reporter of **THE WALL STREET JOURNAL**

May the force be with you. And you. And you, too.

A number of blue-chip marketers are running advertising and/or promotions that play off the May 19 release of "Star Wars: Episode III -- Revenge of the Sith." The big question is whether the proliferation of ad campaigns using the film will dilute the advertisers' messages.

George Lucas's sixth, and final, entry in his 28-year-old Star Wars saga tells the tale of how Anakin Skywalker succumbed to the dark side of the Force and became Darth Vader. In the days before the opening, however, companies such as Cingular Wireless, Burger King, Mars's M&Ms and PepsiCo's Pepsi-Cola North America and Frito-Lay units are using the movie to tell stories of their own.

Star Wars sights and sounds seem omnipresent in marketing efforts. Pepsi has an online promotion and a new Diet Pepsi ad, both centered around Yoda. Cingular Wireless commercials feature Chewbacca and invite consumers to download ringtones with Star Wars motifs.



Top, A Diet Pepsi ad features Star Wars guru Yoda. Bottom, the M&M characters in Darth Vader's presence.

Mars's famous M&M candy figures make appearances in ads alongside Darth Vader, and tell people to "Dare To Go To The Dark Side," part of an effort to sell new dark-chocolate candies. Frito-Lay is selling Twisted Cheetos snacks that turn mouths black or green (representing Darth Vader or Yoda, respectively). A new Burger King ad featuring a Star Wars motif is expected to make its debut tonight on "American Idol" on News Corp.'s Fox network.

Helping drive advertisers' interest in the campaign is Hollywood's increased willingness to let characters from films appear in ads, says Susan Credle, executive vice president and creative director at Omnicom Group's BBDO, who worked on ads for both Cingular and M&Ms. In times past, she says, advertisers were allowed to use film clips only in ads that tied into a campaign. That technique "puts a distance between us and the consumer," she says.

Now so many advertisers are using Star Wars characters as to raise questions about the effectiveness of the different campaigns. "If you are only one of a handful of

partners or sponsors, it's hard for you to stand out and for you to claim any kind of ownership of the tie-in with the movie," says Denise Lee Yohn, an independent branding consultant. "There is also the risk that you get overshadowed. The movie becomes the point, and your brand gets lost in that."

The last two Star Wars movies also attracted marketers seeking to cash in on the series' popularity. Not every campaign was successful, however. In 1999, Tricon Global Restaurants, now known as **Yum Brands**, said a tie-in with "The Phantom Menace," the fourth entry in the Star Wars series, "was surprisingly ineffective at driving sales, and actually slowed momentum in the U.S.," according to Tricon's then-chief executive, Andrall E. Pearson. At the time, Pizza Hut, KFC and Taco Bell were reported to be lavishing much of a \$1 billion marketing budget on that movie.

Frank Cooper, a vice president of promotions, interactive and entertainment for Pepsi-Cola North America, says Pepsi tries to measure the sales lift from such promotions by examining retail trends, historical data and consumer reaction. Cingular says it sees the movie as an opportunity to tap a passionate fan base, says Daryl Evans, vice president of advertising. Lucasfilm said executives weren't available for comment.

Some marketing executives say it helps if a marketer has something unique to talk about in its film tie-ins. Mars's inclusion of M&Ms characters in the ads for its new dark-chocolate candies brings a sense of news to the commercial venture, a Mars spokeswoman says. Cingular's invitation to download ringtones asks consumers to interact with the company's products.

In the end, experience shows that these many-pronged marketing ploys can be as sharp as a lightsaber -- but can cut both ways.

**Write to** Brian Steinberg at [brian.steinberg@wsj.com](mailto:brian.steinberg@wsj.com)

Printed in The Wall Street Journal, page B3

Copyright 2010 Dow Jones & Company, Inc. All Rights Reserved

This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only. Distribution and use of this material are governed by our [Subscriber Agreement](#) and by copyright law. For non-personal use or to order multiple copies, please contact Dow Jones Reprints at 1-800-843-0008 or visit [www.djreprints.com](http://www.djreprints.com)