OMG! GROWN movie Singapore Dreaming (short pictures) was hit theatres here and Deep 7, but its trailers has been viewed more than 10,000 times on YouTube already. 

It's the kind of movie that has hatched on to a fast emerging trend - using YouTube, the hottest video-sharing website around, to advertise a new film.

Colin Goh, one of the two directors of the movie Singapore Dreaming, pointed to Singaporeans of YouTube Dreaming on YouTube over the past month, and they have since garnered more than 7,000 views together. He says that although the movie has its own website from which people can download the trailers, "the reach of YouTube is much further because they are so many people out there watching."

Producers of other Singapore films like Becoming Royston and Smell Of Rain are also tapping YouTube to market their movies. 

"YouTube is the most popular, and we think people would watch a trailer on there before going to the cinema," says producer Ching Yong, who is also the director of Singapore Dreaming. 

Mr Ching says he had asked YouTube to post links to YouTube sites for its TV show of its potential Blockbuster Superstar Rewards. Horror website Fangoria and Lion Gate, an independent studio in Hollywood, launched a special preview of horror film The Descent in early March.

DVD distributors such as Paramount Home Entertainment and Kodak Vision have also started posting trailers of their films. The footage on YouTube is similar to what netizens get from the movie's official website where exclusive content can be downloaded.

However, YouTube offers the advantages of ease of use and interactivity. Unlike what is found on official sites, all clips on YouTube are censored into a Web-based video format set up on the YouTube site for download by users with little lag time.

Viewers can post comments on the trailer, and link to the video according to their taste. The best part is this: if a viewer wishes to share the video clip with friends, all he needs to do is cut and paste the web address and send it on to them.

This function helps fuel its effectiveness as what is known as a viral marketing tool, where the promo clippings of the clip spread virally. 

Dr Mark Chong, an assistant professor of marketing at the Singapore Management University, says that this marketing method is one of the most effective ways to get a message across because it is based on "advocacy". 

"You are more likely to believe what a marketer recommends to you than what a marketer tells you," he says.

Internet icon YouTube is not without its competitors. There are more than 200 video-sharing sites like Google Video and Yahoo, that offer similar services where viewers can upload home videos or trailers of big movies for free. But in reality, it remains the leading site for film promos and global marketing, reports BBC News. 

And to think that the site started out as a means for people to send out their videos to friends. In January last year, Americans Chad Hurley and Steve Chen had trouble sending photos of their dinner party to friends via e-mail because the file was too big. Together with a colleague, Jawed Karim, the three former employees of PayPal, an Internet payment service, designed a simpler software to allow this, and in the following month, Mr Karim was founded.

Mr Jawed left the company later to pursue an advanced degree in Stanford. 

YouTube removed the clip, scoring a public relations coup against the firm that says the site is cocking a snook at intellectual property rights by allowing free posting of materials. Still, it will be unusual for film distributors to go after websites that post their trailers, say industry players here. Mr Low Yew Ping, the managing director of local distributor Festivals Pictures, says that although YouTube is free, it does not mean distributors would indiscriminately upload their trailers there.

Distributors all have marketing strategies and the site might not give them the film's target audience.

Mr Ching says: "Because it is consumer-based marketing, you can't control the channels which can backfire on the marketing effort."

"It will be unusual for film distributors to use YouTube, even if it is free," he adds.

YouTube, which has pumped in $US181 million since it started in March, is hot. Industry players are wondering if it can survive.

Mr Ching says: "You can't control how they liked the trailer. Even if the feedback is not so great, we can learn from it and improve on our work," he says.

Mr Ching also uses YouTube for home videos or trailers of big movies because they are free. "But in reality, it remains the leading site for film promos and global marketing," he adds.

"We should be more broad-minded in this regard," says Mr Goh, who is himself head of the marketing website talkingcock.com. "It is a fast recognition of your work, I hope my movie is successful."