

The future of mass media and advertising

 By [Chris Mberdyk](#)

27 Nov 2018

It is usually folly to indulge in any form of crystal ball-gazing when it comes to the future of mass media and their relationships with the advertising world, but I have, for the past few months, been trying to arrive at what I think are some fairly logical conclusions.

The first is that the sustainability of all media is directly relative to the quality of their content. A no-brainer I would say.

But just what is quality content? In my opinion it is nothing less than concise and accurate information that consumers want.

It also seems logical that revenue generation is not going to be as simple as "paywall or not to pay wall".

In order to encourage brand loyalty among consumers, media will have to continue to provide free access to a certain amount of useful information. And then to charge users for in-depth information and interactivity. But these "charges" might well be absorbed by the advertising model I have outlined below.

And of course by information, one cannot just think "news." While this will remain an important component of an overall information package, mass media will have to start providing quality "how to" content and some form of interactivity for those users who require help or assistance with all manner of issues from how to lose weight to how to fill in tax and visa application forms.

Based on the current marketing thinking that honesty, integrity and trust are simply not enough to convince consumers, media will also have to ensure that in their overall offerings they are able to cement brand loyalty. That's the kicker in all this - brand loyalty.

In a nutshell, journalism will continue to play a role in the mass media but it will be only a small part of a far wider overall content offering.

Equally, I believe that advertising will continue to play an important role in mass media revenue generation although in a completely different guise to the 30-sec commercials we see on TV and hear on radio, the classic ads in newspapers and magazines and banners online.

It is logical that technology will allow consumers to expand on their current options of "Googling" information and making purchases online.

Given the work that I saw Sony doing in Japan a few years ago, it seems logical that the existing paradigm of brands supplying information to consumers by way of mass media advertising and online on websites and via newsletters, will shift massively towards brands, services, governments and NGOs having databases of product and service information that can be accessed on demand by consumers.

Right now Google searches and online shopping are merely the tip of what is an enormous iceberg of brand information.

The way in which the mass media will benefit from this scenario is that instead of running advertisements the way they do today, they will provide consumers with a fast-track channel in terms of accessing product and brand information and solutions.

Like they do today with a Google search, consumers will not in future page through newspapers or wait for TV commercials, except perhaps on a very niched community basis, but will rather put their requests into their mobile devices, notebooks or TV sets with built-in home servers.

They will ask, for example, for information on the latest cricket scores, soccer results, news headlines or want to buy a pair of shoes, clothing, extra lessons for their kids or absolutely anything else.

They will obviously not have the "reach" to be able to do this themselves but will have to rely on mass media companies and other service providers to send out "spiders" for them to collect the most reliable and relevant information. And particularly solutions.

This in turn will put pressure on advertisers who will not be able to simply provide what they do today in ads, commercials and websites. They will, have to cater for that consumer who not only wants to see a picture of the product but every possible detail from choices, testimonials, how it works, who it was developed for and where it is made through video tours of the factory and so forth.

Successful brands will be those that have mountains of information available and who can be quickly and easily reached by those spiders sent out by service providers. And then make it as easy as possible for the consumer to get the product or sign up for the service.

The mechanics of this process might well offset the need to charge consumers.

I said earlier that I recognise that it is folly to indulge in crystal ball-gazing but I don't think I am because just about everything I have suggested above is already happening in some small way.

Both the mass media and brand managers will have to come to terms with the fact that a massive paradigm shift is inevitable.

I believe that mass media will not only survive but prosper as will consumer brands. But they have to prepare themselves for a game that is changing radically.

ABOUT CHRIS MOERDYK

Apart from being a corporate marketing analyst, advisor and media commentator, Chris Moerdyk is a former chairman of Bizcommunity. He was head of strategic planning and public affairs for BMW South Africa and spent 16 years in the creative and client service departments of ad agencies, ending up as resident director of Lindsay Smithers-FCB in KwaZulu-Natal. Email Chris on moerdykc@gmail.com and follow him on Twitter at [@chrismoerdyk](https://twitter.com/chrismoerdyk).

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