

The Big Rethink - Seismic trends in marketing

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As change in every aspect of life accelerates, marketing as a discipline is having to undergo seismic change. Most notably, marketers and their agencies are now having to work with 'just-in-time' communication plans to keep up with accelerated consumer demands. But what exactly does this mean in practical terms?



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There is no mould

Firstly, marketing is no longer about breaking the mould; there is no mould. At the Association of National Advertising's Masters of Marketing conference last year, PepsiCo executive, Brad Jakeman, gave voice to this sentiment: "Ad agency models are breaking. Pre-roll ads are useless. Measurement models are outdated. The ad industry lacks diversity. And the phrase 'digital marketing' should be dumped. Can we stop using the term 'advertising', which is based on this model of polluting (content)?"

In short, there are no model solutions anymore. Each situation, each marketing challenge, requires a unique solution, so marketers and their agencies need to be able to think on their feet.

Targeting is a whole new ballgame

For one thing, targeting just isn't what it used to be. Almost counter-intuitively, under-18s and women are the real power behind the purse. And, as their decision-making differs in very real ways from adult male decision-making, the ad industry's approach to targeting is having to change radically. Agencies are also having to re-look content and the way in which it is being delivered to key audiences.

Branded content is moving to centre field

This is why branded content, which offers a managed way to engage customers in creating a story around the brand, is moving to centre field. So much so that FMCG giant, Unilever, is planning to establish in-house Branded Content divisions around the world. So 30-second commercials are becoming a thing of the past, as is the way in which advertising is being delivered in the social media.

Where it comes down to the wire is that programmatic buying models can deliver spot-on targeted audiences for marketing campaigns at a low CPP, but this doesn't necessarily mean the audiences push high volumes of product off the shelf. For one thing, using these models in isolation excludes 62% of South Africa's mass market consumers, which can place FMCG companies in particular at significant risk.

Bite-sized messaging is a thing of the past

What this means is that short messaging just doesn't cut it anymore. Content is, in fact, being strongly influenced by gaming. A perfect example of this is the 're-boxing' trend illustrated by the Pokémon-augmented global reality campaign; a genius way of reconnecting with old fans and using them as indirect influencers to grow new and younger audiences.

In a related way, MIPCOM, the world's entertainment content market, predicts that on-demand viewership will increase, binge viewing will become more entrenched and mobile viewing will become more addictive. And, by the way, ad blocking is here to stay - for good.

How does this shape 'just-in-time' marketing?

As I see it, both marketers and their agencies have to be more agile when it comes to building content narratives. Gone are the days of pushing a series of bite-sized videos on digital platforms hoping to attract viewership volumes and, by this measure, assuming efficacy.

Now the art of persuasion is about involving consumers in the decision-making journey. It's about providing audiences with what they want to hear - at the right time and in the right way. So old-style segmentation tools are effectively out of the window; it's all about securing audience traction through emotion-generating engines.

With the rate of change being what it is, consumers are living in the 'here and now', so marketers have to do the same. And with e-commerce gaining traction, agencies need to gear up in order to create meaningful consumer ecosystems.

The nature of markets and the structure of advertising is changing fundamentally, and the call for connected strategies and geo-tagging is on the rise. Big block-buster campaigns are on the way out. Talking to consumers in their own environment, in a meaningful way and in their own language is where it's at.

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