

the (still) elusive consumer

The secret to reaching message-weary audiences is creating “media that matters”

The media future is bright, and I am more excited about the business today than I have been in a long while. The primary reason is the positive impact on “old media” by “new media,” and our ability as media specialists to bring it all together.

So what’s our greatest challenge today? Surprisingly, we are still miles away from understanding how the ever-elusive consumer truly interacts with the messages found in media. I just watch my wife, Sue, while she browses, shops and connects with friends and family thousands of miles away with her wireless laptop while watching “Lost,” “House” or BBC World News. Despite all of the systems of media measurement, I doubt that we truly know how she, or countless others around the world, are reacting to the ad messages we have so painstakingly planned to appear within such sought-after content. She says that she feels positive about those brands that are integrated into her media choices, regardless of channel;

she simply dismisses those that no longer connect with her.

John Hegerty, the creative founder of BBH, recently mentioned how he also feels that he is trying to catch up to new consumer thinking when he works to create convincing advertising today. (It is particularly worrying when creative and media agree about the same concern.) No matter how fantastic the media platform or how breakthrough the creative, today’s messaging needs to be consumer-relevant.

Emotional Connection

The measurable responses from online advertising have encouraged many to think that clicks mean emotional connection. However, there is also value in seeing an ad you don’t respond to. When online media moves beyond 10 percent of the total media revenue pie and creates high-quality content, the nature of online response will change.



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Active Engagement

Advertising has always had a pivotal role in the content-value chain; it built the funding models for TV, radio, print and out-of-home. Until recently, the majority of content was delivered through these channels. Successful ad campaigns were planned to interrupt consumers of content and keep them engaged. Makers and distributors of content provided time or space for ads that would fund their businesses. Thus we were complicit in a covert relationship with our customers that can broadly be described as “you watch, I’ll pay.”

Technology, with its ability to create greater interaction, changed the

playing field. The consumer embraced new forms of media transactions more quickly than the agencies or clients. The changing environment is now causing marketers and agencies alike to completely relearn their jobs. Gone are the days when one created a TV spot and a print ad and called it a campaign.

Why do clients spend money on advertising? It is generally to affect some behavioral change. To create such a reaction, a message must engage with consumers, readers and viewers. A single message rarely works as consumers are impacted by multiple interactions and exposures, be they positive or negative. Today's media strategist is the active intermediary between a marketer's products or services and an audience that must be encouraged to become engaged with these brands. To succeed, the media strategist must deliver content-driven, ideas-driven, platform-driven and deal-driven communications work.

The clear strategy for engagement is now to create integrated media solutions and to work more closely than ever before with media companies. The best ideas are always based around compelling content. We have begun seeing great content from media companies being joined by advertiser-funded content. Asia is ahead of the U.S. and Europe in this area.

Consumer Relevance

Our target audiences are beyond our control, but that is the excitement of media strategy and implementation. We need to market by invitation, we need to embrace value for money, and we need to put consumer relevance above all else. In fact, marketing costs decrease as we increase our focus on core targets. By identifying the content consumers want, we can build value around it. We call this "media that matters." It is a simple recognition that some media are more sought-out and more significant to their users

than others. These will be the pillars of Next Generation Marketing, whether it be the Oscars, the Olympics, piczo.com or Final Fantasy XII. They will also provide content "hooks" on which to hang messages that stimulate, build communities and create a positive brand experience that is more rewarding than a single message of interruption.

The Art of Storytelling

Despite all of the great change in technology, the consumption of media and marketing methods, one element remains constant. Great marketing remains the art of wonderful storytelling in a way that inspires action. There have never been greater opportunities to create and transmit these stories. However, identifying the means of transmission and preferences of the audience has never been more complex. Thankfully, I am in the business of helping clients thrive in this new world as they use new media methods to engage with the ever-changing consumer. And let's hope that consumer stays elusive, as it is that unpredictability that fuels us to reach the next level in marketing engagement.

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