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Connect Your Brand with the Connected Consumer

SYSTEMS THINKING

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Ready for another Generation Something? Meet Gen C: a group that's connected, outspoken ...and perhaps will be your most important brand advocates sooner than you may think. By Phil Jones, Global Agency Business Leader at Google

The era of the connected consumer – known as Generation C – is upon us. These are people less defined by age and class than by their interests and attitudes. It's true that 65% of them are under the age of 35, but that means that an astounding 35% are not. 35% are 40, 45, 50 years old or even older. What unites them is that – if they're awake – they're online.

Gen C's primary motivation for content selection and channel choice is their need for constant connection. They consume, curate and create content to stay connected, and they watch YouTube videos so that they can talk about them with their co-workers and friends (11). This is far different than the TV-watching couch potato of yore.

Not surprisingly, most of Gen C's content consumption takes place on smartphones. For example, 41% tune in to YouTube on their phones while waiting for something/someone, 18% percent while commuting from work or school, and 15% check out YouTube while commercials are airing on television.

Thinking about Gen C

These habits require a shift in the way brand marketers think.

As consumers connect across an array of devices in different situations, marketers must figure out how to offer information that people value in those moments. Being relevant isn't a new idea, but doing so in the moment, across various use cases is where the magic now lies.

There is hope in the fact that not only is Gen C not anti-brand or anti-advertising; in fact, they can actually be valuable fans. Two-thirds of Gen C consumers worldwide state that "if there is a brand I love, I tend to tell everyone about it". The Gen C audience is 1.8x more likely to be influential opinion formers, claiming that "people come to me for advice before making a purchase". They are also big spenders: Gen C consumers are up to 3.6x more likely to purchase a product or service that interests them than their non-Gen C counterparts.

Insight-based advertising

Fortunately, marketers now have more ways than ever to understand this audience and identify the moments that matter. CRM, web analytics, advanced digital media metrics and reporting – these are all helpful tools.

In February 2013, when the “Harlem Shake” video launched, Google Trends showed how quickly it caught on (check this out here: <http://goo.gl/vd4oQH>). Within two weeks, more than 12,000 “Harlem Shake” videos had been posted on YouTube, and they were watched over 44 million times.

Brands that were able to move quickly were able to leap on the phenomenon in a way that connected with consumers. Pepsi, for example, was one of the first brands to move, generating more than seven million views of its Jeff Gordon “Harlem Shake” video (<http://goo.gl/flnkbe>).

Another example of a company that harnessed data to successfully drive its content is L’Oréal Paris. When celebrities started flaunting ombré hair (a colouring effect where the bottom of the hair looks lighter than the top), the company identified a considerable increase in search terms relating to the style. It also discovered that consumers had no effective way to achieve the look at home. L’Oréal Paris nimbly responded by developing and launching the world’s first do-it-yourself ombré solution. Smart!

Similarly, Turkish Airlines spotted the growing popularity of “selfie” as a search term and quickly created its “Kobe vs. Messi: The Selfie Shootout” campaign (<http://goo.gl/OXCDF>). The ad had 77 million views on YouTube in just one week, and went on to become one of the most popular commercials in 2013.

Data, insight and agility

To connect with Gen C, brands must also focus on data, insight and agility.

Data helps brands understand the wider ecosystem and how and what each channel produces for their business. This becomes all the more critical when tackling Gen C, given that 90% of users turn to multiple screens to accomplish a task according to Google, Ipsos and Sterling (12) and about 50% who conduct research on a smartphone go a physical store to purchase (rather than buying online). To do something about it, we must first know about it.

Business performance tools can then be used to produce insight that can yield important next steps, and small changes can produce big results. Puma recently tested alternative website headers with Google Analytics and found one variation that increased online orders by 7.1%.

More complex attribution solutions, of course, can go far deeper. A recent project conducted by Adometry produced optimization recommendations that yielded a 30-42% increase in converted visitors for a top global automobile manufacturer without any net increase in ad spend.

The agility to leverage insights into the consumer journey and consumer behavior revealed by data is where the rubber hits the road.

Data is the fuel

Of course, the first step is to get the right data in place; only then can you capture insights, respond with agility, measure the outcome and “rinse and repeat.” The breadth of available data will fuel your brand content strategy, highlight the interrelationships between media activities and, ultimately, drive conversions.

Regardless of industry or business type, constant connectivity gives all marketers the chance to connect with people in specific, real-life moments that matter.

But as challenging as this moment is, it's only the start. There will only be more screens in the future, more interoperability between them and, therefore, more opportunities for brands to be present and relevant. Data, insight and agility will ensure you can catch that wave.

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The New Multi-screen World: Understanding Cross-Platform Consumer Behavior

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