
Content

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The commitment to content is a big deal

Normally we start with a reminder that at MediaCom, we call everything content. So let's quickly do that again. 'Branded content', 'content marketing', even 'traditional advertising' – it's all content. Many of the topics featured in MediaCom Trends 2018 are content. Events and experiential, sport and entertainment, influencer marketing – all content. But for a moment, let's consider 'content' as the longer-form, branded entertainment type of content. Not the 60-second TV-ad-that-also-gets-put-on-YouTube type of content. Let's start with the type of 'original' content that Apple, Google and Facebook have announced they're going to invest billions in. This is a big deal. Not to be outdone by one another, each company knows the importance of growing their audiences and keeping those audiences engaged in their brand. It's not just about getting into telly.

Not that most of the content will be 'branded' of course, given the likes of YouTube Red are basically ad-free Netflix alternatives. But certainly what marketers should take note of are the potential opportunities for product integration and ad-funded programming on digital channels, especially if the commissioning of AFPs within linear TV continues to be challenging (though not impossible, as we have shown with recent successes for Voltarol and Skoda). The advantage held by the duopoly of Facebook and Google is data. Data will no doubt be used in increasingly complex and clever ways to inform the content they commission, not least to fill content gaps that their algorithms tell them their audiences 'want' filled.

Ephemeral content, live content, podcasts and personalisation

At the other end of the scale will be the inevitable rise in ephemeral content. Snapchat started it, Instagram copied it, and many others are now in on the game. For many brands, this will be a challenge. Not only will it be yet another asset that their creative agency won't want to make, but also many brands will find themselves struggling to establish a more relevant and authentic tone of voice. You can't be corporate or salesy in an Instagram Story if you want Gen Z to care about you.

Where we also expect to see a more focused approach from clients will be around live content. It's not new enough to earn its place on a comms plan against 'innovation'. But when appropriate and done well, it can be an effective marketing approach, as we showed with our Facebook Live activity for Dell on Black Friday where we announced doorbusters throughout the day, and sold out within minutes. The podcast renaissance will no doubt continue in 2018, spurred on perhaps by the growth in voice-controlled devices. But where I see the most interesting developments are in the growth of dynamic, relevant and personalised content. Let's not kid ourselves, the insights and technology to create highly targeted advertising messages have been around for years, but where certain brands and their agency partners have struggled to keep up, many tech companies and content creators will be champing at the bit to prove their capabilities.

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