

Nivea played a prank on her.

Nivea basically pretended that she was a wanted criminal and started putting her name on screens and newspapers. People started looking at her oddly making her feel uncomfortable.

After a short while some men with a large suitcase approach her. Inside is a can of Nivea deodorant to stop her sweating. The strapline is “Are you stressed — use Nivea Deodorant”.

When we analysed this video in Germany they found it exciting, but in the UK people found it funny. It succeeded in both markets but for different reasons.

MM: Has that experience helped you develop typologies or methodologies that identify the differences between markets?

IF: Our testing framework is based on 18 psychological responses, which we split into four categories: emotional, primal, cognitive and nonempathetic negative responses. Whenever we test a piece of content we use this model to see how different markets react.

These are universal responses — we’re all human, and will all feel certain things under certain circumstances — but specific emotional triggers sometimes differ from market to market.

Content that evokes warmth, humour or pride, for example, might look very different in India versus the UK versus Brazil.

Regardless, you need to think about what emotions fit with your brand values. You might be tempted to create a funny online video when targeting young men in the US, for instance, but this might not be the right message for your brand.

You need to think about what emotions fit with your brand values

MM: Brands used to be driven by economies of scale. They used to pump out centralised messaging strategies, often with a single piece of hero content for multiple markets. Have we moved passed that?

IF: I think so. Partly because it's become much easier to create content cheaply. There are lots of small content producers that can help a brand do something bespoke and market specific.

At Unruly, we work with lots of teams to produce content quickly and efficiently. For instance, we work with The Smalls — an international community of film-makers and production companies — and Storyful, part of News Corp, which specialises in UGC licensing.

Both are very effective and relatively inexpensive. Of course, UGC isn't as polished as big budget cinematic content, but that doesn't mean it can't be just as effective as the big budget stuff.

MM: Are brands using these resources to experience and try new things?

IF: Absolutely. People are testing stuff because it's so affordable to do so. Some of the most shared Jaguar/Land Rover videos, for instance, are low-budget clips from India. They just show a guy walking around a car show. They cost very little to make, but they give the audience access to something aspirational that they might not be able to attend.

Moreover, the most shared ad of all time, Android's "Friends Forever" featured UGC clips of unlikely animal buddies, evoking warmth, happiness and amazement in a vertical more often associated with product-centric advertising. This new approach gained Android cut-through and broadened the ad's appeal beyond the tech brand's male heartland.

User-generated stuff can be just as effective as the big budget stuff

MM: Do you see many videos that surprise you in terms of performance?

IF: Yes, from APAC and Thailand, in particular. We've just done some research assessing the shares of beauty videos in Thailand. The most successful can feel a little cheesy and overly product focussed, but such ads work in maturing ad markets.

However, that kind of approach possibly wouldn't work in territories with a more developed advertising landscape. The more we test, the more we learn, but it's important not to make judgements based on what we are used to in our home markets.

MM: What determines what content formats work where?

IF: One of the key issues that determines what content works is technology, both in terms of the infrastructure and the devices that consumers use. These vary hugely by territory, so brands need to adapt their approach.

Mobile is predominant in India, for example, so it makes sense to lead with vertical video rather than landscape hero content. In Indonesia the mobile signal is still poor in many places, so longer-form content is unlikely to get viewed to the end. The approach should be based around shorter content.

MM: Do you think this more local-nuance driven understanding is encouraging brands to make wider changes in terms of how they create and approve content?

IF: A lot of our clients are starting to think in this way. One FMCG client, for example, has recently reorganised its team and significantly bolstered its digital resources. They've hired a team of 80 — they used to have two people — because they realise the landscape has

changed.

They know they need to create content more quickly now and can't spend six to nine months creating a video like they used to. They are putting all the approvals in place to remove barriers and become more agile and responsive.

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