

The Heart of the Matter

CONSUMER INSIGHT PASSION

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There are lessons to be learned from brands that have looked to entertain. Kate Rowlinson highlights campaigns that have embraced consumer passions.

“Hey man, my lawyer wants me to sell sneakers,” and I looked at him straight and I said to him, ‘F— sneakers, let’s sell speakers,’ and he said, ‘Oh man, that sounds right.’”

This was an exchange between Dr. Dre and his business partner and CEO of Interscope Records, Jimmy Iovine. The exchange led to the creation of Beats by Dr. Dre – audio equipment for the hip hop connoisseur. Beats creates products which allow the music aficionado to listen to music as the artist intended: products that afford the discerning listener – the “real” fan – access to the nuances of recorded music: the studio licks and tricks that go unnoticed with lesser equipment.

This verbal exchange between Dre and Iovine took seconds. The company now claims revenues in excess of \$500m.

As examples of tapping into passion points go, this is a pretty good one. A record company executive and an artist create a product line which extends and deepens the relationship consumers have with both of them. Beats by Dr. Dre on Facebook has 2.8 million likes and 118,306 people are talking about it right now.

It may be easy to drive a deeper connection with music fans when you're already in the music business, but Dre has tapped into an audience far beyond his own fan base, and Universal, Interscope's parent, is reaping the rewards, the acclaim and the credibility. Beats by Dr. Dre is one small part of the bigger journey that has transformed Universal Music from a "record company" to a "music company": a transition that is in full swing. In 2001, record sales accounted for almost 100% of Universal's business. In 2011, a growing and meaningful percentage of income comes from ancillary, non-recorded music revenue streams, with most artist deals now including some additional rights. Not bad for a company and industry allegedly unable to adapt.

And as a passion point of choice for brands, sport and music tend to top the bill – sport actually accounts for 87% of global sponsorship deals, according to a recent TWISM report. Not surprising when you consider that sport and music offer up two of the most emotional experiences you can have as a human being, be it as a participant or spectator. At the recent Cannes Lions festival, there was an array of award entries from brands forging links with both sport and music. In fact, there was a whole sub-category devoted to the "best use or integration of music".

Does it sell?

ASOS has tapped into the current passion for street dance, its insight being that young guys take their style cues from this scene rather than "fashion" experts. It produced a film in which amazing dancers performed wearing ASOS clothes: the neat trick being that you could click and order the clothes directly from the video.

Hyundai did something entirely different with music in scale and ambition. Project Re:generation is a bold undertaking from Hyundai in the US for its Veloster model. The Veloster is on a mission to target the “creative class”. It’s not entirely clear why this car will appeal to the creative class (I always thought they liked vintage Mercedes...), but it might be something to do with its hybrid ability to combine the “style of a coupe with the functionality of a hatchback”.

Hyundai invited five famous DJs, one of whom was Mark Ronson, to recreate and reimagine five traditional styles of music, from classical to New Orleans Jazz. This resulted in a feature-length documentary that premiered at the SXSW Film Festival. Hyundai also secured a partnership with the Grammys, an endorsement in Rolling Stone and live performances on Letterman and a raft of other chat shows and, ultimately, at Coachella. So far, so credible. In terms of an entertainment property which spoke to and earned the admiration of hardcore music fans, Project Re:generation was an unmitigated success. According to its creators, the film will earn \$130m dollars in advertising inventory alone from broadcast and digital streaming.

Absent from the conversation, the promotional literature and the award entry, however, is any mention of Veloster sales. Did the huge effort drive business for Hyundai? The lesson from Project Re:generation must surely be the importance of ensuring that your passion-focused efforts sell stuff.

Be Brave, aim high!

The sport association that stuck out for me at Cannes was the South African Breweries Grand Prix winner, showcasing how Carling Black Label persuaded South African football to agree to let fans create and manage its professional teams via Facebook. Ridiculously brave in its scope, this partnership saw football fans deciding on the team roster and voting for live substitutions via their mobile phones during the game. More than 10.5 million votes were submitted. The message from Carling Black Label is: be brave, aim high!

Deep consumer insight

Majestic Wine, the UK wine retailer, wanted to position itself to a broad audience as an

accessible, unintimidating purveyor of wines. But how would it do this on a relatively low budget and in the most impactful and meaningful way?

MediaCom unearthed a deep consumer insight that conversations about wine tend to start with food. This consumer truth led to the development of the “Perfect Pairings” strategy, which provided Majestic Wine suggestions alongside recipes, food articles and programmes at a time when consumers are thinking about their favourite food or planning a meal.

This association has been successful for a client relatively new to above-the-line advertising, with consumer research showing uplifts in spontaneous brand awareness and well above-average responses on key brand metrics such as “good at recommending the right wine for you”.

There is some extraordinarily good work going on across the globe right now, which roots brands firmly in the arena of people’s loves and passions. It’s fair to say, though, that there is a major congregation around two big passion points and – with 87% of global spend in sport – this comes with a hefty price tag. So what of other passions and ways into them?

Let one passion Drive another Lauren Luke famously built a business and career by posting “how to” make-up videos on YouTube. Part of the genius behind Lauren’s posts was that she targeted her audience’s passions and interests in order to maximise viewing levels. If she knew that teens would be searching for the latest Britney Spears video, she would do a “Britney” look and tag her films so they turned up in searches for Britney.

Targeting people by their interests is nothing new, but data and the Internet will increasingly allow us to target big, expensive passion points through cheaper ones, a bit like Lauren did. Converse recently targeted teenage boys super cheaply by paying very little money for hugely voluminous search terms such as “how to kiss a girl”. The searches led to mini-Converse content initiatives, hence using one passion to drive to another.

Whatever a Brand does around a passion point, some simple truths remain

1. Make sure it sells stuff
2. Be brave, aim high and
3. Make sure there is real consumer insight at the heart of it.

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