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HOW FMCG BRANDS OR MARKETERS ENGGE THEIR TARGET AUDIENCE THROUGH BRANDED CONTENT

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Branded Content

Branded Content is a practice that is being defined in recent years as brands and marketers are trying to define a concept that can no longer be associated with the advertisement for many reasons. Branded Content can be defined from a holistic and all-encompassing perspective as "any manifestation associated with a particular brand in the eye of the beholder". From a managerial perspective, Branded Content is any output fully/partly funded or at least endorsed by the legal owner of the brand which promotes the owner's brand values, and makes audiences choose to engage with the brand based on a pull logic due to its entertainment, informative and/or education value" [1,2].

This study aims to explain how Branded Content is positioned in the broader scenario of Content Marketing and describe its peculiarities that distinguish it from advertisement. In particular, one of the most important features that characterise Branded Content will be analysed. This facet is called "Engagement". This exploratory study is developed through the support of many professionals and practitioners all over the UK. These experts are willing to share their expertise and knowledge acquired over the years to conceptualise a new practice that is rapidly growing within brands of a great number of sectors [1,2].

Within the Content Marketing world, there are different strategies available to promote brands or products. Content marketing is a pool containing both Advertising and Branded Content. Companies may want to choose one of these two possibilities or to use them concurrently. Advertisement has a specific "shout" effect that allows working on the brand or products awareness factor. Alternatively, Branded Content is particularly suited for engaging the end users in conversations guiding them through the purchase funnel until the conversion. Though the tools of advertising are similar, there is a substantial diversity in the mode of delivery. As discussed in the literature review, Advertising is an interruption-based technique while Branded Content is not.
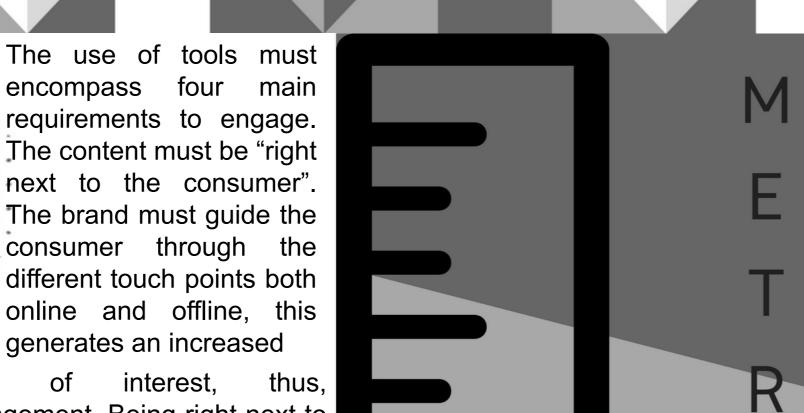
CONTENT MARKETING

Advertising | Branded Content

Awareness

Isolated Tactic

Engagement

Company Holistic Approach

Most of the practitioner converges on the fact that the Branded Content is a long-term strategy. Experts believe that the outcome of Branded Content is observable and incremental, campaign after campaign. In implementing it the company must adopt a holistic approach thinking about how to converse with its audience in a larger communication architecture. Engagement, in spite of being a single word, exhibits a dual nature. It can be either a short-term phenomenon or a long-term commitment. Considering Branded Content as a company holistic approach, the long-term goal is to create an architecture that retains the consumer.

Brand Meanings and Values

Branded Content with its distinctive features can create value for the brand in different ways. Branded Content impacts the brand image as it is embedded with the values of the brand which it is promoting. Branded Content is a two way of communication that allows the manifestation of Consumer Engagement. Engagement is a critical factor as only through a direct response the Brand can understand if is creating value for the customer or not. Moreover, through Engagement, Brands can generate value internally thanks to users comments that can eventually improve the product or even generating enthusiasm within the audience that will contribute with user generated content.

THE FOUR PILLARS

The use of tools must encompass four main requirements to engage. The content must be "right next to the consumer". The brand must guide the consumer through the different touch points both online and offline, this generates an increased level of interest, thus, engagement. Being right next to the consumer suggest to exploiting a multi-channel strategy.

Branded Content is engaging only when the content is relevant to the targeted audience requiring a deep understanding of the audience both as a content and product consumer. Another important cornerstone that tremendously increases the engagement level is the role of "anticipation". This value encompasses both anticipation in the forms of narration and the anticipation in the forms of mediums.

METRICS

A mutual concern within the practitioners is the quantification of the engagement dimension. The interviews reveal three main clusters of KPI associated with multiple levels of engagement. The first level evaluates the number of people involved with the content. This KPI evaluates the first grade of response from the consumer. At a deeper level, the "stickiness" evaluates the duration of the interaction. In fact, consumers may view the 20% of a certain piece of Branded Content or the 80% highlighting, in this case, a huge amount of engagement. The third grade is about the relative influence that the content generates, this data can be gathered through a qualitative analysis of the comments. Regarding measurement, a few conditions can affect the correct evaluation of the engagement as the practice of "whispering" or "buy followers"

Research Achievements and Future Work

The interest in the issues raised by this research derives both from the academia and the managerial world. The project generated a huge response from the industry experts willing to contribute with their knowledge in delineating a concept that is growing everywhere from the FMCG giants to the SME. The information gathered will contribute to defining the best practices when it comes to determining Branded Content strategies within a large communication architecture that aim to describe the set of values inherent to a certain brand. Once analysed the main features that grant engagement within a Branded Content strategy the following step is to expand the research to the businesses willing to understand their performances implementing measurement metrics which are clear and generalisable. Furthermore is important to define exactly the maximisation formula that enhances the combinations of advertisement and Branded Content.

References

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