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When Multiple Personalities Threaten The Common Thread

Posted June 13th, 2008 - 8:46 am by Chris Copeland

Last month, I wrote about the apparent lack of a common thread in most advertising. Suddenly media properties are selling bundled solutions through a single salesperson. And while this checks the box for economies of scale, it provides little incremental value unless media efforts are bound together by something more substantial from the communications plan.

But what happens when the ties that bind are sliced apart by consumers?

I think advertisers have two challenges. First, there is clearly a persona problem in advertising today that must be addressed. During a conversation I was having last month with a leader from a search engine, we were discussing how search will act very differently in the future based on the device being utilized. He contended, and I agreed, that the experience one wants when searching on the desktop is very different from his or her mobile needs — and again different from the experience one wants through TV. Therefore, the types of communication we provide should be different.

But what if the device used to search signals a shift in my interests, a shift based on the persona I'm in at a given time? For example, I am a father, husband, advertising executive, sports nut, pop culture junkie, borderline gambling addict and closet Bee Gees and Culture Club fan, amongst other things. I'll stop the list there before getting any more awkward.

On any given day, I will engage with the ESPN properties on every screen. From Sportscenter to ESPN.com to checking baseball scores on my cell phone, I am the perfect target guy for their advertising base. I am certain that I've been hit with advertising on all three screens from a single advertiser. What I am less certain of, is whether any advertiser has cracked the code on how to adjust to the modes — or personality — I am in at different times. It occurs to me that what I've likely seen are campaigns that are the same in consistency of offer and look, but are not consistent with my mindset or behavior when using those channels.

When you run retail search programs, you learn very quickly that Monday will always be a big day. Despite the increased broadband penetration in homes, the reality is people shop on Monday when they come back to work after being out in the stores and online over the weekend. Clearly, advertisers have an opportunity to adjust to this with promotion or advertisement. Yet rarely, if ever, outside of the holiday season, do you see companies shift their marketing to match consumer trends. Every trend about the consumer says a huge opportunity exists to encourage this behavior, and no one appears to be reading the signs.

We talk a lot about behavioral targeting and personalization, but what if, as the consumer, my persona is the red herring in the mix? I've told you through my behavior that I want products that can help me be a better golfer or channel my inner Gibb brother, yet those are two very different mes. I think the answer ultimately will be around better sequence understanding. When and where do I come into contact with your brand, and how many measurable touch points can you create with me?

Everyone frets over personal data — and for good reason. Yet, if trust can be established and there's value in the exchange, most people will find a way to exchange data for personal gain. If you can watch a segment of your audience and understand the steps that get them down the funnel, can you as an advertiser be better positioned to create threads that solve your business challenges by harnessing that behavior?

Advertisers buy Thursday night TV for movies to get that last bit of mind space. However, studies by Google indicate that search behavior six weeks out can be a shockingly accurate predictor of box-office success. And still no major studio is approaching the medium differently based on how consumers are determining if they will show up at the box office or not on a given Friday night — long before that Thursday night TV blitz.

And that's really the second and potentially damning problem when it comes to the thread. Consumers are giving off tells left and right, and yet advertisers have a set sequence for talking to people. You get your print and TV schedules, a bit of radio, and then support through digital and search. But clearly, consumer behavior in retail says "offer me incentive to shop with you come Monday," and searching tells us that movie consideration happens earlier now than ever before.

One of the most frequent questions asked of men in their roles as husband and father is, "Are you listening?" That's a fair question for the industry today.

This entry was posted on Friday, June 13th, 2008 at 8:46 am and is filed under [Chris Copeland, Search](#). You can follow any responses to this entry through the [RSS 2.0](#) feed. You can skip to the end and leave a response. Pinging is currently not allowed.

2 Responses to "When Multiple Personalities Threaten The Common Thread"

1. [Martin Edic](#) from Techrigy, Inc. says:
[June 13th, 2008 at 10:14 am](#)

Where can we find those Google behavior studies? Links in these posts please.

2. [Paula Lynn](#) from Who Else Unlimited; hollywood5459@verizon.net says:
[June 13th, 2008 at 10:47 am](#)

You are not different people at different times. If you get that wrong, then predictions will also be wrong. You are one persona with varied interests which overlap. And no, not only do your interests not sound off the wall from one end to another, but other folk are pretty much the same. Base line - premise rocky. By the way, years ago, I was poking Mondays to clients.

Plus, you are then dispelling another major narrowscaping behavior targeting. Will you be buying diapers when you are checking sport scores? Really now.

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