

Connected world

Sustaining brand relevance with the connected consumer



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Opinion Leader

Sustaining brand relevance with the connected consumer

Consumers have access to so much information that the amount of time spent on pre-purchase research is limited only by interest in the product category itself, or the amount of money they are planning to spend. Yet whilst time spent may be dictated to by level of interest, how they spend that time, the sources of information they turn to and the advice they take, is influenced greatly by the devices they own.

The digitally-empowered consumer behaves very differently to those who are still yet to plug in, and brands have to work hard to catch up. Sustaining brand relevance means an increased focus on the consumer, enhancing and enabling their experience, delivering a consistent experience and message across all media and purchase channels to ensure brand messages are reinforced rather than diluted.

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The digital revolution can be likened to a runaway train for some brands. It's very hard to board now it's on its way and, even if you have a seat already, it's a far from comfortable ride with the emergence of new devices – and the ways in which consumers interact with them – acting like yet more unpredictable junctions in the track ahead.

The biggest shift over the past few years has been the smartphone explosion. With approximately 30percent of the world now constantly connected – researching purchases, comparing prices, shopping via mobile and sharing comments with their network and beyond – the implications for brands continue to be huge.

That the Internet has had a dramatic impact on other channels is well known, however this still plays out very differently around the world. In a market like Sweden where more than 9 out of 10 people have access to the Internet, only 31percent of people regard TV ads as influential, whilst almost three-quarters (74 percent) will go online to find out information about a product seen

elsewhere. Compare this to Indonesia, where Internet penetration has only reached 16 percent and the majority of Internet access is via a mobile device. Here, TV plays a far larger role, with 96 percent of Indonesian Internet users regarding it as influential – even if they are surfing the Internet on their phone as they watch it. An opportunity exists for brand owners in both of these markets to deliver impactful, integrated campaigns, but it can only be exploited with a sound understanding of which devices consumers use, when, why and how. Constant connectivity has made consumers more vocal than ever before and this word-of-mouth influences decision-making everywhere. It has never been easier for the connected consumer to report on a bad experience, in real time, whilst feelings are still raw. And these comments, reviews and criticisms have an effect – with 52 percent of people saying that a single negative review will have an impact on how they feel towards a brand. Many brands have learnt that this shift in the balance of power towards the consumer requires an overhaul of marketing approaches, with the



30%

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9/10

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flexibility to respond to opportunities – and threats – in real-time a significant driving factor in maintaining a positive reputation.

We have seen the Internet and online shopping have a huge impact on the high street; mobile Internet has taken this disruption to a new level and is posing diverse challenges. Many brands are experimenting ~with different approaches to the retail environment, using their physical locations as showrooms, laid out for strong design appeal, rather than showcasing piles of products. Showing consumers the product in a highly compelling setting, but giving them access to the size, model, or colour that they want via a kiosk in-store is proving a good way to evolve the in-store experience to keep pace with technology for some brands.

The 28 percent of consumers who are using their mobile to research in-store also create a new dynamic and brands need to take action to ensure that they can hold their own in an environment where consumers can be more knowledgeable than sales staff. Empowering shop-floor teams with their own handheld devices that provide access to the latest

prices, stockroom situation and consumer reviews will be a valuable way to stay relevant.

Brands need to consider how to make mobile a key part of the in-store experience, ultimately creating another POS channel. Facilitating this through free wifi, QR codes linking to product information or expert reviews, product overlays, or mobile payment are all approaches that will ensure that the brand stays relevant. Mobile wallet is also slowly gaining traction and already more than a third of consumers globally are interested in using this service; this may be the change that takes us towards a world without check-out queues, or even check-outs at all, solving a major bugbear of the grocery shopper.

As tablet ownership starts to increase, further new behaviour and attitudes will emerge. We're already seeing them impact on where and how we shop, with highly compelling, engaging interfaces driving out-of-store purchases. As penetration grows, the opportunities to develop new ways for consumers to shop online will also grow exponentially.



Consumers

are increasingly paving their own path to purchase, with a growing, device-driven autonomy from traditional channels. The key for brands' success is to harness these new behaviours. Enable and enhance the consumer experience, delivering a consistent experience and message across all media and purchase channels to ensure brand messages are reinforced rather than diluted.

These new destinations seemed far-fetched just a few years ago. Yet with devices putting consumers in the driving seat, the choice for retailers and brands may be less of a question of whether they can keep up, but rather whether they can afford not to.

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