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A MONTH IN MEDIA



INNOVATION OF THE MONTH

MAY 2016

MoodBox is the world's first "emotionally intelligent" speaker, designed to empower users' movements and enhance their lives by providing the right music to match the right mood at any given time. Leveraging Emi, MoodBox's emotionally intelligent heart, to get to know its user on a one-on-one basis, MoodBox is able to distinguish a user's moods as well as their likes and their dislikes. The result? Emi can provide ambient lighting and music (streamed wirelessly from a user's music library, Internet radio, Spotify, Pandora and more) for nearly every mood, feeling or situation.

Beyond music and lighting, a MoodBox can provide personal assistance with tasks like customized wake up calls and daily weather reports before you head out the door. There is also a companion app that can provide an analysis of how a user's mood varies throughout a day, week or month.

This is a great example of deep learning, and how it can be leveraged to analyze a person and provide customized support and service. By understanding emotions and moods, devices can become increasingly empathetic as well as able to predict (and properly react to) a person's constantly changing emotional and mental state.



VIEW FROM THE TOP — EMERGING MACRO TRENDS THAT SHOULD BE ON YOUR RADAR

CONSUMERS & MARKETING

BRANDS ARE ASKING TEENS TO PROM

It is that time of year again for one of the most popular and anticipated events of a teenager's life—prom. Although the total spending per household on this hyped event has fallen to \$919 in 2015 from \$1,139 in 2013, according to Visa's annual nationwide survey, 'promposals' are becoming an increasingly important and expensive component of the marketing world.



Many brands have already opened the doors for prom-based marketing, attempting to leverage the teen community and the excitement that surrounds the highly anticipated event. For example, Men's Wearhouse declared March 11 "National Promposal Day," running a massive social media campaign around it, including a custom Snapchat filter across high schools in the U.S. and Canada. MTV, Seventeen Magazine and other brands also amplify the prom madness, pushing products across different platforms, providing inspiration and entering (or even creating) conversations around prom.

Whether it is launching a Snapchat filter, the most popular platform among Gen Z, or creating inspirational branded content, it is important to understand the best way for brands to customize content for their audience. Knowing the consumer, their key moments, and where or how they can best be reached is crucial, in addition to evolving content to complement the platform it is seen on.



BRANDING & CULTURE

COULD BRAND IMAGE BE AS SIMPLE AS AN AVATAR?

Across every online platform is an image that represents each user—these images or 'avatars,' are as unique as a person's fingerprint and are representative of both the platform they appear on and the person it belongs to. The avatar can be considered a mask of one's true self due to the biased depiction, portraying an often more desired persona than may be the reality. However, regardless of the deception proliferated, avatar 'norms' differ across channels.



For example, on Facebook an avatar or profile picture of you and your sorority sister partying may work. On LinkedIn, however, that avatar will not suffice. The same goes for your Instagram avatar, which may have you looking artsy in Brooklyn, whereas your email avatar would be at a higher point on the professional spectrum. The result? Every platform's avatar (e.g. Twitter, Spotify, WhatsApp, etc.) is altered to depict a certain self-image.

In a society where image and personality is everything, it is no wonder that the avatar has become an integral part of any platform. That is why branding your business with the same concepts of building an avatar will ensure success. Keeping in the mind the desired brand personality to portray across a specific platform and understanding the specific audiences that avatar or brand image will be seen by can take a brand's image to the next level.



HOW MOBILE NEWS READERS DIFFER

Utilizing data from 9,000 opt-in iPhone and Android users, Nielsen and the Knight Foundation explored user behavior to gain insights about how smartphone users access news content. When it comes to usage, they found that these mobile users spend more than two hours of their mobile time each month digesting news content. News apps had smaller audiences compared to mobile news sites. App users, however, spent significantly more time browsing news content. While the mobile news user is demographically diverse, younger users are more likely to reference social media or chat apps for their news.



DATA & ANALYTICS

As mobile media investments continue to increase across digital media, understanding where consumers are spending their smartphone browsing time becomes increasingly important. The differences between a mobile web user versus one who utilizes apps are vast and still being discovered. Obtaining a more complete understanding of these differences will improve the effectiveness of targeting and ultimately, media dollars. As marketers strive for a more natural advertising experience, understanding how users interact with different apps or websites allows for a better connection to ad types that may be more relevant to user behavior.



FACEBOOK MESSENGER TO RECEIVE INFLUX OF BOTS

Facebook Messenger's head of product, Stan Chudnovsky, revealed that over 10K developers are building bots for Messenger. The platform, which until recently has been completely ad-free, will soon be flooded with automated experiences designed to boost brand loyalty. While audiences have been receptive to the launch campaigns, concern is rising around distressing or overwhelming users with the large influx of bots. To combat this, Facebook is creating chatbot analytics tools which will help both developers and Facebook regulate and eliminate bots that offer poor experiences.



SOCIAL

Facebook Messenger is likely to experience growing pains as it matures into a more versatile and commercial communications platform. For Facebook, a major part of the appeal has been the ad-free, clutter-free environment, and while initial launch results indicate users are open to new experiences, brands must hold the bar exceptionally high to meet audience (and Facebook's) expectations. The influx of new bots gives brands the luxury of choice, and they should exercise that choice to find highly brand-relevant opportunities that provide clear value for the user.



THE INFLUENCE OF INFLUENCERS IS REAL

According to a recent study by Twitter and analytics firm Annalect, nearly 40% of the 800 surveyed respondents have purchased an item online after seeing it used by an influencer on Instagram, Twitter, Vine or YouTube. In addition, the survey found that a user's purchase intent increased five fold when exposed to both a brand and an influencer tweet. A recommendation from an influencer, for some, is as or more influential than a recommendation from a friend or neighbor. This increase in influencer impact has caused brands to take notice. Influencers have become the modern version of a celebrity endorsement, thanks to the mass reach of social media, as well as continuous consumption of content on mobile devices.



MEDIA PLANNING & BUYING

The one-to-one relationship influencers have with their fan bases is extremely valuable to marketers, especially brands that are focused on impacting the elusive Millennials. However, the struggle for brands is finding the right influencer within a crowded marketplace. Niche, an influencer focused company acquired by Twitter that creates content across Vine, Instagram and other platforms, reported that their influencer pool increased from 6,000 to 24,000 in the last year. While the ROI for many brands is undeniable, the key is finding an influencer that can organically weave in a brand's message, which can prove difficult with the number of influencers being so large. However, when brands do find that synergy, the results can be immense.



WHAT TODAY'S DIGITAL PLAYERS ARE SAYING

TWITTER TO STOP COUNTING PHOTOS & LINKS IN 140-CHARACTER LIMIT 

INSTAGRAM INTRODUCES THEIR NEW LOOK 

GOOGLE CHROME PLANS TO START BLOCKING FLASH 

FACEBOOK DISCLOSES HOW THEIR TRENDING TOPICS WORK 

YOUTUBE LOOKS FOR GROWTH WITH IN-APP MESSENGER

YouTube announced they are testing a messaging feature in their mobile app, designed to allow users to more easily share and discuss videos in smaller groups. This feature can offer a frictionless way to share and discuss content, as most YouTube videos currently get shared via links in SMS, emails and through other social platforms. It is being tested on iOS and Android with a small subset of users, however YouTube has not yet announced when it might be fully rolled out.



YouTube is still the leading video destination, but they are likely feeling the threat of Facebook and Snapchat's growing video offering. While launching a messenger feature may just seem like the trendy thing to do, this rollout solves a true problem in the platform's video sharing process. If users adopt the feature, it may help YouTube take a big step toward being more than a video destination but rather a place for conversation and connections. Brands should not yet expect to see ad opportunities in the rollout, however if successful, it is likely YouTube will introduce ad solutions down the line. >>

GOOGLE TAKES ANOTHER STEP INTO VR

Coming out of an exciting Google I/O conference, Google announced that they are diving deeper into virtual reality (VR) with an Android VR platform called Daydream. The more advanced successor of Google Cardboard is both hardware and software baked into the Android N—there's a headset that looks a lot like the Gear VR and Rift headsets, complete with a controller that looks similar to an Apple TV remote. Daydream will include apps like Netflix and gaming companies like Ubisoft, bringing VR yet again to the common space.



DIGITAL

After Google Cardboard made immense strides with over 50 million downloads, Daydream offers the next step for Google to bring the VR experience to the masses. For Google, it is less about the VR device and more about the platform and the reach that can come of it. This platform for high-quality mobile virtual reality offers excellent content opportunities for brands looking to reach Android users (Daydream will only work on new phones with specific components vs. Google Cardboard that worked with nearly any smartphone). It will be interesting to see how this rolls out and how its streaming platform partners use the platform for storytelling. >>

THE BIG SCREEN IS STILL A BIG DEAL

After a month of NewFronts and Upfronts debating the perfect tactic and screen to reach Millennials, a verdict by National CineMedia (NCM) has been made. NCM stated that their Millennial movie-going audience grew over 16% in 2015 and is already up 8% in 2016, illustrating the fact that the movie experience is growing and is still something valued. To strengthen their argument that the big screen is still a big deal, data by NCM shows that this elusive generation is even more likely to consider movies a passion, buy movie tickets in advance and arrive early to the theater.



CONTENT

While most discussions across media today are around digital and integrating mobile-first solutions, the value of film and the movie theater experience should not be overlooked. Millennials, the most favored generation by brands, are into watching on the big screen and supporting films. As a brand, being a part of the big screen experience, whether through loyalty programs, movie preview commercials or branded content, will put brands at the forefront of consumers' minds at a time and place that is still highly valued. >>

AMAZON WANTS IN ON VIDEO INFLUENCERS

Amazon has launched a new video service called Amazon Video Direct (AVD) intended to enable content developers to leverage Amazon's audience scale and unique distribution channels, to provide users with additional quality content. Built into the Amazon Prime video experience, Amazon is making a concerted effort in adding to and diversifying their library of content as an additional "hook" for current and potential subscribers. Anyone from influencers to major motion picture studios are welcomed to participate, but Amazon seems to be making a fairly concentrated attempt at specifically attracting influencers. Case-in-point is the AVD launch partner status of content networks like JASH, StyleHaul and Kin Community, as well as Amazon's new creator revenue sharing program, AVD Stars.



VIDEO

Amazon initially lacks the heavy-hitting influencer or celebrity "star power" to jump-start AVD but current Amazon advertisers may see natural implications for incorporating their long-form brand or product videos into these libraries and making connections to their Amazon product pages (in addition to leveraging possible increased scale for pre-roll on AVD). Beyond that, there may also be natural value-exchange opportunities for brands by providing non-subscribers access to AVD content beyond the Prime paywall, as well as exploration for brands that are active in the influencer space. Regardless, this is another key step in Amazon's path to providing a full-fledged content-to-commerce solution that will likely demand the increased attention (and investment) from product marketers. >>