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A MONTH IN MEDIA



INNOVATION OF THE MONTH

SEPTEMBER 2016

Smart beacons are currently limited to displaying personalized or relevant data only on smartphones; however, the Bluetooth Low Energy (BLE) beacon manufacturer Estimote, is changing that.

Estimote unveiled Mirror, their newest video-enabled beacon platform, that communicates with phones and corresponding apps to deliver customized content to individuals on nearby digital video screens. Mirror works with any standard video screen, plugging into the HDMI and USB ports. The HDMI reads BLE signals from nearby devices and special Estimote Stickers to receive content to display, while the USB is used as an endless supply of power. As a proximity-based, customized content portal, the Mirror's possibilities are endless. For example, when a traveler approaches an airport flight monitoring screen, specifically tailored flight details can be displayed to create a frictionless and personalized travel experience.

Whether it is the integration of a beacon-powered video display for a retail space or an experiential out-of-home campaign, going beyond the norm to connect with consumers in personalized ways, at the right time and place is important. It will not only generate seamless experiences, but it will also ensure long-term brand relationships are built based on consumer need and brand utility.



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

CONSUMERS & CULTURE

THE GOLDEN AGE OF AUDIO

Despite the popularity and growth of visual-centric content such as captioned video, audio, curated playlists, music streaming, podcasting and more audio-focused media are captivating consumers and proving the power of sound. Recent research by Edison illustrates that monthly podcast listening increased 24 percent since 2015 and that 65 percent of listeners are more likely to buy a product after hearing an ad in a podcast.



Whether it is the human connection felt through sound or new voice-enabled tech like Amazon Echo or Siri, brands are using audio more. For example, Tinder and Spotify partnered to introduce an option to add music to dating profiles. Meanwhile, Facebook has been testing autoplay video ads that load with the sound turned on, instead of the usual silence. Apple's AirPods that are set to launch are also contributing to the golden age of audio by introducing snackable audio with simplified audio interactions.

The heightened consumer magnetism toward audio is a particularly important trend for marketers to consider as it introduces a whole new realm to connect and reach consumers. Understanding the best practices and key tactics that will provide an engaging audio experience is essential for success.



TECHNOLOGY & LIFESTYLE

PUTTING SOCIAL IN SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM

Messaging apps and social networks attribute to the extensive time spent on mobile. The platforms provide a place to connect with friends, share content, talk to brands, seek information and even purchase products. The popularity and utility of these messaging and social platforms are leading the way for other types of platforms to mimic their practices, introducing more community-based/social activities.



For example, the new YouTube Community tab enables fans and vloggers to connect and chat. Users can post text, GIFs, live video and discuss videos, combining the power of a News Feed with the simplicity of chat. LinkedIn is also providing a place to socialize, launching a new "Interest Feed" that serves up trending news updates, posts from members, opinion pieces and even its first bot.

Enabling users to interact with one another on the platforms they are already familiar with and have already built a network on will drastically increase user time spent on the platform. Moreover, brands can leverage their platforms' followers and each platform's best practices to connect on a more personal level with their consumers, join the conversations and generate greater brand connection.



VERTICAL VIDEOS: A UBIQUITOUSLY SUCCESSFUL SOCIAL FORMAT

In another attempt to replicate the strengths of Snapchat, Facebook introduced the use of vertical video on the platform. Although, Facebook has dabbled with vertical video previously through Canvas Ad units, until recently in-feed videos still nestled in a square format. Early testers of the vertical video format found that CPM rates are three times more efficient than the square layout. Since the pricing model on Facebook is influenced by performance, these efficiencies indicate the highly praised Snapchat vertical content is more heavily consumed and engaged with than the traditional video form.



SOCIAL

With vertical video content aligning with the natural behavior of consumers holding their phone upright versus horizontally, it is no surprise that Snapchat has been successful. However, because the uses of vertical video was until recently limited to Snapchat, the production of vertical video is often low on the priority list. However, Facebook's new update now makes this format a multi-purpose, wide-reaching asset, with a higher potential to earn attention. If brands begin planning for vertical video early in the production schedule, they will be able to obtain the right assets without adding significant cost increases, to reach mobile audiences effectively.



GOOGLE'S IN-APP SEARCH FINDS HIDDEN APP INFORMATION

Google is introducing a new search mode in its app called "In Apps", which will allow consumers to search inside mobile applications for things like contacts, messages, music, videos, tasks, notes and more. The searching mechanism will enable consumers to find specific messages or references. Currently "In-Apps" search only works with Gmail, Spotify and YouTube but Google is working on adding apps like Evernote, LinkedIn and Facebook Messenger in the coming months. The "In-Apps" searches take place entirely on your phone as opposed to remote servers like normal Google searches which means private information is not sent to Google and consumers can search when they are offline.



CONTENT

More of the content we are looking for is saved in mobile applications so from a marketing perspective, it will be interesting to see if Google and third party apps leverage this data to deeply target consumers either directly on mobile devices or Google properties. Obviously privacy will be key, but "In-Apps" can unlock deeper search data which may be valuable to advertisers in specific cases. For consumers, the search function is a great addition as it will allow you to find anything on your phone with a simple search. No longer do consumers need to scroll through a month old text message to find information like a restaurant recommendation because the data is all just a search away.



POKÉMON GO KEEPS GOING WITH WEARABLES

At the Apple Event, Apple announced that they will be releasing the next Apple Watch with a special Pokémon Go integration. Last month, Pokémon Go achieved record-breaking popularity, earning the attention of retail marketers due to its success in driving foot traffic. Recently, however, the hype surrounding the augmented reality game has reduced, and their user count has decreased significantly. If the Apple Watch version of the game relies on the watch's fitness tracker, as opposed to GPS, it could radically change the nature of the game because the activity tracker would allow players to continue progressing in the game even if they are just taking steps on a Stairmaster, or running on a treadmill. In addition to the partnership with Apple, Niantic has launched their own wearable, the Pokémon Go Plus. The plastic device allows players to continue tracking their steps and even catch Pokémon through a button on their wrist, without ever having to pick up their phone.



INNOVATION

The relationship between Apple and Pokémon Go's parent company, Niantic, remains unclear. A few months ago, one would have expected Apple to fight hard to be associated with the viral game that everyone was talking about, but now it looks like Pokémon Go could use the additional boost of being associated with a brand like Apple. Now, more than ever, we are seeing the development of partnerships with mutual interest, where both companies stand to benefit substantially. For Apple, Pokémon Go could enable potential growth within the much-coveted, hard-to-reach gamer community. For Niantic, an Apple Watch integration could encourage players to give the game another shot through the unique benefits that a wearable device brings. The interaction between Pokémon Go and wearable devices shows how a technology, when applied correctly, can influence games and even impact social and culturally-learned behavior.



WHAT TODAY'S DIGITAL PLAYERS ARE SAYING

LINKEDIN LEARNING LAUNCHES—AN ONLINE PLATFORM FOR SKILL DEVELOPMENT 

SNAPCHAT RELEASES FIRST HARDWARE PRODUCT CALLED SPECTACLES 

SPOTIFY IN TALKS TO BUY RIVAL MUSIC STREAMING SERVICE SOUNDCLOUD 

TWITTER UPDATES 'MOMENTS' FEATURE ALLOWING USERS TO CREATE AND CURATE 

ABC NEWS EXPANDS LIVESTREAMING TESTS

ABC News continued their partnership with Facebook to live broadcast the popular presidential debates. ABC News first tested this with live coverage of the RNC and the DNC, which led to great results, reporting 28MM video views across its Facebook pages. In addition to covering the debate itself, they streamed pre-debate programming and sought out audience participation that was incorporated into the live coverage. ABC also added celebrity talent to the mix to host the show, including "Nightline" co-anchor Dan Harris, Digital Host Anna Nawaz and ABC News contributor LZ Granderson. Although highly-coveted, there were no advertising opportunities offered for the livestream event.



We have seen many publishers step into the livestreaming game in an effort to expand their offerings, in fact Bloomberg is partnering with Twitter to also offer live debate coverage this election season. Especially as cord-cutting continues to increase, experimentation from TV networks, such as introducing livestreaming, proves that they are seeking viable new ways to remain relevant amongst their audience. Moreover, this is a sign that brands should be open to updating their media channel mix to ensure they are testing new environments. Brands can learn from the experiments of publishers and partners to inform and affect their approach to new mediums and reach new audiences.



CONDE NAST USES IBM'S WATSON TO FIND INFLUENCERS FOR BRANDS

Influential, Conde Nast's influencer platform, is now tapping into Watson, IBM's super computer, to help build and strategize influencer campaigns for brands. The innovative technology will enable brands to use big data to better understand which social media celebrities provide the perfect match for a given campaign. Watson will be able to show brands influencer demographics and personality traits, which will enable marketers to best align influencers with their brand strategies. The overall goal for the partnership is for Influential to better understand the consumer experience in order to make the best recommendations for brands.



IBM Watson provides a credible, technologically advanced third party data solution to the typical influencer pairing technology. Additionally, IBM Watson's advanced computing technology enables it to use abductive reasoning to make suggestions based on already available facts. This means the more advertisers work to utilize the tech, the better the suggestions are for future campaigns. The use of an advanced programmatic solution for influencer campaigns proves that introducing propriety technology can improve advertising/targeting by generating great experiences for consumers.



WHAT DO MLB AND ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY HAVE IN COMMON?

Brands, networks and publishers are hustling to create content that is relevant for their target audiences. One unexpected example of this is Major League Baseball, who recently partnered with AwesomenessTV to launch a six episode romantic comedy series called 'Out of My League.' The show will feature YouTube influencers and will be shot in Dodger Stadium. Another company venturing into the new content space is Time Inc. They recently launched an over-the-top (OTT) service called People/Entertainment Weekly Network or "PEN" for short. Along with offering archival content, Time Inc. has planned over 300 hours of original programming for the network's first year.



Now, more than ever, brands are realizing that the only way to reach young consumers is through quality content that lives on relevant media. One way to ensure this is to form mutually beneficial partnerships. In this case, for MLB, AwesomenessTV offers the opportunity to engage a new generation of potential baseball fans. Marketers are beginning to focus their attention on Gen Z, a generation that is harder to reach than any of its predecessors, so brands are turning to emerging media publishers like AwesomenessTV to form influencer-focused content partnerships. Time Inc's PEN network demonstrates the need for brands to take risks and create content that is intended to live on emerging channels, like OTT.



SNAPCHAT AD REVENUE EXPECTED TO REACH ALMOST \$1 BILLION IN 2017

According to a recent eMarketer forecast, Snapchat ad revenue is projected to have explosive growth by next year, with a huge leap from an estimated \$366MM in 2016 to an estimated \$935MM by 2017. The projected growth can be attributed to Snapchat's impeccable ability to reach younger millennials, its now wide ad portfolio and its much improved ad targeting solutions. In addition to its ever-growing ad offerings dominating the U.S. market, Snapchat is expected to grow its international ad revenue. Currently the U.S. accounts for roughly 95 percent of Snapchat's ad revenue but the rapidly growing international market will start to bring in additional revenue and bring the company's success to even greater heights.



On one hand, the social giant has huge reach with the prized millennial demographic, but on the other hand, it has been difficult for advertisers to determine if Snapchat provides a better ROI than other social networks. To address that concern, Snapchat has partnered with different measurement firms and drastically improved its targeting capabilities to ensure advertisers reach their desired target. With Snapchat's hefty expected ad growth and Instagram's announcement of its advertiser base doubling in less than six months, it appears that reach does not matter as much as daily engagement, making the platform and platforms like it a consistently attractive option for advertisers.



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