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A MONTH IN MEDIA



INNOVATION OF THE MONTH

DECEMBER 2016

Imagine being a child who was moved to an unknown country where everyone spoke a new language. It can be scary, overwhelming and extremely isolating. However, what if you had a friend who you could speak your native language to, who helped you feel comfortable while adjusting and even taught you the local language?

Meet Ahlan, a friendly teddy bear that helps Syrian refugee children adjust to their new homes in Canada. The bear has the ability to speak over 60 unique pairs of sentences in English and Arabic, and even knows some Canadian phrases like "I love hockey!" Ahlan, which translates to 'welcome' or 'hello' in Arabic, was created in partnership with COSTI Immigrant Services, to bring a sense of belonging to every refugee child, providing a reference point for the children after their big move. Ahlan removes the unfamiliarity of the children's new home to create a familiar and friendly feeling of connection.

Rethinking ways to connect and bring the feeling of comfort to consumers is an unbeatable method to reach new and existing consumers. For marketers, it is important to learn from Ahlan, as this reimagined bear shows the impact that reaching children and families can make, particularly if it means acting on current social problems, as it is an opportunity to provide value for both consumers and society as a whole.



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

TECHNOLOGY & LIFESTYLE

VIRTUALLY EVERYWHERE

The rise in technology is enabling society to communicate with anyone, anywhere, at anytime. Events that once required in-person interactions and first-hand attendance are now being replaced with opportunities to view and interact from the comfort of one's couch. This phenomenon is known as virtual events—meetings or gatherings that take place on the web.



Virtual events are often powered by video chat, livestreaming and remote device software. Companies and social circles are increasingly hosting virtual parties, allowing participants to celebrate at their own locations while interacting via video chat with fellow participants. Recently, the team at Xerox had a virtual holiday party complete with donation-based gift exchanges. Additionally, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter are all pushing new integrated livestream features, leading to entertaining virtual events that consumers can tune in to watch and interact with like-minded individuals. Facebook Messenger introduced their newest feature, group video chat, just in time for the holidays, which will surely lead the way to more virtual gatherings.

By removing the need to physically bring people together, you eliminate the financial and physical barriers that keep people (and brands) apart. Whether it is a virtual experience, a group video chat, a live stream or a face-to-face encounter, finding ways to connect with consumers in the ways in which they are most comfortable and engaged will lead to experiences that are welcomed.



CONSUMERS & CULTURE

BEYOND LOYALTY DISCOUNTS

According to an Accenture study from June, loyalty programs are becoming more and more popular, with 42% of all retail customers stating that they are enrolled in loyalty programs. Although joining a new loyalty program may mean having to carry around yet another card, loyalty programs are becoming even more appealing to consumers because they offer more than just discounts and special deals.



Loyalty programs are moving beyond just discounts, by introducing more initiatives that encourage brand fidelity. For example, Domino's Pizza is offering company stock to a select few, choosing winners from those who share their brand love on social. Other companies like Bed Bath & Beyond are revamping their loyalty programs after many years to reflect new consumer behaviors, creating loyalty apps that push offers directly to app users' phones. Hertz has joined the loyalty fun too, giving loyalty club members the opportunity to skip the long line and go straight to their rental car.

With the cultural shift of consumers wanting more from brands than just a discount, brands must prove that they are providing value rather than a cheaper product. Brands and consumers alike can mutually benefit from loyalty programs through its two-way relationship—one where consumers gain benefits for providing personal information and brands gain loyal consumers. For brands, generating innovative ways to encourage brand loyalty, such as a new app or a rare experience, will ensure your brand stands above the competitors.



NO MORE LONG LINES WITH NEW 'AMAZON GO'

Ever wish you could make it in and out of a store with no lines and absolutely no human interaction? The days of standing in line waiting for a cashier to scan all your groceries may soon be over with the introduction of Amazon Go, a seamless shopping technology. Amazon Go's concept video illustrates the beta usage of the app-based service in Amazon's Seattle offices. Using "Just Walk Out" technology to track and charge purchases directly to a user's Amazon account without ever needing to physically checkout their purchases. Users can simply walk into the store, scan their phone, pick up any products that they want to buy, and just walk out.



ECOMMERCE

Amazon Go illustrates the desire of consumers for more seamless retail experiences and the market moving toward easier and frictionless payment. As brands grasp this, they will and should continue to adapt to transactions that are checkout-less and/or more mobile-friendly. Brands can consider partnering with checkout-less services, such as Instacart, Venmo or Selfycart, who have announced their intent to move into this space. Overall, going into 2017 and beyond, all eyes will be on Amazon to see how their size and scale will impact the commerce space and impact the way retail stores operate and consumers shop.



SAY HI TO "CORTANA," THE MICROSOFT ASSISTANT

Microsoft announced that they will be rolling out capabilities that would allow smart devices such as toasters, fridges and thermostats to access its virtual assistant, named "Cortana." Cortana was first available on Microsoft Windows phones and then was later added to its Xbox game system and Windows 10 PCs and tablets. However, with this recently announced update, any Windows 10 "Internet of Things" (IoT) device with a screen will be able to access Cortana. While we will still have to wait to see the assistant in specific devices, the new Cortana-enabled products are in the works with a planned launch for early next year.



DIGITAL

Virtual assistants powered by artificial intelligence will continue to fight for space in living rooms, kitchens and bedrooms. Presently, technologies such as the Google Assistant, Apple's Siri and Amazon's Alexa are the largest competitors to Cortana; however, these technologies are currently more advanced. This is because Cortana lacks the same presence as Siri and Google, which are built-in to mobile devices. Understanding the ways to innovate your product to include virtual assistants can provide consumers with more conversational, one-to-one interactions and increase overall brand engagement.



AD SPEND GROWTH TO SLOW DOWN IN 2017

While overall global ad spend is expected to increase in 2017, growth is expected to see a deceleration. Compared with the 5.7% growth expected for 2016, next year's projected growth level is only 3.6%. Ad spend in the U.S., specifically, will see a bigger hit to growth (1.7%) versus last year's growth of 6.9%. Additionally, GroupM expects 33% of global ad spending in 2017 to be devoted to digital media. Overall, the main reasons contributing to the decline are political and economic uncertainty, as well as the lack of big spending opportunities seen in 2016, such as the election season or Olympic Games.



MEDIA PLANNING & BUYING

While overall growth rates are projected stagnate, digital and mobile are expected to be the bright spots of marketing spend. 2017 should bring interesting developments, including IPOs from companies like Snap and the continued evolution of AR and VR companies. It will be interesting for marketers to track the growth and decline of ad spending as the political turmoil continues to unfold around the world. Tracking digital growth in particular will show where and what consumers are most interested in, giving marketers a chance to hedge their bets on the future.



WHAT TODAY'S DIGITAL PLAYERS ARE SAYING

DISNEY BECOMES THE FIRST STUDIO TO HIT \$7 BILLION AT THE GLOBAL BOX OFFICE >>

FACEBOOK MESSENGER LAUNCHED 6-SCREEN GROUP VIDEO CHAT WITH SELFIE MASKS >>

INSTAGRAM USERS CAN NOW ADD STICKERS TO THEIR STORIES >>

TWITTER WILL LIVE STREAM THE GOLDEN GLOBES' RED CARPET PRE-SHOW >>

NIelsen & FOURSQUARE TRACK IN-STORE VISITS

Nielsen has bolstered its digital measurement offering by partnering with location data company Foursquare to help marketers better understand when online ads drive people into physical stores. With the partnership, Nielsen now has the tools to measure the full purchase funnel from digital ad exposure to in-store visit to purchase, which are the exact behaviors marketers are constantly trying to measure correctly. The Foursquare data will not automatically be available to clients, as they will have to buy into a new version of Nielsen's product for access. However, once purchased, marketers will have access to the location data from Foursquare's panel of more than one million people.



DIGITAL

For marketers, the new partnership will allow them to track when a consumer sees an ad and visits a store but does not actually make a purchase. They can also use the data to understand which ad types (or creatives) are most effective at driving consumers to physical locations. Facebook, ComScore, Google and companies like Placed offer similar tools to marketers, but Nielsen has been the trusted measurement source for decades. Marketers and agencies should explore using various solutions to understand the effectiveness (and shortcomings) of each product as well as gain further insight into attribution against a wider user base and pool of data.



FACEBOOK LIVE TURNS THE SOUND UP

It has been a busy month for Facebook, announcing 360-degree Live Video, group video chat and most recently the launch of a rather old school product—Live Audio. With podcasts becoming more and more popular and audio-only streams becoming more preferable, the introduction of an audio-only product is expected. People can tune into a Live Audio stream and interact with it as they would a Live Video stream, posting comments and sending reactions—but unlike the video version, they can play the audio broadcast in the background of their devices, without losing the stream.



AUDIO

Although Facebook Live Audio is only being tested with a few Page owners including BBC, Harper Collins and certain authors, Facebook plans to open it up to more Pages. Facebook's move into the audio space sheds light on the consumer behavior where consumers listen to audio content while browsing other apps. For marketers, brainstorming ways to introduce entertaining audio to consumers is important, as the audio trend is most definitely one to stay. It is also important to stay tuned to Facebook's announcements as more audio options unfold—maybe music streaming?



SNAPCHAT EXPANDS WITH A SHAZAM INTEGRATION

Snapchat has announced four new features to the already successful disappearing photo app. The updates include group messaging for up to 16 users, a Shazam capability that allows you to discover songs, scissors and a new paintbrush. Each addition has been made to ensure Snapchat continues to stay popular, as competitors like Instagram add features such as live stories and live video or group video chatting via Facebook Messenger. With the additional features, Snapchat users theoretically never need to leave the app, especially with the Shazam integration bringing music discovery to the platform.



SOCIAL

The Shazam integration is an interesting move for both companies, as it enables Shazam to stay relevant with a young Millennial audience while bringing music, a universal passion point, to the app. However, it will likely drive daily usage of Shazam's app down as there is no reason to use both Snapchat and Shazam for the same thing. For marketers, the partnership creates another way to engage Snapchat's valuable audience base. For consumers, Snapchat users will be excited about the ability to group chat as well as further personalize their Snaps. Overall, the added tools will surely keep time spent within the app high which is great for marketers.



NEW HOLIDAY TRADITION: SWIPE RIGHT WITH TINDER

In what sounds like an SNL skit, Tinder is now available on Apple TV, making finding potential matches a spectator sport. Will he or she swipe left or right? While the move sounds strange on the surface it is actually not that far off, friends (and sometimes family members) are often joining in on vetting potential matches. The move comes just in time for the Holidays so it will not be long until it becomes a yearly tradition and other peculiar apps begin tapping their potential to the big screen, too.



DIGITAL

Tinder has supported their Apple TV move with an effective ad campaign that perfectly captures the scenario of big-screen, living room dating. Besides being an app that can help you find love, Tinder also provides a lot of entertainment, which it will continue to do through the Apple TV integration. Marketers who did not pay attention to dating apps as an ad option prior, may now find it a good time to reconsider as these uncommon apps begin appearing on the big screen.

