CASE STUDIES:
BRANDED CONTENT, NATIVE
ADVERTISING AND THE FUTURE
OF CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

www.koganpage.com @KPMktng
2018 is set to be an exciting year for the development and use of cutting edge marketing technologies, with artificial intelligence and native advertising adoption only predicted to rise. Native advertising combined with AI now offers brands the chance to gain a deeper semantic understanding and granularity from campaigns, and in fact, any platform not using AI capabilities for ad targeting in the coming months will start to look increasingly dated.

However, with display ad technology and digital experiences sitting deeper at the core of advertising innovation comes an even greater demand for impeccable and authentic customer experience. 2018 marks the age of ultimate choice: consumers no longer expect personalization – they demand it.

Transmedia storytelling offers the ability to tie each marketing channel and platform together using narrative, which when placed at the heart of live and interactive brand experiences, has the potential to win lasting attention and advocacy from your customers in 2018 and beyond. But where do you start in achieving this?

Learn more about the new generation of connected digital experiences and the advancements in native advertising, digital content and experiential marketing – and how organizations have used them effectively - with these exclusive case studies from our expert authors.

Kogan Page’s portfolio is the leading cluster of books covering marketing communications, customer experience and digital transformation. Our books address the latest industry trends and concerns to ensure your marketing remains one step ahead.

**Save 20% on any Kogan Page book in print or ebook format with discount code MWCASE20 at www.koganpage.com**

**CONTENTS:**

3  **Innovation in experiential marketing** by Shirra Smilansky
4  Case Study 1: The Ripcurl surfer GPS watch
4  Case Study 2: Tommy Hilfiger’s TMY.GRL messenger bot
4  **A new generation of customer experience** by Shirra Smilansky
4  Case Study 1: Apple continues to pioneer exceptional customer experience in-store
7  **Content mapping the user journey** by Daniel Rowles
8  Case Study 1: targetinternet.com
9  Case Study 2: Heineken share the sofa
10  **Brand content in native advertising** by Dale Lovell
10  Case study 1: Pepsi MAX and BuzzFeed
11  Case Study 2: Marriott weekends
12  Case Study 3: Amura and Taboola
Innovation

Innovation pushes brands beyond their core commercial remit to communicate their brand personalities laterally, and address additional consumer needs and desires. As Jeremy Basset, Head of Unilever Foundry, stated in the WARC Innovation Casebook 2016: ‘The need for brands to evolve and innovate has never been more critical. Innovation entails ideas that fuse innovative technology, product and creative solutions to create genuinely fresh executions.’

Case Study 1: The Rip Curl Surfer GPS Watch

The WARC Innovation Casebook 2016 covers a truly innovative case study: it discussed how the Rip Curl Surfer GPS Watch enabled users to track their waves, and brought the brand – which had been worried about meeting their consumers’ changing demands – closer to their hard-to-reach and discerning ‘Surfer’ Target Audience. The watch experience generated data that in turn created an engaged community and united surfers from around the globe, demonstrating how technology can bring together both people and brands, igniting positive sentiment and performing functional duties that add value, with relevance and authenticity.

Alex Altman, Managing Director, MEC Global Solutions stated in the casebook that, ‘The Rip Curl GPS is a fantastic example of a brand totally in touch with consumers and developing a product that both meets their needs and, at the same time, further strengthens brand love.’

It has become increasingly feasible for products to be ‘smart’, gather intelligent data, draw conclusions and take actions, thereby entirely reinventing the notion of what a ‘live brand experience’ can be. The data gathered results in consumer benefit, and often opens up plenty of commercial opportunities by enabling marketers to better identify and fulfil customer needs.

Speed up or die

It can be daunting to step outside the normal remit of day-to-day business and strive to break new ground, make what can feel like risky changes through innovation, and embrace technology’s evolution at this incredible snowballing pace. In fact, the true risk lies in being left behind in the blink of an eye.

At the time that Netflix was transitioning from DVDs by post, to live streaming, CEO Reed Hastings was featured in a report by The Drum Works ‘The Next Digital Transformation’. He said: Companies rarely die from moving too fast, and they frequently die from moving too slowly.

The report commented on how even the most successful brands often do not really seek out their customer needs and desires as they are scared that what they might find would hurt their core businesses. Harvard Business School Professor Clayton Christensen called this phenomenon the ‘innovator’s dilemma’. Christensen said, ‘Disruption is so problematic for the incumbents because their processes and business model that make them good at the existing business actually make them bad at competing for the disruption.’

AI is a game changer

The continued development of full AI is posing enormous questions about the future of the human race. There have long been disturbing prophecies about AI from a number of intellectual figureheads, including Stephen Hawking, who teamed up with Elon Musk and 1,000 AI experts in January 2015 to write an open letter highlighting the ‘potential pitfalls’ of
creating ‘superhuman’ artificial intelligence. However, like it or not, AI is a reality, and one that has huge ramifications for the marketing world.

**CASE STUDY 2: TOMMY HILFIGER’S TMY.GRL MESSENGER BOT**

Fashion brand Tommy Hilfiger ran several campaigns across Facebook and Instagram during New York Fashion Week. On Facebook, it released a shoppable video allowing people to purchase items seen on the runway and set up a chatbot, TMY.GRL, using Facebook Messenger:

- The Messenger bot asks users questions to establish the type of content they would like to see. The chatbot was launched to promote the brand’s collaboration with model Gigi Hadid.
- Created in partnership with AI platform msg.ai, it then displays tailored and interactive content based on their answers, showcasing behind-the-scenes imagery, shopping opportunities and fun facts about Gigi, their ambassador.
- The bot offers an ‘add to cart’ button within the app, thus completing the loop and driving social engagement and sales all at once.

Puneet Mehta, founder and CEO of msg.ai, commented:

> The consumer and brand relationship is on the cusp of the most significant change since the smartphone. Messaging is becoming the new browser and the gateway to consumer life, with artificial intelligence bots being the new user interface. With TMY.GRL, Tommy Hilfiger is providing consumers with the digital commerce experience of the future: immediate, individualized, entertaining and seamless across the entire customer journey.4

**References:**


---

**A NEW GENERATION OF CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE**

**SHIRRA SMILANSKY**

**CASE STUDY 1: APPLE CONTINUES TO PIONEER EXCEPTIONAL CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE IN-STORE**

One pioneering organization in terms of customer experience is Apple, which created a truly added-value, simplified and design-led experience for its customers. The simplified experience starts from the very beginning of their relationship with the brand, to every touchpoint along the way, from in-store, to online, to its customer service. It tackled several classic pain-points and ensured a positive added-value experience in the form of brand-immersive stores, free in-store workshops that bring to life all the available software, and staff who are themselves brand advocates. All of its efforts are designed to create lifelong advocacy inspired by its interaction with customers.

In this case, the consumers are not just shoppers who purchase the products, they are the people who sing the brand’s praises, converting endless computer users by preaching the benefits of an alternative. When customers go into one of Apple’s stores worldwide, they are made to feel as though they are in a music and gadget candy store, with the cinema-style screens and beautiful sets. Apple have built a playground for the modern adult and teenager alike. By educating and informing consumers through brand-relevant, engaging experiences, they create brand evangelists. The word of mouth, inspired through personal recommendations and lifestyle aspirations, is priceless.

Apple has managed to hit the nail on the head; not only because it has an experiential philosophy at its
core, but also because it uses it as part of its retail environment. With cutting-edge design, education, added service and sensory elements, its stores are the platforms for inspiring customer experiences, and the store staff act as the Brand Ambassadors.

Customer-experience journey planning

Companies like Apple are not the only brands to take experiential marketing to the next level and continuously place the experiential strategy at the core of their overall strategies. Increasingly, countless other global brands such as adidas, Red Bull, Singapore Airlines, Sony, Bombay Sapphire, Asahi, Diageo, and Smirnoff, position brand-relevant experiences at the core of their entire communications strategies.

Customer-experience journeys provide a deeper understanding of customers, their feelings, and how they engage with brands. Observing, documenting and analyzing the customer experience through the customer perspective enables brands to understand customer interactions throughout the customer experience and how best to strengthen their relationship with that individual customer. This applies not only to areas such as customer service, but also to the pre-purchase and recommendation stages, enabling companies to present relevant, contextual content and personalized experiences to customers, also supporting advocacy, referrals and word of mouth.

Customer-experience journey work requires a positive and collaborative culture of cross-functional collaboration. Sharing responsibility for customer journeys across functions can help companies to modernize their customer journey efforts and transform their organizations. This means adopting a higher-level journey strategy that will focus on understanding customers. An analytical mindset will help companies to identify and optimize opportunities to retain customers, drive incremental purchases and encourage positive word of mouth.

Data gets smart and drives real-time behavioural insights

A Forrester and IBM report, Customer Journey Study Marketing, talks of how pioneering businesses with forward-thinking perspectives on customer experience are using real-time insights to drive accountability across functions. Such companies see the fantastic potential impact of truly engaging customers, understanding them deeply, and demonstrating that experience mapping and journey work requires strategic cross-functional collaboration and accountability from different departments within the organization such as marketing, customer experience, customer service, sales, and business technology professionals. But the report highlighted how the marketing function should take the reins and lead the way for other departments to follow suit – almost 60 per cent of respondents, said that marketing leads journey mapping and analysis in their organizations.

CASE STUDY 2: EXPERIENCE AS A POINT OF DIFFERENCE

Sam is a marketing director at a leading petrol company that has recently opened a coffee shop in each of its larger outlets, but was struggling to differentiate without competing on price. Service was originally its key differentiator and is what allowed it to charge a higher premium for its services in the past. Its competitors had become wise to this, and improved their service, providing little room for differentiation and lack of justification for the higher price.

By adding a positive added value and brand-relevant experience, Sam hoped that he could appeal to the commuter who spends long hours on the road and wants to stop for a refreshing, high-quality cup of coffee on their way home.

The challenge

Sam knew he would have to position the brand as a quality choice for premium coffee and sandwiches, as well as petrol – three things that traditionally do not go hand in hand. He knew from the market research that their agency conducted that when consumers refuelled, they often sought a little caffeine to help them stay awake on the road.

Yet, the research also uncovered that consumers wouldn’t trust the quality of the coffee, and historically have been less likely to purchase coffee from a petrol station than other outlets. Therefore, customers tended to visit the petrol station with the cheapest petrol rather than the best coffee.

Approach

The agency creative team came up with the suggestion of creating a live brand experience that could be rolled out across most of the stations.

Sam had overlooked the importance of the fact that the coffee beans they used were purchased from
fair-trade sources. The experiential campaign would position the coffee brand as being one that cares for people and the environment, adding credibility by only using fair-trade organic coffee beans and freshly grinding the beans for each cup of coffee.

**Putting it into action**

As an authentically environmentally friendly brand that gives back to the community, the coffee bar was redesigned to show photos of the rainforest farmers who harvest the coffee beans, and gave consumers the chance to win trips to visit the rainforest coffee plants, by answering questions about fair-trade coffee and endangered regions.

The consumers were also provided with a free sample of coffee when they purchased their fuel, and were encouraged to sign up to a ‘care and share’ loyalty card that donated money to relevant charities every time they filled their tanks.

The broader Digital Outdoor Media campaign was also designed to reflect this initiative, focusing on the fact that the brand and its customers were working hard to counteract and offset the negative effect that the petroleum industry has on the environment and labour.

The petrol stations were also fitted with scent machines that emitted the smell of freshly ground coffee beans, further strengthening the front-of-mind affiliation between fair-trade quality coffee and the petrol outlet.

**Outcome**

Following this integrated campaign there was a dramatic uplift in the number of customers who bought coffee as well as fuel when visiting this chain of petrol stations. At this point, the premium rate they were paying became less significant, and the competitive pressure and commoditization on the brand eased.

The reason that this petrol-station company wanted to position itself as a caring, environmentally oriented brand was to try to counteract the perceptions that consumers have of the negative effects that petrol and oil cause to the environment, and also the affiliation with lower-quality food.

By using the live brand experience concept as part of a creative integrated campaign – designed to bring the consumers closer to the brand personality of its coffee shop – it also managed to reposition the brand as a whole. This brought it one step closer to succeeding in its corporate goal of increasing sales and differentiating itself from the competition.

**References:**


Let’s take a couple of examples and look at how we can map content against each of the stages of both user journey models. We’ll take two very different organizations: TargetInternet.com, a business to business organization that sells access to online digital marketing courses, and Tesco.com, a global online grocery retailer. Table 3.3 shows the four stages of the user journey (from both user journey models) and then shows examples of content at each stage for a particular audience.

The see/browse content is of broad general interest to our target audience. The think/active interest content is actively related to what the organizations sell. The do/point of purchase is their key product offering. You’ll notice the content at the see/browse stage can also be used at the care/loyalty stage.

### Table 3.3 User journey models and content mapping

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>TargetInternet.com</th>
<th>Tesco.com</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>See (Browse)</td>
<td>7 top Facebook tips for social success</td>
<td>25 things to do with your children on a rainy day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Think (Active Interest)</td>
<td>Complete guide to bridging the digital marketing skills gap</td>
<td>20 healthy ideas for children’s lunch boxes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do (Point of Purchase)</td>
<td>Online digital marketing courses</td>
<td>Online grocery shopping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care (Loyalty)</td>
<td>7 top Facebook tips for social success</td>
<td>25 things to do with your children on a rainy day</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Value proposition and mapping the user journey

Once we map out and understand our different target audiences, their different motivations and the user journeys they could potentially take, we start to have the basis of a digital plan. Once we align this to our business objectives and can measure for success and improvement we have the makings of a digital strategy.

Now we can start to understand how we can consider each step of the user journey. What we also need to start thinking about is how we can use the different digital channels appropriately in order to achieve our goals.

### Goals and conversions

At this stage, it is worth defining some terminology that will be important throughout: a goal is something we want our target audience to do, generally on our website. This could be buying something, but it could also be the filling in of a form, downloading something or just visiting a particular page; a conversion is the completion of a goal.

By tying these activities back to our social media and other digital channel activity, we can start to understand how they are contributing towards our online objectives.
CASE STUDY 1: TARGETINTERNET.COM
(disclosure – this is one of my businesses).

Industry: Online learning.
Location: Virtual with global customer base.

Marketing objectives
To drive highly qualified enquiries for an online digital marketing training solution, aimed at organizations with large teams to train. Lean business approach, so any approach must not require additional staff.

Their challenge
It was identified early on that the majority of TargetInternet.com’s potential customers had no idea what digital marketing e-learning was, or if they needed it. It was also clear that the potential customer base was so broad in terms of different industries that an industry-by-industry approach would have been highly time-consuming and resource intensive.

TargetInternet.com operates as a ‘lean business’, meaning that full-time staff are kept to a bare minimum.

Their solution
Give away free educational content on digital marketing and then filter the traffic that this generates into useful business leads.

TargetInternet.com position themselves as providers of practical, up-to-date and easy to understand digital marketing training. This is achieved by using a content-based strategy to engage and build trust with an audience who may not be aware that the service even exists.

The website acts as a content ‘hub’ where a wide range of free digital marketing educational content is held. A single section of the website focuses on the commercial service offered, with the majority of the website offering free content. The free content includes blogs, videos, in-depth reports and a regular podcast. On each free content page there is a call to action to drive the visitor through to the conversion page (see Figure 3.4).

Content delivers the key value proposition of credible and easy to understand content, and a series of different digital marketing channels are used to manage the sales funnel.

Social media drives awareness and sends traffic to the website via Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube and Pinterest. Social media activity also helps to drive search rankings by creating social signals that indicate the website’s credibility.

The library of free content helps to achieve search rankings and drives search-engine traffic. It also builds trust with the target audience by demonstrating expertise.

E-mail data collection throughout the website allows for ongoing communications and the building of a clearer understanding of the target audience, as well as the individual potential customer.

Cross-sell messages then direct any interested section of the audience to a conversion page that explains the service provided and encourages the completion of an enquiry form.

Their results
Monthly visitors: 20,000.
Conversion rate to leads: 0.1 per cent.
Monthly leads: 20.
Conversion rate of leads to sales: 60 per cent.

What’s good about it?
Each digital channel has a clear role in the sales funnel, and the complete focus on content-based marketing means that the value proposition and digital branding are very closely aligned.

Although the conversion rate of visitors to leads seems low, this is an expected consequence of driving a broad digital-marketing-interested audience. Content is then used to deliver the value proposition, and sales are driven organically from an engaged audience.

The very high conversion rate from lead to sale indicates the self-qualifying nature of the conversion
This process minimizes the need for an extensive sales team and keeps cost to a minimum.

Being able to track each stage of the sales cycle like this means that each step gives the opportunity for improvement through optimization of each channel and stage of the process.

**What they said**

TargetInternet.com is a lean business, meaning we focus on scalability and quality. Focusing on our digital branding means we can deliver maximum impact without needing to scale up costs, particularly around sales staff.

The focus on high-quality content means that our core team spends its time focusing on what they are good at: producing educational digital marketing content. This ties in directly with what we sell, and means that our value proposition and the digital branding we use to deliver it are completely aligned with who we are as an organization. (Susana Mascarenhas, Commercial Director)

**CASE STUDY 2: HEINEKEN SHARE THE SOFA**

**Industry:** Beverages brand.

**Agency:** Tribal DDB.

**Location:** Global.

**Marketing objectives**

- Maximize impact of Champions League sponsorship.
- Drive brand awareness and engagement.
- Improve sales.

**Their challenge**

The key insight at the heart of the campaign is that 76 per cent of people watching the Champions League (a European football tournament) were watching it alone at home, and most of them were multiscreening with tablets and smartphones while watching the games.

**Their solution**

The Share the Sofa campaign created hundreds of pieces of video content that were broadcast via Twitter live as the football matches were played. These video clips were made by football celebrities who shared their opinions and insights on the match in a lighthearted and highly visual way from their own sofa.

**Their results**

The campaign generated over 1.2 billion content views and gave Heineken a 79 per cent share of all conversations in relation to the Champions League sponsorship online. It also led to a 7 per cent increase in purchase intent in the target audience.

**What’s good about it?**

It’s a great campaign because it takes a clear audience insight on multiscreening and uses to this to create a core creative concept. The campaign was picked up by numerous media outlets and discussed globally, adding to its reach and impact.

**Further insights**

The campaign used some innovative techniques to achieve live video streaming because it was created before Periscope (a Twitter app to create live video streams) was created. Because of Periscope, and other social live video streaming, such as Facebook Live, these kinds of campaigns are much easier to create now from a technical point of view.

**View the case study video:**

http://www.targetinternet.com/heineken-share-the-sofa-case-study/
In May 2016, the IAB UK published the Content and Native Definitions Framework. The definitions framework split content and native advertising into main categories: brand-owned; publisher-hosted and/or made; and native distribution units. We’ll summarize these below.

CASE STUDY 1: PEPSI MAX AND BUZZFEED

In the summer of 2015 Pepsi MAX partnered with BuzzFeed Australia to increase awareness and grow audience in the Australian market. Together, Pepsi MAX and BuzzFeed AU created a series of articles. The content revolved around the ‘summer’ and the wider theme of fun. BuzzFeed created content designed to resonate with their Australian audience. Titles created included:

- 12 Things That Are Not Allowed This Summer
- 11 Epic Australian Places You Should Probably Visit Someday
- 13 Reasons Summer Is Your Best Friend
- 13 Hacks You Must Have In Your Life This Summer

The list-style content also included introductions such as ‘Australia doesn’t do nature by halves. Make sure you’re living life to the MAX...’

Distribution involved the targeting of niche Australian groups on Facebook, studying user behaviour to keyword match and serve Facebook social media ad units to those more likely to engage with the Pepsi MAX BuzzFeed content.

Results

- 245,302 total views;
- 169,715 paid views;
- 75,587 social views;
- 1.4 times social lift;
- a total of 293 days consuming Pepsi MAX content;
- 16% average time on page for content compared with Australian average over same time period!

Why it worked

The content was created to appeal to a particular audience, at a particular time of year – the Australian summer. The content achieved these aims conclusively, but it also managed to align the brand – through well-made content – with the feelings and positive sentiment around the coming summer and ‘fun’. The content created was not overly promotional – like the concept it wanted to promote, it too was ‘fun’. Funny images and amusing ‘life hacks’ encouraged social shares and ongoing content consumption. Combining all of this with targeted audience extension via Facebook social media posts ensured that Pepsi MAX was able to grow and reach its intended audience and achieve its overall campaign objectives.

Publisher voice versus brand voice

When you partner with a publisher for bespoke branded content native advertising, as an advertiser, it is all about accessing a publication’s unique tone of voice and tailoring a marketing message for your brand to fit into that voice. In-feed native distribution, in comparison, offers an outlet for brands to directly share their own unique voice with a wide audience. In-feed native advertising is the format brands are increasingly choosing to distribute their own brand-created content. It’s the conduit used to speak to your audience in your own voice – the voice of your brand – not through the voice of a publisher.

Brands spend millions on creating branded content annually – and while most brands will value publisher partnerships with leading publishers, there are many
more times when they are keen to share the great content and advertising messages they’ve spent millions of dollars creating in their own unique voice, too. This is what they do on Facebook and other social media channels; in-feed native advertising allows them to do this across leading publications outside of social media too. In effect, it’s about maximizing the opportunities brands have to promote themselves and engage with their target audiences in the feed.

NATIVE ADVERTISING IN-FEED DISTRIBUTION –
CASE STUDY 2: MARRIOTT WEEKENDS

Marriott Weekends undertook research into the holidaying habits of modern-day Britons and revealed the rise of the ‘micro-break’ – quick, easy and super-local getaways.

In August and September 2016, Marriott looked to promote and raise awareness and consideration in the UK for micro-breaks. They were also looking to enhance and drive awareness of their ‘Discover Your Weekend Self’ campaign – giving the customer a reason to visit their properties across the UK. The target audience were between the ages of 18 and 35: singles, couples and families with children, and users in the market for short breaks/holidays/vacations in the UK.

Marriott took a new and innovative approach by creating a quiz, challenging customers to discover their ‘weekend selves’. ADYOULIKE promoted the quiz using their Native Traffic distribution product to deliver the ad to in-market holiday/vacationers. Upon click-through the user was delivered to the quiz, and upon completion of the quiz, they can be defined as one of five ‘Weekend Selves’:

- Foodie Finder;
- Path Explorer;
- Destination Finder;
- Trend Tracker;
- Sensation Seeker.

Marriott also used ADYOULIKE’s highly engaging Native Traffic in-feed placements to deliver users to the Marriott Weekends page to discover locations that fit with their ‘Weekend Self’ type and to book a weekend break.

Marriott also used ADYOULIKE’s in-house content studio to create five bespoke articles based on the above ‘Weekend Selves’, highlighting key attractions and cities to visit local to their 54 UK hotels. This content was then seeded out using ADYOULIKE’s Native Story product, enabling them to deliver bespoke content at scale.

Results
ADYOULIKE’s in-feed placements delivered high engagement rates for the quiz and content pieces:

Native Story
- impressions: 2,813,011;
- dwell times: 4 m 50 s (11 m 53 s high).

Native Traffic
- impressions: 6,892,056;
- CTR (click-through rate): 1.16%.

Native Traffic (quiz)
- impressions: 3,214,464;
- CTR: 1.40%;
- total hotel bookings: 242.

Why it worked
The ‘Weekend Self’ concept resonates well with audiences. The creation of highly engaging content around this concept, including an interactive, fun quiz, was key in creating an ongoing narrative and affinity with the user. The additional use of highly engaging ad formats situated in-feed rather than in the periphery of the publisher environment delivered significant reach and excellent click-through rate (CTR). Delivery of the advertising messages to relevant audiences in the right content and contextually relevant environments was also key to success. The fact the campaign – which had a brand-building KPI (key performance indicator) – delivered 242 hotel bookings is also testament to the fact that native advertising delivers significant return on investment.

Content recommendation
Content recommendation widgets are incredibly successful forms of native advertising. If you are not familiar with the phrase, you almost certainly will be familiar with the product. Visit any leading news website, read to the bottom of the article, and more often than not you’ll see a box of three, or six, or sometimes more, ‘promoted stories’ or ‘related content’ style articles. The boxes will usually carry an image and an enticing headline. When you click on the ad, you’ll be taken through to a third-party website – often the site of another publisher – where you’ll be encouraged to read the article and click through to additional content on-site. Content recommendation offers huge scale for marketers. You can pay just a few cents per click for a website
visit, and have your content shared across thousands of websites. You only pay for the visit. It is usually not traded programmatically – but this is changing – and is typically operated via self-serve dashboards that you can load content and budgets into easily and effectively.

Some of the stats around content recommendation are very impressive. Outbrain claims that content recommendation visitors to a page view 100 per cent more pages per session than those coming from search engines and 165 per cent more pages per session than those coming to the content from social media. In terms of bounce rate, content recommendation is 23 per cent less likely to bounce than search traffic and 32 per cent less likely to bounce than social traffic.\(^3\)

The argument goes that as content recommendation is normally run at the foot of content articles, those reading and clicking through to more content are already in ‘content consumption’ mode. So they are likely to read and consume the content promoted to them more.

Savvy marketers and publishers use content recommendation units to promote content to a wide audience – and to drive website visitors to their websites. Over the last few years or so this native ad format has become a crucial part of most marketers’ toolkits. Why? Because it has huge scale, is affordable and is easy to set up and monitor. If used properly, it can complement your wider digital marketing activity and be a valued part of your arsenal in distributing good-quality content, at scale.

### Case Study 3: Amura and Taboola

Amura is one of India’s leading digital marketing businesses, with a focus on performance marketing. It has operations in Pune, Mumbai, Bangalore and Delhi. Many of its clients include some of India’s largest realtor businesses.

In June 2015, Amura organized the first-ever Indian Realty Flash Sale (IRFS 2015), a four-day online real estate event showcasing properties across 15 cities and 50 top Indian developers. This was India’s first online flash sale specifically for the real estate category.

The flash sale had on board almost 35 national-level developers showcasing properties across cities such as Mumbai, Delhi NCR, Bangalore, Pune and Chennai. Amura used content marketing to promote the event, using Taboola to power its content distribution with the aim of reaching Indian real estate buyers globally.

A key objective for this campaign was finding the right target buying audience, quickly, across the digital space and directing them to register interest – via e-mail and mobile phone data capture – on the Indian Realty Flash Sale (IRFS) website.\(^4\)

**Results**

- by the end of the campaign, over 500 new registrations for IRFS;
- an average 10% boost in qualified traffic to the IRFS microsite during the sale period;
- creative headline, description and image combination testing optimization increased average CTR by over 20% throughout the sale;
- large audience reach to spread brand awareness amongst prospective buyers.

**Why it worked**

This is a great example of how to use content marketing and content recommendation services to drive conversions, whatever your industry. The ability to target a global market of interested buyers, at scale, with tailored, relevant content – at the right time – was key to the success of this campaign. Continued optimization around best-performing creative led to a significant increase in click-through rate, which is key to the successful outcome of any native advertising campaign.

Over 500 new registrations is a real, quantifiable business outcome that demonstrates the powerful impact content, distributed at scale to the right audience, can achieve. Plus, while the performance and direct response aspect of the campaign are impressive, the additional reach of the campaign in boosting brand awareness and the promotion of the flash sale should not be overlooked either.

**References:**

3 Alex Bennett (3 April 2014) Brainpower: The online engagement battle is on – Discovery vs. search vs. social traffic [online] www.outbrain.com/blog/the-online-engagement-battle-is-on-discovery-vs-search-vs-social-traffic [accessed 28 March 2017]

Take Your Next Step to Marketing Success

Keep up to date with the latest marketing trends, innovation and best practice to ensure your marketing remains one step ahead.

@KPMktg

www.koganpage.com/marketing-pr