

Brand managers need to focus on cultural strategy

By  Laurent Marty

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Brand managers are still using very traditional models of marketing to connect with consumers meaning a focus on culture is needed.



Source: www.unsplash.com

In fact, it is looming so large in the world of marketing that the following question has become an elephant in marketing boardrooms: what is your cultural strategy?

Brands not connecting with consumers

Let us contextualise this question: we know digital experiences have enabled consumers to almost completely firewall brands out of their socio-cultural reality. From banner blindness to ad-blocking software, consumers can choose to ignore brands.

Content marketing for marketers was going to be the big answer, right? Wrong. On YouTube or Instagram when ranking channels by the number of subscribers you find that corporate brands barely appear, only three have cracked the YouTube Top 500. A video of a panda in a zoo racks up over a billion views while brands' content struggles to go over 10,000 views.

The hard truth is that very few people want brand content in their feeds. Most view it as clutter—as brand spam. Consumers have little interest in the content that brands churn out. When Facebook realised this, it began charging companies to get “sponsored” content into the feeds of people who were supposed to be their fans.



#BehindtheSelfie: Ryan Curling, marketing manager at TCL

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Cultural strategy

So, what can be done about it? It starts with developing a clear idea of the three components of a brand's cultural strategy:

1. What is your cultural stance as a brand and what gives you the right to it as a brand: the voice which can be to be accepted is not welcome within the hallowed ground of consumer culture? That question is probably easier for a sports brand than it is for a financial services brand, but even a bank is entitled to a relevant cultural voice
2. What are the brand's Trojan Horses that brands can piggyback on, to be allowed within cultural arenas? Brands need to identify subcultures and actors within these subcultures they can partner with, and which can give them a cultural authenticity. We have seen Nike successfully leveraging Colin Kaepernick in this regard.
3. What type of cultural content is likely to even start competing with a baby panda video? Here a great amount of brutal honesty is needed: too many marketers and advertising agencies act as naked emperors on this question. Too many content calendars are a box-ticking exercise.

This is in marketing an urgent question as there ever was: where is your cultural strategy?

ABOUT LAURENT MARTY

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