

Marketing fragmentation: A cross-device world

By  Ellen De Matos Silva

22 Jun 2018

Online users live a multi-device 'noisy' world due to a multitude of devices that travel across an assortment of digital media channels. The world has become far more instant, busy and complex. Many believe this has caused the average user's attention to fragment between devices. We may see a product on Instagram, go to YouTube to view the product review and then, if we like it, visit the flagship website in order to complete a purchase.



Photo by Tim Gouw on Unsplash.

The average American spends around 15 hours viewing online content and communication every day. This is according to the study, *How Much Media? 2013 Report on American Consumers* conducted by James Short at the University Of Southern California Marshall School Of Business.

Media and cross-device 'noise'

Even more frightening, by the time an American child has turned 7 years old, they will have spent an entire year in front of multiple screens. This includes televisions, tablets, smartphones, desktops and laptops.



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So, has all this media and cross-device 'noise' caused our attention span to be that of a goldfish (or less) or is this simply how we are adapting to a changing digital landscape? Julia Wilde of DNews, seems to think that this could be the reason. Consumers have learned to adapt to a bombardment of media spread across channels such as YouTube, Facebook, Netflix, computer games and text messaging. "Perhaps we are just more discerning about the way we consume media," she says.

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Bill Key, an attribution product manager for Google believes that the consumer experience is a 'set of moments' that a consumer goes through on their path to purchase, i.e. the sales funnel. He goes on to say that we cannot afford to simply focus on the last channel where the user completed a purchase; the journey is equally as important.

Paying strict attention to the medley of channels allows us to value each 'moment' that occurs along the sales journey. As a result of this specific journey, they have been guided and ultimately encouraged to buy your product or service.

Do consumers really have a short attention span?

According to a Google analysis of customer behaviour, 81% of video viewing sessions are able to capture a user's attention. If anything, we are paying more attention than ever before and have developed a knack of discerning whether a form of media content is wasting our time or not. This is known as 'Customer Relevance' and is why it is so important to target the right audience using online tools at our disposal.

In the past, we were yelled at for flicking through channels on the television too fast; today we can make split decisions about whether we want to carry on watching a video or reading a blog post. It is clear that technology has changed the way we focus our attention and perhaps not necessary our lack of attention span.

So although consumers have the ability to focus for an extended period of time, the bar has been raised for marketers and if we want their attention, we have to earn it.

People pay attention to all screens equally

Unfortunately, all screens have not been created equal. We may put the TV on to watch our favourite show, but is our attention squarely on the show or are we texting a friend, shopping online or researching a product or news story?

When people are in a 'lean-forward' viewing mode they are 1.5 times more likely to pay attention as opposed to a 'lean-back' viewing mode. The 'lean-forward' moments are what marketers are striving for since the viewers are less likely to be multi-tasking (texting, browsing the internet) and more likely to be 'watching with purpose'. This is undoubtedly the best opportunity to capture their attention.

People tune out online advertisements

As Key mentioned earlier, customers are won or lost in 'moments' and across multiple devices all at the same time. Marketers need to focus on staying relevant by creating campaigns that add to the consumers' viewing experience and understand the journey that they have been on.

That starts by understanding why consumers turn to particular platforms for content in the first place. A Google study found that users seek different online platforms because they have certain emotional needs that they need to satisfy. This could be inspiration (Pinterest) excitement (YouTube) or connection (Facebook).

We often forget about the unique emotional role that each platform plays in a consumer's life. Marketers should be aware of this and make small, simple edits to our content accordingly. Incorporating this into the crafting stage of content could be a sure-fire way to increase attention amongst viewers.

How do we measure responses?

Conversion tracking helps marketers see what happens after a customer interacts with an ad. This measurement tool is highly effective and starts with the creation of a conversion action in a Google AdWords account or on Google Analytics.

Conversions can be used to track:

Website actions: sales, sign-ups and any other action that a customer would have to complete on a website.

Phone calls: calls that occurred directly from a campaign ad, from a phone number on your website or clicks on a phone number on the mobile version of a website.

App installs and in-app actions: installations that occurred on an Android or iOS mobile app. Purchases or other activity that occurred within those apps.

Ask yourself, does this conversion build awareness, influence a decision or drive action? Conversions need to have one or all of these marketing objectives.

On a final note, the take home message is that marketers need to be aware of the 'lifespan' of a lead (potential purchase) and the cross-device journey it may have undertaken. Certain platforms may incite or attract certain emotional responses from consumers and it is vital to bring understanding to these preferences in order for consumers to complete the desired call-to-action.

ABOUT ELLEN DE MATOS SILVA

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