5 Ways Brands Can Surrender Control to Connect With Users

Society is more divided than ever, but there’s one thing we all agree on: We have trust issues.

Average Americans don’t even trust their own neighbor. Globally, two-thirds of consumers believe humans are less trustworthy than ever before.

If we don’t trust our neighbors, then we certainly don’t trust brands. A Havas-conducted survey found that only 22% of brands are trusted by consumers. Social media isn’t immune, either. Brands are boycotting Facebook, TikTok has privacy issues and Twitter is dealing with hacks.

Despite these realities, the pandemic is shifting culture to reveal an ownable white space for brands to nurture consumer trust. The time is now to deepen your bond with new and existing consumers.

Embrace a values-based economy

Today’s consumers are more defined by likes than location. Instead of segmenting broad demographics, take a values-based segmentation approach.

Many consumers think values and ethics are pivotal for building brand trust, yet brands still avoid communicating their values. Embracing values doesn’t mean embracing issue-charged activism; it’s authentically showcasing core values in both actions and advertising.

For example, when Covid-19 made customer service and government assistance challenging, Zappos created a value-

based campaign called “Customer Service for Anything.” Ads enforced Zappos’ value of helpfulness by saying: “Stuck in the middle of a project? We’re here to lend an ear and help you make your next step forward.”

> *Instead of focusing on a lack of polish, lean into your brand’s newfound vulnerability.*

Thriving in a values-based economy doesn’t mean being divisive. It

means working with like-minded individuals toward shared goals, which can rang

e fr om cl ea nl in es s to fi gh ti ng fo r eq ua li ty .

Find and commit to your community of trust

Society is an interlocking maze of communities of trust. In tumultuous times, we are dependent on them because they share our beliefs and reflect our identities.

Brands can find their own communities of trust without restricting themselves to just one. To authentically belong to multiple social circles, you have to commit.

Commitment through actions, finances or resources will transform communities of trust into brand advocates. But you can’t fake it. Social media engagement has increased by 61%, and users are more adept at detecting nonsense. Prove to your fan base that you deserve to be part of their inner circle; they’ll become a brand advocacy group that spreads your praise

like wildfire.

Take me to your leader

Authentically engage your fan base by committing to influencers that mirror your values. Influencers are the leaders of value-based communities, making them the perfect proxy to engage multiple users.

Influencers are seasoned early adopters with built-in trust. Influencer partnerships encourage communities to engage with your brand, simultaneously earning media and trust. In fact, 71% of consumers are more likely to make purchases based on social media referrals than traditional advertising, providing solid bedrock for the path to purchase.

Know your users' trust language

For establishing trust, experts agree that video is best. It taps into all the little tricks humans employ to express and decode trustworthiness. Audio, imagery and text follow closely behind.

Although mediums remain static, trust languages vary. For example, 61% of Americans believe that how a company treats its employees is important, but this metric is even more important for the 14 million Americans who recently lost their jobs. Younger consumers may prioritize an activist trust language, recently demonstrated by Ben & Jerry's viral social post on "dismantling white supremacy," which garnered roughly 21 times more likes than its average posts.

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How to Approach Legal Issues With CGI Influencers

Virtual influencers have IRL earning potential. Brud, the new studio behind virtual star Lil Miquela, was recently valued at $125 million. More than 80,000 people per month stream her songs, and she partnered with Samsung for its #TeamGalaxy campaign and Prada for its Fall 2018 collection. Software voicebank Hatsune Miku surpassed $120 million in revenue releasing music, merchandise, hologram concerts and open-source, sharable media.

It's not just for brands. Xinhua, the Chinese government's media outlet, introduced a virtual news anchor last year, saying it "can work 24 hours a day." The World Health Organization's Knox Frost, a virtual health and wellness influencer, garnered a big PR splash. WHO's choice was strategic; younger generations show slow adoption for Covid-19 distancing recommendations and virtual influencers' audiences skew younger.

There are three paths to working with digital influencers: budget for a sponsorship, signing the influencer and creating the influencer. The legal implications may inform and drive a brand's decisions about partnership approaches.

Advertising truthfulness and endorsements

Standards of advertising truthfulness always apply. The U.S. Federal Trade Commission's Endorsement Guides and last year's Disclosures 101 for Social Media Influencers apply to

promotional messaging featuring digital beings—to the extent they can. To start, consider what disclosures are needed under the existing FTC guidance, for example, regarding the "material connection" it has with a virtual influencer. The FTC does not require specific wording but has recommended language such as "paid ad" and hashtags #ad and #sponsored. Also, all influencers should avoid making claims advertisers cannot substantiate, and contracts with engaged influencers should hold them to it.

How can a brand ensure a virtual influencer's message honestly reflects their experience? The FTC states that the "most important" principle of an endorsement is that it must "represent the accurate experience and opinion of the endorser." Consider KFC's Colonel Harland Sander, reimagined as a virtual being who raves to followers about Dr Pepper's "ice-cold, refreshing" taste, Old Spice making him "look good and feel good," how "there's no better way to sleep" than on a Casper mattress and TurboTax securing him a federal tax refund. These claims seem ripe for regulatory attention. Control over messaging and disclosure is key.

Contractual issues

Consider issues around the ownership of the influencer—which is a creation—and the works featuring the influencer together with the brand or products. Copyright and other intellectual property issues have a new slant in the virtual world. If you sponsor or sign the influencer, rather than create it, the ownership or license issues for the influencer and promotional content should be addressed in the underlying contract.

> *Consider issues around the ownership of the influencer—which is a creation—and the works featuring the influencer together with the brand or products.*

If your brand wants total control over the messaging, IP

rights, etc., creating an influencer is the way to go. Fashion house Balmain created its own “virtual army” to model its clothing. Balmain created new intellectual property which now requires an enforcement strategy for protecting those IP rights. How they relate to artificial intelligence is evolving territory. But through creation, you have automatic exclusivity – something that would need to be carved out or negotiated if you sponsor or sign.

Another plus: Ownership negates the hazard of brand-damaging behavior. CGI influencers owned by others are controlled by humans who may act contrary to a brand’s ideals. The kiss between Bella Hadid and Miquela Sousa as part of a Calvin Klein commercial struck many viewers as unrealistic and offensive resulting in negative PR. Brands need to include morals clauses in contracts, covering the virtual identity and the creator (even if not publicly identified). These clauses help provide protection and recourse related to PR issues of reputation, tarnish, blurring, appropriation and authenticity.

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https://www.adweek.com/digital/how-to-approach-legal-issues-with-cgi-influencers/

Top five tips to use Twitter’s new Voice Tweets feature

30-second summary:

- Twitter has unveiled a new Voice Tweet feature, an exciting new way for brands to connect with fans and followers by leveraging the power of the human voice.
- Voice Tweets can add context and nuance that strictly visual language can’t capture.
- Voices.com’s CEO David Ciccarelli shares five tips for building a strategy that caters to audiences’ ears, not just their eyes, and creating successful Voice Tweets.

In a 2009 interview with the Los Angeles Times, Twitter co-founder Jack Dorsey recalled how the platform got its name. He said the definition for the word “Twitter” was perfect because it “was ‘a short burst of inconsequential information,’ and ‘chirps from birds.’ And that’s exactly what the product was.”

This may have been true then, but Twitter evolved from a website full of inconsequential information to one of the world’s largest news sources. Today, the social media platform broadcasts everyone’s messages, including individuals, Fortune 500 companies, and even global superpowers.

Just as the site itself has grown and changed, its content features have evolved as well. The Twitter team added support for GIFs and videos along the way, and tweets are now 280 characters when they were originally confined to 140. Most recently, Twitter announced its new Voice Tweet feature. Voice Tweets represent the social media giant’s first departure from the visual realm. It’s an exciting opportunity for brands to connect with their fans and followers in a whole new way.

The value of voice

Communication that’s strictly visual can leave out a lot of information. That missing context can often lead to separate interpretations by different readers or viewers, and occasionally those interpretations are decidedly at odds.

Voice, on the other hand, allows users to utilize all the nuances and complexities of inflection and tone, letting them convey additional meaning and subtext that eliminates ambiguity and enables deeper connections with the audience.

Twitter's new auditory feature ergo, Voice Tweets are an exciting opportunity for businesses to enhance their brand touchpoints with platform users by leveraging the power of the human voice. The key is putting in the effort and getting the rollout right the first time.

To build a strategy that caters to your customers' ears instead of their eyes, follow these five steps when creating Voice Tweets:

1. Appoint an audio ambassador

In addition to the CEO, select or hire one or two people to represent your brand as audio ambassadors. These people (and their voices) will be synonymous with your company, so they should be adept at connecting with audiences. Your ambassadors will be responsible for all audio operations and can assist in accessibility usage for those who are deaf and hard of hearing. In the U.S., 15% of adults 18 and over have some trouble hearing, according to the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders. Create threads under your original Voice Tweets with transcriptions to improve accessibility and utilize SEO keywords.

2. Be clear on key messaging

To create coherent messaging, you need to clarify both the broad themes and specific details. Being clear on messaging can determine what keywords people associate with your brand and what future searches they'll make. What words or phrases do you want to be associated with your company? What would you and company leadership consider off-brand? Make a list and distribute it to all parties involved to ensure that the right

messaging is top of mind. Then, plan to update your individual messages with audio cues that are specific to each campaign.

3. Define your style

Kantar TNS reports that almost 80% of Twitter users follow one or more brands. That’s a sizable audience that represents a major opportunity, but it also means you’ll need to find a way to stand out from the crowd. Your Voice Tweets should establish an auditory identity while staying consistent with your brand’s style and personality. Define your style by determining your tone (for example, conversational or professional) and preferred word choice.

4. Create high-quality recordings

It may come as a shock, but most voice-over recordings happen in home studios. That’s not just a recent symptom of the COVID-19 pandemic – it’s a trend that’s been happening for the past decade. You don’t need to rent out an expensive recording studio to start publishing your brand’s first Voice Tweets, but you also don’t want to record in a busy home with lots of noise and distractions. Find a quiet space to record – whether it’s a closet or a spare bedroom – in order to improve the audio quality.

5. Listen to audio clips before publication

Have you ever recorded a voicemail greeting and then played it back? If you’re like most people, you probably thought you nailed it on the first take only to listen in horror as you “umm” and “ahh” your way to the end. Voice Tweets should be no different, and your audio ambassador should always listen carefully to ensure that each tweet conveys a simple and coherent message that exemplifies your brand. Before anyone presses publish, verify that the recording is something you’d

be comfortable or even proud to hear over and over.

As a nod to the original character limit, Voice Tweets give your brand 140 seconds to get your message across. Before you wax poetics about whatever strikes your fancy, focus on crafting each tweet in a way that builds and supports your brand's overall auditory identity. Capitalizing on a new feature is a large undertaking, but these five steps should give you a good place to start.

David Ciccarelli is the founder and CEO of Voices.com, the largest marketplace for audio and voice-over products and services in the world with over one million business and voice actor registered users.

More about:

https://www.searchenginewatch.com/2020/08/25/top-five-tips-to-use-twitters-new-voice-tweets-feature/

Millennials—Not Gen Z—Present Biggest Ecommerce Opportunity for Holiday Season

The fourth quarter of 2020 will be different in many ways, yet it will still carry outsized importance for retailers. Shopping behavior has been heavily disrupted. Here's what pandemic lessons you can apply this holiday season, and why you should focus on millennials over Gen Z.

Millennials are more committed to online shopping than Gen Z

As it might be expected, Braze's research shows baby boomers are most eager to return to "real" stores—only 18% plan to increase their online shopping post-pandemic—followed by Gen X (35%) and Gen Z (33%).

Almost half of millennials (44%) say they plan to do more online shopping in the future, even after restrictions and health concerns are over. After having a taste of how easy grocery delivery can be on mobile, for example, why would they go back to fighting for a spot in the supermarket parking lot?

Gen Z, primarily still at home, may feel less driven by time constraints and safety worries. This group is also more likely to miss the social aspect of in-store shopping with friends.

Younger shoppers are bullish on the holidays

Consumer confidence varies with age, too, and there is a stark divide when it comes to thinking about holiday spending this year. One in 10 people over 40 years old (13%) intend to increase year-end holiday spending in 2020. A good 33% of those under 40 years old, however, expect to spend more this holiday season compared with last year. Smart strategists will use modern marketing automation to test differentiated holiday messages and continuously optimize into those that perform best for each audience segment. Avoid defaulting to steep discounts, as seasonal online shopping is more than just looking for the lowest price.

> *Newly acquired consumers are more likely to move on than those who signed up pre-pandemic.*

Unlike big-box stores and platforms, local retailers are likely to garner the lion's share of millennials' extra holiday spend. The pandemic has hit small retailers hard, and

shopping small is a concrete way to help neighborhood stores survive the Covid-19 crisis. More than half of millennials in the US (51%) said they would be making almost all or most holiday purchases at small local businesses. That means stakes are higher for the major players, who will need to retool customer engagement strategies to give customers relevant reasons to shop with them.

To keep loyalty, reinforce

Users acquired through mobile channels are more valuable than those who come in through other avenues during the pandemic. Remarkably, mobile-acquired customers are 10 times more likely to convert with a purchase, and 12 times more likely to make a second purchase. That said, don't assume that once you've got them, those mobile shoppers are yours to keep. Newly-acquired consumers are more likely to move on than those who signed up pre-pandemic.

The data shows that 87% of U.S. consumers are planning to continue to shop online as much or more, even after brick-and-mortar retailers fully reopen. To improve retention, make sure marketing communications are useful, timely and personalized to be relevant to each new shopper. Well-crafted lifecycle marketing programs that onboard new customers with care will reinforce new habits early and strengthen acquired shoppers' bonds with your brand.

Applying pandemic learning for holiday success

Consumers have demonstrated a willingness to try new things during these unusual times. The flip side, however, is that brand equity built up through pre-pandemic marketing may not pay off, as brand awareness does not equate to conversion during the pandemic. Only 13% of U.S. consumers cited "familiarity with the brand" as a top reason for making a purchase.

This holiday season each interaction with a customer presents

an opportunity to strengthen the bond with the brand more than ever. Start work now to create seamless cross-channel messaging that demonstrates a contextual understanding of each customer in the moment. A relevant holiday experience is more likely to give the customer a reason to stay loyal into the new year.

Don’t miss **Brandweek Masters Live, Sept. 14-17**, a fully reimagined virtual experience assembling the foremost brand marketers for 4 days of main stage insights, Masterclasses and more. **Secure your pass before rates increase on 9/2.**

https://www.adweek.com/brand-marketing/millennials-not-gen-z-present-biggest-ecommerce-opportunity-for-holiday-season/

Why Brands Should Welcome the Term Latinx

Latinx is a forward-thinking term, inclusive, appropriate and emblematic of the way younger generations expect brands to talk to them. So why is it receiving backlash of late? Why are some brands ignoring it?

It’s not widely adopted—yet

Several articles have been published as of late that cites research or references that Latinx isn’t a widely accepted way to refer to people. This misses the point a bit, as Latinx is less of a consumer-facing term than a term that specifically refers to a gender-neutral way to segment a group for marketing or research purposes.

It’s not political

The term Latinx is not a way to politicize or push the agenda of gender or LGBTQ+ rights. With the understanding that people and how we define ourselves in terms of gender have already changed, we can see that the concept of Latinx simply acknowledges that.

It is a conversation starter

Terms like Latinx are often great tools for starting conversations that although they may feel uncomfortable at first are definitely worth having. By referring to this term in marketing presentations, agency materials, my writing or speaking engagements, I have been able to discuss with many different types of people what the implications are of speaking a romance language that always defers to the male perspective when in plural. It has also allowed for frank conversations about the importance of belonging in today’s world. The term Latinx is a way to allow more people to feel like they are part of the conversation.

It’s not a millennial or Gen Z specific term

I’ve heard and also been asked quite a bit whether the term is only for millennials, Gen Zers or young people. The reality is that although the younger generations are certainly at the forefront in terms of demanding equality and are therefore the ones who are pushing for the use of gender-neutral terminology, this word is not just about them or their peers.

In the same way that it is non-gender specific, it’s also not age-specific. It refers to anyone of Latin American descent, in the singular form or plural.

It is a powerful way for a brand to demonstrate they stand with today’s most active generations

Consumers who demand diverse considerations and equality will absolutely pay attention to how brands communicate—with them, their peers and their loved ones. Again, this doesn’t mean that your brand should be using Latinx in consumer-facing materials, and we certainly don’t recommend that to our clients. We recommend that they look at their copy, casting decisions and other factors to ensure they’re actively showcasing powerful cues related to diversity and inclusion. This includes not using heteronormative or male-focused language exclusively in their communications

It isn’t free of controversy and confusion

These types of terms and the belief systems behind them seem to strike a nerve and drive strong opinions from multiple sides. In the case of Latinx, you have the purists, among them linguists, who simply don’t believe language has gender and who also typically feel that using a term like Latinx goes against the rules of language. There are those who feel that progressive agendas have gone too far in their beliefs that everything must be inclusive and who therefore think that the term Latinx is both unnecessary and annoying. On the other side, some believe strongly in the need for this type of more inclusive language and who feel that the belief system it imparts is more important than a need to comply with historical language norms. And of course, there are those who just don’t get how to pronounce it.

It is not likely to go away

Let’s be honest—the term itself might drop out of favor. Latinx may be replaced by Latines or something completely

different in the near future. But the need for inclusive language and also a real, profound change in the way society speaks to and about us will remain because the majority of us who devote our lives to creating content and buying into the system of products and brands want this more inclusive version of the world to gain steam. So even if the term Latinx makes you cringe, it's a good idea to think about how you or your brand can learn from all that's behind the term.

It's not the only way to refer to people in a nonbinary, gender-neutral way

Although Latinx has caught on the most in the United States, the reality is that in Latin America and elsewhere, people are using Latin@s or Latines as options for gender neutrality. So yes, there's more than one way to approach this.

Join Adweek for a live discussion with Hispanic and Latinx leaders in marketing and advertising who will dive deep into the community's biggest challenges and opportunities in today's environment. Each leader will share their honest perspectives about hidden bias, overcoming false perceptions, leading under unique circumstances and actions we can all take to accelerate systemic change. The Hispanic and Latinx Summit — A Virtual Event on Aug. 12, noon ET.

https://www.adweek.com/brand-marketing/why-brands-should-welcome-the-term-latinx/

There Needs to Be More

Accountability in Advertising to Shatter the Status Quo

Another day, another epic fail from a brand putting on the diversity mantle or shouting about social distancing.

Ads keep missing the goalposts on the climate emergency, diversity, ocean plastic—pick a theme. Behind every misstep is bad advice, lack of understanding or someone who didn't listen.

The majority of a company's value is inevitably tied to the brand. Missteps can cost billions in the short term, like #DieselGate for VW, and other times can prove near fatal, as was the case for American Apparel, which is now on life support.

Most agencies and marketing departments are ill-equipped at understanding and responding to the challenges of our time. And sorry to say, there is no quick branding fix to systemic racism, rampant carbon pollution or an excessive buy-and-throw-away culture. But it's undeniably time to live up to our shared responsibility, whatever side of the table you're sitting on. Climate change, population growth, resource scarcity, biodiversity loss and increasingly acidic oceans are only some of the issues that will challenge all brands' profitability and long-term growth.

The brand is on the firing line every day, but what about its advisers? Remember when it was customary to write the agency name in the upper-right-hand corner on print ads? (Oh yes, I began in adland two decades ago. Apologies to younger readers.)

For an industry that hypes itself as brand builders and positioning experts, isn’t it ironic that all agencies swim in the same generic soup?

That act has significance. Like an artist signing a work or signing for a house mortgage, it comes with a responsibility. It’s your neck; it’s your legacy. It shows you, as an adviser, took your work seriously. Just because most advertising work is so short-lived is no excuse. When the ad carries your name, it provides transparency and a production liability. And maybe having that name out there for public scrutiny could force agencies to take more responsibility and potentially accelerate much-needed change.

For an industry that hypes itself as brand builders and positioning experts, isn’t it ironic that all agencies swim in the same generic soup, shouting, “Look at our awards! Look at our work!”? We have a significant role to play in positively shaping businesses and brands going forward, but only if we strive for more than simply being an award-winning sausage factory. A client comes with a brief, and out comes a sausage as desired—or maybe the art director added a splash of this season’s hyped Pantone red color.

No wonder clients don’t want to pay as much anymore for our circus clown balloon-blowing abilities. They’re struggling with bigger problems than a 30-second award-winning ad. A rising tide raises all boats. Let’s strive higher as an industry, which will ultimately protect trillions in brand value. Ad agencies shouldn’t become consultancies; our key strength is still finding creative solutions to business and brand challenges. And clients still need an infusion of fresh perspective.

The first step toward creating change is to realize what capabilities we have and those we need. Just like our industry was struggling with digital transformation, sustainability still isn’t taken seriously, even though it’s challenging

brands daily. Education is needed for us to do it properly.

Being in the “goodvertising” space for more than a decade, I’ve witnessed ups and downs, and it seems like we just don’t learn. If we keep building brands that claim to be world saviors, maybe it’s not surprising when they’re criticized or silenced. What if instead of crafting brands like preachers, we made brands like coaches that help people live better lives? People are no longer buying marketing messages or a brand’s good-willed approach; they’re looking for a personal change. Anyone can sell them things like stories or identity, but very few brands can help people achieve their goals. It’s moving the relationship from transactional to transformational, helping people be more, do more, see more and experience more.

We need to work better together as agencies and clients to harness each other’s knowledge and keep the momentum behind the change. The advertising industry is moving faster than ever, and marketing directors these days seem to play a game of never-ending musical chairs. How does that square with lofty ideals like phasing out single-use plastics or fighting ingrained biases and stereotypes?

Here’s an idea. Think of every ad you make as a chance to hold your head up high and show your kids or the generations to come that you were part of the change.

https://www.adweek.com/agencies/there-needs-to-be-more-accountability-in-advertising-to-shatter-the-status-quo/

What Brands Should Know in the (Unlikely) Event of a TikTok Ban

|
57 mins ago
It’s been a few weeks since the news broke about the Trump administration considering a TikTok ban. With growing tensions between the U.S. and China, loyal TikTok users and brands are wondering when and if this could happen, and more importantly, what a world without TikTok would look like.

Late last year, when its data protection practices were called into question by Congress and the general public, TikTok revealed that it stores all U.S. user data in the United States, with a backup in Singapore, and is currently posturing to make additional changes to distance themselves further from China. In an attempt to thwart a possible ban, U.S. investors in ByteDance are in talks to buy a majority stake in TikTok. Some corporations have advised employees to delete the app from company devices for added security measures. While this ban is unlikely, many are still taking it seriously and are preparing for the worst. For advertisers, it’s crucial to be aware of how a ban would impact their customers and selling strategy, and to develop a plan of action that makes sense.

Until we know for sure that TikTok is going to be banned, why pull out now? TikTok’s advertising value lies in its ability to draw authentic engagement from Gen Z and millennials faster than any other channel available today. Are TikTok ads and sponsored posts really so impactful to warrant running new campaigns on the platform in the face of a ban? Absolutely. For instance, Chipotle’s #GuacDance challenge ran last summer

for six days and drove 430 million video starts and 250,000 TikTok submissions, which resulted in a 68% increase in avocado usage.

A ban would certainly cut short the potential for late-coming brands to realize the full value of TikTok, whereas early adopting brands have had a leg up on establishing an audience and driving leads before the ban.
If the viral potential of TikTok campaigns isn't enough to convince brands that are on the fence about utilizing the app, they can also look to veteran TikTok advertisers who understand the immediate value it can bring. They clearly haven't been deterred since the ban news broke. For instance, e.l.f. Cosmetics began a TikTok campaign with influencer Marlene Mendez on July 19. Hollister also announced a back-to-school campaign on July 16, partnering with TikTok stars Charli and Dixie D'Amelio and Noah Pugliano, that included a viral dance and hashtag.

A ban would certainly cut short the potential for late-coming brands to realize the full value of TikTok, whereas early adopting brands have had a leg up in establishing an audience and driving leads before the ban. But the viral, quick-hitting power of campaigns on TikTok outweigh the risks, even for brands just getting started.

Let's look ahead now. If TikTok is banned, where will advertisers go? Of course, it depends on the specific brand and the audience they're trying to reach. And options could be limited due to the Facebook boycott. Even if those brands do end up flocking back to Facebook, it will not be an adequate substitute to the hyperviral growth that TikTok has been able to provide, especially when it comes to reaching Gen Z and millennial users. Brands may shift spending to comparable video-sharing platforms where influencers and creatives migrate, including Snapchat, which experienced a stock bump when the TikTok ban was announced. Or we might see an increase in spending for ads or product placements across streaming

platforms such as Netflix, Hulu and YouTube if users turn to these venues for entertainment in the absence of TikTok.

While a TikTok ban is unlikely, brands must be aware of the potential implications and prepare for the worst so they avoid losing their footing in the minds of consumers and, perhaps more importantly, losing the attention and buying power of the younger demographic that has come to love TikTok. In the meantime, halting TikTok advertising is not the answer and rather, brands should do the opposite and move forward with quick-hitting campaigns that can drive awareness and engagement even during what might be the app's final weeks (don't let the rumors scare you). On the whole, brands must keep their eyes on a post-TikTok future while also remaining conscious of the value it offers them in the present.

https://www.adweek.com/programmatic/what-brands-should-know-in-the-unlikely-event-of-a-tiktok-ban/

It's Time to Come to Terms With Online Life Falling Short of Our Real-Life Expectations

|
3 hours ago
Since lockdown, we've been cut off from colleagues and customers alike. While goats have taken over some high streets

and dolphins are back in Venice's canals, brands are dealing with their separation anxiety by focusing on growing online communities.

But how far can this take us? Can we actually build a real community online?

Well, up to a point. It's a great way to acquire new customers and engage your current base. As long as you focus on both quantity and quality—your followership and your engagement—you should end up with a strong online community.

So, is that it?

Building a virtual community is only the first step. Haven't we all felt the limitations of screens in the past few months? Digital parties, trivia, virtual yoga classes—we liked them at first, but they feel sterile compared with messy real life. Conversations stutter; moods are less readable. And when things get tough, not being able to give someone a hug just feels wrong. Last month I "celebrated" my birthday on Zoom. Nothing is more tragic than watching one of your friends singing "Happy Birthday" on mute.

Nothing is more tragic than watching one of your friends singing Happy Birthday on mute.
Maybe that's what's behind the recent craze for baking and growing your own [insert home project here]. In our locked-down worlds, we're missing the feel, taste and smell of our lost physical world. We knead dough and plant herbs because we crave using our senses again.

To make a relationship real, you need to take it into the real world. Some brands are doing a brilliant job of showing us how. Take streetwear. Beginning with passionate online fan bases, the sector exploded when brands did activations in real life. For example, apparel brand Daily Paper doubled U.K. sales after a monthlong pop-up in London, while shoe brand Supremes' one-day store saw over 350 people stand in line to

shop its latest product drop.

When you think about it, it’s like online dating. Apps are fine for starting a conversation with your match, but what would be the point of stopping there? It would be like playing virtual simulator Second Life when you could—well, you get it.

Likewise, engaging in real life is the only way to really get to know your customers. There, your customers aren’t personas but live people, with all their quirks and contradictions. You can get a strong sense of who they are, what they’re feeling and why they’re there. Behind every click, there’s an emotion.

Isn’t “bounce rate” a sterile way of saying that a person is frustrated with what you have to say? In the digital world, voices are missing. Is it any surprise that the phrase “You’re on mute” has become the soundtrack of remote working?

In a conversation I had with Gloria Noto, founder of beauty brand NOTO Botanics, she mused that the lockdown reminded her of how great it feels to have a physical space that represents your company in your community. For her, a community space right now means possibly being one of the few human exchanges her customers have that week—or even month.

Of course, real life is less tidy than online. Because what are our metrics? What do we measure when we aren’t counting likes? Well, it could be the time someone spends in-store or a consumer sharing his or her physical experiences online. As always, your metrics will depend on your marketing goals.

But there’s no doubt about it. Relationships can only grow in the fresh air of the real world. We’re social creatures; that’s the way we’re wired. We don’t need Maslow’s hierarchy of needs to know that people love to be with people. It’s our basic human need.

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This Time Is Different. Facebook's Issue Is More Pervasive

|
59 mins ago
Over a thousand brands have pulled their ad spend from Facebook—including the likes of Unilever, Coke and The North Face—to protest the hate speech that has proliferated on the platform. Brands have protested social media platforms this way before. Nestle and others stopped spending on YouTube in 2019 after harmful comments were found on the site.

This time, it really is different. Facebook's issue is more pervasive. Brands are more serious. Outside social organizations such as the NAACP are steering the conversation. And the public is more aware of the problem. In this situation, brands have a tremendous amount of power, and, as the saying goes, "With great power comes great responsibility."

Brands can't go back unless Facebook changes

When prominent brands pulled spending from YouTube as problems

with content management emerged, YouTube was quick to respond with apologies and promises to improve, which they largely have. Brands were able to resume their spend without much public backlash, and the industry conclusion was that brands needed to become comfortable with user-generated content, which would never be 100% brand-safe.

This time, the problem is not with a few videos or comments hidden in a corner of the platform. Rather, it is a pervasive problem at the highest levels and Facebook isn't apologizing. Instead, founder Mark Zuckerberg has repeatedly suggested that the platform should remain hands-off, even as content veers from fringe politics to overtly inciting hatred and violence. This is more than a brand-safety issue. This is an issue that touches on free speech and public safety. Even lawyers hired by the company reportedly announced that the company was doing too little on civil rights.

But as the platform loses its shine, brands will start to re-evaluate how they measure Facebook's value and will find that their new media plan offers benefits of its own.
With spending still climbing back from a low point due to the Covid-19 crisis, some brands may determine that now is an opportune time to protest something they have long been concerned about without having to worry about having a magnifying glass pointed at the effect on their overall performance. That may be true, but it is not a reason to dismiss the power of their collective action.

In a recent IAB call, many participants noted that brands and agencies were aggressively working to shift their Facebook media budget to new channels, looking to fundamentally alter their ongoing media mix planning and execution. Another signal that this time is different: Advertisers are not planning a mere pause in spending until Facebook potentially makes a few concessions in a week or two. Advertisers are working hard to prepare for a new way to buy media that doesn't rely as heavily (or at all) on Facebook. This is a concerted effort

that likely would not have been launched if not for the political and ethical issues plaguing the platform.

Brands that have made public stands know that they will not be able to go back to Facebook until the platform makes major changes. The stakes are too high, and the story is too public. Brands that return prematurely will see negative brand effects that cut much deeper than what they have dealt with in the past.

The spark that started a fire

Now that global brands have started leaving Facebook, smaller businesses are joining them. For all of these brands, reduced spend or not, Facebook has been a foundational element in their media plan. But as the platform loses its shine, brands will start to reevaluate how they measure Facebook's value and will find that their new media plan offers benefits of its own.

Social platforms that allow the proliferation of hate speech bring to light the importance of context, something that many brands have long ignored on programmatic advertising. Despite decades of studies proving the value of contextual adjacency, brands have been too enticed by conversion rates and CPM prices to properly account for contextual relevance.

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What Going Dark on Facebook Really Means for Your Brand

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3 hours ago
It’s mid-2020. Do you know where your favorite brands are advertising? It is not on Facebook and Instagram.

Facebook and its affiliates had become a marketing investment must for companies both large and small. It provides targeted, efficient reach coupled with performance and has an endless pool of inventory with 1.68 billion users, depth of targeting data, and its proprietary algorithms drive traffic and conversions. Despite this, things have recently taken an unexpected turn.

As part of a monthlong boycott in support of curbing Facebook’s spread of misinformation and hate speech, multiple heavy-hitting brands have cut or suspended their advertising spend on the platform. We couldn’t support these brands more, and signs are pointing to this boycott lasting much longer than a single month. Facebook’s perceived disinterest and lack of desire to control the content being published in its advertising, posts and communities make advertisers feel uncomfortable during these times of social change.

July has inadvertently become a time to experiment. As marketers, we wonder what impact pulling out of Facebook will have on a brand’s business.

There’s an opportunity here to challenge the belief that marketing on Facebook is necessary for success.
Because of the existence of walled gardens between major ad tracking platforms, there is a risk of digital and social

measurement being inaccurate, as well as duplicated conversion counting between platforms, without diligent management of pixel and tracking strategy. This makes it necessary for marketers to invest in more advanced measurement tools, like multi-touch attribution and marketing mix models. There’s an opportunity here to challenge the belief that marketing on Facebook is necessary for success.

Going dark on social media could allow many brands to measure the true impact of their social campaigns on sales. We believe most of the larger marketers already understand the impact of cancelling or pausing their campaigns.

Brands that are fortunate enough to have a multifaceted analytics approach are able to triangulate the Facebook impact across digital last touch attribution, digital multi-touch attribution, attitudinal surveys and cross-channel marketing mix modeling. Smaller companies should take note. Multi-touch attribution (MTA) is a good first step, especially for marketers only investing in online advertising. MTA tools help identify where in the path to purchase Facebook assists in the conversion. Facebook even offers a free version of this methodology to help validate their impact on your business. MTAs can help you understand Facebook’s advertising in the path to purchase, but not necessarily the total impact to the business when it comes to offline media investment, promotions and market factors.

Our hypothesis posits that larger brands leaned into their marketing mix (MMM) tools to help make the decision to cut their Facebook spend and to determine the optimal ways to reinvest their budgets to make up for any lost sales. MMMs help quantify an individual media vehicle’s incremental impact on sales and how media vehicles interact with each other, while controlling for promotions, non-paid media, distribution and other internal and external business drivers. This approach allows brands to understand and quantify marginal ROI for any decrease in investment of one tactic and increase in

another.

As the headlines continue to roll in with more brands choosing to divest from Facebook, some of our clients considering similar steps have asked for our assistance in evaluating their media strategy and quantifying the possible impact. We have encouraged them to use the in-house tools they have in place to measure and analyze:

Audience reach

What is the incremental reach you get on Facebook, and who are you reaching? Are you already reaching that same audience through other efforts or can you find them through other channels?

Last touch measures and multi-touch measures

Having used these measures to tactically optimize Facebook, now evaluate how much of your campaign optimization could be impacted by duplicative conversion counts between platforms. How much of that do you anticipate would dry up if your brand was to divested from Facebook?

Digital control groups

Are you currently implementing, or have you previously executed, control groups to better quantify Facebook's incremental impact on your business?

Marketing mix

Based on your marketing mix analysis, what do you anticipate will be the incremental loss in sales to your business by divesting from Facebook, and what components of your media plan can scale to offset any incremental sales loss you will see from Facebook? Secondarily, what has your MMM told you about positive PR in the past? And do you anticipate that any PR related to divesting from Facebook will help offset some of those incremental sales as well?

Now is the time to triangulate your different measurement approaches to get at the truth. If all those fail, you can just go dark and see what happens.

https://www.adweek.com/brand-marketing/what-going-dark-on-facebook-really-means-for-your-brand/