Digital CMO Digest

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B2B Content Marketing

Hello

Content marketing today is a two-edged sword. While on the one hand marketers see content marketing as core to their strategy, there is also increasing evidence of a content overload that consumers are battling with.

In this issue of the CMO Digest, we look into how CMOs are tackling this problem. We also focus our attention on some of the key trends emerging in the content marketing space and how marketers are harnessing these trends to meet their business objectives.

Anshul Tripathi, Juniper Networks' India and South Asia Marketing Head and Director, tells us why we need a different content strategy for each of the social channel that we are present in, and why podcasts could be the next big thing in content marketing.

Sachin Kapur, Co-Founder & CMO, nearbuy (erstwhile Groupon India), gives us his insight on how to make content engaging and relevant to today's consumer.

We speak to Rahul Golecha, Co-Founder of Videogram, about emerging trends in video marketing and how their patented technology helps people engage better with digital videos.

We had the pleasure of chatting with Andy Budd of Clearleft on the relevance of design in content marketing, and trends that marketers can hope to see in the design space.

Rajesh Nanarpuzha, doctoral scholar from IIM-Ahmedabad, takes us through some of the key studies on how marketers can meaningfully connect with consumers on social media throughout the consumer journey.

We also bring you an interesting case study as told to us by Sanjay Gupta, CMO of Urban Ladder, of how they pushed the social media envelope as part of their content marketing strategy to engage with consumers.

And in Book Corner, Soumendu Ganguly, Vice President, Product and Marketing at Sulekha.com, tells us about three books he recently read that left an impression on him.

Content marketing is all about storytelling. And in our artistic space this time we have for you an artist who weaves complex stories into her art. Tutored in the fine arts in New York, Rithika Merchant's work explores myths across geographies; and what better source for stories than myths and folklore that have been handed down over generations? We offer five of her art pieces. We hope you find them as exulting as we did.

Happy reading!

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Editor

Content

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Avanish is an independent journalist who writes on business strategies. Previously, he was a reporter on start-ups at The Financial Express.

Priyanka Bhatacharya

Priyanka Bhattacharya is an old school journalist who began covering the Indian information technology industry when it was still nascent. Since then she has expanded her horizons, and besides IT, she now also covers digital marketing, CRM, health & beauty, and the lifestyle industry.

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Rithika Merchant

Rithika Merchant (b.1986) received her Bachelor's Degree in Fine Arts from Parsons the New School for Design, New York in 2008. She has exhibited extensively since her graduation. Recent exhibitions include a duo show "Reliquaries: The Remembered Self" at TARQ, Mumbai; "Language of the Birds: Occult and Art" at 80WSE Gallery, New York; and group shows at Summerhall, Edinburgh and Artry Gallery, Kochi. Her work has been included in multiple group shows at Stephen Romano Gallery and The Morbid Anatomy Museum, New York. Born in Mumbai, she now divides her time between Mumbai and Barcelona.

Mane of Aves
Gouache & Ink on Paper

As the world goes social, content follows: Results of The State of B2B Content Marketing 2016 Survey

Quality content is almost universally recognized as the core of marketing, and in 2016, this content is increasingly going social. The State of B2B Content Marketing 2016 survey by Regalix Inc., has found that while 20% of surveyed organizations still did not invest in content marketing, 76% of them plan to do so in the next 12 months.

Among the 80% who already have a content marketing strategy in place, 96% said that quality content is at the core of their marketing strategy. Of course, there is a lot of room for content strategies to evolve, as only 28% of those surveyed rated their organization's content strategy as being very effective. However, this is a big step up from last year's figure of just 18%.

The growing focus on quality content is also visible in the growing spends on content marketing. As against 39% of organizations that had budgeted 10% to 25% of their spending for content marketing last year, this year 57% set such budget targets for themselves.

Significantly, organizations are shifting focus away from traditional channels like email and website, toward social media and the blogosphere.

In 2015 more marketers chose email and website as their most effective channel for distributing content, while social media ran a distant third. In 2016, on the other hand, almost as many marketers (27%) consider social media as indispensable as those who continue to rely on email (28%), while website fell to third place (26%).

Interestingly, blogs (20%) and videos (16%) toppled emailers (13%) from its number one spot in 2015, to become the most indispensable content type in 2016.

What is disappointing, though, is marketers' continued neglect of mobile-centered content. Only 11% of marketers this year said they have an exclusive mobile content strategy, a significant drop from the 21% in 2015's survey.

Despite the move to social, marketers are not fully exploring the possibilities social media offer for building sustained, long-term engagements with their customers. Content marketing strategies continue to focus on lead generation (87%), creating awareness (76%) and nurturing prospects and influencing purchase (69%), while engaging customers to build loyalty and advocacy fell from 56% last year to 50% this year.

Organizations measure the outcomes of their content strategies along the same lines, prioritizing website traffic (64%) and conversion rates (63%), and neglecting other key metrics like level of engagement (43%) and time spent on website (31%).

Producing quality content (62%) remains the biggest challenge for marketers.

The emerging significance of social media in content marketing opens up new possibilities for engaging and building sustained relationships with customers. As one of the more intimate technology presences in our lives, mobile devices will hopefully facilitate this relationship between brands and customers to evolve in future. And quality content will give brands a welcome, much-needed presence in their customers' lives.

Every social media channel requires a different content strategy

The US-based Juniper Networks' India and South Asia Marketing Head and Director, *Anshul Tripathi,* who listens to a lot of podcasts in his free time, talks about the importance of content marketing*. Interviewed by Avanish Tiwary*

// How do you hit a balance while creating content so customers don't get overwhelmed by the amount of information provided to them?

Given the information overload on the web, users don't really read everything. Typically, users scan the web, find something relevant to what they are looking for in their organisation, and get into more details. The objective for us is to get the attention of these 'scanners' and turn them into 'readers.'

The question is how the content should be. The first step for me as a marketing person is to talk to my sales people and understand from them what the customer is asking for, because that's what they are going to search on the internet. When you understand the customer's current concern, you put that kind of content to get him to notice you.

The content has to be simple and it should be easy for consumers to access information that is useful to them. It has to be short, snappy and effective.

// Do you see any trends in digital marketing specific to India?

We are all global citizens, so irrespective of the country, trends remain pretty much similar. If you look at the statistics of social media, Facebook has the highest number of users from India and LinkedIn has the second highest number of users from India. Podcasts and videos, and the latter in particular, are very effective ways of giving out the right message in a very short span of time. We still have the white papers and data sheets for technology people who want to get into details, but that comes later.

We believe podcasts are a very important aspect of content marketing and are investing in it.

I am sure other companies are also doing so.

// What is the goal of your content marketing efforts? Is content marketing more effective at the pre-sale stage?

Essentially I am trying to sell a product or service to the market and for it to be effective, it has to be a combination of pre- and post-sale measures. At the end of the day you are trying to create trust. What we say is what we deliver and that plays a very important part. The maximum amount of content that is there is from the pre-sale perspective. But in the end, all business solutions or products have to be backed up by the post-sale part as well. Typically, the size or the percentage of the content is much higher on the pre-sale side. This is not just with Juniper but with most other companies. However, content is as effective on the post-sale side. As we are a technology company we create a lot of podcasts and videos as post-sale content to tell our users how to install or configure a particular software..

// Do you have a separate mobile strategy for content marketing?

Everything is driven through your smart phones these days. But am I doing something specific on the content side from the India perspective? Maybe not. But globally, in Juniper there is a specific strategy for driving content out of smartphones.

// What is the role of social media in all of this?

For us, social media is more of a platform for snippets. Our content would not be too detailed as far as social media is concerned. Social media is crucial to us for content promotion as it allows us to bridge boundaries across geographies and across time zones.

Today users are on almost all social media channels, be it Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, or any other. And we have a different content strategy for each of those platforms. So what would effectively work on Twitter might not work that well on Facebook.

I think a different strategy for each social media channel works because users accessing these channels differ from one another.

We even have a separate strategy for Instagram, which is more corporate and internally-led.

Syzygy
Gouache & Ink on Paper

# "I truly believe that product design is the new marketing"

: A conversation with Andy Budd of Clearleft.

Andy Budd is one of the founding partners at user experience design consultancy, Clearleft.
Interviewed By Arunh Krishnan

As a leading authority on interaction design, Andy spends a lot of his time promoting the design industry at international conferences like The Web 2.0 Expo, An Event Apart and SXSW. He is an organiser of the Brighton Digital Festival as well as the originator of Clearleft's popular design conferences, dConstruct and UX London. He sits on the advisory board for .Net Magazine.

In 2010, Andy was named as one of Wired UK's top 100 digital power brokers. He is also the author of the popular book, *CSS Mastery.*

Here we chat with Andy on the challenges faced by the design industry and where it is headed.
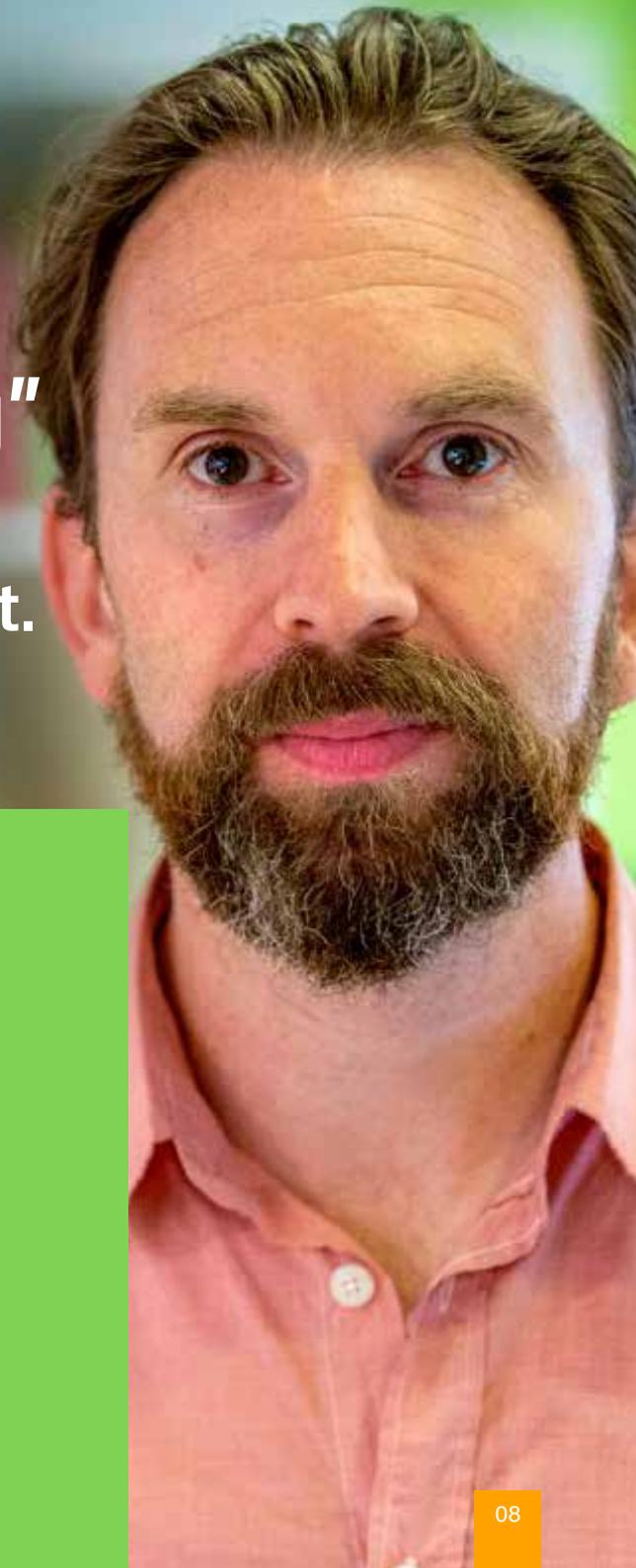
// While most Chief Marketing Officers (CMOs) we spoke with agreed that 'content' is a critical element of their core marketing strategy, 'design' was never brought up in the conversation by any of them. Why is this so?

At marketing school you are taught the 4 P's: Product, Promotion, Price and Place. Sadly most marketing teams have ended up fixating on the promotion element, at the expense of the product. This is one reason why you regularly see campaigns describe an experience of a product that rarely lives up to reality. So when I talk about the role of design in marketing, I'm mostly talking about the design of the product or service that's being marketed, rather than the campaign "creative". For me, the product is the most important thing, and if you don't have that right, no amount of snappy content, clever ad placement or "creative" will help.

Fortunately, the tide is turning and CEOs are waking up to the power of design, in part thanks to the numerous articles on design thinking coming out of publications like the Harvard Business Review.

// At a time when we are faced with an overload of content, can design help in providing the edge in gaining consumer attention?

In the old days of advertising, the creative partnership was king. This was the blending of words and images, through copywriting and graphic design. These days I think there is a new creative partnership in the form of content strategy and UX design, ensuring that the words are backed up by simplicity and appropriateness of use, rather than memorable imagery. Essentially we're moving away from style and toward true substance.

As technology becomes more and more of a commodity, one of the few ways a product or service can really differentiate itself from competition, apart from spending more money on advertising, is to compete on design.

As a result, I truly believe that product design is the new marketing.

// Why doesn't design get the attention it deserves amongst marketers?

The thing is, it is easy to measure the effects of content marketing, programmatic ad spend, etc.; it's much more difficult to measure the value of a well-designed product. That's because design acts as a multiplier of ad spend. If you have a crappy product you have to spend so much more getting it in front of users and convincing them it's not as crappy as it appears! If you have a great product, you can spend much less on marketing for a similar effect. Sadly, it's much easier to write a new piece of content marketing, or spend more on pay-per-click, than it is to improve the quality of the thing that you're selling. This creates a difficult but understandable imbalance in design investment.

// How critical is it to have a separate design brief for mobile?

The majority of brands we work with these days see over half of their web traffic coming from smartphones and tablets, and it's only getting bigger. As a result, we've seen the rise of "mobile first" thinking, where the mobile experience has been prioritised over the traditional desktop experience. However, that doesn't require a separate brief. It simply requires input from a modern design team that understands the fundamentals of responsive design – an approach that allows you to design once, but publish on a multitude of devices. Thanks to responsive design, the days of separate mobile briefs and separate mobile websites are well and truly over.

// How can a company measure the ROI on its design investment?

It isn't as hard as it may seem. Understand what outcome you want the design work to have—it could be encouraging more content consumption, delivering more click-throughs, increasing checkout completion, or raising revenue— then undertake the work and see whether it's moved the dial. Our friends at Google design use their HEART framework to help focus attention, where HEART stands for happiness, engagement, adoption, retention, and task success.

// Your take on Lean UX… is it just a buzz phrase or is there more to it?

The old way of doing UX involved a lot of document creation and 'big design up front'. This saw designers wasting huge amounts of time and money creating endless wireframe iterations. The modern way of doing UX ditches the formality in favour of the least documentation possible, a conversation over a specification, a sketch over a wireframe, and a poster over a PowerPoint deck. While Lean UX is heavily aligned with the Lean Startup movement, I prefer to see it more as an evolution of UX thinking in line with the Toyota philosophy of lean engineering and reduction of waste.

// How is the increasing dominance of social media influencing the design language?

I'm not sure it is. However what is affecting "design language" is the rapid growth in design literacy and design expectations set by a glut of well-designed products coming out of Silicon Valley and other places.

// 3 Dos & Don'ts of design that every CMO should be aware of.

a) Don't mistake design for "look and feel"; it goes much deeper than that. Good design is how a product or service works, how elegantly it solves the problem it was intended to solve, and the experience it provides customers as a result.

b) Don't tell designers what you like or dislike, tell them what you want the design to accomplish.

c) If in doubt, test your designs with real users. That doesn't mean you ask their opinion. It means you put your product or service in the hands of users, note the problems they encounter and fix those problems. This moves design even further away from personal opinion and into the realm of objective problem solving.

// What are the key trends you see evolving in the design space in the coming years?

I'll leave you with 3 big trends.

The first one is the rise of the design leader, the 'designful' company and the DEO (Design Executive Officer). To exploit the competitive advantage inherent in design, companies need to become design-infused, and this requires design leadership at the highest levels.

The second trend is related to this, and revolves around companies bringing more and more digital skills in-house. Great digital design agencies have two roles to play here. The first is the traditional role of providing short term capacity. However, the more important role is that of helping to grow capability within the client team. This involves working alongside the client's internal team, mentoring, training and sharing skills along the way.

The last big trend is the rise in Artificial Intelligence and VUI (Voice User Interface) stripping away our reliance on graphical user interfaces in favour of text and voice interfaces. We're already starting to see this with agentive technology like Siri, Amy and Alexa, along with products like Amazon Echo. Expect to see voice control find its way into more and more devices, from your Bluetooth headsets and TV remotes, to your bank app and self-driving car.

As a result, the future will be filled with fewer glowing blue rectangles and a lot more people seemingly talking to themselves on the street. Oh joy!
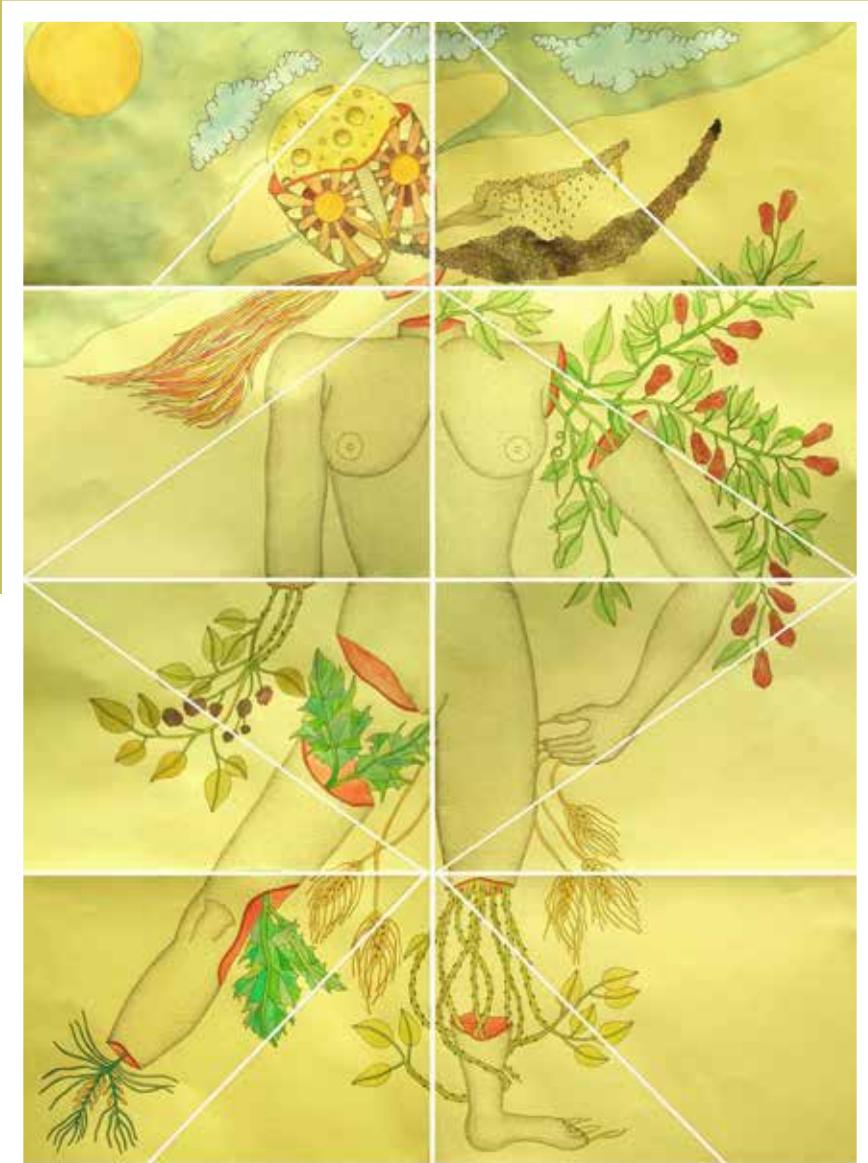
Creative Dismemberment
Gouache & Ink on Paper

Content Should Be For Consumers, Not Search Engines

Sachin Kapur, Co-Founder & CMO, nearbuy (erstwhile Groupon India) tells us how India's first hyper-local online platform that enables customers and local merchants to discover and engage with each other has used content marketing as a core part of its brand building strategy. While he agrees that content marketing cannot replace traditional advertising, he feels it should be an integral part of any company's strategy for consumer engagement and retention.
Interviewed by Priyanka Bhattacharya

// How relevant is content marketing today, especially in a scenario where there is a content overdose for consumers?

Content marketing has never been more important. However, one has to remember that content has to be for real users and not for search engines. Use genuine and original content that people can use. It will help you reduce acquisition cost and get users to be more loyal. Never optimise content for everyone. Instead of being something to everyone, be everything to someone. So, if you are writing about fashion, be very specific about who your user is. Define the persona and write it for a very small group. That group should feel that this is exactly for them; even if this means alienating some other users. This is the only way to be more meaningful and generate virality.

// How important or relevant is content marketing for nearbuy, vis-a-vis other marketing initiatives? What is the weightage that you give this form of advertising?

At nearbuy, we call ourselves a "Lifestyle Discovery Engine" and this is only possible when users get to know more about the world around them. Content marketing is relatively new to us. However, we now have a thorough roadmap that has helped us scale in the last six months. Content marketing currently generates about 10% of our traffic. However, for us the major role that content plays is that of engagement and not so much acquisition.

// What is it that your company is looking for when it uses content marketing as a branding tool as compared to direct advertising campaigns?

Content marketing for us does two things - Helps people discover things to do around them; and ups their social quotient and knowledge about areas of interest like food, healthcare and wellness.

// When you plan your marketing initiatives, how do you weave engaging content into them?

Content is a vital part of most campaigns that we do. Our recent association with the Hollywood movie Batman Vs Superman had given us an opportunity to generate tremendous amount of original content that fans loved. This included movie trivia, facts about the characters and history of the franchise including an interesting contest. Content can never replace other forms of advertising. However, content marketing complements it beautifully to reduce bounce rates and increase engagement.

// How do you map the ROI on your content marketing spend? Do you think checking for ROI is very important when you push engaging content that may not have a direct connection with your products or services?

We have defined metrics that help us track the outcome of what we've put out there. While social content clearly is measured against metrics like engagement rate, traffic generated and sales, the most important number for us is to see how much time people are spending on our blog, how many articles they read and if they end up buying something from the site after that.

// Do you think it is better to have an in-house content marketing team or should a company outsource such a service, including ideation, content creation and then marketing?

Clearly depends on the brand strategy and how much content you need to put out to make it meaningful for your business. Ours is a local business with multiple verticals. Hence we need lots of content pieces based on the cities we are in. Thus for us it makes sense to have an in-house team. For brands that can work with lesser or more focused content, outsourcing is not a bad option. However, always ensure that your brand team or agency is in the loop. This ensures that the tone of voice and consistency of message is always delivered. Never stray away from what you truly stand for.

// In our market study, we have seen that many CMOs say it is not easy to measure the success of a content marketing initiative. So how do you measure the success of any content marketing initiative, and what kind of campaign would you term as successful?

When you set out to define a content marketing strategy, you need to define very clear objectives. For B2B companies it might mean more leads. For B2C companies it might be better user engagement. We've defined our objective around engagement. However, we also define what it is that we expect from engagement and what do we want from the engaged users. When content is being created for a campaign, our objectives are to reach out to more users on social media as content like Facebook Listicles have delivered at least 25% more reach to us compared to usual posts. When done for our blog, we've seen organic traffic increase over a period of time. Thus, on the blog we measure traffic and the page value that the traffic delivers. This gives us a clear indication of the user actions that are done after they read the content.

// Do share your ideas on the innovative ways brands today can use content as a successful marketing tool.

No one today wants to see an ad. Advertisements are pieces of content that the user or customers have no use for. Create something that has some intrinsic value for the customer. That value could very well be entertainment. However, a notch higher than that is something that the user can use or get some benefit from.

INNOVATIONS IN VIDEO MARKETING

As B2B marketing professionals have started trying out digital videos to reach their customers, a few start-ups have started partnering with them to help them in their pursuit. Headquartered in Tokyo, Videogram helps people discover, engage, and share their favorite videos by providing, at a glance, all the important scenes from those videos. Videogram is patented worldwide.

Co-Founder of Videogram, **Rahul Golecha** talked to Digital CMO Digest about how marketers can use videos as a tool to reach their customers.
Interviewed by Avanish Tiwary

// How has video marketing evolved?

At a time when click bait stuff has become prevalent, finding the right video is important and there is no innovation around that.

What Videogram does is, rather than just showing the whole video it also splits the video into multiple scenes. We show those split scenes in an interactive collage form. The small clips give the viewer a summary of the whole video, after which they can decide if that's the video they wish to watch.

In many cases viewers just want to watch a particular section of the video and it's usually difficult to find that in the whole video. But when we break a video into collage form, viewers know which clip consists of what scenes and start the video from that point on. It helps viewers save time and bandwidth both.

It helps publishers as well. A lot of times when a movie trailer comes out, people create copies of either the trailer or just the poster and share the same thing with a different video embedded in it and when users click on it they realise it's the wrong video. That affects the publisher's original videos and creates negative sentiment in the minds of viewers.

// So it's a B2B2C model?

Publishers are using it but eventually the interface is going down to the consumer level. Our split video feature with multiple thumbnails of the same video is a new tool for publishers because one of the thumbnails could display an advertisement or a tie-up with some brand. So even if people are not clicking on the video, we are making money out of the display ad without increasing the real-estate.

Since we are showing multiple thumbnails and frames, the click rate increases as someone might be interested in one of those multiple frames.

There is a frame of Shahrukh Khan and another of Katrina Kaif; one group of people will click on Khan's thumbnail and the other set on Kaif's thumbnail video clip. The existing revenue on these networks also increases.
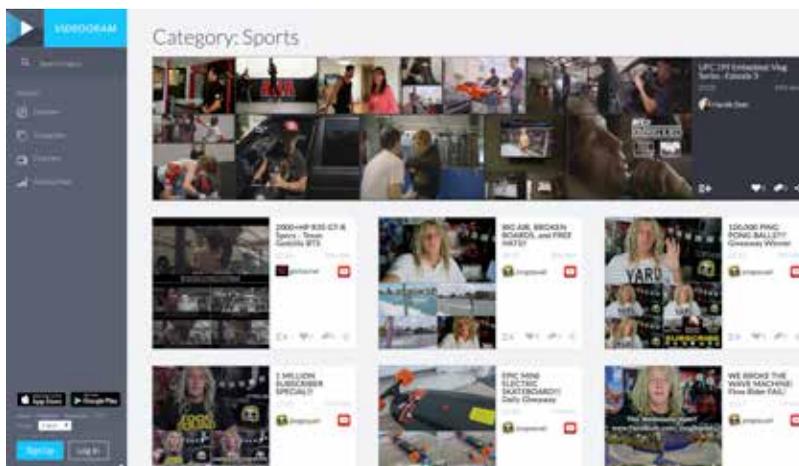
// How are companies looking at exploiting videos as a content marketing tool?

A lot of companies are using video marketing to promote their products. Videos are something that drives traction and keeps the user engaged for a certain amount of time. It's a new trend in the market and a lot of companies don't know how to make the most out of it. At times, they create a whole stack of videos and then slowly figure out how those videos have performed. That results in waste of time and resource.

// How long has the video usage being going on as a marketing tool?

Even though videos were there for the corporate marketing teams to make use of, I would say in the last two to three years it has picked up a lot. What has happened is that blogging websites and social media websites have grown a lot on the back of interactive videos.

Most of these platforms such as ScoopWhoop, StoryPick, etc. have started including videos as they feel if people are coming to their websites they would like to know the story through a video.

// What is the new strategy that these companies have adopted?

The ultimate goal is to make the video viral or at least make it trend so it reaches the maximum number of audiences. And for that to happen, they try to find out the apt distribution channel. The negative aspect of making videos viral is trying click-bait videos that are kind of ruining the support system.

Distribution is the main innovation point here apart from trying to figure out which analytics tools to come up with. A few companies have started doing gamification in the videos.

// Has the budget gone up for video marketing?

As things are moving toward digital platforms, it would surely increase.

Soon a time will come when digital video usage in B2B and B2C marketing will be at a comparable state.

Digital video campaigns also help the company find out if a particular campaign or style has got the desired number of buyers or viewers—something that is lacking in TV ads. Analytics is very important as it helps marketers change and tweak their next video content.

// Are companies aware of the issue that many a time consumers find the videos too long?

This is one of the biggest problems in long form videos such as a cricket match. If you upload a 3 hours long T20 match not many people would watch the whole match. That is why we split videos in multiple screens based on the content and USP of that clip.

// How big is the issue of bandwidth and patchy connection?

Yes, that is a concern for everyone who is related to the creation and consumption of videos. Publishers are worried whether the video will buffer in small towns or not. The audience is everywhere. The solution as of now is that publishers seeing the viewer's connection change the quality of the video. But that is not a permanent solution. People have not gone beyond that on how to solve the issue of bandwidth.

Harnessing social media through the consumer journey

Rajesh Nanarpuzha

The author is currently a doctoral scholar in marketing at IIM Ahmedabad. Previously, he has worked as a brand manager in Dabur, and as a business consultant in the retail and consumer goods domains at Cognizant and Tata Consultancy Services. Rajesh is an MBA from IIM Indore.

The ubiquity of social media and its power to engage customers has made the harnessing of social media a marketing imperative. However, in less astute hands, social media could become a chimera for marketers, difficult to understand and to grasp. This is primarily due to the power that social media grants consumers in shaping dialogue. Gone are the days when marketers talked and consumers listened. As Edelman and Singer (2015) note, 'empowered' customers chart their own journeys in engaging with a brand. In this context, Edelman and Singer (2015) suggest that companies need to aid the customers in shaping their journey by customizing it and making it more compelling. In this endeavor, engagement with customers on their chosen social media spaces is a powerful marketing tool. However, attempting to do so brings along associated challenges. We discuss some of them and examine potential avenues to overcome them.

Solving the Facebook conundrum

Archer-Brown, Piercy, and Joinson (2013) study social customer relationship management (SCRM) within the context of message content in virtual communities. In line with advertising research in general, Archer-Brown, Piercy, and Joinson (2013) find evidence to show that customer skepticism of advertising messages extends to virtual communities, when brands attempt to engage directly with customers. However, the authors point out that informational content rather than opinion-based content was found to reassure skeptical customers. This provides a potential direction for marketers to tailor their SCRM strategies.

The rapid and continuing growth of Facebook has placed it squarely in the center of the marketer's digital media strategy. However, an understanding of Facebook users, and the means to target diverse segments of Facebook users, is largely absent. Hodis, Sriramachandramurthy, and Sashittal (2015) provide direction in this regard. Using the two axes of content creation and content consumption, the authors classify Facebook users into four segments – connection seekers, entertainment chasers, attention seekers, and devotees. Further, the authors suggest that entertainment chasers and connection seekers, who are low on content creation but vary on content consumption, should be nurtured and grown. On the other hand, attention seekers and devotees, who are high on content creation but vary on content consumption, and who are therefore more influential, should be recruited and empowered by marketers as their brand endorsers. These suggestions provide a potential framework for marketers to plan their Facebook user engagement strategies.

Targeted marketing strategies by Facebook segment
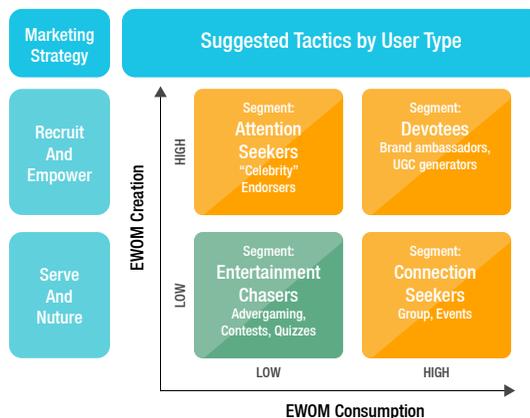
Source:Holids,Sriramachandramurthy & Sasithal (2015) journal of marketing Management,31.http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0267257X.2015.1073170

In addition to the creation of meaningful customer segments, marketers also find it difficult to specify marketing objectives for their social media advertising. Particularly with respect to Facebook, an understanding of what works and what doesn't is still in its infancy. In this regard, Brettel et al. (2015) provide some potentially actionable insights. The authors find that Facebook 'likes' and contributions to the brand's Facebook page are long-term sales drivers. Customer engagement through these means has important carry-over effects over the long term, and is indicative of strong and positive customer sentiment. Page views, on the other hand, should be considered as an indicator of potential short term sales. Facebook page content, enabling impulse purchase, could help in driving short term sales. Finally, Brettel et al. (2015) note that 'stream impressions,' manifested as company-sponsored, paid content on users' news feeds has a significant, negative impact on sales, especially when used extensively.

Going viral and what it takes

In social media, achieving advertisement virality remains the marketer's holy grail. In this regard Teixeira (2012) offers five specific suggestions. First, Texeira (2012) argues that prominent branding in advertisement content is off-putting for viewers. 'Brand pulsing', which involves unobtrusive weaving of the brand image in the advertisement is recommended. Second, users in social media tend to get bored quickly. The solution suggested is to create feelings of joy or surprise early in the advertisement. Third, Texeira (2012) recommends creation of an emotional roller coaster in the advertisement, as users tend to stop watching advertisements which maintain a stable emotional state, even if it is one of joy or surprise. Fourth, to improve sharing rates for the advertisement, Texeira (2012) recommends that advertisements should surprise but should not shock. Finally, the author suggests that it is important to target users of your brand that show the greatest potential for sharing. This in turn is a function of the users' personalities, and can be ascertained through effective segmentation.

Akpinar and Berger (2016) ask the question whether virality and favorable brand outcomes (e.g. increased purchase probability, higher brand evaluation) are antithetical objectives. Thankfully, they find evidence that they are not. Akpinar and Berger (2016) find evidence in line with extant literature that emotional advertisements improve virality. At the same time, the authors find that informative advertisements lead to better brand outcomes in terms of brand evaluation and purchase likelihood. Akpinar and Berger (2016) suggest that 'emotional integral' advertisements (where the brand is integral to the narrative) provide the best outcomes both in terms of potential virality and in terms of better brand outcomes.

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Virtue
Gouache & Ink on Paper

The Urban Ladder 'Mattress Tester' campaign – an innovative content marketing initiative.

Sanjay Gupta, CMO, Urban Ladder, says the focus of the company right from the start has been on developing a brand-connect with the consumer. To develop that interaction, the company invested heavily in generating content that would create the right perception about the brand. *Interviewed by Priyanka Bhattacharya*

"Customer obsession, honesty & transparency, and fun are the three things that have been the bedrock of what we are and how we interact with our customers, employees, and partners", says Sanjay.

The company keeps its customers interested in the brand by doing some fun stuff – tongue-in-cheek initiatives that get the customers totally engaged.

Here, in his own words, Sanjay tells us about a campaign that they devised & ran for April Fools' Day this year:

April Fools' Day is one day when brands get the liberty to bring out their crazy side by being smart and relevant. We were toying around with various ideas and found the perfect one. We know working professionals are an overworked bunch, and are always looking for something that's easy to do. So we thought, why not ask them to apply for the position of a mattress tester? Heard of that before? Neither have we.

To make it sound super realistic, we created a job profile on LinkedIn.

People got particularly excited after reading the "Desired Skills and Experience" section, which read as follows:

Job Description

On a typical day, you'll need to sleep on various Urban Ladder mattresses to check for comfort and ease. Each mattress will need to be tested under different conditions, such as after consuming coffee and other caffeine-based drinks, after travelling long distances, as well as under different light and sound conditions.

Desired Skills and Experience

1. Love for sleeping that would put Kumbhakarna to shame

2. Strong analytical skills and an insightful bent of mind

3. A good understanding of the best practices in mattress design

4. A passion for product quality and attention to detail

5. Demonstrated expertise in sleeping under varied conditions

6. A strong customer focus

7. A complete lack of enthusiasm and drive

Sounds like you? Then don't sleep on this opportunity. Send us your resume with a cover letter explaining why you'd be the perfect fit for this job to *sleep@urbanladder.com*
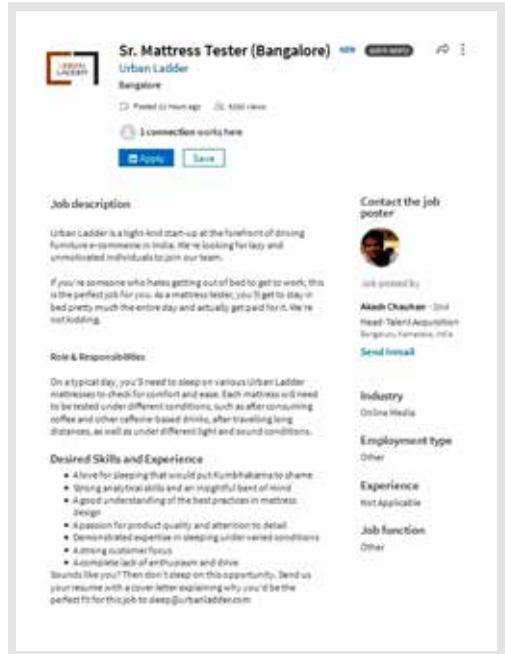
This idea was the perfect balance of possible-real-job (mattress testing is a real job in some countries) and too-good-to-be-true. Plus, it tied in well with one of our product categories.

Two days before April Fools' Day, we shared a simple post on Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn, with a link to the 'job description', also hosted on LinkedIn. The post asked 'lazy and unmotivated people' to apply for the position of Sr. Mattress Tester.
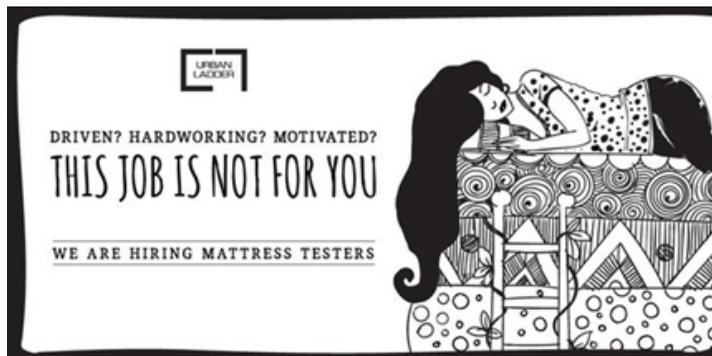

In a matter of hours, the post went viral with several shares and retweets across platforms. It is now conventional wisdom that any marketer will bet their last bottom dollar on Facebook and Twitter, but LinkedIn?

The same day, we also had websites like Buzzfeed, Scoopwhoop, Huffinton Post, The Times of India and many more run a feature on the prank.

By April Fools' Day, we had over 1000 applications on LinkedIn and via email - some serious, some in jest. We had several international applicants asking us if we could send the mattress to them so they could "work remotely", but were also willing to relocate if required. Applicants included co-founders of other start-ups and employees of some of India's largest e-commerce websites.

All this, without our having spent a dime on media spends or promotions.

Here are some of the tweets and applications we got ☺
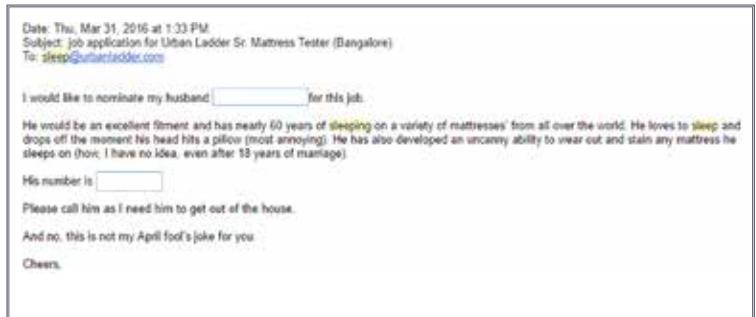
How does a company selling high-value products like furniture harness the power of mobile? Urban Ladder is one such company that has been using mobile effectively. Here's what Sanjay Gupta had to say: "Our mobile app has been doing well for us. It contributes to 35% of the business. On the app our content consumption is very high. We have the blog, reviews and the UL stories. We realised that people do not generally go to an app with the intention of buying furniture, so we pushed content first. Our objective on the app is to facilitate browsing, so here engagement via content becomes more important to us. That has actually led to a lot of purchases."

Twins
Gouache & Ink on Paper

BOOK CORNER

Soumendu Ganguly, Vice President - Product and Marketing at India based Sulekha.com, an online firm that connects users with businesses, talks about the latest books that he has read.
***Interviewed by Avanish Tiwary***

// Shoe Dog by Phil Knight

In the book, Phil talks about a friend, a runner called Steve Prefontaine. He tells us how he saw Prefontaine in one of his Pre-Olympic races, in which he was running in second position and within the last 100 yards, dig in deep and come up with a whole new level to win the race. It is then that Prefontaine says, 'Somebody may beat me, but they are going to have to bleed to do it.' This is one quote that has stayed with me. I might lose to better talent but never for want of effort.
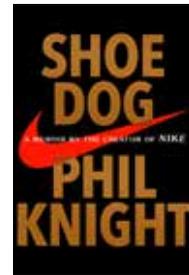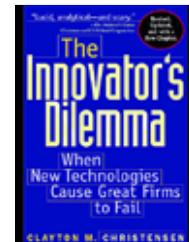
// The Gene by Siddhartha Mukherjee

The book talks about heredity and our quest for it. It starts before Mendel and Darwin and traces the history of genetics to recent work on Cancer. The thing that I felt after reading this book was how human biases have been there over centuries and how these biases make us blind to the simple truths that lie before us. It is extremely important that we are aware of our biases to overcome them.
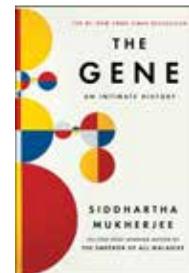
// The Innovator's Dilemma
by Clayton Christensen

The book talks in detail about how again and again we have seen companies who once were leaders in their field not being able to adapt to change in technology and become irrelevant. The book talks about how it is not lack of effort but processes that once made you great, eventually become the cause of your death. The book goes on to tell how you can avoid this trap and stay relevant and also sensitizes you to the hard decisions you need to make in order to achieve this.

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