

# Using the opinion age to grow brandlove

 By [Carolyn Cramer](#)

25 Feb 2014

The steady growth of social media has ensured that we now know just about everyone's opinion on just about every topic. We're an info-hungry generation and we devour columns and opinion pieces on topics relevant to our interests. Very few brands have capitalised on this trend, however, preferring to play it very safe when it comes to their publicity offering.



(Image: Wikimedia Commons)

But brandlove is developed when a connection is made. Brandlove is developed when a consumer recognises something of their values in a given brand, when a brand calls them to more. Such values may be surface level enough to be communicated through an advert, but more and more people are searching for depth, for authenticity and for relevance.

In addition, the growing nature of online shopping platforms means that many brands will lose in-store touching points, so there is a need to build relationships with the customer elsewhere. Brands need to dig deep to get to the essence of what their customers really want and what their interests are if they are to gain and maintain their affections. Content marketing is on the rise and brands who haven't jumped on the social media bandwagon yet are realising that content media is not simply a fad, but a real platform that, when done correctly, provides the opportunity to increase a brand's following and build on brandlove.

## An under-utilised opportunity

In this light, opinion pieces and columns offer an under-utilised opportunity for forward-thinking brands to provide thought leadership while creating brandlove. That said, it is vital that brands speak the truth: audiences have become suspicious of greenwashing and talking the talking without walking the walk. When a brand makes a promise or specific declaration - for example, a company's involvement in community upliftment projects - it is vital that this collaboration should be authentic and not simply 'good marketing'. The recent turnaround of neknominations from a glorified drinking game to a movement for good is an example - Nando's offering in this regard stepped away from their usual tongue in cheek, pun-filled persona and presented a human and heartfelt video which has been viewed close on 200,000 times.

With that in mind, the very best of 'values' marketing is that which based on the existing passions and involvement of the brand, rather than the other way round. That's not to say that it's not worth creating a project and giving your brand something to talk about, but if the marketing thereof is the only motivation for the involvement, today's savvy audience will pick that up.

## How to grow brandlove

The opinion pieces and columns of today have the potential to be the great speeches of yesteryear. Think of the opinion pieces which have truly shifted public thinking and Angelina's piece on her choice to have a preventive double mastectomy springs to mind. Like Jolie-Pitt, brands need to communicate their humanity to their audiences, fostering a more personal

relationship with the consumer. Rather than simply providing a service or a product, consumers want to know that brands have the specific needs of their nation in mind and that they are coming from a human standpoint. With the global rise of social media and content marketing, brands and companies that were once seen as faceless businesses are now able to interact with their consumers on a one-on-one basis via Twitter and Facebook.

With so much information at their fingertips, social media users are becoming more and more selective about the type of brands they follow. By publishing thought-provoking and informative opinion pieces, brands have the power to become thought leaders within their fields and to grow brandlove.

## ABOUT CAROLYN CRAMER

Carolyn Cramer heads up Coz it counts, a boutique PR agency which focuses on telling the stories of South African NGOs. Coz it counts clients include Afrika Tikkun, WWF, the conservation organisation, and Relate Bracelets. Visit [www.cozitcounts.co.za](http://www.cozitcounts.co.za) for more or find them on Twitter [www.twitter.com/cozitcounts](https://twitter.com/cozitcounts).

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