Convergence, content key themes for media, advertising

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Fact: consumers hold the upper hand in how we advertise. They are the ones who are more empowered, are demanding more and are less loyal. Never before has advertising been so interesting and exciting what, with tried-and-tested traditional formulas constantly being challenged.

Challenge: get to know your consumer! These are the people who can now truly participate with our brands. This is thanks to technology which has played a huge role in how we work, play, shop and live our lives. Consumers are now our "brand transmitters and storytellers".

What does this mean for media? Three things:

1. Consumers will discover and embrace new and multiple ways to engage with brands, and each other.
2. New media is on the rise - more to come and more different types of new media in their way.
3. Digital is for EVERYONE

2012 will see various trends being built upon where there is a convergence of media platforms, a need to share information in real time and a demand for cross-platform content and messaging that can simultaneously reach numerous audiences. Some of the trends are explained in more detail below.

1. **Media socialisation**
   Social media has been the buzz over the last few years; we're now witnessing the socialisation of media. Content continues to bring people together, offering opportunities to connect and share experiences.

   We still love to talk about TV, while increasingly tools such as Twitter are helping to facilitate deeper content experiences in real time, especially with these networks being accessible on mobile phones. TV shows and radio shows (eg Idols) regularly appear in Twitter's top trending topics, and pages for TV shows are the second most 'liked' on Facebook as a genre, after films.

   Therefore, an integrated content and social strategy can deepen the real-time experience, while also provides opportunities for extended narratives through socialisation.

   Try to make all aspects of communication 'spreadable - use buttons to allow people to embed or share easily, and set up official accounts on social networks. Remember, sharing is caring!

2. **Channel blurring**

   Media channels are colliding in a positive way. Television and social networking; out-of-home (OOH) and mobile; print and tablets - the innovations are happening at the edges of these channels.

   Through this collision, deep consumer experiences are being created. New media opportunities will engage in new and compelling ways.

   Mobile apps and gadgets allow people to catch up with content on the move (egm the DStv Drifta), content from TV shows such as American Idol regularly dominate YouTube's 'most viewed' charts and digitisation of the OOH space will help the broadcast of real-time content while commuting.

Brands need to think in terms of multiple media. Even if an idea starts on TV, how could it work online, on mobile, in OOH, in press, and on the radio? What unique features could those channels contribute to your campaign?

3. **Fluid content**

   We are living in a world of convergence and are at a point where content can truly flow across any time, any place and any device. This convergence is becoming more seamless - consumers expect a seamless content experience across devices. The cloud and enhanced devices are helping to facilitating this.

   It is vital that brands use consistent branding and messaging across different platforms while playing to the strengths and differences in demographics of the different platforms.

4. **TV revitalised**

   TV has learned to live with the web better than a lot of other media. A show such as Idols actively relies on the internet to let people see clips of the highlights between episodes, and programme makers have acknowledged YouTube's part in making stars of people such as Susan Boyle and Die Antwoord.

   TV technology is also developing, with HD and 3D. Average sizes of screens for the main TV in the house are rising, meaning that TV (with DVDs, Blu-ray etc [*and wifi-enabled Blu-ray players/internet-enabled TVs allowing access to the internet - managing ed*]) is now a much richer experience than before.

   The rising number of channels means that there is more clutter. To achieve standout, more brands are using sponsorship and product placement to integrate more closely into the programming, rather than between the programmes.

   TV is still powerful, and should remain a key element of campaigns. Think about how TV works with other media (eg, driving search and social media) and also sponsorship and content-creation opportunities.

5. **Shallower and deeper**

   The spectrum of engagement is changing; we can be passive (mass media); we can collaborate (segmented approach); we can create (experiential platforms).

   We are consuming more media; we are multitasking; we are multiscreening. However, we also have appointments to view TV and are interacting with content in new ways. Much of our media experience is now deeper than ever before. The challenge is to identify these moments and understand how they impact on consumption of media.

   Brands need to seek out programmes or environments that will offer people deeper and broader opportunities to engage. Create campaigns that go beyond just advertising to link deeper into the content, eg, through sponsorship.

6. **Continuous**

   Our lifestyles have accelerated; digital technology fuels this - we can consume and connect constantly. We are always on and now the big consumer desire is to find ways to switch off (no doubt there is a device or app to help us do this!).

   Brands must recognise this always-on lifestyle and identify how they can fit into this continuous consumer mindset. It's no longer enough to do two big campaigns a year, with nothing in between. Brands need to have a constant presence, through new channels and interactivity.

   Brands also need to communicate through themes and strategies that will allow lots of different executions and variations. Importantly, these must be customised for channels where the brand lives.

7. **Play**

   The world is becoming more playful. This is shown from the success of video games, and online and mobile games, including games in social networks.

   More brands are trying to make games part of their strategy, both as content, and as a medium to advertise in. Eg, Microsoft lets advertisers put ads into Xbox online games, based on the titles and demographics of the games.

   Social gaming is another growing area, with games such as Farmville attracting millions of players in social networks.

   Brands need to develop a strategy for getting involved in games, where it is appropriate for the audience. Think about how the brand can be more like a game, with rewards, different levels of engagement, and a sense of fun [*but what about those of us who aren't into game-playing much? We do exist - managing ed*].

8. **Experiential**

   Brands are trying to create experiences for consumers so that they can get the feel of a brand more easily. The alcohol category has done this for years, but new examples include the pop-up store, which is smaller and more mobile so your brand can engage in different spaces.

   Brands need to think of ways of creating experiences around them; pop-up stores and cafés are just one of many ways of letting hard-core fans or potential fans get closer to the brand.

9. **Hyper-local**

   Hyper-local generally refers to very local activity, or stories that would only be of interest to local people. It's been seen in the emergence of very local blogs and websites (some of which only cover one postal code area). Marketers are also making activity more local, eg, local sponsorships or initiatives in local communities.

   Brands need to think globally, act locally ('glocal'). Try to get involved in local communities or movements in areas that are strong for the brand, with localised ranges and events.

10. **Bespoke**

    There are more ways to personalise media experiences. We create our schedules, which device we choose to pull media, who we will share it with, the type of personal media we create, what we search for and who we trust. Broadcast still plays a huge role but our personal footprint over media consumption is increasing.

    One recent example is the Flipboard app for the iPad and now iPhone. Flipboard turns online content such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and newsfeeds into something that looks like an online magazine, sucking links and photos into the interface. Flipboard is an entirely personalised experience, defined by the user.

    Brands need to make content and messages personalisable, as well as shareable. Make sure that it works with cloud applications, and also across multiple platforms -eg Apple and different mobile operating systems (Android, Blackberry).

These media themes look at the changing behaviour of consumers, and with the South African market being so diverse, the impact of technology across all groups will vary.

However, mobile penetration and technology are a reality in our market and the impact of new media within our market is something we cannot shy away from.

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In 2007, business partners Tanya Schreuder and Richard Procter joined the Aegis Media (www.aegismedia.co.za) network to bring global strategic media-planning and -buying Vizeum brand (www.vizeum.com) to South Africa. These days the agency bills just under R800 million and partners blue-chip clients such as Cell C, Santam, BMW, MWeb and Coronation. Tel +27 (0)21 526 6353 or +27 (0)11 513 3575; email tanya.schreuder@vizeum.com or richard.procter@vizeum.com.
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