

TREND WATCHER

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Developing a communication strategy that connects with your consumer is more crucial in today's market environment than it ever has been before. Making a consumer feel like you are talking directly to them, meeting their needs or giving them something special that is "just for me" could win you a long term consumer. In today's world where word of mouth could make or break your product more than any advertising campaign you not only need to know who your consumer is, you need to know what makes them special or least, makes them feel special.

Taking exclusivity to the next level

September 12, 2012, Advertising Age

Usually, brands want as many fans as they can get on Facebook. But Grey Poupon mustard is trying to mark itself out as exclusive. Through agency Crispin Porter + Bogusky, the Kraft-owned condiment is launching a Facebook campaign in which only fans who are identified as having "good taste" can "like" it on the social network.

Fans of the brand are asked to apply for membership to the "Society of Good Taste" on the Grey Poupon Facebook page, where an algorithm will determine whether or not they "cut the mustard". The algorithm searches and judges users' profiles based on their proper use of grammar, art taste, check ins, book and movie selections, and so forth, and gives them a percentile score based on their refinement. However, if the algorithm detects poor taste in music or text-speak, for example, they could be rejected. Those who do not qualify will have their "like" deleted, and be asked to refine their profile before trying again.

The idea is a fresh take on Grey Poupon's "refined" positioning of the past, like the memorable "Pardon Me" spot from 1988 featuring two wealthy gents exchanging the spread while in passing cars.

HOW YOU CAN APPLY THIS TO YOUR BUSINESS:

Today's consumer wants to feel special, like products were made for them and not just mass marketed – something that is exclusive. Campaigns like this one for Greg Poupon is sending a message that it's a cut above. While this is a risky move because it could alienate as many people as it attracts depending on the criteria. Those who make the cut however could become the best brand ambassadors spreading the word to their entire network of friends and online connections. In today's tech savvy world, this could be worth much more than trying to win everyone over.

Customization is the way of the future

August 30, 2012 Globe and Mail (excerpt from full story)

Coca-Cola's new "Freestyle" vending machines, launched in Toronto in May, soon will pop up across Canada.

They look like normal vending machines with touch screens on the front. Because the machine uses a fountain to mix drinks rather than dispensing individual bottles, it offers more than 100 Coke-owned drink brands, with endless options for mixing them.

"Everything is becoming more personalized," said Shane Grant, vice-president of the sparkling business unit at Coca-Cola Ltd. "To the extent that I have choice, it's the new normal for consumers to be able to create unique experiences 'for me.'"

It's easy to see the marketing value of personalization: Companies want to create loyalty by making customers feel special. Allowing them to make personalized choices is one of the easiest ways to do that.

Customization has long been seen as the next big thing in marketing, said professor Frank Piller, a founding member of the Smart Customization Group at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Design Lab. He believes it is now set to become much more widespread.

"Baby boomers grew up in mass marketing. You're part of a consumer segment ... consumers knew that they had to compromise, or they had to pay a very high price to customize," he said. "This is different now. We have consumers that were never taught to settle."

"This is really our next big evolution in the way we engage with people."

HOW YOU CAN APPLY THIS TO YOUR BUSINESS:

For a mass marketed product like Coca-Cola to offer something that is customized will certainly gain attention. More importantly its speaking the language of today's consumers who want something "just for me".

Did you know?

Teens and adults who are social media users in 2011 reported high levels of influence as follows:

- +22% discover new brands or products through social media
- +9% use SoMe to learn about unfamiliar brands or products
- +19% are strongly influenced in purchase decisions by opinions in social media

Source: GfK Knowledge Networks, June 2011

Changing face of families could have an impact on how your communication strategy

The Toronto Star, September 20, 2012 (excerpt from full story)

The once traditional mom, dad and the kids now make up just a quarter of Canadian households. Instead, the family that gathers around the kitchen table is increasingly likely to be a same-sex couple, a common-law couple, a single parent, a stepfamily, a household with grown kids and grandparents, according to new data.

More Canadians are simply living alone. And many young people are living with their parents into their 20s and putting off serious relationships. The census counted 9.4 million families, up 5.5 per cent over the previous count in 2006. While married couples remain the predominant family unit at 67 per cent, the release paints a picture of a society in transition as traditional family structures give way to common-law couples and same-sex couples.

Among the census families, common-law couples grew rapidly, up 13.9 per cent since 2006 compared to a 3.1 per cent increase for married couples and an 8 per cent rise for single-parent families. For the first time, common-law couples surpassed the number of single-parent families.

The number of same-sex couples showed a sharp rise, up 42.4 per cent to 64,575, attributed to the legalization of same-sex marriage in 2005. Of those, 21,015 were same-sex married couples and 43,560 were living common-law.

The 2011 census also counted stepfamilies for the first time, finding that one in 10 children live in a stepfamily. Of the approximately 3.7 million families with children, 87.4 per cent were so-called intact families — two parents and their biological or adopted children — and 12.6 per cent, or 464,335 were stepfamilies. Of these, 192,410 are what the agency described as “complex” stepfamilies — a child of both parents and a child of one parent from a previous relationship.

The census data also show that more Canadians are living alone — 5.6 million people 15 years and older did not live in a census family. Thirteen per cent of this population lived alone, up slightly from 2006. It also noted that couples with children at home continued to fall — 39.2 per cent compared to 44 per cent of couples who did not have children. These are the empty-nesters, the aging baby boomers seeing their grown children move away from home.

Statistics from 1961 show the evolution of the Canadian family. The number of families — married couples, common-law couples and lone-parent families — has more than doubled since 1961, to 9.4 million families from 4.1 families. But the proportion of married couples has dropped from 91.6 per cent to 67 per cent. Since 1981, the number of common-law couples has more than quadrupled. In 2011, lone-parent families made up 16.3 per cent of all families, double the share in 1961 when more childbearing took place within marriage and divorce rates were lower,

HOW YOU CAN APPLY THIS TO YOUR BUSINESS:

It should be no surprise that the make-up of households are changing in Canada. Knowing what the changes are is only part of the battle – the easy part. Knowing the best way to respond is the more difficult part of the challenge. What these new statics mean to your marketing efforts at the most basic level is that 1) the needs of a family have changed; 2) portraying today's family in a 1960's, Beaver Cleaver way, will not only be less effective it may alienate a large part of the population. It is more important than ever to be specific about who the target is for all your product and communication strategy.

About TrendSpotter Consulting

*TrendSpotter Consulting provides everything a business needs to develop, fine tune or review **brand strategy**:*

- *Creating the plan of action*
- *Designing, executing and analysing the research*
- *Outlining the target and positioning*
- *Working with agencies and suppliers to execute on strategic marketing initiatives*

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