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Philosophy of Targeting the Masses Versus the Individual

By Cory Treffiletti

Is advertising and marketing the sole domain of the marketers or is it possible that advertising and marketing is now the focus of the masses?

I read *Time* magazine religiously, and one of my benchmarks for whether the general populace is aware of a topic, trend, or fad is when *Time* magazine publishes an article on it. I know that by the time the article is published, the topic will be old news to us early adopters, but it will then be entering into the minds of the masses. Recently I remember reading an article in *Time* about "where are all the men 18 to 34 going" which made me wonder if advertising is now a subject for the general audience?

I recently heard a number of people discuss how the consumer in today's market is more advanced as well as more cynical. I consistently refer to AADD as advertising attention deficit disorder and the concept that we are successfully training our audiences to not pay attention to advertising, or at least not notice it, due to clutter and the endless barrage of messaging they see. With these forces in place, and the inherent cynicism of the general target, are we also educating the population to be resilient to our tricks and tips?

As the audience gets smarter and understands our methodologies more, they become immune to them. Is general advertising methodology now the domain of the audience itself?

If this is the case, then we are in trouble. If we are letting out all of our secrets then what do we have left to rely on?

The truth of the individual.

The truth behind messaging is that relevancy is still king. The effectiveness of relevancy is that it applies to the individual more than to the masses. If you luck out, then your advertising will speak to a group of individuals rather than to a singular person. This is where efficiencies come from.

Last week I mentioned that I had the opportunity to listen to Scott Bedbury speak and many of the things he said rang true to my ears, but one of them was the idea that it's better to build a brand in the eyes of the individual than by targeting the masses.

The individual is the source of excitement. They are the ones that evangelize the brand and become loyal and passionate. Trying to manipulate the masses is not an easy thing, but speaking to the needs of the individual, or groups of individuals who you may be able to align in the future, is very effective.

Thinking about these concepts, and wondering whether we are outsmarting ourselves by educating the audience on what we do, I come to the conclusion that a more informed consumer is a better consumer. If the consumer knows that we are talking to them, and not to everyone else around them, they may listen. This of course, needs to be coupled with strategy and smart core messaging, but I think that utilizing their cynicism can be a means to an end. Treat them with respect and they will respond accordingly.

It's a nice concept. Hopefully it's truly working.