



Webisodes: Always On in the Digital World.

In this month, we will take a closer look at one of the video formats of online advertising – webisodes.

Dear Reader,

The potential for marketing has never been better or bigger. With online advertising it has become possible to talk to consumers in a wide range of different channels, all depending on where they spending their time and media consumption. One of the fundamental dilemmas about traditional advertising is that brands want to affect all consumers at the right time and place. This was very difficult and expensive in the age of traditional advertising, but with the new formats, relevance to the consumer has been re-introduced as one of the key valuable outcomes of marketing.

Enjoy!

Webisodes

Webisodes are internet based series of content, spanning from a few to many episodes. In this context, we are looking at commercially branded webisodes, which is a rather new form. In the following, we have a closer look at three different webisode cases. Conclusively, we will analyze some of the differences between traditional advertising and webisodes and online video advertising and reflect on how webisodes can help overcome some of the dilemmas of traditional advertising.

Sony Ericsson: Johnny X.

www.whoisjohnny-x.com

Background

Sony Ericsson launched both the Xperia sub-brand and their new X1 smartphone via a ground breaking digitally led campaign. The initial goal was to build 'intrigue' around the campaign prior to the handset launching based on a drama titled 'Who is Johnny X?'. The webisodes were developed by Dare Digital, with the media campaign planned by MEC Global and the digital elements bought centrally.



Story Line

A series of nine videos, reflecting nine handset panels, were built around the mysterious Johnny X, who wakes up in an amnesiac state in a hotel in Bangkok. The opening trailer sees Johnny X plea to the audience to help him discover his lost identity. Whilst much of the series is a mystery, the visibility of the X1 is not: it's everywhere. The handset becomes an inextricable part of the storyline as Johnny X uses the X1 to rebuild his life.

Distribution Strategy

The online distribution activity was supported by a global print and outdoor campaign using the strapline "Life to the Power of Nine" to highlight the product's multi-panel interface. Press ads ran in titles such as i-D magazine, National Geographic and Wallpaper to reach the product's target audience of males aged 25-44. To drive viewers to the website, iris created press and outdoor work trailing the series. By using a shortcode from a print or outdoor ad, viewers were able to download a mobile application, built by MEC, to watch the series on any handset. Online, the series was supported by video ads, where users could watch the trailer and click through to the site or view up-to-date episodes. Over a three week period, one new episode of Johnny X was available every Monday, Wednesday and Friday to end with a total count of nine videos.

Conclusions

The Johnny X campaign is a genuine example of how to commercially brand a webisode. The integration of the brand is very relevant in the videos, and does not seem forced. In each webisode new features from the phone are revealed, as the storyline goes on, which helps to keep the audience interested, as well as informed about key product features. Due to the relatively short interval, in which the campaign was distributed; the span of user attention was very concentrated which works well for product launches.

Nissan Qashqai.

<http://blog.spannerleague.com>

Background

An other brand which has had positive experiences with the webisode format is the relatively new Qashqai from Nissan. With Toyota as the largest competitor, the webisode format has been an excellent strategy to compete on a smaller budget, than if the same levels of awareness were to have been created on television. Furthermore, the format also targets segments, which would be impossible to target on TV advertising, since many consumers today spend most of their media consumption online.



Story Line

The general narrative of the two seasons has been that the Qashqai is about having fun in an urban vehicle. The series were created as the unofficial world championships of 'Qashqai Car Games', where contestants were competing in a variety of disciplines, all evolving around the car, of course.

Distribution Strategy

Nissan has with this online strategy had two major campaigns or 'seasons' in the Qashqai universe. Common to them both was that they spanned multiple webisodes each and users could easily think it's all one long campaign. This way, Nissan delivers content continuously to the users, who in return pays with attention. Each season has spanned 5-6 episodes – but even with this number it has only been possible to launch a new clip every 8-12 weeks.

Conclusions

Overall, approx 35 mio. views were generated for second season of the Qashqai Car Games. However, in effect there have been some large gaps between the launch of each episode. In short, the more often the brand can add to the campaign and content portfolio, the more likely it becomes that the level of awareness and engagement are kept at a constant and a positive momentum in the campaign is achieved. The longer between the gaps, the more risk of users forgetting the brand or losing interest.

Sony Ericsson: Puppy Pulling Power

<http://puppypullingpower.wordpress.com>

Background

With the new 'Smile Shutter' technology, the camera in the Sony Ericsson C510 Cyber Shot apparently takes a picture, every time somebody smiles in the camera. With its unique facial recognition software, Sony Ericsson wanted to make this a very strong point in the campaign. Therefore, the idea of 'Puppy Pulling Power' was introduced as a central theme in the campaign.



Story Line

The basic narrative of this campaign is centred on discovering, which puppy dog appeals mostly to women. A couple of guys sets out to gather their field data in the park. The experiment evolves around the Sony Ericsson C510, which is placed around the neck of five different breeds of puppy dogs. Which ever breed gets the most smiles from women is declared the winner.

Distribution Strategy

The campaign consisted of six different videos, a trailer and a full film of all separate videos. The campaign was split into two phases – distribution of the videos and the final publishing of the result of the field surveys. The very last video announces the winner of the competition.

Conclusions

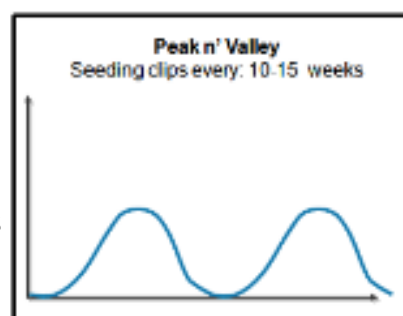
Setting up a campaign as a competition allows for a rather engaged audience, if the content is good enough. If it is, the user will feel compelled to follow the progress of the competition and come back to figure out, who won the whole thing. The only downside about this structure is that it becomes more difficult to follow up on a campaign like this, since it has been finished with an ending of the storyline.

Insight

One of the main differences between webisodes and online video advertising and traditional advertising lies in the format of distribution. Narrow casting and contextual seeding of today's advertising formats has made it possible to talk relevantly to just the right people. This introduces advertising as something valuable and relevant, instead of being an interrupting element of content consumption.

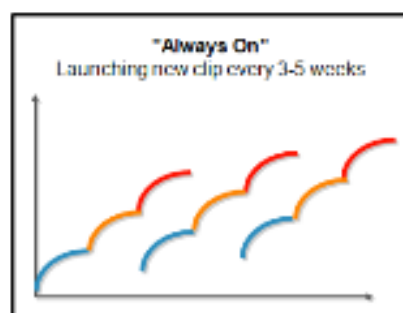
Traditional Burst Strategy

In traditional advertising, brands cannot afford to communicate to consumers all the time, or to be certain that they are communicating at exactly the right time, in order to affect the consumer when he is considering buying a product. This often results in brief burst strategies, where material is launched with major time gaps in between the ads. In these gaps, the consumer is most likely to forget about the brand and lose whatever brand preference that was built prior to the next ad.



Always On Strategy

With webisodes and online video advertising, it's possible to steer clear of this risk by pursuing an "Always On" strategy. Always On is about the brand always being ready to be found or to communicate, on whatever terms or conditions the user might have. Since internet advertising is so much cheaper, it's possible for brands to communicate all year long, instead of every two or three months on TV. The key is having a continued presence online by launching clips with much shorter intervals than traditional advertising and thereby 'building' on top of previously gained awareness or interest.



This way, later campaigns or pieces supplement earlier activities by adding to the momentum of the campaign. Brand preference and awareness is this way built on top of each other continuously and the brand ensures that when users initiate information search prior to a buying decision, the brand is present when it is relevant to the consumer.

This also calls for several pieces of content instead of one or two. The brand needs something to publish consecutively. Central is the idea of creating a narrative theme or universe, around which several pieces of content can be created.

Effect Measurement

Another interesting dimension of webisodes is that effect measurement is very much improved and precise, compared to earlier traditional advertising. In TV advertising (and plenty of other formats), most of the effect measurement is based on estimations. With webisodes or online video advertising it is possible to accurately track, how many users watch the video, comment, rate, share or otherwise interact with the material. A requirement for most online video advertising is the quality of the content. In traditional interruption-based media, content does not have to catch the audience the same way, it does on the Internet. If the audience does not like it, they won't watch it. However, if they do, they can be transformed into a very powerful ally by taking actively part in your distribution strategy. Today, online video advertising has also reached a maturity level of critical mass to create both reach and engagement, outcomes which are very difficult indeed with traditional advertising platforms.

In short, webisodes and other formats of online video advertising can help your brand reach the right audience, make the advertising message relevant instead of interrupting, comes at a much cheaper price and generates more precise and accountable effect measurement for evaluation and optimization purposes. There is probably no brand at all, that would not benefit from this platform – regardless of brand position.

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Kind regards,

Frederik Thestrup, Editor