Singapore Management University

Institutional Knowledge at Singapore Management University

Perspectives@SMU   Centre for Management Practice

11-2018

Twitter and the discovery mindset

Singapore Management University

Follow this and additional works at: https://ink.library.smu.edu.sg/pers

Part of the Communication Technology and New Media Commons, and the Social Media Commons

Twitter and the Discovery Mindset

30 Nov 2018

Understanding how social media is consumed can help make an ad more easily recalled

Following the explosive ending to the UFC fight between Conor McGregor and Khabib Nurmagomedov in October, Twitter was abuzz with fans of both fighters slinging virtual mud at one another. The big media Twitter markets of the U.S. and McGregor's native U.K. saw plenty of activity but the third highest amount of activity came from an unexpected location: Malaysia.

"Our penetration in Malaysia is tiny [but] it shows you that when there is something people are interested in, we know why they go on Twitter," explains **Martyn U'ren**, Twitter's Head of Research, Asia Pacific & Middle East and North America (MENA). "They're coming on to see what the public debate is, and they're looking to find out more information."

With Islam as its national religion, Malaysia's interest in a high-profile Muslim such as Nurmagomedov in a major sporting incident is easily understandable. It also exemplifies what Twitter calls the 'Discovery Mindset', which can be found in the following situations:

1. In the moment satisfaction: "To keep me stimulated or provide some escapism, maybe while waiting for a bus."
2. Short-term benefit: "When I need to know something in particular."
3. Feeling part of something: "Keeping up with what's going on makes me feel like I'm more involved and relevant."
4. Cultivating a positive identity: "I like discovering new ideas that feed my interests and project a positive image of me."

When done appropriately, U'ren elaborates, ads can create a memory.

"If we can come up with what's creating the memories, what works and what doesn't work, we can help our clients create better ads and solve some of those issues [that make people ignore or forget ads they have seen]."

Writing on the [Twitter blog](#), the social media giant's Head of Editorial for Europe, Middle East and Africa (EMEA) Gordon Macmillan explains:

> *"The fact that Twitter users are in a Discovery Mindset means they are less likely to filter information out. That's why viewing an ad on Twitter is over three times more effective at improving brand associations than viewing on other social media platforms.*
>
> *This is highlighted in how our study found 60% perceived branded content on Twitter as being trustworthy. That's significantly higher than branded content on other platforms. The reason for this is that because people curate their own timelines they are more open to trusting the content they see."*

"Previously it used to be all about the right message," says U'ren at a recent SMU Centre for Marketing Excellence talk titled "Twitter Research - Mindset Matters". "It used to be creating an ad that people remember. It then became all about media planning and buying – it was about the right time and right place.

"Now, it's about the right mindset. I need to speak to the right audience. It's great that they understand who they are. But how can I dig into the mindset they are in when I'm looking to communicate to them?"

The role of research

Twitter, U'ren says, invests heavily in neuroscience research to find out what makes a tweet or content on Twitter memorable. For text-based tweets, using emotive words work well.

"Try and look at some words and not read them," U'ren elaborates. "Once you've learnt to read, the ability to read goes into the fast-thinking part of the brain. We might not even want to read it but we read it anyway.

The tweets that go against human nature just drifts off.

"Bright colours are another thing. A research agency we worked with said that messages with bright colours were more successful. Stop signs are red and white because there are no red and white combinations in the natural environment. If it were green and grey it'd fade into the background."

While U'ren admits there is "a whole load of data" at Twitter regarding users' online behaviour, the best research into understanding how people use technology comes from talking to real people. With regard to lessons he has learnt trying to deliver insights and value to brands advertising on Twitter, U'ren mentioned the following: the Romans, NASA, and fashion icon Tom Ford.

"When NASA came to design the space shuttle," he says, "they had to transport the rockets. They had to put those rockets on a train, which is of a certain width. That width is determined by the width of the train track, which was determined by the people who built the trains; those tracks were built on roads, which came from the U.K.; all the roads in the U.K. were built by the Romans.

"The Romans built the roads in such a way that only one car can go on either side and no wider. It's designed that way because it's inefficient to build it any wider. What this talks about 'path dependency'. Every time you have a new question or research project, you should think about, 'How have I got here? Am I going to do the same things as I've always done?'

"Stop asking the same questions Stop asking the same people. Speak to the actual audience and find out what's happening."

As for Tom Ford, U'ren had this to say:

> *"Every fashion show has only 15 minutes of catwalk time. One minute of that is used just to sit guests down, so it's only 13 minutes because at the end there is another minute for the designer walk out to applause or not. Here he is, he has create billions of dollars in fashion sales based off 13 minutes of delivery.*
>
> *Designers know from that immediate feedback loop how well sales are going to go. Think like Tom Ford [and create a memory]."*

He concludes: "One key lesson we've learnt by looking at the platform is that it is very hard to create memories. It's extremely hard. How can you take something and make people remember what was presented? In other words, how can you present like Tom Ford?"

Follow us on Twitter (@sgsmuperspectiv) or like us on Facebook (https://www.facebook.com/PerspectivesAtSMU)