

Changing Consumer Media Consumption Demands Better Communications Approaches

By Lyle Bunn

This article was published in the April 9, 2010 Wall Street Journal, East Coast Editions as part of a special supplement on Digital Signage / Digital Place-based Media published by MediaPlanet. Lyle Bunn served as principal writer and editor of this supplement.

“The pace of change in the way that people consume media and the way communicating happens is accelerating” says media pundit Shelly Palmer, “so the key issue for advertisers and other communicators is critical mass and efficient message targeting”. “Digital Place-based Media is “message targeting on steroids” because it reaches mass audiences, with strong geographic and demographic targeting, and is easy to plan and buy.”

“The consumer is no longer tethered down in front of a TV screen or a computer screen at home or office” observes David Keene, Executive Editor, Digital Signage Magazine. “They have and are using technology on the go, on the fly, and the industries that used to dictate the flow of content are now finding themselves on the other side of the equation—scrambling to keep up with a fast-moving digitally enabled consumer. We live in an age when every person, and every place, is Internet Protocol (IP)-addressable”.

Consumers’ media consumption has changed, and so the media that is used to influence purchase decisions and other actions must change as well. No individual media can be expected to fulfill the communications and business goals, so each media type including Digital Place-based should be considered relative to the communications intent and overall media plan and purchase.

SeeSaw Networks has advanced the practice of Life Pattern Marketing™, the practice of placing companies’ brand messages on digital place-based screens and billboards that are located where busy people really are: while they grab a coffee in the morning, get a workout in their favorite health club at lunch, while they shop for groceries in the afternoon and while they stop on their way home to fill their gas tank. “The key is context” says Rocky Gunderson of SeeSaw “The psychological impact on a consumer getting the brand message in many contexts permeates the “noise” and builds awareness and retention. Life-Pattern Marketing™ creates the perception of brand ubiquity, enabling companies to cost-effectively imprint their message onto the minds of those they are trying to reach and engage with them”.

In 2009, SeeSaw Networks network of place-based digital video locations grew to over 35,000, and available weekly impressions grew to over 238 million per week (815% over 2008). This reach is equivalent to a weekly nationwide 17 GRP (gross rating point) or 24 weekly GRP for the top 20 DMAs. SeeSaw’s impressive reach, combined with innovative Life Pattern Marketing™ methodology, market leading campaign optimization planning capability, and compelling research and analytics allow brands in a broad range of verticals including automotive, financial services, retail, telecom, CPG, entertainment, and consumer electronics to benefit from place-based digital media.

Richard Fisher, President & CEO of PRN says “Digital place-based advertising combines the power of television with the proximity of place, and is an effective choice for advertisers. For brands and agencies, it’s now critical to have a complementary mix of traditional and emerging media to engage consumers across many different touch-points throughout their days”.

“As the impact of traditional advertising declines” says Michael Chase, VP Marketing, Sales & Creative for St. Joseph Content, “and consumer who regularly use technology to do their research and shopping further shape and define our retail marketplace, brands must focusing on ‘new media’ solutions, shopper marketing strategies and creating unique and richer connections between products and digital experiences; connecting print advertising, OOH, digital and augmented reality; and finally, fundamentally transforming marketing and media communications to cross-channel, participatory, interactive and two-way mediums. In becoming a formative part of the consumer “path to purchase”, this potent medium has the power to reinforce key brand features and benefits at or near the point of purchase – persuading consumers and ultimately activating the sale.”

Companies know that the more engaged a consumer is with their on-line content, the more likely the consumer is to make a “buy” decision so full multi-touch interactivity holds promise for increased customer engagement. As digital signage developers adopt these new full multi-touch capabilities into their applications, user’s will be drawn to this immersive “digital consumer space” that brand marketers can use to introduce and reinforce their brand promise, to increase the level of their customer intimacy, and to deliver a customer experience like never before.

“Full multi-touch technology helps fulfill the promise of dynamic and immersive digital signage applications that engage consumers and help influence their buying decision,” says Chris Colbert, general manager, 3M Touch Systems.

Everwell TV uses multiple consumer contact points. Loren Goldfarb, EVP, Content & Distribution of Everwell TV says “Our engaging wellness and lifestyle content plays across the Everwell TV network in nearly 1,000 doctors' office waiting rooms across the country. Advertisers buy time across the network but also have the opportunity to reach consumers through our other platforms including our consumer Web site, everwell.com, e-mail newsletters and iPhone app. In addition, ad packages can incorporate our growing list of high-traffic Web partners, all of which feature Everwell's video content. The combination of Everwell's properties and those of our partners provides a truly "surround sound" approach for brands and expanded revenue opportunities for Everwell”.

As consumers evolve, savvy brands will communicate with consumers and patrons on their terms.

Lyle Bunn is an independent consultant and educator in North America’s Digital Signage, Digital Place-based and new media industries. www.LyleBunn.com