

ADVERTISING

Reshaping sponsored content to boost authenticity, engagement

November 6, 2014



Dolce & Gabbana sponsored pin on The Cut

By NANCY BUCKLEY

NEW YORK – Micropublishing allows brands to reach large numbers of readers on platforms where they feel comfortable, according to panelists at ad:tech New York 2014 on Nov 5.

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Two experts in micropublishing spoke on "The State of Mobile Creative – Micropublishing Platforms" panel about the space on mobile devices for readers to engage continually with amateur writers as they develop chapters and stories. This space also creates a personal experience for brands to reach out to consumers to tell their own stories through the words of their favorite authors in sponsored posts.

"The advertising is the content and the distinction is a promoted art or symbol," said Candice Faktor, general manager at [Wattpad](#), Toronto.

"That is why the content that is advertising needs to be really entertaining," she said. "And that is what we are finding, it really is. So you have Interstitial ads between chapters that show stories you may like and one may be promoted and the other may be a original story."

Reading and writing

Many brands focus on images and videos in campaigns to engage the consumer with quick thoughts about the product or brand. However, there is still a space for sponsored text content.

Most readers engage with a micropublisher at times when they are not able to listen to sound, such as on their commute or before bed. The desire to simply read is still present, evident by the number of readers on micropublishing platforms.

Storytelling through mobile writing platforms creates a place for aspiring writers to tell stories in short segments that can lead to larger tales.

Within these mobile narratives, there is room for sponsored content. This content can be a fun narrative concept that can bring consumers more information than a traditional advertisement.

The micropublisher can rake through their authors and discover which ones have the greatest reader followings and will gain the most attention to sponsored posts.



Panelists

Through micropublishing it is evident that content strategy and creative are aligned. With content strategy the textual updates and sponsored content can be used in the same context.

“The modern magazine is mobile first, serial, social and paid,” said David Jacobs, CEO of [29th Street Publishing](#), New York. “It is easier than ever to discover new content and new writers.”

It can be important to connect with writers and their readers for sponsored content. Writers exist everywhere now because of blogs, so it is important to find these people and use their reach to connect with consumers.

Native advertising in micropublishing lets writers do what they are already doing and, with a brand, create an advertisement around their writing in sponsored posts.

Brands can create text to tell their own stories or share a branded content tale that will intrigue readers. The use of pre-established online authors allows brands to reach an already formed reader base and have the story told from someone outside the brand itself.

Once upon a time

Creating stories outside of the brand's usual space makes a fun and interesting campaign for consumers to interact with more than just the brand's products.

For instance, Italian fashion house Dolce & Gabbana elaborated on the ingredients that compose its fragrances through sponsored content on New York magazine's blog The Cut.

Dolce & Gabbana sponsored The Cut's "Italy in 30 Days" section that publishes articles about the country's food, designers, news and other cultural topics. The brand's presence in this dedicated section likely reaffirmed Dolce & Gabbana's heritage and interest in modern day Italy ([see story](#)).

Similarly, Hilton's Waldorf Astoria Hotels and Resorts enlisted British author Simon van Booy to pen a short story with the hotel as both a setting and a player for its latest ad campaign that raises awareness about various properties.

The story, titled "The Escape Artist," was set against the backdrop of the Waldorf Astoria's Chicago property, and follows fictional fashion designer Alexandra, played by actress Olga Kurylenko, who travels to the hotel to get inspiration for her latest collection ([see story](#)).

Engaging brands with writers and their content allows readers to interact with a brand in a non-threatening, whimsical manner.

"In terms of what gets the most engagement is when you commission writers who really understand the platform and know how to write for mobile social platforms," Ms. Faktor said.

"Writers who have really big audiences were targeting their audiences to read these commissioned stories," she said. "And the stories were written in a way that was very aligned very aligned with the platform."

Final Take

Nancy Buckley, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York

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