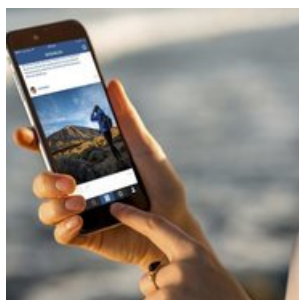


MARKETING

Branded, sponsored content are working in early efforts to evade ad-blocking

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Content marketing is making a connection

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Marketers' efforts to circumvent ad-blocking are showing signs of being effective, with one new report revealing that branded content is driving higher brand recall than pre-roll ads for some while separate research found that sponsored posts on Instagram are hitting the mark.

Mobile-equipped consumers are hungry for engaging content but not interested in annoying ads. With these same consumers spending a significant chunk of their media time on mobile, savvy marketers are doubling down on their content marketing programs, with separate research from Nielsen and Markerly suggesting initial success.

"Marketers that consider the format in which the content is delivered, the elements within the content beyond just the brand, and the surrounding environment in which the content is delivered tend to see the most success in terms of brand impact," said Harry Brisson, director of lab research at [Nielsen](#), in a [blog post](#) about the research.

Brand recall

Nielsen found that quality branded content on both desktop and mobile outperforms pre-roll advertising. Branded content, in this case, refers to entertainment or editorial content combined with brand or product messaging.

Nielsen compared the same brand marketed as both branded content and pre-roll ad and found that the branded content generated an average of 86 percent brand recall among viewers. In contrast, the pre-roll ad generated 65 percent brand recall. Additionally, the lift in brand perceptions was higher for branded content across key performance indicators such as affinity, purchase intent and recommendation intent.

The analysis also found a positive correlation between intent to view future episodes and positive impact on brand lift metrics.

Given that content marketing is scaling up as marketers look to minimize the impact of ad-blocking and engage consumers, competition is heating up, putting pressure on marketers to create content that will break through the clutter.

Nielsen's research and content testing identified some common themes for content that resonates with audiences, with viewers more receptive to brand messaging when content is captivating, relatable and of high quality.

Relatable content

One key finding was that when viewers felt that content was relatable on a personal level, this correlated positively with intent to view.

Additionally, Nielsen found that hosts and characters should be relatable along with being likeable and credible as experts. The findings show that viewers who rate a video's central personality to be "excellent" are significantly more likely to seek out additional content than viewers who rate the personality as "fair" or "poor."

Nielsen also found that marketers that distributed their branded content in partnership with a publisher saw a higher brand lift 50 percent higher, on average than those who published content on their own.

Visual quality

In another report reviewing sponsored and non-sponsored posts on Instagram over the past two years, Markerly found that sponsored content on Instagram is connecting with users, with non-sponsored posts and sponsored posts having a nearly identical like rate. The minimal gap means brands have the potential to reach and engage audiences through sponsored content, giving them control over the message while benefitting from a sense of follower trust with the content coming from the influencer.

"With an increased emphasis on the visual quality of Instagram content, brands need to be mindful of how sponsored content appears when viewed by a consumer," said Sarah Ware, CEO of [Markerly](#). "When scrolling through Instagram, many consumers want to experience content that feels natural and organic as the thought of reading an ad' can often be a deterrent.

"When analyzing the differences between 'good' and 'bad' content, we noticed that there was less follower engagement on posts that featured unnatural product placements, text layered on the photographs, and poor photography," she said.

"By avoiding those common content marketing mistakes and ensuring sponsored content is created correctly, it can be a valuable tool for brand marketing initiatives."