

MARKETING

Consumer-centric advertising models seen as solution to commercial aversion

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Bang & Olufsen television

By SARAH JONES

NEW YORK – The television advertising system needs to be overhauled to enhance rather than distract from the viewing experience, according to an executive from Turner speaking at ad:tech New York 2016.

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During a panel discussion titled “Defining the Future: The Turner Ad Lab Research Initiative,” speakers explained their joint venture to uncover ways to make advertising more relevant to consumers. With increasing ways to avoid commercials, whether through online streaming or ad-blocking, marketers need to find ways to deliver messages that provide value to the consumer, making them want to engage.

"We realized about a year ago that if we had thought about building the TV model to be more consumer-centric, would have a very different ad experience than what people live through in today's world," said Howard Shimmel, chief research officer of **Turner Broadcasting**.

"There are some cable networks where they run more than 20 minutes of non-programmed time in an hour of programming, so one minute of something other than programming for every two minutes of actual programming," he said.

"So as we've thought about it, studied Netflix and Hulu and other SVOD (subscription video on demand) services, we've realized that one of the benefits they bring to consumers is the ability to see video without ads. Think about the digital world and the challenge everybody is facing now with ad blockers.

"It's all a sign that as media, I don't think we've necessarily developed in a way that is consumer-centric and in a way that makes advertising a natural and enhancing part of the viewing experience."

Collective effort

The Turner Ad Lab Research Initiative is focusing on finding what is turning consumers off advertising, while also investigating what constitutes a positive advertising experience for them.

One of the potential turn-offs and opportunities lies in data collection. There is a push and pull between marketers and consumers, as both dance around trying to find a balance between the amount of information they will give up

to help receive better ads.

Sheri Roder, chief of Horizon Media's Why Group, said that she sees that transparency goes a long way. As long as brands are open, even though some consumers may opt out, there will be others who consent to data collection.



Image courtesy of Sony

There is a conflict between traditional and digital media brewing, according to Zane Vella, founder/CEO of Watchwith. As television shows migrate to additional digital platforms, the ad serving mechanisms also shift, with targeting more representative of online channels.

It may seem that digital targeting tactics could transition to television, enabling advertisers to better pinpoint their ideal audience. However, while a smartphone or a computer are typically used by only one person, a television set is often shared, making accurate targeting more difficult on that screen.

Looking to change the one-dimensional, primitive nature of television, Mr. Vella's company is experimenting with the idea of interactive overlays. These ad placements would enable the audience to engage if interested or skip over, putting more power in the hands of the viewer.



Watchwith brand engagement effort during programming

Other hopeful opportunities for television include an equivalent of Google AdWords, in which media buys would be made around relevant content. While it has not happened yet, this would make an ad seem less disruptive to the viewer, positioning it more as an extension of the entertainment.

Turner's Mr. Shimmel mentioned a native spot featuring Maya Rudolph that ran during an episode of TBS' "Full Frontal with Samantha Bee." When the show resumed after the two-minute spot, engagement with the show increased.

Another element of Turner's research initiative is looking at the measurement of advertising's impact on KPIs.

When investigating the failed efficacy of an ad, it could be attributed to either the placement's creative itself or the context of the ad. The only way to truly know what will work is experimentation.

Targeted approach

For luxury brands with specific target audiences, both context and content are important.

Auction house Bonhams celebrated the stories that antiques carry with them through an integrated advertising campaign centered on its first television placement.

Bonhams played its ads through Sky Adsmart, a new media buying offer for Sky channels that enables different ads to be served to different households who are watching the same program. This makes television buys on national channels more scalable for niche businesses and those with a specific target audience ([see story](#)).

Some luxury advertisers have tested new forms of television spots with success.

Toyota Corp.'s Lexus experimented with a new form of television advertising that enhanced the channel's relevance in the digital world.

The automaker introduced skippable ads on Smart TVs and received surprisingly strong interaction rates. As the nature of TV viewership changes, brands have to find ways to ensure that their spots are actually watched ([see story](#)).

"How intrusive do you find the ads in Vanity Fair magazine?" Mr. Shimmel asked. "Not at all.

"And the whole idea that you have other media who have done a great job at interspersing highly relevant, high quality ads that are part of the consumption experience is something we want to get to in TV."

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