

Accessing the youth market in 2022

By Ryan McFadyen

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A key demographic globally and locally, the youth market is becoming harder and harder to reach through media and advertising. It's also historically cynical of advertising.



Source: www.pexels.com

As a result, many marketers have re-focused their marketing approach on purpose-driven marketing, which speaks to the youth's desire to have a positive impact on the world. Similarly, based on the fact that 94% of the global youth market are on social media, there has been a big focus on always-on social strategies focused on engagement.

The question is, is this what appeals to the youth? The answer is yes and no.

According to various research studies conducted by agencies like Wunderman Thompson and Voxburn, the youth market sees purpose-marketing and social media as a hygiene aspect of a brand. They believe that businesses should stand for more than just profit, and that social media and digital should be an integral part of the way a brand communicates with its audience. That said, the other consistent insight pulled from the various reports is that, in order to engage and build affinity with the youth market, a brand above all else needs to entertain them.

A simple case in point is Red Bull or Nike's social media strategies. Red Bull creates amazing content and shares this

across multiple digital platforms to entertain and inspire the youth audience. The brand itself is authentically placed into the content in a way that shows the brand's purpose of giving wings to people and ideas while pushing the limits of human performance.



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Nike, similarly, stays true to its brand mission of inspiring and motivating the everyday athlete with its approach to content. This has seen Nike become the most-followed brand account on Instagram with 198 million followers. The content is inspiring, entertaining, immaculately crafted and culturally relevant.

Brand values

In both cases, the brands' values are front and centre while the brands' products are subtly woven into the fabric of the content. Traditional push marketing doesn't work. 79% of the global youth want their money to go to a brand they believe in and with which they believe they share the same values.

Simply put, a key focus for brands in 2022 should be entertaining content that speaks to the brand's value in an authentic manner while still providing an authentic way to showcase their products.

But that's not all...It still needs to be distributed through the right channels where the youth audience can find it. Choosing the right channels will be critical to success in 2022. So, what are these channels?

First up, social media and digital will remain front and centre for this generation. But it won't just be Facebook and Instagram. This is not to dismiss these channels: as a channel to drive traffic to a website or host e-commerce or build awareness they are still very important.

But to entertain and engage marketers will need to look to trends such as virtual worlds, social mediatainment and the growth of audio.

Virtual worlds

By now, most marketers have heard of the exponential growth of gaming. With the growth trend forecast to continue to grow, brands are diving headfirst into the space. And the approach which is having the biggest impact with the youth market currently is branded virtual worlds.

Many brands are turning to established gaming platforms to tap into their existing audiences. You simply have to look at the success of Wendy's or the popularity of the Marvel Skins within Fortnite for proof.

More recently, however, brands have been tapping into the ever-popular Roblox universe in the hope of engaging the platform's 46 million daily active users. These brands include Ralph Lauren, Nike, Vans and even Hyundai. All included virtual games, digital collections for avatars and the ability to engage with the brand in relevant, fun and entertaining ways.

Social mediatainment

Traditional storytelling is evolving and moving across to social media. With plots that develop entirely on social media profiles, fictional characters who engage with each other and their followers and dramas that unfold in social media feeds, companies and brands are looking to social media as the next entertainment channels.

The Wunderman Thompson Future 100 report shows that FourFront is “revolutionizing TV through TikTok.” FourFront, which secured \$1.5 million in seed funding in October 2021, is a new kind of content studio. It produces scripted narratives on social media that have the look and feel of regular posts, featuring fictional characters who have their own storylines, social media pages, and interact with followers organically. As of October 2021, FourFront had reportedly garnered 1.9 million followers and 281 million views across its characters’ TikTok accounts.

The growth of audio

Audio is becoming a key engagement channel again. From podcasts to retail radio to spatial audio, the category is becoming a powerful aspect of youth marketing activities. Podcasts listenership is currently growing by 15.5% monthly in 18 key territories including the US, UK and China according to emarketer.com.

The expansion of retail radio, lead locally by inBroadcasting, is seeing amazing results in terms of audience growth and listener affinity. And spatial sound is being rolled out globally by Apple across its product lines, while brands such as Cartier are creating immersive audio experiences.



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According to Wunderman Thompson: “Social media platforms such as Instagram have driven a hyper-focus on visual elements over the past decade. Now, especially as digital platforms mature and engagement evolves, the focus is shifting to multisensory elements - audio, in particular - for a truly immersive experience.”

In summary, youth marketing is constantly evolving and so marketers need to stay on top of trends being adopted by the market. But most importantly, marketers need to keep in mind that above all else, the youth market needs to be entertained.

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