



A Glance at the Audience of Online Branded Content

By Samuel SORS

Under the direction of Anne-Flore MAMAN, Ph.D.

info@semioconsult.com

Acknowledging the global trend in usage of online branded content by all types of businesses, SemioConsult® buys Samuel Sors's proposal to try to segment the audience for such content. Such segmentation appears as a prerequisite to ROI measures. 252 consumers have been surveyed in order to assess their exposure, attitude towards and willingness to share branded content, with a particular focus at generational differences. Do not hesitate to get back to us, should you need a deeper analysis of the market or should you have any queries regarding this project.

What is "Branded Content"?

"Branded content is some kind of editorial content supported or provided by a brand. Its definition has been extended to all types of processes and communication tools related to some 'content'" Bo & Guevel (2010)

Such content may take many faces: books, magazines, documentaries, short-films, films, mobile apps, communities, web TV, events, websites, exhibitions, etc.

Three types of contents can be identified: informative (ex: advices from insurance advisers), functional (ex: a recipe book edited by Betty Crocker), or playful (musical content, online games ...).

If the production of branded content is far from being new, it faces a bunch of new developments and challenges with digital technologies. It is thus now a core component of brand management strategies. Companies tend to increase their spending in it, especially with more and more saturation in traditional media communication. Consumers do expect innovative and disruptive formats of communication, challenges which can be met through branded content campaigns

Who Relies Upon Branded Content?

Branded content is everywhere. A recent study conducted by the Custom Content Council (2010) shows that 68% of US companies state being willing to reinforce their branded content strategies. But far from being a marketing tool only targeted at individual consumers, it stands for 29% of total investments in B2B communication.

Why Using Branded Content?

- 1) **It helps businesses offer relevant and customized content to their target audience, while at the same time engaging in some dialogue with her.** Tailored content to a given community of consumers will undoubtedly grasp more its members' interest, and digital tools will enable them to react directly to the content. The higher the quality of the offered content (related to its legitimacy and relevance), the more compelled consumers will feel, thus being willing to share the contents with their acquaintances.
- 2) Branded content is a great way of **expressing all the facets of a given brand identity**, while at the same time **avoiding the limits** set by traditional above the line communication tools.
- 3) It is a useful element in an Integrated Marketing Communication strategy and a great support to more traditional communication campaigns (billboards, print, TV commercials, etc).

RESULTS FROM THE STUDY:

The study lasted 6 months. The sample of respondents included 252 French consumers, with demographics representative of the French population. Not all consumers end up being equal as far as branded content is concerned:

. **16-35 year-old people are more exposed to branded content:** More than half of respondents belonging to this cluster state they are exposed to branded content on a daily basis. The Internet is their most favourite way to get access to such content, as they consider it the most convenient.

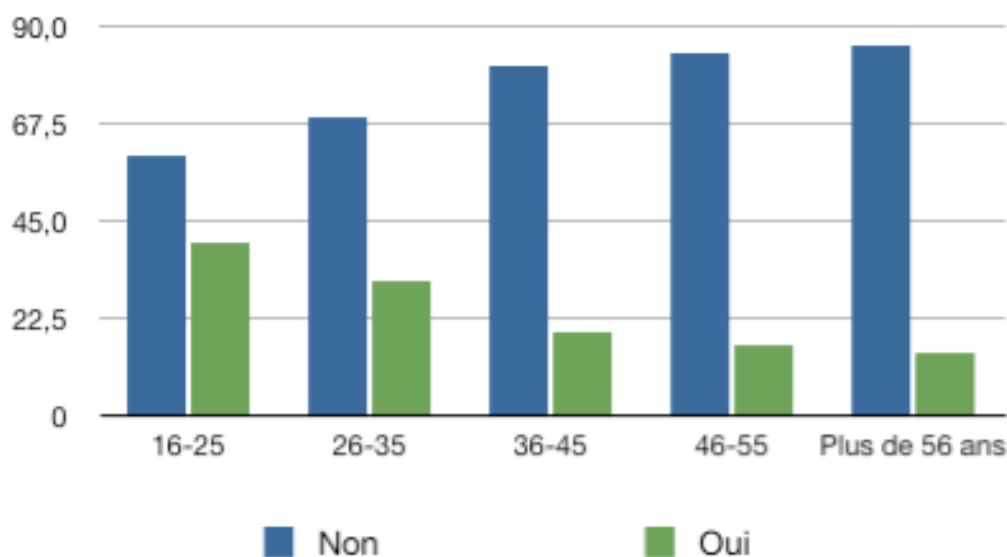
. **Young people are more prone at launching viral campaigns around branded content:** The 16-35 year old are willing to share and forward such content (47.2% of the 16-25 vs. 53.1% of the 26-35). Recommending and sharing content exponentially decreases with age. Similarly the sharing method changes with age-cluster: young respondents tend to rely upon online tools (such as social networks) while elder people favour offline word-of-mouth.

. **A better impact of playful branded content on the 16-25:** For the various key success factors of such campaigns (recognition/awareness; brand values recognition & understanding; and actual purchase), the 16-25 year-old are leading the way.

Focus on answers to the question “Do you find that such contents help you get a more precise image of the brand and of its values?”

. **Branded content is highly criticized...** Respondents do not like the too much visible presence of the brand in the content, and do not feel it is relevant for the brand to get involved in cultural production.

. **...but at the same time is well appreciated by some proportion of the respondents (see graph below)** simultaneously, other respondents feel that funding cultural production is positive for a brand, especially when the content is of good quality. They find it a good alternative to traditional advertising.



Answers to the question:

“Do you find that such contents help you get a more precise image of the brand and of its values?”

Main Takeaways:

✓ **The 16-25 year-old should be considered as priority target for playful original branded content.** Even if access to the Internet is equally shared among consumers, young people are more exposed to branded content. Besides, they are more prone at sharing the content and turning it into a buzz, and better grasp its meaning.

- ✓ **The quality of the content is of the highest importance** to be able to get consumers' interest, while they are overexposed to communication in general.
- ✓ **Brands should build some legitimacy as content producers**, for example positioning themselves as experts in their area. This is a prerequisite to sound credible in consumers' minds.
- ✓ The Golden Rule: **Content should be consistent with brand image** or the pre-stated legitimacy will never exist.

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