

Brand tribes; where passion has no boundary

Knowing more about consumers has never been more important as the pressure to deliver bang for your marketing buck, as well as give a consumer what they want, has intensified.

But are we all too focused on knowing the short term minutia details of data streams on each potential and actual consumer, instead of delving deeper into more authentic and longer lasting segmentation tactics that focus on brand loyalty and harnessing powerful strategies such as the old school 'word of mouth' approach?

A notion that has been sticking with some brands, such as Pernod Ricard, is that of the 'brand tribe', but this meaning, much like 'AI' and 'CX', can have different interpretations and can be difficult to nail down to just one firm definition.

French beverage giant Pernod Ricard, which employs more than 18,000 people, owns a wide variety of drink brands worldwide such as Havana Club, Jameson Irish Whiskey and Jacob's Creek, has long been a fan of the 'tribal strategy' when it comes to marketing and zoning in on who its consumers are.

"A tribe is a community sharing common interests/passions who act as accelerators and generate word of mouth, amplifying and endorsing brands by choice," the brand said in its marketing documents.

But are all marketers switched on to the opportunity of tribes, the power of 'share' or a recommendation and how do you spot brand advocacy?

In a bid to tackle some of the questions around these so-called brand tribes, RadiumOne held a roundtable in partnership with AdNews. RadiumOne is a huge advocate of brand tribes as it very much believes in the power of the consumer sharing action and the intent it shows - be that via a social sharing interaction or increasingly through more intimate and telling 'dark social' means - such as email or direct message.



From loyal brand advocates who truly believe in your offering, to the enthused influencers aligned with your products, the common fan who likes and follows your online social media assets and the devoted brand 'insiders' that get exclusive access and sneak peeks, what constitutes as a loyal and authentic brand and consumer relationship can fall into many buckets.

Hosted by AdNews online editor Pippa Chambers, the roundtable included head of consumer marketing at PayPal Liz Lefort; head of digital and social at Lenovo Asia Pacific Danielle Uskovic; founder and CEO at influencer marketing company Social Soup Sharyn Smith; digital strategist at Spark Foundry media agency James Drewe and RadiumOne marketing director Jodie Koning - who also has brand experiences at major brands such as McDonald's, Smirnoff, Diageo and Blackmores.

Huge scale of connectivity boosts tribes

"Tribes aren't new," PayPal's Lefort said. "If you go back to even grandma's knitting groups or anti-fur groups - there's always been people that are ultimately really passionate about something and wanted to drive a difference."

"But what has changed is the way that we're connected. It's the mobile technology, the ease and convenience and the scale in which we can communicate with each other now. That's the real call out for me around tribes and that's something that we've definitely been talking about internally."

Lefort, who previously worked at Westpac, recalled how years ago

Roundtable panelists

- PayPal head of consumer marketing **Liz Lefort**
- Lenovo Asia Pacific head of digital and social **Danielle Uskovic**
- Social Soup founder and CEO **Sharyn Smith**
- Spark Foundry digital strategist at **James Drewe**
- RadiumOne marketing director **Jodie Koning**
- Moderator AdNews online editor **Pippa Chambers**



there was the saying of 'you have a good experience and you tell four people, you have a bad experience and you tell 12', but added she'd hate to even think what the scale of that number looks like now.

"Customers don't step away and say 'I'm going to go home to think about how bad that customer experience was and I'm going to write a letter to whoever'. It's actually instant - it's on social and people are commenting straight away," she said.

"The thing for us is how you use that strength and you use the power in the tribes and the passion that people have, but you've got to be really conscious of it. It is something that you need to face into."

Uskovic said Lenovo wants its actual employees to talk about the brand and wants them to be its advocates. "We want them to be leading from the front and sharing our content, because that's more believable than us - than that corporate branded message," Uskovic explained. It also uses influencers and has an extreme group super-fans - some with Lenovo tattoos.

"What we look for are people that are passionate about our brand, that really want to be part of it," Uskovic said. "It's the same with influencers, we look at those that actually already fit in with our brand, rather than just go and approach just someone that will be a one-off, we want it to be a long-term relationship."

The group agreed that a group of 'fans' alone is not necessarily a tribe, as those fans may identify with very different things about that brand. It might just be status orientated or lifestyle focused.

Social Soup's Smith said there needs to be more than just a brand as the shared common brand tribe denominator. "Ultimately a brand should be the connector rather than the destination for a strong tribe to exist around them."

The powerful territory of word of mouth

Spark's Drewe said the word 'fan' has been watered down incredibly

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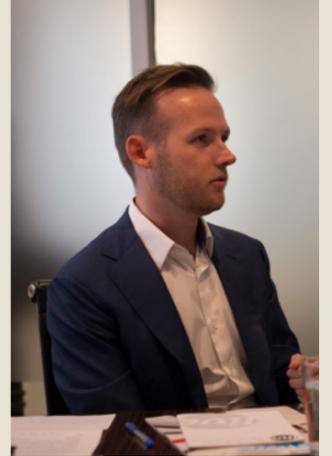
Lenovo head of digital & social, Danielle Uskovic

since Facebook. He said from a sporting sense you'd have fans that go to games, buy all the merchandise, actively support the product and follow their team through the ups and downs. "But when you try and use the words 'fan' for any consumer product, it's like, "Oh yeah, that's just a bunch of people who clicked the thumbs-up icon on Facebook," he said.

Drewe argued that for a lot of tribes around passions, the brands they like to associate with could quite easily be interchanged at any one point in time. Why? Because it's passion that really brings those people together - not the brand. "Product doesn't really come into it, when you have the fact that people for a very long time have been associating Nike with athletic performance and amateur athletes who would love to focus on being able to do that better."

Koning also argued that brands can get caught up in thinking the tribes are forming for the brand only, but actually a tribal member may be spreading or sharing content to help friends out - that is their core angle. "The fundamental human need to connect makes us happy. Connections are one of the key drivers of happiness and we continue to look for it - and the way that we connect with the world is often through tribes," Koning said.

Koning said what's also



interesting is the sharing that's done via more intimate channels such as in messenger and email. Many brands are blind to some of the 'dark social' behaviours that they can be privy too - with the right technology. 'JODIE to add 1 short quote about how dark social = great results.' 'JODIE to add 1 short quote about how dark social = great results.'

Give and you get

"People choose brands the same way as they choose their friends. So you need to foster, you need to build, you need to be authentic and you need to build that trust," Lefort said

Drewe concluded that the best approach is not to go in with the intention of selling and instead have the intention of building trust in a relationship - and the sales should hopefully come from that.

Despite not being a quick win and that cultivating a tribe will present challenges, all agreed that it's worth the effort as when in full swing, brand tribes will provide an incredibly self-sustaining ecosystem once up and running.

Want to know more about dark social and RadiumOne? Visit www.radiumone.com

