

‘Noise about nothingness’, turning off eMarketing: The disconnected consumer, identity and behavior

An exploratory study

Dr Mariann Hardey, Associate Director Centre for Communication

Lecturer, Durham University

@mazrred

Disconnected research

Purpose - Exploratory study to develop an understanding of 'disconnected' consumers, decision-making and reaction to eMarketing content.

Design/methodological approach – Based on subjective responses of 50 interviews with consumers who responded to the publication of two research advertisements. Qualitative, based on in-depth and semi-structured interviews.

Practical implications –The research depends on the self identification of 'disconnection' by consumers who have observed and recognise certain practices of eMarketing.

Research limitations -Data forms part of consumer self-reportage, making it difficult to repeat for comparison or validation. Also relies on material from consumers who are willing to self-disclose.

- Diversity of consumers and sense of multiplicity.
- *Get over the digital divide* – Connections, like consumer's, are nuanced.
- Some consumers minimise exposure to marketing and branded content.
- Various risks from ill considered social media campaigns that assume all consumers are the same.
- Why? Because they are seen to intrude into spaces consumers think are personal and private.
- Discord: As consumer's are motivated to disconnect.
- Deliberately isolate themselves from marketing messages, *but not socially*.
- How data finds us suggests privacy settings = easy for consumers to manage connections. Expect to manage connections. Appropriate response marketing message.

'eMarketing' is MISSING THE MESSAGE.

Search for Stories

Enter keywords:

400 million stories to explore and share

Photos Videos Comments Links

Loading stories

How has Facebook helped you?

Title of story:

Facebook story:

Submit

*Access to information technology and the ability to use it increasingly [have] become part of the toolkit necessary to participate and **prosper** in an information-based society.*

Servon and Nelson (2001: 279)

Getting over the digital divide

In reconsidering the digital divide Neil Selwyn has surmised that this to be a simple premise:

1. The have's vs the have nots;



2. Universal access';

Grounded in primarily economic judgments that are 'simplistic, formalistic' (Burgelman, 2000: 56).

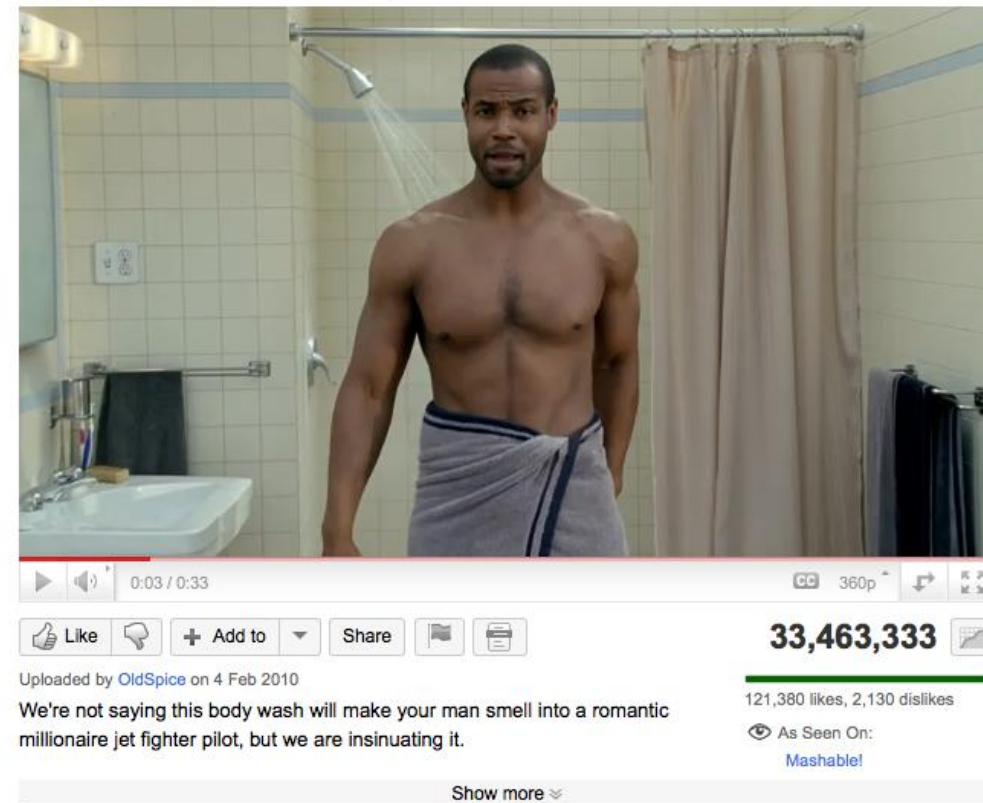
eMarketing has been quick to push toward the have's.



...limited and rudimentary?

Old Spice | The Man Your Man Could Smell Like

OldSpice 205 videos  



“the fastest-growing and most popular interactive campaign in history.”

Robin Grant from wearesocial.com.

- More people watched Old Spice commercial in 24 hours than those who watched Obama’s presidential victory speech.
- Total video views reached 40 million in a week.
- Campaign impressions: 1.4 billion in the first 6 months.
- Since the campaign launched, Old Spice Bodywash sales are up 27%; in the last three months up 55%; and in the last month up 107%

Statistics from **Wieden+Kennedy’s Old Spice case study**, August 2010.

TIPP ex Royal wedding.

Method

Not intended to be a large-scale, 'high-response' representative study.

Central issue to do with degrees of disconnection and sensitivity to 'noisy and intrusive' commercial information.

The approach allowed focus on consumer experiences and practices and to 'tell the story' about their disconnection.

Bardhi, F., Rohm, A.J., & Sultan, F. 2010. Tuning in and tuning out: media multitasking among young consumers. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*. 9: 316-332.

Borrows from Belk, R.W., Sherry, J. & Wallendorf, M. 1988. A naturalistic inquiry into buyer and seller behaviour at a swap meet. *Journal of Consumer Research*. 14.4: 449-470.

DISCONNECTED, in a good way?

Two University of York researchers seek to learn from those aiming to stay outside the rush of the information age – no mobile phone? No internet access?




Take 50 disconnected

- Lifestyle
- Risk
- Social responsibility
- Anti eMarketing response

The point is that disconnection is a more malleable construct than simply 'switching off' rather for the respondent's, disconnection was to do with deeply personal, social and relational consumer preferences.

- Sample: 23 females and 27 males;
- Age range: 18 - 62 years (median 40 years);
- International data set with respondents from 11 different countries including, Australia, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Netherlands, New Zealand, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom and the United States;
- Nine of the sample had an unused personal email account. All respondents selected to have an additional email address for their professional networks. Forty-seven of the sample also choose to regulate a separate email account '*especially for Spam and advertisements*'.
- Finally, twelve participants had chosen to deactivate their Facebook accounts. One respondent, a university professor from Iceland mentioned how he was '*forced*' to continue to use Facebook to communicate with his students.



*I think that (disconnection) is a real possibility that, at the moment, might not affect the vast sways of people, but shows how people get around the commercial cr*p and get the most out of their lives.*

Amanda, Professor, Manchester, 47 years old.

I got fed up... there is a cess pool of information that people are just getting lost in.

Antonio, business entrepreneur, Italy, 27 years old.

In a sense it is a continuous decisional choice, I could go and log into Facebook after this conversation, and there was a time when I enjoyed this, but it's getting noisy with so many advertisements it just doesn't hold the same appeal for me anymore.

Clive, Executive Director, London, 37 years old.

Disconnected *'coping strategies'*

Theme of nuanced control of consumer content and related information flows

1. First '**authentic engagement**' and a desire to prioritise 'real' communication that is counterpoised against the '*noise*' and '*irritation*' of spam or viral shares.
2. Second '**secure engagement**' draws on narratives about the risks that are involved in 'becoming too involved' with commercial content e.g. Facebook Fan Page and the need to devise strategies that '*protect*' personal connections.
3. Finally '**paced engagement**' reflects experiences of the 'speed' of communication and pressure to embed commercial content into personal networks. Resonates with Giddens' (1999) description of a 'runaway world'.

back to messages for marketing –

Authentic engagement

Dave, an eighteen-year-old, international student, living away from home for the first time, he observed how amongst his friends eMarketing had had a;

...discreet influence over my friends... one of the contradictions of myself is that I do have a Facebook account, but I'm not really that bothered with it now cos I got fed up with all noise from different Group updates and Fan Pages. It's changed how I feel about those kinds of networks.

Authentic dialogue? The role of “friendship” in a social media recruitment campaign

Henderson, A. 2010. Journal Communication.

How organisations are trying to utilise the power of “real” and “**authentic**” experiences across ‘webbed communication’ - *internet public relations becomes nothing more than a new monologic **communication** medium or a new **marketing** technology.*

Secure engagement

Robert a Head Teacher living in Brighton;

I'm looking for something secure... I look at those kinds of Groups [on Facebook] the kids are involved in and see what their influence is...

What you have is just the rapid exchange of something, very specific [like a competition for free coffee] for me it's the act of the exchange that's more important not the content, which is mostly tedious and all the same.

What makes for trusting relationships in online communication?

Bekmeier-Feuerhahn, S. 2010. Journal of **Communication**. 14, 4: 337 - 355.

Research based on socio-communication strategies and determining factors in online communication and their practical implementation.

***Trust** is becoming a key variable in a society strongly influenced by **online communication**, and in the important field of PR as well.*

Paced engagement

Dorothy a Harley Street psycho-therapist living in London described a release;

They [commercial companies] are too concerned with too much unintentional following [on Twitter]... They seem to discourage and cut away from any real contact, which makes them lazy.

...The pace appears fast, but that's an illusion in matters that really concern you as a consumer like good customer service.

Engagement, telepresence and interactivity in online consumer experience: Reconciling scholastic and managerial perspectives

Mollen. A. 2010. Journal of Business Research, 2010. 63, 9-10: 919-925.

Research that examines the environment to provide the necessary cognitive and sensory input equivalent to that of the more concrete real.

We construe engagement as a cognitive and affective commitment to an active relationship with the brand as personified by the website.

Consumers are different.

- New forms of informational behaviour amongst consumers, some who are at the fore of social media and social platforms and choose to deliberately distance themselves from 'aggressive' and 'unnecessary' eMarketing messages.
- Consumer activities are nuanced and embedded in broader consumer contexts that has consequences for the the creation and use of social media and networks for eMarketing.
- The identification of such new forms of consumer activity forms the basis for further research and the incorporation of the disconnected response into successful marketing strategies.

