

Mobile Marketer

THE NEWS LEADER IN MOBILE MARKETING, MEDIA AND COMMERCE

How to build brand passion among millennials: Ad:tech keynote

By Dan Butcher, November 5, 2008

NEW YORK - The millennial demographic, youth consumers between 12 and 24, can be a tough nut to crack, but once cracked, their constant media consumption makes them a gold mine for marketers.

During her keynote presentation, "Obama, Apple and Ice Cream: Building Brand Passion among Millennials," at ad:tech New York, Samantha Skey, executive vice president of strategic marketing for Alloy Media + Marketing, New York, discussed best practices for marketing to this media-savvy generation. She also brought up a panel of youth consumers to the stage to give their opinions of various advertising strategies.

"Millennials have grown up with lots of options for media consumption, and they are difficult to reach, but they are so much more rewarding for brands once they do," Ms. Skey told a packed room of interactive marketers.

"Contrary to popular belief, nine out of 10 say they are close with their parents, so they're influencing their parents and they're influencing the teens and tweens that come after them," she said.

"They're likely to state their opinions when they've been formulated and share their brand preferences with their friends and family. Gossip Girl is a good example of a brand that's had success building brand passion among this group of consumers."

Ms. Skey used Sen. Barack Obama, Apple and Ben & Jerry's ice cream as examples of brands to which millennials respond favorably.

All three brands have found success marketing to youth via social networks, especially Facebook.

Other brands that the youth panel mentioned as having compelling advertising include Target, Subway, Sony Bravia, Sonic, the NBA, Nike, Starbucks, Krispy Kreme, Urban Outfitters, Asics, Diet Coke, Bobby Brown makeup, American Apparel, Trader Joe's and Whole Foods.

The millennials in attendance said that companies that are socially responsible and environmentally friendly were more likely to attract their business, although they said "funny" and "relatable" advertising was even more likely to influence their purchases.

There was a consensus that they see ads everywhere, and that they love things such as special offers, discounts and coupons.

There are 54 million U.S. consumers ages 12-24, and 10.5 million of those are college students. One in five is non-white, and the number of minorities is growing.

Teens have \$176 billion of own their own money to spend, while college students spend \$312 billion a year, a number that continues to increase despite the economic slow-down.

Many believe that they will be the demographic to change the world, and more are exercising their right to vote.

In 1996, 15 percent of all people in that age group voted. In 2004 21.1 percent of millennials voted, while this year it is estimated that close to 30 percent will vote.

"Numbers of that magnitude can change the course of the election," Ms. Skey said.

One key theme was "Obama-nomics," named after the way the presidential candidate and now president-elect has been able to establish a brand connection and achieve a wide reach with his marketing approach.

President-elect Obama's opt-in SMS campaign was a particular success.

While the youth panelist expressed reluctance to receiving advertising on their phone, saying that it's a personal, private device, they did seem more open under certain conditions: if the company pays for the text messages and if it adds value through a promotion or special offer.

Due to advancements in technology, more and more millennials are watching TV on their computer, and some are watching videos on their mobile phone.

The majority of the youth panel said they couldn't live without their handset.

Many said that they send text messages to friends and family throughout the day. Several said that their parents are even starting to jump on board the SMS sensation.

The youth panel was also mostly in agreement that they would like to be able to do everything with just their mobile device, including surf the Web and watch video.

"I call millennials 'the reachables,' and although they can be elusive and so difficult to reach, they consume more media than any other segment of the population," Ms. Skey said. "They seem to understand the advertising content contract, free or cheaper content in exchange for viewing ads.

"The key is context and relevance, sending them the right message at the right moment," she said.

Among millennials, 62 percent say they learn about popular brands and products through advertising.

"Advertising is totally working, it's a matter of where and when and which ones are appealing to them," Ms. Skey said.

Staff Reporter Dan Butcher covers banking and payments, carrier networks, commerce, database/CRM, manufacturers, music and software and technology. Reach him at dan@mobilemarketer.com.