



Marketing's New 'Power of Now'

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Published
September 2015

In a world of infinite information and product choice, consumers hold more power than brands. For retailers, this means embracing marketing's new 'power of now.' Below, Steve Dennis of SageBerry Consulting offers a strategic growth model for retailers, anchored in five core experiential elements.

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In the balance of power between retail brands and consumers, companies traditionally held most of the cards. Brands decided the messages they wanted to promulgate and tightly controlled the channels of communication. Their budgets were mostly focused on creating big moments when their brands could shine. For consumers, the decision journey was mostly linear, time-consuming and constrained by scarcity of information, access and choice.

Clearly this has all changed. The power has shifted radically to the consumer, who now has nearly infinite access to information and product choice anytime, anywhere, anyway. Price transparency is ubiquitous, and consumers control many of the throttles on the messages they receive. Mass marketing is on the wane, giving way to greater personalization. Today, brand marketing and the consumer's path to purchase are rarely characterized by a few big, well-orchestrated moments. Instead, many small interactions coalesce to determine success. In this new era, what happens in the now—in what Google refers to as “micro-moments”—is often becoming more important than the cumulative effect of our best-laid and elaborate marketing plans.

Not very long ago, the consumer mind-set was very much an intentional act to go online—to boot up and log in. Today we live online and are virtually tethered to our smart devices 24/7. When a need arises—to gather info, research a potential purchase, check the best price, locate the nearest store or whatever might satisfy our intent—that impulse can be acted on wherever we are, right now. This is not just theory. Google's research, for example, indicates that 82% of smartphone users use their phones while in stores shopping for products. And that rate is growing. This dynamic forces all brands to re-envision their strategies and embrace marketing's new “power of now.”

To illustrate this further, I've developed a strategic growth model for retailers (which I call "WE-tail") that is anchored on five core experiential elements:

- **Harmonized.** More and more, the blended channel is the only channel as customers use any and all touch points to learn, discover, research and ultimately buy and support a retail purchase. It's no longer about online or bricks and mortar, but a well-integrated "one brand, many channels" strategy.
- **Personalized.** Many categories are stagnant, which means the only way to generate meaningful top-line growth is to steal market share. Products and experiences that are designed to treat different customers differently—along with personalized marketing treatments—are becoming the antidote to increasingly less effective mass strategies.
- **Localized.** Context is becoming king. At last, geo-location technology can be employed to get much closer to CRM's Holy Grail: the right offer to the right customer at the right time. But it goes beyond that. Consumer behavior is fundamentally changing because of what mobile uniquely allows them to do. The way consumers use smart devices creates a series of micro-moments, creating new opportunities for retailers to win or lose.
- **Socialized.** We live in a connection economy, and consumers often turn to their networks for inspiration, information and validation. With the emergence of "buy" buttons, it's no longer just about sharing.
- **Amplified.** With an abundance of choice and a tsunami of marketing messages, the only way to break out from all this noise is to push to higher levels of relevance and remarkability. Good enough rarely is any more. Value propositions must rise

above a sea of sameness, and we must deliver a story that demands to be told.

Many retailers are making headway on some of these elements. Yet few seem to truly understand that historical advantages are fraying. They don't seem to get that immediacy is redefining the definition of relevance.

For marketers, the power of now is about owning the micro-moments. Increasingly, that is less about a traditional TV spot or some other large-scale ad campaign. It is less about a piece of direct mail or a batch, blast and hope email campaign. And it certainly is not about one-size-fits-all campaigns that lack both relevancy and immediacy.

The localization of marketing is moving quickly, and therefore the need to meet customers where they are in new and different ways is evolving just as fast.

Marketing's new power of now accepts that the consumer-decision journey has forever changed and that many consumers are defaulting to their smart device as the key enabler of their shopping experience. Marketing's power of now acknowledges that the battleground for attention is not about winning big moments, but, instead, about showing up in those micro-moments, the moments that matter. These moments are rich in intent, and brands that aren't present in compelling and relevant ways may miss out on an opportunity entirely.

If you don't win in the now, there may be nothing there later.



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