

CASE STUDY

Toyota Goes Big and Bold With YouTube and Inspires Its Passionate Communities



The last ten years have seen a dramatic change in the way people engage with content. Recognising YouTube's seismic impact on popular culture, Toyota partnered with YouTube early on, winning the hearts of millions in campaign after campaign.

Merely a decade ago, a handful of media outlets held a monopoly on consumer attention. Today, with millions of digital channels to choose from, people are looking for more than just the specs and features once relied on to sell vehicles. "They expect a lot more personalisation," says Jack Hollis, Toyota's Group VP of Marketing, "And Toyota is changing to meet those demands." According to Hollis, the brand's approach is shifting in order to answer the major question today's consumer asks of brands: "How do you make me feel?"

Hollis realises the answer to this question can be as varied as people's unique backgrounds, passions and interests. So Toyota and advertising agency Saatchi & Saatchi LA teamed up with YouTube to tap into its diverse communities and see what emotions they could spark.

Engage the right audiences with the right video content

If brands want to connect with people, they need to go where people are actively engaged. This is what brought Toyota to YouTube. From content creators to loyal subscribers, YouTube is a platform truly powered by people. And while YouTube reaches more 18-49 year olds than any cable network in the US, its users are as diverse in culture as they are in age.

YouTube viewers are drawn to niche content and the content creators who touch on specific subject matter. So the better brands understand their audiences and what their audiences care about, the better equipped brands will be to create content that is relevant to their audiences. This was Toyota's mantra when it decided to go big with YouTube and develop

Results

- Earned over 180 million impressions with bonus YouTube content series
- Rhett and Link's test drive of the 2015 Camry contributed to a more than 20% lift in ad recall with Google Preferred

a digital strategy that combined the powers of paid media and exclusive content. This combination allowed it to find its audience and connect with it through moving stories.

A prime example of this new strategy at work was the “Bold New Camry” campaign featuring the Super Bowl spots “My Bold Dad” and “How Great I Am”. Toyota leveraged tools like Google Preferred and TrueView to access the most popular and engaging content on YouTube, and ensure that these videos found the right audience, in this case, parents – specifically fathers.

Toyota also created a bonus content series available exclusively on YouTube to bolster a campaign that inspired fathers and earned over 180 million impressions. The content’s innate shareability provided audiences with another opportunity for engagement. Hollis recalls reading user comments like “I literally watch this commercial every day, and it makes me cry,” and “I stopped it on this part because I just want to hear this one sentence.” He says the unique value of digital advertising on YouTube is the deep relationships that develop between consumers and brands. “People could go to YouTube, stop that video and share it with someone else.”

Another way Toyota has personalised its messaging is through partnerships with YouTube’s stars and content creators. Dionne Colvin-Lovely, Toyota’s Director of Traditional and Digital Media, says these partnerships have allowed Toyota to showcase the brand in an integrated way. “Creators on YouTube already have organic followers who are eager to see the next episode of their content,” she explains, “and we can have our brand included in a very authentic way.” So Toyota has given its partners the creative freedom to make content that is true to themselves and their audiences, and time and again it’s paid off for the automaker.

That was the case when Toyota paired up with YouTube influencers Rhett and Link for an adrenaline-fueled test drive of the 2015 Camry that contributed to a more than 20% lift in ad recall with the help of Google Preferred. Likewise, Toyota won affinity with First Car Vs. First REAL Car, a BuzzFeed Video partnership starring the Corolla that tapped into the hilarious truths of first-time car buyers.

YouTube’s communities go far beyond millennials looking for a laugh. To engage the hearts and minds of the growing eco-conscious community, Toyota sponsored episodes of Motherboard (VICE’s science and tech channel)

series “Upgrade”, which explored tech solutions to environmental issues. This is a great example of a brand working with a trusted creative partner to provide content and satisfy an increasingly diverse consumer culture.

Measure success by brand engagement, not views

Connecting with the passions and interests of millions of people across a spectrum of cultural backgrounds can sound like a tall order. But with the right ideas and the right partners, there is ample opportunity to reach many YouTube communities on deeper and more personal levels. For Toyota, that investment has paid off with a lift in impressions, earned media and sales.

“We measure success in a lot of ways,” Hollis says. “The numbers we’ve seen are outstanding, but YouTube is also all about the heart.” Colvin-Lovely agrees that YouTube delivers more than just financial rewards. For her, “YouTube is a platform that, due to its multiplicity of interests and voices, allows us to really continue to go deep, making sure we can always measure our effectiveness, but also stretch our wings in terms of emotion and connecting in a very meaningful way.”