Defining Branded Content for the Digital Age

Developing a clearer understanding of a ‘new’ key marketing concept
Overview

- Background
- Why does Branded Content matter?
- What is Branded Content?
- What are the Challenges?
- Key Learnings
A Collaboration Between Academia and Industry

Andrew Canter  Bjoern Asmussen
Nicolette Michels  Andrew Butler
Stewart Thomson
The Research Team's Expertise
Background of the Study

Branded Content means different things to different people, which ...

1. ... causes confusion and misunderstanding

and

2. ... hinders its progress as an important marketing concept
Quotes to back up the “Confusion” Point

“... the concept of branded content is fundamentally flawed.”
David Martin, Forbes, 2011

“... there is a significant amount of confusion and controversy out there around what content is, what it does and how to use it.”
Robin Thornton, Shaman Marketing, 2013

“‘Content’ is such a broad and fuzzy term that it tends to make any discussion of it broad and fuzzy as well”
Cindy Gallop, If We Ran The World, 2013

“The term ‘content’ seems a bit of a broad stroke owing to its multi-dimensional nature.”
Amar Trivedi, Social Media Strategist, 2012
Why is a Clearer Understanding of Branded Content Needed?

- Digital media has revolutionised the Branded Content landscape
- Branded content emerges as a key marketing concept
- The confusion about the Branded Content concept has greatly increased
“A BMW Motorcycle Story”
by Bill Costello
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by Bill Costello
Purpose of the Study

Identify and understand the different conceptualisations people use when talking about Branded Content.

Develop a definition that helps clarify the concept for a broad range of stakeholders and establishes Branded Content as a key marketing concept.
Why does Branded Content matter?

39% of digital marketing professionals nominated Content Marketing as one of their top priorities in 2013.

“Content, in all its shapes and forms, is core to everything we do as Marketers.”
Econsultancy, 2013

“As advertisers increasingly look for ways to avoid being ‘turned off’, content can be defined as the stuff audiences choose to engage with rather than being forced to experience through disruption or incentivisation ...”
Ben Kerr, Creative Director, Drum, 2012

“The future of the marketing department is half marketing, and half publishing.”
Joe Pulizzi, Founder, Content Marketing Institute, 2012

Marketing organisations need to ‘think and act like media companies.’
Our Methodology: How did we do it?

Material analysed:
- Industry/practitioner publications (100+)
- Academic literature: books and journals (30+)
- Blogs (20+)
- Case studies (10+)
The 5 Key Perspectives on Branded Content

5. All-encompassing Perspective

1. Traditional TMO Perspective
2. Digital TMO Perspective
3. Integrated TMO Perspective
4. Stakeholder Perspective

Pre-Digital Age

Digital Age
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Traditional Perspective (Pre-Digital Age)</th>
<th>New Perspectives in the Digital Media Age</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perspective 1</td>
<td>Perspective 2</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Traditional TMO</td>
<td>Digital TMO</td>
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<tr>
<td>Defining Feature</td>
<td>Branded Content is CONTROLLED by the TMO (trade mark owner)</td>
<td>Branded Content is INITIATED by the TMO (trade mark owner) digitally</td>
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<tr>
<td>Initiation</td>
<td>TMO initiated</td>
<td>TMO initiated</td>
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<tr>
<td>Funding</td>
<td>Usually TMO</td>
<td>Usually TMO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TMO’s Level of Control over Content</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High to low (initiated UGC competition versus tweet)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Main Objectives</td>
<td>Intended to create positive brand meanings and/ or manifestations amongst consumers</td>
<td>Intended to create positive brand meanings and/ or manifestations amongst stakeholders</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Intended to connect and/ or engage with consumers</td>
<td>Intended to connect and/ or engage with certain stakeholders</td>
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| Branded Content Strategy to achieve the objective | A) Entertaining  
B) Informative  
C) Educational  
D) Serves a function | A) Entertaining  
B) Informative  
C) Educational  
D) Serves a function | A) Entertaining  
B) Informative  
C) Educational  
D) Serves a function | Potentially no strategy involved |
<p>| Push versus Pull                   | Predominantly Push                       | Predominantly Pull                       | varies          | Predominantly Pull |
| Disruption versus Engagement       | Predominantly Disruption                 | Predominantly Engagement                 | Predominantly Engagement | Predominantly Engagement |
| Channel/ Platforms                 | Traditional/ non-digital channels of communication such as TV, Print and Radio | Digital channels/ platforms               | potentially across all channels             | Predominantly digital channels/ platforms |</p>
<table>
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<th>Branded Content is <strong>INITIATED</strong> by the TMO (trade mark owner) digitally or non-digitally</th>
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| Branded Content Strategy to achieve the objective | A) Entertaining  
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D) Serves a function |
| Push versus Pull | Varies |
| Disruption versus Engagement | Predominantly Engagement |
| Channel/ Platforms | Potentially across all channels |
“A Day Made of Glass” – a B2B example
“A Day Made of Glass” – a B2B example
Branded Content comes in many Different Shapes and Forms

Branded Entertainment

Native Advertising

Product Placement

Branded Content

Sponsorship

Advertiser Funded Programming

Brand Licensing

Etc.
Welcome to a World where any Consumer can become a Branded Content Creator

“It is the greatest brand-building commercial of all time …”

“Greatest BMW Ad In History Is Not By BMW”
Abe Sauer, BrandChannel, 2011
Welcome to a World where any Consumer can become a Branded Content Creator
Welcome to a World where any Consumer can become a Branded Content Creator

www.davecarrollmusic.com
Welcome to a World where any Consumer can become a Branded Content Creator.
The Challenge
The Integrative TMO Perspective might therefore not be sufficient.

3. Integrated TMO Perspective

2. Digital TMO Perspective

1. Traditional TMO Perspective

Digital Age
A Wider Integration Appears to be Crucial to Understand the Branded Content Phenomenon as a Whole

5. All-encompassing Perspective

3. Integrated TMO Perspective

2. Digital TMO Perspective
1. Traditional TMO Perspective

4. Stakeholder Perspective

Digital Age
“Branded content is any content that can be associated with a brand in the eye of the beholder.”
Key Learnings

1. **DIFFERENTIATION**: “The future of communications belongs to branded content. Not easy, or cheap. But it is … effective at driving sustainable brand differentiation.” (Emily Tan, Campaign Asia-Pacific 2012)

2. **IT’S A NEW WORLD**: Everyone can now become a Branded Content creator and distributor. (Marc Mathieu, Senior Vice-President of Marketing at Unilever, 2013)

3. **GROWING CONSUMER POWER**: Audiences are at least to some extent able to filter traditional advertising out from their lives. (Michael Serazio, Assistant Professor of Communication, Fairfield University, 2011)

4. **THE NEED FOR TRANSFORMATION**: “In an era where every brand is a publisher and a content creator, you have to have a point of view and a compelling voice. You have to know how to tell a story” (Ann Handley, Chief Content Officer, MarketingProfs, 2013).

5. **THE NEED TO GET ORGANISED**: To be able to implement successfully your Branded Content strategy you need resources, processes, structures and coherence across all channels which is particularly challenging in an international or even global context.
THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION

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