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Content: Never Mind the Quality, Think About the Platform

By Dominic Mills. This article was featured in Mediate1 Newsline.

We all know that adland has gone content crazy. Now it's adding a new twist to it - 'platformisation' - a neologism so ugly it can only have been dreamt up by techno geeks.

Two deals last week encapsulate this new trend. The first saw Havas Media enter into a partnership with NewsCred, which allows brands to create their own content or licence it from publishers, and pump it out to their own media channels or elsewhere and then (and this is where they're stretching it a bit) measure its effect.

You can read the details of the Havas deal [here](#).

The second involves Publicis buying Relaxnews, which creates content and has its own distribution platform, and folding it into ZenithOptimedia.

The principles behind both deals look identical, the main difference being that Publicis has gone for ownership at a cost of about £11m, while Havas has gone into partnership.

In fact, while both Havas and Publicis talk as though they are breaking entirely new ground, they're not: one of the big media networks already owns a

platform called Liquid Thread that does pretty much the same stuff.

The funny thing is that Liquid Thread is actually owned by another part of the Publicis empire, Starcom MediaVest Group. Quite why they're doubling up in this way is a puzzle to me. I can only suppose that it is because Zenith last year made a big play for the owned media space and without its own shiny 'platformisation' toy can only talk the talk.



The idea that brands should try to be 'news platforms' is nonsense, argues Dominic Mills - and risks breaking the trust that is the ultimate foundation of their success.

One of the interesting things to me about this is the way the big holding companies are aligning content 'platformisation' with their media agencies, rather than with creative or digital networks. I suppose,

since 'platformisation' is tech-driven, and the media agencies are the ones most comfortable with ad tech, they are the natural place.

But aligning these deals with media agencies also suggests to me that the big holding companies are trying to get ahead of the curve on the next big issue: the use of programmatic trading for native advertising. Native is nothing more than a subset of content marketing, and it is inevitable at some point that it too will become fully automated.

When that happens, the media agencies will want to have all their ducks lined up.

So, what is 'platformisation' all about? Essentially, the driving force is the realisation that there's no point in going content mad if nobody can see it. So, in this digital world, you need platforms to get it out everywhere, at speed.

So far, so good. But you also need content - and yards of the stuff.

But good, relevant, content is hard to produce at quantity, especially if you're a media agency like Havas Media or Zenith.

Which is where NewsCred and Relaxnews come in: as well as the platforms, they can produce their own content - although to what standard is hard to say - and, through licensing arrangements, access professionally produced publisher content.

Thus Relaxnews has a deal with Agence France Presse (AFP), a Reuters-type news agency; NewsCred claims

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access to 5,000 publisher sources, including the Economist, the Evening Standard, Forbes, and Associated Press.

It also lists the Daily Telegraph as a supplier which, after last week's furore involving HSBC and Peter Osborne, should make the paper the go-to guys for advertiser-friendly content.

And of course cash-strapped publishers like this because it is another way of generating revenue - even if the rates are as miserly as Spotify's payments to music artists.

It's not hard to understand the dynamic here. My issue, however, is that all this points to the commoditisation of content. It is selected and pumped out, if not indiscriminately, at a speed and scale that makes little allowance for context or the reader's mood state.

Plus - and this is a big negative - the content sourced from publishers is

not original and not likely to be timely. It's been used before - that's why the publishers make it available to the likes of Newscred.

The claim that these platforms can measure the ROI of content marketing needs challenging. Yes, they can produce lots of data - reach, frequency, engagement, likes, shares and all that. But these are media metrics, and thus offer only a limited view of ROI.

The real challenge for content marketing is to measure its long-term impact, separated out from TV advertising and so on, on broader brand, and ultimately, business metrics: brand favourability, trust, incremental sales, margin etc.

To suggest that these platforms can do this is specious.

I also find myself increasingly irked by the nonsense the 'platformisers' spout. Here's Jerome Doncieux, co-founder of Relaxnews, blathering on: "If brands want to be strong on the content battlefield, they have to move from being traditional news agencies to being news platforms."

WTF is he on about? Brands as 'news agencies'...no. Brands as 'news platforms'...rubbish. Mr Doncieux is suffering from a nasty dose of hubris.

Imagine HSBC as a 'news platform'..."all your up-to-date tax avoidance news here."

Brands are products and services that can add value by providing consumers with entertainment or utility, some of which, within a narrow definition, may be news. The moment they step beyond that, they'll break the trust that is the ultimate foundation of their success.

FocusON Entertainment

Telemundo Goes Interactive (Really)

You are supposed to forget about dinner and dive into an on-air variety show.

For the first time ever on Spanish-language television, Telemundo incorporates live participation into the primetime viewing experience with a new digital and on-air variety show, AT&T Presents Suelta la Sopa Novelas (AT&T Presenta Suelta la Sopa Novelas). The series, hosted by TV personalities Erika De la Vega and Alessandra Villegas, began February 20 and airs on Friday nights during commercial time in the 8-10pm novela timeslot for 13 weeks.

In collaboration with Telemundo, AT&T is engaging in social conversations through real-time viewer participation within the network's primetime novela programming. Every Friday night beginning at 8pm, the hosts are interacting with fans during commercial breaks by posing a new question each hour, urging fans to take part at sueltalasopa.com/juega. Poll results are featured in real time on the audience's personal devices and in content capsules airing throughout the night.

"Based on the insight that Telemundo viewers love to take part in live, shared experiences with our original storytelling, AT&T Presents Suelta la Sopa Novelas is a unique real-time marketing opportunity for AT&T," Mike Rosen, Executive Vice President of Advertising Sales, NBCUniversal Hispanic Group. "Developed collaboratively with the innovative marketers at AT&T,

MARCH GLADNESS

COME FOR THE SUMMIT, STAY FOR MIAMI



Calle Ocho, The Miami Open and Wynwood Art Walk... these are just a few of the amazing events taking place in Miami this March. And of course, you can't miss up the New Mainstream Business Summit. The New Mainstream is multicultural and digital and inhabited by Millennials who are the drivers of the Total Market. These are the main themes of our conference this year – replete with top-notch speakers, hard hitting case studies and valuable workshops and panels. Arrive the weekend of March 14th and take advantage of everything else the vibrant city of Miami has to offer.

- Network with leading multicultural marketers and your peers.
- Gain insight and knowledge as you discuss strategies and tactics with these successful and experienced authors, executives and thought-leaders.
- Explore new ideas and sources of innovation, information and resources that will help you build your business and grow your market share.
- Discover the secrets of successful multicultural marketing strategies and avoid costly mistakes.
- Indulge in the chic ambiance of The Mandarin Oriental Hotel – one of Miami's hottest venues – at an unbeatable price! Your registration includes all meals and entertainment. Fine dining and spectacular views of Miami.

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this custom initiative offers our viewers the chance to interact live with the network and each other.”

In an effort to continue the conversation and offer fans an outlet for more in-depth discussion about their favorite storylines, a 2-3 minute “Suelta La Sopa Novelas” weekend wrap up show, is also published on sueltalasopa.com/novelas.

The weekly recap show is broadcast each Friday after Telemundo’s 10pm novela from an AT&T branded “Suelta la Sopa” set. The wrap up show provides viewers recaps of key novela moments of the week, highlight social media commentary from followers, feature a “Fan of the Week,” extend conversations about the night’s topics and take a deep-dive into the latest novela gossip.

The interactive experience aims to encourage live viewing and build on the network’s fan base by offering a unique way to engage with its most popular programming.

Azteca América Lands New Victory Deal

Azteca América has signed an affiliate agreement with Victory Communications Inc., adding another station to its affiliate roster. Under the terms of the deal, K48MR, channel 48.2 in Bentonville/Rogers, Arkansas will carry Azteca América’s programming. The agreement is part of the network’s ongoing expansion strategy. This new addition broadens the network’s reach to 63 stations, 27 of which are operated by Azteca América. See more at [Media Moves](#).

FocusON Culture

Retro Acculturation through the Hispanic Influence in U.S. Culture

First published by Conill Advertising

As the Hispanic population in the United States has grown, with a marked increase in native births and a plateau in immigration, the notion of conforming to the prevailing culture has given way to a richer, more resonant and less coercive concept: acculturation.

Acculturation is the process through which individuals or groups adopt cultural features from a different group and weave them into their own cultural fabric — without losing an inherent sense of identity. A vivid example of this is the celebration of distinctly American holidays, such as Thanksgiving and the Fourth of July, by families of a different national origin. These families, many of whom share the same values that the holidays have come to represent, have adopted these American customs and have made them their own by adding native foods, music and social rituals to their celebrations.

Additionally, while minority groups can incorporate the traits and customs of a dominant culture, it also is clear that a reverse flow exists. Hispanic culture is having a profound effect on American food, music, sports, beauty products, fashion, politics and much more. This influence is due not only to the sheer size of the Hispanic population of 52 million now in the U.S. — roughly one in six Americans, with projections to nearly one in three by 2050. In many cases, it’s due to the recognition, acceptance and consequent gradual, organic adoption of aspects of the Hispanic culture by non-Hispanics.

The exchange, interpretation and borrowing of cultural characteristics is a great American tradition, but at this intersection

a paradox arises: The thrill of the new combines with the tension elicited by the unknown. For every man who swoons at the beauty of Sofia Vergara, there is another who raises his eyebrows at her accent; for every supporter of the Dream Act, there is a detractor who looks with skepticism upon a new and independent voting bloc. Similarly, there are marketers who work to understand and identify crossover opportunities between the general market and specific groups, while others miss opportunities with strict, conventional interpretations of demographic information and analysis.

This study explores this paradox. As Hispanic culture continues to permeate the mainstream, we seek to learn where the effect is concentrated and which groups are most receptive to its influence. We want to know which aspects of American culture are affected and to what degree, and we explore how the majority perceives a minority group that has risen so quickly in influence — after all, Hispanics are this country’s largest and fastest-growing minority group. Moreover, we wanted to understand how Hispanic identity might evolve: Do Hispanics see themselves as agents of change? What are their views on balancing their distinctive heritage with the pull of the mainstream?

Do they feel secure in a society that, despite its advances, still might not fully recognize them as fellow Americans?

The purpose of this study is to help marketers more effectively navigate our dynamic and evolving society.

Talk of the Hispanic market going mainstream is nothing new. Now there is more talk (and more evidence) about the mainstream going Hispanic. When it comes to measuring the degree of Latino influence on American culture, the jury is in: It is present, it is profound, it is pervasive and it is permanent. More important: It is a shared perspective. Three out of four Americans agree that Hispanics have had a significant influence on American culture. And

although Hispanic and non-Hispanic populations may disagree about the level of Latino influence in a particular segment of the culture, it is striking how close they are in perspective when it comes to the overall influence across markets.

One key factor in our study is geography. Its influence is consequential across numerous metrics. In some instances, respondents' market locations within the U.S. revealed a regional prevalence of certain sentiments. In other cases, a specific belief may be widespread, embraced by study participants throughout the country.

Predictably, the touch point ranked by Hispanics and non-Hispanics as delivering the greatest influence on American culture is food. Almost 90% of non-Hispanics saw it as having the most prominent impact, placing it nearly 25 percentage points ahead of the next greatest influencer, music (63%). Hispanics gave food a slightly more modest share at 82%, and music was only seven points behind at 75%.

While music ranked second in overall impact on American culture as perceived by all Americans, there are important geographic differences. Hispanics in New York, Miami and McAllen, Texas, note a substantial effect of Hispanic culture in music at 86%, 86% and 90%, respectively. These cities also comprise the top three markets for non-Hispanics on the music question, albeit to a lesser degree at 75%, 73%, and 71%, respectively. In Nashville, the center of country music, just 42% of non-Hispanics (the lowest mark of any city) and 67% of Hispanics feel a Latino beat — a stunning 25-percentage point gap between the two, and both lower than their respective national averages.

The Latino influence in sports is felt most acutely among non-Hispanics in New York (72%) and least in Detroit (48%). Baseball,

however, demonstrates how deeply integrated Hispanics are in American sports culture. The National Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, NY has installed a permanent ¡Viva Baseball! exhibit celebrating Latino contributions to America's favorite pastime, and the number of Latino players in the league has surged in the last two decades, jumping from 13% in 1990 to 28% on opening day in 2010.¹

The Hispanic community gives itself high marks for influencing beauty standards (64%), style and appearance (62%), and clothing (61%). Only about a third (32%) of non-Hispanics believe that Latinas have had a great to moderate impact on standards of beauty, a proportion that remains largely constant across demographics and is essentially the equivalent weight they give to the Hispanic influence on clothing (34%). On matters of style and appearance, non-Hispanics seem more aware of Latino influence (48%) than they are on beauty (32%).

Both non-Hispanic and Hispanic audiences size up the impact of Latino culture in television programming and channel real estate in equal force, as 54% of each segment see moderate to great influence, highlighting a strong presence in the channel lineup combined with the proliferation of Latino actors in general market television and cable programming. Univision now ranks as the nation's fifth most popular network and two of the highest paid actors on television from May 2011 to May 2012 were women of Hispanic descent: Sofia Vergara of "Modern Family" and Eva Longoria of "Desperate Housewives."² Even with the ascension of these actresses into mainstream television, however, negative stereotypes of Hispanics are viewed as a fixture in media, with 73% of Hispanics and 68% of non-Hispanics noting their presence.

Latinos in the United States are frequently grouped into a monolithic group of Americans. In reality, Hispanic subgroups reflect profound DIVERSITY in ethnicity, culture, and origin. Given the distinct differences among the various people we call Hispanic in this country, it is essential to recognize that there is diverseness within this segment. But when it comes to understanding the diversity of Hispanic culture in the U.S., our survey demonstrated that only one-third of Hispanic and non-Hispanic respondents alike believe it is extremely or very well represented. So there is progress yet to be made on this front, and sadly, more work to be done in a less nuanced dimension: 55% of Hispanics (but only 15% of non-Hispanics) said Latinos encounter frequent discrimination, while 67% of Hispanics strongly or somewhat agree that as a group they are discriminated against more than other ethnic minorities.

The Hispanic consumer is both social and vocal, and proactively engages in a dialogue with friends and family about a range of products from high-ticket technology to fashion and style. The "next new thing" resonates with three out of four of these consumers, and more than half consider themselves a go-to source for information and guidance for new products.

These proportions are comparable to those of non-Hispanic consumers, half of whom consider themselves advisors and more than 81% of whom "love trying new things."

The materialization of a substantial, widespread and thriving minority culture, intersecting and complementing the more pervasive culture, brings with it a new set of challenges, opportunities...and expectations. It is an exciting and rich horizon, and one that we aim, both as experts and participants, to show you.



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Identity Matters

Ethnographic and survey data on the media habits of Hispanic & multicultural audiences

Adriana Waterston, SVP, Insights & Strategy, Horowitz Research



Ad Effectiveness in an Increasingly Multi-Platform World: The Latest Data from ESPN Ad Analytics

Chris Barton, Assoc. Dir., Advertiser Analytics, ESPN

FocusON Brands

There's No Bullshit like Brand Bullshit

By Bob Hoffman in the Ad Contrarian

Okay, just for the record let's state the obvious:

- Yes, having a strong brand is very valuable.
- Yes, the highest goal of advertising is to create a strong brand.

Now, let's get to the bullshit:

- No, for the most part consumers are not in love with brands
- No, consumers do not want to have a conversation with your brand, or an "authentic relationship" with it, or co-create with it, or engage with it, or dance with it, or take a shower with it.

They want it to work well, taste good, be reasonably priced, and look pretty. End of story. As I've said about a million times (and Prof. Byron Sharp has said much more articulately in his book, *How Brands Grow*) most of what we call "brand loyalty" is simply habit, convenience, mild satisfaction or easy availability.

I promise you, if Pepsi would disappear tomorrow, most Pepsi "loyalists" would switch over to Coke with very little psychological damage.

Nike devotees would throw on a pair of Adidas without having to enter rehab.

McDonald's faithfuls would cheerfully eat a Whopper without the need for counseling.

In fact, according to Havas Media, "in Europe and the US, people would not care if 92% of brands disappeared." And, to be perfectly honest here, I would not care if Havas Media disappeared.

Which brings us to a lovely bit of new age marketing baloney published on the Entrepreneur website recently called "How to Get Customers Raving About Your Brand"

Apparently, in the never-never-land of brand babble, the way you get customers "raving" about you is through transparency, or to quote the article, "transparency is the new black." Somebody please shoot me.

You see, consumers are now so enchanted by their love of brands that they are studying brands to see which ones are most transparent.

This makes it a little difficult to explain the world's most successful company -- Apple -- which, with the possible exception of North Korea, is the most secretive enterprise in the history of mankind.

Apparently, opaque is the new transparent. The meatball who wrote this thing thinks Starbucks is successful because of its transparency. On the other hand, I have a feeling it might have something to do with having a store on every corner, making the stores clean and comfortable, and serving a good cup of coffee.



In fact, I did a little survey at my Starbucks this morning. I went around and asked everybody why they were there. Transparency came up exactly... hang on, let me check my notes... oh, here it is -- no times.

But this is the new ideological world of marketing. Marketing is no longer about meeting the practical needs of customers. It's about high-minded principles of transparency and co-creating and conversations and...

Well, I'm afraid I have a very old guy opinion. You want customers raving about your brand? Sell them a good f++++ing product.

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