

The argument for making lower quality ads: Targeting Generation Z

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There are a number of reports of agencies missing the point when it comes to the youngest generation of consumers, Generation Z. Often, too little time is spent optimising content for this generation's platforms-of-choice, such as Instagram, Snapchat and Facebook.



Image credit: Konstantin Pelikh via [123RF.com](#)

One of the biggest obstacles in the way of engagement is quality. If a video ad is too professional, or too well put together, then it is easily identifiable as an ad, rather than as content which drew Generation Z to engage with the platform in the first place.

But there's a predicament: adverts ask something of the user that platform-native, organic content does not. To be successful, adverts tend to require action from their audience. The mere fact that content is platform-native is no guarantee that it will be successful and popular, and on platforms like Instagram, users undoubtedly skip through certain organic content just as eagerly as they skip through unwanted adverts.

Should we mark our adverts out as different from the platform's mainstream, because they demand an active response from their audience? Or should we disguise ad content as something organic and native to the platform on which it is published?

Can ads that look worse do better?

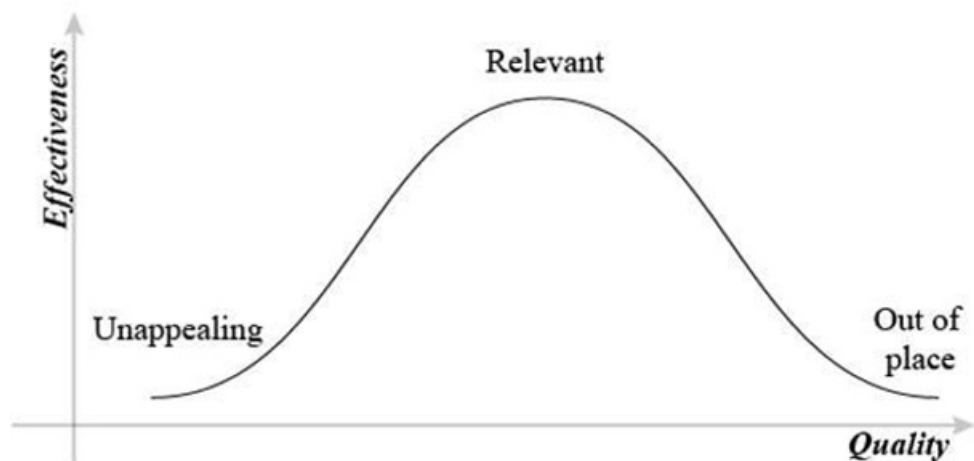
On YouTube, for instance, most of the content which goes viral is not that with the highest production value. It is likely filmed by an amateur, using an inexpensive video camera, and problems like blurred or out-of-focus shots, or poor audio quality, haven't stood in the way of their popularity.

This fact is clear to most people who spend a decent amount of time online, but advertisers rarely capitalise on the implications behind the facts: given that we, as digital advertisers, are constantly aspiring to virality, does that mean – in order to optimise our adverts for YouTube, Instagram and Snapchat – they should look a bit, well, bad?

Find the sweet spot

The answer varies from platform to platform, brand to brand, and product to product. But, whatever works best on a case-by-case basis, there are lessons we can learn from what the less cynical among us might call “platform-native” content, and what others might call – for want of a better phrase – calculated crapness.

When advertising to Generation Z on social media, one way to succeed is finding the sweet spot between being so low-quality it’s unappealing, and so high-quality that it looks out-of-place. This may seem a bitter pill to swallow for those of us who have dedicated time to learn how to create content that is as stylish and professional as possible. But, on platforms whose content is more real, raw and amateur, then emulating that amateur feel can bring in better results.



I believe this is where influencer marketing tends to shine. It accomplishes all of this in one go. Firstly, content from influencers is almost always platform-native, influencers create their content to stay in line with how the general user might use each platform, they are simply masters at this. Secondly, content from influencers tends to not look as professional or as well put together as ads from brands, and arguably, this might be one of the reasons why their content performs so well and how they manage to build audiences that rival the very same brands they're working within size and engagement.

Best of both worlds

There are exceptions of course: among Generation Z, many might happily click on an ad featuring the crisp visuals of, say, a blockbuster movie like *Avengers Infinity War*. And, for all the viral YouTube videos that aren't high quality, a lot of the most-watched videos are professional music videos. But even in these cases, I believe combining a high-quality trailer with platform-native content could bring in even better results for individual campaigns, especially on Generation Z's platforms of-choice, like Instagram, Snapchat and Facebook.

By adding platform-native influencer content into your advertising strategy, you simply get the best of both worlds. You can use influencers to create traction and, if you're lucky, even achieve unicorn status of going viral which then feeds back on to your brands' website or social media pages depending on your campaign objectives.

This solution prevents adverts from feeling like something that is foreign to the platform on which they appear. Using influencer content helps the ad itself feel like an element in the stream of content which people have chosen to consume, and so they're much more likely to be receptive to its message.

ABOUT HLUMELO NDONI

My twitter bio uses buzz words such as ass kicker, tech geek, and Internet ninja. But when you get down to it- I'm a marketer, a blogger, a social media enthusiast and budding growth hacker.

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