

FUTURE COMMERCE
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FUTURES 

HOW TO **MODERNISE** THE COMMERCE CONTENT LAYER



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HOW TO MODERNISE THE COMMERCE CONTENT LAYER

PERSUADING **SOMEONE TO BUY FROM YOU IS HARDER THAN IT'S EVER BEEN. AT A TIME WHEN THERE ARE SO MANY WAYS AVAILABLE TO REACH OUT TO POTENTIAL CUSTOMERS, THAT MAY SEEM AN ODD THING TO SAY, BUT IT IS THE BROAD RANGE THAT IS THE PROBLEM. WHERE DO YOU FOCUS YOUR EFFORTS AND WHAT KIND OF CONTENT DO YOU EMPLOY IN ORDER TO PERSUADE PEOPLE TO BUY SOMETHING – AND BUY IT FROM YOU, NOT SOMEONE ELSE?**

In PwC's most recent global retail survey, mobile is clearly the channel that's growing for online purchasing. However, purchasing in store remains king, and appears even to be showing a slight resurgence, and there are still more people buying via PCs than via mobile. When you consider browsing, on the other hand, mobiles – and especially mobile sites, rather than apps – are dominant. And once you start drilling down into different sectors, well then the pattern varies considerably.

So what should you do with your content layer?

37% OF BRANDS WE SPOKE TO RATED THEIR CONTENT LAYER AT A 3/10

BE CONSISTENT

Among PwC's recommendations is that retailers should invest in "the story" and not traditional advertising. But where does that story need to go? Globally, social networks now top shoppers' inspiration for purchasing (39%), but while that seems to match our expectations with the focus on all things social, it's still almost at parity with retailers' own websites (37%), price comparison websites (35%) and multi-brand websites (32%).

Somehow, therefore, you need to find a way to connect with potential customers across all possible channels. While you do so, rule number one is: "Be consistent, remember your brand identity and keep it aligned with what you want to achieve as an organisation," according to Adi-Buer Puplampu, Interim Chief Technology Officer at Vivienne Westwood.

This can be challenging when it feels like social media is such a different platform



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33% OF BRANDS WE ENGAGED WITH SAID THEY WOULD FOCUS ON MAKING ALL AREAS OF THEIR CONTENT SHOPPABLE, WITH AN ADDITIONAL 24% FOCUSING SOLELY ON ONSITE IMAGERY



(in the broadest sense) from your eCommerce website. Or, indeed, when you are comparing any form of online content with good old-fashioned retail – a difference that’s exaggerated when we’re talking about something like buying takeaway food, for example, rather than, say, books. But the rule stands: you are one company and you want people to engage with you, so don’t confuse them by appearing as if you are a different organisation in the various places they encounter you.

You may not write the same things on social media as on a product listing page, but keep the tone and language similar, and the imagery. You may also want to consider how common this should be globally if you have an audience that is likely to encounter you in multiple countries.

“The important thing is that every time someone interacts with your brand, they should get the same consistent content – and content that is relevant to who they are, what they’re doing and where they are. That’s across every touchpoint, not just digital,” says James Wehner, Director of Digital Experience at McDonald’s Global Digital.

BE AWARE

When choosing your content strategy, it’s more important than ever to be aware of what your current and target buyers are doing. Where are they spending their time online? What are they doing AND what are they expecting to do – is it learning, browsing or buying?

“Not all content needs to be sales content – in today’s world content is about engagement and new experiences,” says Chris Micklethwaite, Interim Digital Director, Brakes Group. “Digital transformation is about taking a traditional product or service and using technology to find ways to augment that, or even replace that – it may even cause you to change your business model. The aim should be long-term engagement and not one-off sales.”

There is a clear value in this: PwC’s survey found that 61% of people say they buy based on brand loyalty, rather than trying something new. So you will need to try particularly hard to capture new customers – but still need to work to retain existing ones. How you approach this will vary according to the channel and the kinds of interaction people tend to have with your brand in each place. “If a customer is in ‘browse mode’, supply the appropriate content,” advises Wehner.

This doesn’t mean making broad assumptions about what people tend to do on each platform: you need to spend time monitoring it.

“Be customer led – the trick is to provide a customer experience that is something they want and that makes you unique to them as an individual. Segment down to the power of one using technology to provide that unique experience. Remember that it’s no longer

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62% OF COMPANIES WE SPOKE TO SAID THEIR CONTENT PRODUCTION SAT WITHIN THEIR MARKETING TEAM WITH ONLY 24% IN THE ECOMMERCE TEAM

purely about the product or purely about commerce – it’s about the customer,” says Micklethwaite. This approach is underscored by Wehner: “Present the right content to the right people at the right time in their journey, whether it’s about the brand or their purchase.”

And don’t feel you have to stick to tried and trusted styles of presenting information about your products. “Although product information and accuracy and relevance are important,” offers Micklethwaite, “people are moving away from standard, static layouts to highly personalised, highly relevant content.” User-generated content is another option, albeit carefully curated.

And at McDonalds, where kiosks are replacing over-the-counter ordering in some outlets, “we found that by presenting rich content on our in-store kiosks, users actually chose more speciality food [than when ordering at the counter] and they spent more,” says Wehner.

The issue of when and where you should offer clear options to buy is a contentious one, however. While you should make it easy for someone to buy at any point on their journey, “customers can get bored of seeing the same message over and over again,” points out Wehner. Nevertheless, with moves to offer buyers the option to purchase via social media and even while watching videos, it can be appropriate to enable eCommerce from most or all of your content, as long as it isn’t overwhelming.

BE ORGANISED

Within your organisation there are other aspects to creating a content strategy. With so many potential content channels, the first one offered by Pupilampu is:

“Have an organisational structure to create content in all channels at the right pace to keep up with demand, and ensure this accounts for any necessary localisation if you are a global brand”. Pupilampu adds “that everyone involved in this needs to be fully aware of your organisation’s brand identity, to ensure this flows through into what users experience.”

One practical solution may be to break the work down into workstreams, with clearly assigned ownership and responsibilities.

Look too at what can be outsourced – translation work may be better managed this way, for example.

And don’t forget to communicate to everyone what is happening, including management. Manage expectations as well as encouraging feedback and ideas.

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BE OPTIMISED

It is important to optimise your internal management and creation of content, and it's also advisable to optimise the technical aspects of uploading content.

As yet, there is no perfect solution – at least not one we know – for addressing every aspect of content delivery. Machine learning and artificial intelligence may help to provide dynamically structured micro-content to support you in providing experiences, rather than just basic information. CRM also has a part to play. Whatever you do, look for solutions that don't force you to end up with the same sorts of content structure as everyone else.

And don't take humans out of the equation. "Platforms can't deliver content by themselves," says Puplampu. "You need the human element to provide the nuances – and will do for a long time yet."

Finally, as Wehner observes: "Look at Amazon. The Amazon shopping experience isn't great, but it is consistent everywhere and it works very well for them as it's what many people grew up with in terms of digital commerce. Just don't copy it!"



¹ PwC; Total Retail Survey 2017; <https://www.pwc.com/2017totalretail>