

Measuring Engagement – A White Paper

Why is engagement important?

Engagement, and how to measure it, has become one of the hot topics in the research world over the past few years. In an increasingly cluttered advertising environment, understanding how consumers both engage with - and react to – different media is becoming ever more important, particularly in understanding how these experiences influence purchase decisions.

The relationship that a user has with particular media may actually influence how receptive they are to the advertising contained within; with the premise being that the more engaged a user is with particular media, the more effective the advertising contained within that particular media will be¹.

By understanding the experiences or feelings that consumers are undergoing when in contact with different media, it is possible to develop a series of metrics which will provide an overall measure of engagement and, by default, an indication of how well the advertising contained within that medium will be.

Measuring engagement in an increasingly complex media landscape

Trying to understand this relationship is particularly complicated in the online world; where consumers may visit certain sites very frequently and spend considerable time on these sites, yet not notice any advertising. In certain circumstances, the advertising may even be seen as a hindrance, distracting them from the main purpose of their online activity. As such, volume alone (frequency of visiting and time spent) cannot be a measure of engagement; it is the quality of the time spent on the site, and perceptions of the experience that contribute to overall engagement and receptivity to the advertising contained on that site.

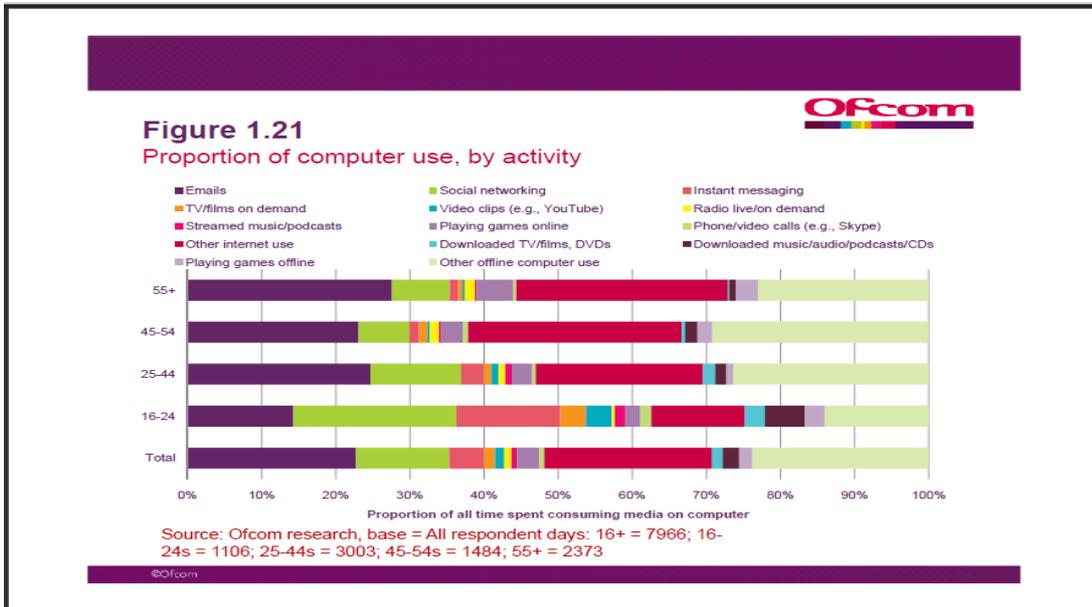
To further complicate matters, consumers are increasingly media multi-tasking, consuming more than one type of media at the same time. Recent research from Ofcom² indicated that on average consumers squeezed 8 hours and 48 minutes of media activity into 7 hours and 5 minutes (increasing to 9 hours 32 minutes of activity into 6 hours 35 minutes of media consumption amongst 16-24 year olds).

The same research highlighted (detailed in chart 1) that two fifths of time consumers spend on a computer is on communicating with other people; namely e-mail, social networking and instant messaging, with activities on computers or mobile phones most likely to be undertaken at the same time as other media activities

¹ Calder & Malthouse: 'Media Engagement and Advertising Effectiveness'

² The Communications Market 2010: Key findings of the consumer's digital day

Chart 1: Proportion of Computer Use by Activity:



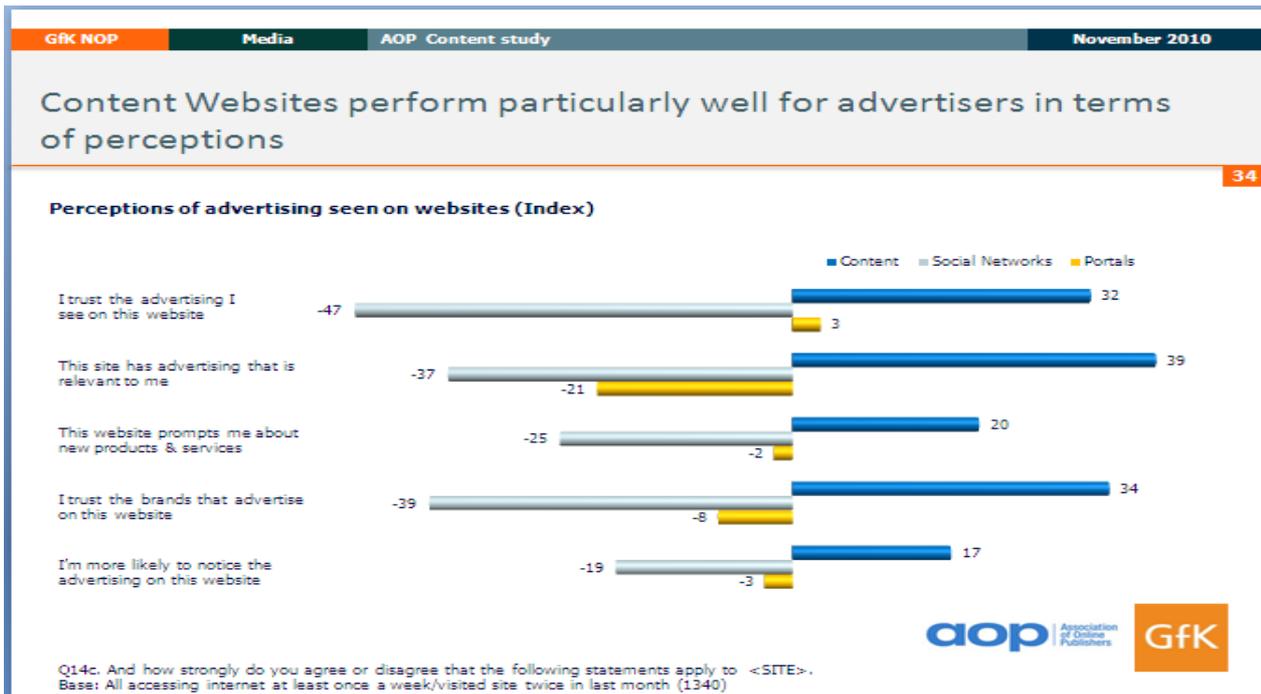
Understanding the online environment – and the impact of site content on engagement

The rapid growth of social networking sites such as Facebook has grabbed headlines – and new advertising opportunities as the number of users increased dramatically. However, motivations for using social networking sites are very different to those motivators for using portals, or other sites and the type of engagement is quite different.

To understand these differences, and how this might impact on advertising engagement, the AOP (Association of Online Publishers) commissioned GfK NOP to conduct a research project to examine engagement levels for content sites (that is, websites for which content is produced specifically) versus those for portals and social network sites and how this might impact on advertising perceptions. On face value, both portals and social networking sites have 'engaged' users in terms of dwell time and frequency, but how do content sites perform?

Mirroring the approach taken by the OPA (Online Publishers Association) in the US, the AOP project did not start out with a pre-conceived measure of engagement but instead asked respondents to rate particular site types on a battery of different image dimensions. Detailed statistical analysis was conducted on the results to identify different dimensions associated with each site type – together with related advertising measures. This resulted in the identification of 5 core website factors: Trustworthy & Reliable, Opinion Leader & Authoritative, Entertaining & Engaging, Unique & Up-to-date and Community, and 3 advertising factors; Creates awareness, Trust and Response Trigger.

Interestingly, it was the metric of trust and reliability which was more likely to drive a response to the advertising – and one area in which social network sites are still to prove themselves as the chart below illustrates. Consumers who particularly trusted the sites they used were more likely to trust the brands advertising on these sites and, as a result, more likely to respond to the advertising on these sites



In Summary

Site engagement is a complex relationship and cannot be measured by reach and frequency alone. Consumers' attitudes towards a website, motivations for using and overall opinion of the site also need to be taken into account. Trust is an extremely important metric for driving advertising response and is yet to be strongly associated with social networks

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