Consumers, Marketers & Content

Consumers have binary vision when it comes to 'content' and 'advertisements.' It is either content or an ad. Period! And this is across all mediums and platforms.

They **value content depending on the uniform it parades in.** For example: Let's say a consumer sees a piece of content i.e. "How much should you insure yourself for?" If this content appears on a 'neutral source" website of high pedigree like CNNMoney it is seen as informative. However, the same content - word for word, punctuation for punctuation - parading in a brand's uniform e.g. [www.metlife.com](http://www.metlife.com/)appears much more like a 'sale' rather than information. Note the content remains the same.

This behavior is telling of**consumer perceptions on 'where the content resides' more than 'what the content really is.'** And for marketers, perhaps the opportunity lies exactly where the challenge mirage appears. Singapore Airlines sharing a Lonely Planet piece of content about the 5 best summer destination holidays this year can add a very valuable engagement layer with its social audience. True, they could have published that content in their own skin or fully syndicated the content - But, it runs the risk of being seen by the cynics as "Singapore Airlines flies to these destinations...." and hence these feature as the best summer destinations.

**So why are marketers and social agencies not hitting those 'share' buttons which feature in very prominent places on digital content assets?** That is because they realize that while most publishers have full control on the content, the advertising is less controllable. In today's world, contextual placements and re-targeting are at their zenith. Therefore, it is very likely that the article shared by Metlife to it's social base on "How much one should insure himself / herself?" will see a competitor ad like a AIG Life Insurance running through one of the many ad networks publishers have partnered with. That's discouraging as no marketer likes being ambushed! Let alone, score a self goal!!! And not that this is done with an ambush intent. It is the very nature of today's digital advertising that brings together a fantastic and unprecedented mix of context and targeting.

Most marketers say they would be encouraged to share 'original source content' should this challenge be addressed. Because, this **third party content humanizes the brand they represent and drives up their engagement quotient.**