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MKTG 5411

21 February 2022

Apple’s Digital Marketing

**Apple’s Digital Strategy**

It is no secret that Apple’s digital marketing strategy has become a benchmark for other companies that want to reach the same level of success. Apple can teach a lot to any firm looking to have successful marketing campaigns. Digital marketing plays a huge role in Apple, which is no surprise as they are one of the largest tech firms that provide hardware and software platforms for digital creativity, innovation, and display (Arica, 2020). There are several well-known techniques that Apple uses in their marketing. The first is that they are hyper-focused on customer needs, resulting in the sleek, simple, and convenient product and service they provide to them. They advertise that visualization and creativity is easily available for everyone with a simple device from their company. They stick to their guns with unique value propositions, focusing on this point to completely avoid online price wars. To even further their business strategy, their customer experience both online and in store are unmatched to that of their competitors (Arica, 2020). Apple does everything to please their customers. Apple also maintains a high level of mystery, keeping consumers guessing with their minimal online ads and TV commercials. Finally, Apple takes advantage of their digital capabilities and uses social media platforms to advertise their presence, while at the same time avoiding a social media strategy whatsoever to continue to campaign for their mysteriousness (Kubbernus, 2021).

**The Ever-Evolving Lifestyle Personas**

To understand how Apple has stayed consistent in the market for decades, we must compare personas of the times. The first is a teenager between the years 2000-2011. Said teenager is a popular head cheerleader in high school, with the trendsetter archetype. Her motivations are driven by her fear of being “so yesterday” and she takes her social status in high school very seriously! She wants to have a scholarship in cheerleading and go into pro cheerleading one day. Her greatest frustration is picking the right music for her routines. While ambitious, she is generally kind towards others and finds herself constantly flocked because of her ability to connect with others.

The second persona is the millennial undergraduate student between 2010—2020. Said student is a scholarship recipient soccer star, with the hero archetype. No matter the situation his team is in, he finds a way to score a goal. His goals are not only to rank nationally in most goals at the collegiate level, but he strives to advance his future career. His daily routine is filled with constant workouts, practice, and running. Despite having what seems like a great collegiate career, balancing school and soccer is difficult. Not only does he have to wake up in time for his training, but he also has to maintain his grades at a certain level in order to be eligible to play for the team. His literal fear is failing his classes which means failing his team.

The two seem to be almost identical in terms of their personas. However, the stark difference is that both have different focuses. The popular teenage cheerleader is most likely to identify with Apple’s “iPod Silhouettes” (Doyle, 2011). Apple’s iPod Silhouettes showed that the company was a major player and trend setter in the digital music industry (Doyle, 2011). The head cheerleader would most likely get her hands on this trendsetting iPod to not only resolve her frustration in finding good music for her routines, but she would be able to influence her friends and cheer squad to buy iPods so they can also listen to music like her. Practicing her routine is easily done anywhere if she has her iPod.

The college soccer player would not relate too much with the iPod Silhouettes. Instead, he would prefer Apple lifestyle products. The student-athlete is most likely going to use a Mac Book for his classes, an iPhone for his alarms and to contact his classmates or teammates, and an Apple Watch to keep track of the miles he runs every day. These products all fit the lifestyle he’s looking at while maintaining a balance in both sports and school. His use for Apple products are not just for show, but for functionality and convenience, where he can easily access his email and files on his phone should he be unable to access his laptop.

When comparing the two personas of different decades it is easy to see how Apple has evolved in identifying personas of the decade. The age of silhouettes was something strictly unique to Apple, and they continued to advertise to the public with several music genres in their commercials. However, as the times changed, consumers began to look for further convenience, and Apple adjusted themselves to be able to sell to accommodate all sorts of lifestyles. As seen in the college soccer player persona, it is easy to see that Apple products are no longer just trendsetting items, but products that shape and contribute positively to the lifestyle of the customer.

**Customer Journey**

Apple’s customer journey is unique, with their sleek and simple store, to their Genius Bar support. Apple has even found a way to make waiting more pleasurable with their displays, letting consumers feel that their experience was not neglected and that it certainly lives up to the brand’s reputation. We explore Apple’s customer journey through five stages: awareness, consideration, acquisition (purchase/usage), retention (repurchase), and advocacy.

In its history of ad campaigns, Apple has created a reputation for ingenious ad campaigns, from the iPod Silhouettes to Taylor Swift falling off a treadmill. However, their humor and creativity add only a small piece to the awareness puzzle. These days, Apple relies more on product placement and media reviews now that they are such a well-known brand beyond just the iPod, with the iPhone overshadowing the once coveted music player (Anderson, 2021). This is where Apple gains customer awareness, from ads years back to word of mouth customer rave reviews. This leads to the consideration stage, where users begin to weigh all their options between Apple and the competition (Anderson, 2021). Apple may not be able to compete on price, but that isn’t how they maintain their customer base! They focus on their unique value proposition: a unique sleek design, that is easy to use and conveniently accessed across their various devices. By determining this as their selling point, they can move into the next stage of the customer journey.

When it comes to the next stage, acquisition, Apple moves their customers through the process of purchase and usage smoothly. They give consumers a bevy of options: buy the iPhone online or in store (Anderson, 2021). In-store customers can directly buy from employees with mobile points of sale so there are no lines to wait in after they’ve taken their pick, offering payments in full or monthly (Anderson, 2021). Apple employees will walk you through the purchase options as well as what their products offer, creating an opportunity to express their value proposition when using their products. They are even capable of setting up your new iPhone with your current carrier for you. Then, the retention stage comes next. Apple continuously nurtures customer relationships after the acquisition phase by creating loyalty. They do so by offering outstanding customer support thanks to Genius Bar and Apple Care, ensuring that users understand the products well enough and know that they are taken care of (Anderson, 2021). Furthermore, they solidify loyalty by providing an upgrade trade-in system, where you can get discounted newer models by turning in an old product to recycle the hardware. Not only that, Apple makes it almost impossible *not* to buy into their Apple ecosystem, where you can find your phone, watch, MacBook, and sync everything between all devices (Anderson, 2021). With iCloud also in tow, it’s convenient to the consumer all around.

Finally, at the advocacy phase, Apple reigns supreme. Customers don’t just become loyal, they become fans who know their product usage inside and out. During Black Friday and holiday sales, people are willing to camp outside the stores to get their hands on the best deal. It is undoubtedly a top priority Christmas and birthday gift. And not only so, but it is also a logo that everyone recognizes. With customers advocating by swearing to what they love about Apple, word of mouth spreads awareness to their friends and family, which brings us back to the top of the cycle of the customer journey: awareness.

**Touchpoints**

Apple has impressive brand touchpoints. An obvious one is their physical store, boasting over 500 Apple Stores in 25 countries where the brand is experienced at the locations (Brandification, 2021). Apple’s store is a radical reinvention of the way technology is experienced at the point of person, from excellent customer service to their interactive displays. Of course, their website is just as revolutionary as their store, with simple navigation and ease of purchase, making the online experience just as good as in person. Apple’s iPhone makes up most of the brand’s gross income, which speaks volume in terms of their mobile capabilities. Lastly, Apple’s biggest event of the year is always their Keynote event, where they confirm any rumors swirling in the media, delivering answers to the mystery of their future products and services (Brandification, 2021). With all of these in play, paired with the customer journey, Apple fosters a healthy customer experience and journey.

**Moment of Truth Captured in a Photo**

While the iPhone is largest portion of Apple’s profit portfolio, there is a single reason that Apple’s iPhone sells out more than its competitors: camera quality. Apple sells on the basis that the camera quality of an iPhone is revolutionary, allowing users to personalize the lock of their images with fine-tune settings and customizable filters (Apple, 2021). One can adjust focus and exposure, take a mirrored selfie, capture photos at high speeds, and create cinematic style videos (Apple, 2021). The high-quality, high-definition photo and video capabilities of the iPhone speaks volumes for Apple’s brand, literally leaving a lasting image to their customers, a moment of truth captured in a photo.

**Improving the Digital Strategy of Apple**

Improving the Digital Strategy of Apple is a headscratcher for employees of Apple and other experts alike. While many companies look to Apple’s current strategies and past strategies to understand where their own companies need to improve, Apple has no one to look to. Their digital strategy is top notch and makes them king of their digital empire. Microsoft may beat them in the PC sales, but overall, Apple is still the highest earning tech firm between the two. Apple instead focuses on how they can introduce and market new products and services to their consumers.

**KPIs**

Apple tracks their success with KPIs. From customer service reviews to sales numbers, Apple makes it known that their numbers are out there for everyone to know. They keep track of the number of mobile sales and how many days it takes for an item to sell in a store (inventory turnover). However, not only are they measuring their success on a customer level, they are making efforts to ensure that their employees identify with Apple’s values and succeed as a company. Apple uses balanced scorecards to help the entire company direct their focus, allowing stakeholders in today’s business world to be more adept at focusing on a company’s strategic vision (Taylor, n.d.). Apple knows its company from an internal perspective and an external analysis, which is what also drives their digital strategy success.

**Can Apple benefit from crowdsourcing and/or crowdfunding?**

Apple already reaps the benefits of crowdsourcing. For years, Apple prided itself on protecting the privacy of consumers, refusing to crowdsource. Nearly a decade later, Apple Maps is committed to crowdsourced incident reporting for motorists (Paukert, 2019). The company released features in iOS 14.5 in which a motorist can say, “Hey Siri, there’s a crash up ahead,” and Siri will crowdsource the information to Apple Maps, allowing Apple users to benefit from it (Paukert, 2019). The voice-command ability allows driver safety as well as the safety of others. As far as crowdfunding goes, Apple does not have a need for it, since their financial success is already top of the line.

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