MKT 605 3-1 Case Study: The Nokia N8 “Push Snowboarding” Campaign

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The Nokia N8 “Push Snowboarding” campaign did something that hadn’t been done before, it made the bold decision to use social media to develop the product, generate awareness and engagement and increase brand and device preference. No other company previously had blended social and traditional media in this way. It was about more than marketing the N8, it was ‘proof of concept’ and a glimpse of the future of marketing.

The social media strategy used social media platforms like Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter to not only promote product but connect people over shared interests, strengthen brand relations and build new ones at a time when social media was in its infancy. It was very meta idea to use social media platforms used on mobile devices to promote a mobile device.

Elements used to launch the new product were:

Advertising

TV advertisements were designed to generate curiosity and encourage viewers to visit the N8 website, where the project was explained in full and the resources made available for the community to get involved themselves. The website was the main hub where content was published. The idea was to use TV ads, Tweets and YouTube films to direct the target audience to the website and drive engagement.

Nokia sponsored the Burton US Open, where the campaign was aired on a large scale and covered extensively on Twitter and YouTube. At the Burton European Snowboarding Open, Transworld Sport produced a six-minute report on Push Snowboarding, which reached 249 million people across the world. The campaign was covered on major TV channels such as CNN, Sky Sports, Wired, USA Today and ESPN (Dubois & Pal Kaur, 2015).

Direct Marketing

Taking a page from a Ford Fiesta campaign, Nokia invited customers to voice their ideas about the N8. Select customers were given the N8 with a mission to showcase the aspects of the phone they found attractive to their friends using their preferred social media platforms in effect, creating user generated content like videos, blogs and photos.

At the recommendation of Hyper, Nokia created a strong online community around the N8 that could serve as a springboard for speeding up product adoption and development while leveraging Nokia's endorsement of open source and create an open online platform that could be easily accessible for the development of powerful new applications.

Public Relations

Wells wanted to demonstrate the N8's power by showing its ability to capture, communicate and share information that consumers within their communities would value. Phone capabilities were growing and Wells, a sports enthusiast, was inspired by a Tour de France route bike ride he had taken where he was able to compare his performance with that of the professional riders and he wanted to develop something comparable to apply to the snowboarding field (Dubois & Pal Kaur, 2015).

Nokia formed a partnership with Burton, the largest and most popular snowboarding brand known for its innovative and high-performing boards and clothing designs, who helped Nokia develop the sensors needed to allow the N8 to measure speed, rush, heart rate, pressure and

orientation. This is the information that could then be shared on social networks and to compare performances. It was a smart partnership to appeal to both Nokia and Burton fans.

Nokia made available all the data collected on parameters such as speed and airtime to the snowboarding community, and encouraged them to use it as they liked and share the content on social media platforms. One fan used the data collected by the N8 to create a snowboard design, Nokia presented the fan with a bespoke snowboard that Nokia especially created from the design at the US Open, and arranged interview coverage of the presentation.

Events and Experiences

The N8 used sensors that could measure and track snowboarding performance, enabling snowboarders to compare their performance with others. The “Push Snowboarding” campaign aimed to give the N8 a powerful launch, create momentum, increase product referrals and adoption, and produce high levels of customer engagement in the form of customer-generated content and the developers’ contribution to the phone’s applications. Taking it even a step further, the N8 would be a tool for professional snowboarders and snowboarding enthusiast alike to track and measure their personal performance and compare it with one another.

In January 2011, Nokia was invited to the Burton European Snowboarding Open. While there, seizing the opportunity to further engage the community and generate content, Nokia carried prototypes of the N8 to the event and invited tech and snowboarding journalists and snowboarding enthusiasts to use the product and provide feedback.

While there Nokia interviewed snowboarder Terje Haakonsen about his thoughts on the product and made a video showing him using the N8. The idea was to engage snowboarders in the

development of the product, such as how to measure airtime (angle, rotation, speed in air, impact on landing), why it was important to measure it (bragging rights, comparison with friends and professionals) and why it needed to be accurate (importance of visual proof in the snowboarding world).

Content was generated from many sources such as snowboarding fans, the US Open, interviews with professional snowboarders and testing videos. Results were shared on Twitter with fans, which further helped engage target customers. The experiences of top-ranked snowboarders, such as three times TTR world snowboard champion Peetu Piiroinen and snowboarding legend Terje Haakonsen, were shared online, allowing fans and developers alike to compare (Dubois & Pal Kaur, 2015).

I was impressed by Nokia's N8 campaign. It was ahead of its time in social media marketing, online community building and UGC at a time when social media was still the wild west. From a marketer's standpoint, all of Nokia's efforts can be appreciated but its focus on the snowboarding community was what set it apart from other smart phones at the time. Nokia was essentially a pioneer in smart health apps. Without the campaign's focus on the snowboarding niche, engaging with that community and providing them with a valuable service crafted to that particular community there would not have been the reception that there was to the campaign.

The biggest lesson that I learned from the Nokia N8 case study was that researching, knowing and serving your consumer is the best way to convert a fan to a buyer. When marketing a product to people the most important part of the integrated marketing communications approach is the consumer's wants and needs.

The IMC was very affective. According to the post-project assessment carried out in four countries among 1,000 respondents to measure the impact: an improvement of 3.25% in brand preference and an increase of 14% in device preference. The most substantial engagement came via Twitter, where as a result of the campaign Nokia reached 8.2 million people on the platform. On YouTube, videos by Nokia and user-generated content resulted in 35,000 hours of viewing. In addition to social media, online and press news reached another 36 million people (Dubois & Pal Kaur, 2015).

Analysis showed that incremental ROI was 1:13 on the investment made (for every dollar spent on the campaign there was a return of $14). The campaign reached approximately 290 million people across the world through social media platforms and channels such as Sky Sports, which contributed to the Nokia N8 recording the greatest number of pre-orders ever from the company. Sales went up: more than 4 million units of the N8 were sold in the year following the launch. This was an overwhelmingly successful integrated marketing communication strategy.

References:

Dubois, D., & Pal Kaur, M. (2015, April). The Nokia N8 ‘Push Snowboarding’ Campaign: An Avant-Garde Social Media Strategy from Engagement to Sales. Retrieved August 15, 2021, from https://services.hbsp.harvard.edu/lti/links/content-launch