

Connect the Dots

BY AL WITTEMEN

TRACYLOCKE

You might think that you don't have a "second" life, but if you're on the internet, you do. We *all* do. Not only that, but our first and second lives are colliding.

When you think about it, the thing that makes that second life so appealing is that it gives us a level of control that mostly eludes us in our first lives. We know exactly where everything is, and usually can find what we want when and where we want it. We have these great conversations that begin and end as we please.

If only our first lives could be as simple, efficient and orderly as our second lives! Well, the good news is, more and more of us are doing what we can to try to make that dream a reality. The pertinent news, from a business perspective, is that a few packaged goods companies are starting to explore this nexus of our two lives and accruing impressive dividends to their shopper marketing strategies.

For example, have you visited Procter & Gamble's *Tide.com* site? It's absolutely brilliant from a shopper marketing perspective. When you click on any of the various products, the entire shelf set comes up in a flash movie. If you remember, a few years ago every P&G shelf set was standardized so that it is nearly identical from store to store. This allows consumers to have an experience with Tide in any store, in the comfort of their own homes.

So, the next time you go to the store and you're looking for that P&G product, you have a good idea where that product sits and what it looks like. Most people probably don't even think about what has changed, but it creates a marker in their minds about where that particular product is in the store. It helps them navigate the store more easily.

How consumers behave online informs what brands should do at retail.

If the idea of people interacting online with jugs of detergent sounds like an unlikely scenario, think again. A three-month long, collaborative study by comScore, Procter & Gamble, Yahoo and SEMPO found that "a majority of U.S. consumers

visited websites for CPG product categories."

The best part is that P&G is collecting information about its customers along the way that its retail partners didn't already know—the kind of information that grows sales, builds loyalty and feeds innovation. The implications of this are huge because it means that the "first moment of truth"—the very premise of shopper marketing—can actually happen before the consumer is even in the store. It puts tremendous clout back in the hands of CPG companies.

BETTER, FASTER, STRONGER

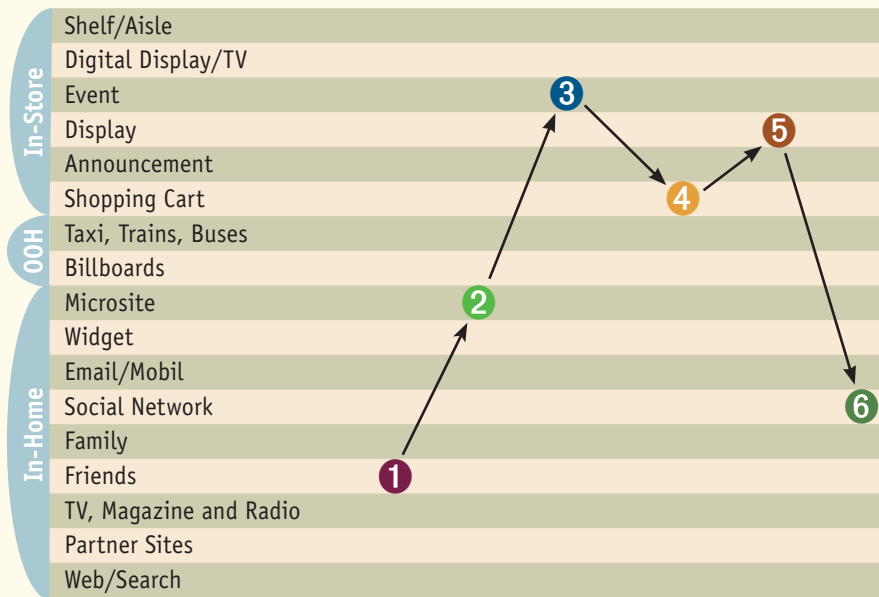
The digital world is making shopper marketing better, faster and stronger. Retailers are now sharing traffic and sales data and analytics faster. Manufacturers are sharing better and more granular insights, too. Digital has created a very different context for the retailer-manufacturer relationship that's nothing like it was even five years ago.



Tracy Smith
34-years-old
Mother of 2 kids
Mission: Shop for Bargains

Touchpoints

Path-to-Purchase Scenario



1 Friends

Tracy receives an email from her friend about a microsite for young mothers and then has a phone conversation about a special in-store event happening later this month.

2 Microsite

She browses the microsite and searches for a local retailer by zip code, signs up for mobile alert reminders for seasonal events and personalized promos.

3 In-Store

Signs up as a member while shopping the store with her friend. An email is sent to her home thanking her for becoming a member with a link to the microsite.

4 Shopping Cart

As Tracy grabs her cart to shop, she notices a display on the cart with a map of the store and immediately heads for the baby-care aisle.

5 Display

Continuing to shop, she sees a diaper display with an online review and a message to text a short code to the microsite to get more information.

6 Social Network

Tracy becomes a fan of the microsite, advocating its many benefits to her friends, who also get an update on their Facebook news aggregators that Tracy is a fan of the microsite.

Digital also addresses the issue of speed, which is essential today because the marketplace is moving at such a fast clip. In the CPG world, programs are on the floor for only 2-4 weeks. By today's standards, they only get feedback 45 days later and there's no way for shopper marketers to really change or augment what they're trying to do.

Somehow, we've got to be able to build speed into our strategies, and digital gives us a way to do that. In that respect, digital is in a league of its own. ACNielsen offers a 45-day feedback period, while for HomeScan

and Yahoo, it's 30 days minimum. Wal-Mart has got it down to 14 days with its Smart Network. But in a digital environment, your feedback is available within hours. Wherever that digital tactic is, when you push people there, you begin to read it immediately.

Most important, digital is the way to amplify shopper-marketing programs and make them relevant to shoppers at home, outside the home as well as in the store. This is as it must be because engagement demands relevance. The world of creativity has gone so far beyond where it needs to go. So much of

marketing is big, bold, splashy and interruptive, but it is not always relevant.

Relevance are things that may be a little softer, but more meaningful in our lives. You have to have some relevance with people's lives to connect with them on an emotional level.

That usually means looking for solutions that align with the tasks that we're trying to accomplish. We are not looking for freedom *of* choice as much as freedom *from* choice—an edited set of possibilities that make our lives simpler.

We have so much choice today in our daily lives that we really start to drill down our consideration set. Where we once had one soda, we now have 80 different sodas. Where we previously had ten feet of one particular product, we now have 80 feet. People in general are just saying that the world has become too much of a Chinese menu. They're saying, be an expert for me, lead me down that path and then let me make my choices.

Freedom from choice is one of the reasons Martha Stewart has been so successful in the paint category. People want somebody with authority to help them make a decision and give them the correct consideration set because there is so much to be decided upon, especially when it comes to paint.

People just want someone to tell them how to match up colors because they're not good at it. So, Martha Stewart took that spectrum of colors down to the top 200 and matched everything for everybody and became the queen of paint sales. She gave people freedom from choice and Sears a rock-star category.

A DIGITAL STRATEGY

The question is, how to connect “first” and “second” lives—online and offline behavior—to amplify shopper-marketing strategies? At TracyLocke, we start by creating what we call “personas.” We do this because it gives the shopper and consumer a seat at the table in the process. We actually draw this persona down to an individual with a name, although she represents a group.

This helps us understand her personal profile, her key behaviors and attitudes, her motivation, where she indexes under and over in terms of retailers. So, for instance, maybe Sam's Club needs to look at what Safeway is doing that's attracting a particular type of shopper. It's not that Sam's Club should emulate Safeway, but rather identify what it is about Safeway that this shopper finds so satisfying, and how to win her over.

We look at the brands that she uses and her

media consumption, and it really starts to draw a picture of whom we're trying to talk to as we roll out our campaigns. Based on this information, we identify what we believe is a likely path to purchase for her both online and offline (*see chart*). It's all based on what she responds to, what guides and informs her, and gives her “freedom from choice” in her life.

So, the digital strategy helps us become more “micro” in our ability to develop unique programs that fit shoppers' profiles in a way that's relevant in their lives, the ways they want to shop and see information. We've got real learning from real shoppers in real environments. Instead of trying to guess at what consumers do, we can get a good understanding of what they actually are doing by creating a dialogue with them.

Our conversation with consumers and shoppers today is one way; we send them our advertisements and promotions. But we now live in a conversational culture because of the internet and what it's allowed people to do. If you want to get to know anybody, you have to have a conversation with them. Shoppers and consumers want to have conversations with brands that are relevant to them.

Much of this conversation is happening online. That's where engagement starts. We've got to be able to bring that conversation back into the brand experience and back into the brand idea to refine it in a continuous feedback loop.

It's very much like what direct marketing does. Every time you engage with a consumer at a digital touch-point, you have a “breadcrumb.” It's measurable, and we can look at how it changes over time. It literally creates a learning platform about shoppers. Shopper marketers who connect the dots will have at their disposal a continuum of learning over a long period of time, over multiple kinds of shoppers and consumers.

Of course, these personas are just a starting point. The real goal is to measure what we learn as we go, and then plug that intelligence into a long-term learning plan that drives innovation, enables wiser decisions and makes the shopping experience better for us all. ■



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