

Marketing trends in 2012: Viral promotion, product placement, crowdsourcing

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Traditional product advertising -- full-page magazine ads and 30-second television commercials -- may be going the way of the rotary phone. Emerging concepts such as crowdsourcing, viral Internet campaigns, product placements and guerilla promotions will dominate the marketing and advertising landscape in 2012 and beyond, says a marketing expert at Washington University in St. Louis.

“Traditional expensive [advertising](#) is no longer effective given all the clutter, as well as the emergence of technologies, like digital video recorders, that block the ads from even being viewed, much less absorbed, by consumers,” says Seethu Seetharaman, PhD, the W. Patrick McGinnis Professor of Marketing at Olin Business School.

Seetharaman says the success of “ingeniously crafted” inexpensive viral ad campaigns, such as BlendTec’s “Will it Blend?” YouTube campaign for its blenders, indicates that such non-traditional, low-cost/high-impact promotional campaigns will be on the rise moving forward.

Product placements, though they’ve been around a long time, will continue to gain popularity as well in place of more traditional advertising, he says.

“The movie Transformers 3 created a record, even by Hollywood standards, in terms of the number of brands that were ‘product placed’ within the movie,” Seetharaman says. “This will catch on in the future, although the concept of product placements goes back to the times of the

Marx Brothers.”

The reason for its reemergence, he says, is that there are very few opportunities these days to get consumers in a “captive” mode of having no choice but to take in the brand being advertised.

“One of those few opportunities is being stuck in a dark auditorium, consuming entertainment, having no choice of whitening out a brand on screen, or using a DVR to fast-forward,” Seetharaman says. “In fact, product placements are also on the rise in sitcoms, video games and other media for the same reason.

“In fact,” he says, “pre-movie advertising interspersed between movie trailers will increase as well.”

Social media will play a critical role in product development, as well as advertising.

“I think crowdsourcing is only going to increase,” Seetharaman says.

Crowdsourcing refers to the open innovation model, pioneered by sites like Threadless.com, where customers design and vote on new product designs.

This allows them to take active charge of the new product development process, rather than reacting to product concepts developed by firms, he says.

“This [product development](#) model has already moved to information markets like the Huffington Post, and is now moving to high-ticket products such as furniture and cars, albeit for limited target markets for now,” Seetharaman says.

Given the popularity of campaigns such as the T-Mobile Flash Mob, one is more likely to see non-traditional “grassroots” campaigns get more noticed than traditional billboard advertising in city streets.

“With the explosion of smartphones, these grassroots campaigns are swiftly recorded by people and then posted on YouTube in short order, which then makes these guerilla campaigns go viral in a big way,” Seetharaman says. “This ‘guerrilla promotion’ style of advertising will blossom in 2012 and beyond.”

Provided by Washington University in St. Louis

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