

Big marketers try social-media-only promotions

Papa John's, Dew let followers choose

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By Bruce Horovitz

Some of the biggest brands — once known for favoring mass over efficiency — are turning the marketing matrix on its head by targeting promos at consumers using social media exclusively.

No TV. No radio. No print ads.

Instead of mixing traditional and non-traditional media, they're focusing very targeted promotions via Twitter, Facebook or even Foursquare on a small number of consumers who they hope will reward them with social buzz.

American Express is doing it with the cult hit TV show Glee via Twitter. Papa John's is using its Facebook page to prompt fans to create, name and earn a slice of profits from the sales of a consumer-designed pizza. And Pepsi, which shook Madison Avenue by spurning the Super Bowl for social media, has asked Mountain Dew's Facebook fans to help it create, name and market a new Dew.

"Social media is the hottest thing out there," says Janet Fouts, a social-media coach. "The ones who succeed are the ones who will land the tech-savvies, the Gen Y's and the Gen X's."

If this is the future of how marketers reach their targets, it could affect every advertiser, agency and media format. For now, most advertisers prefer to mix traditional with non-traditional formats. Even then, some are using social media exclusively for specific promos.

But beware, says social-media guru Jay Baer: The growing number of social-media promos could ultimately result in what he calls "participatory clutter." This will get "annoying some day," he warns.

It doesn't seem to be annoying yet to a core group of consumers who live and breathe social-media. Here's how some big brands are reaching out to them via social-media only — and making them feel involved in decision making:

► **American Express.** Keenly aware of the large Twitter following of the Fox TV comedy Glee — about a high school glee club in small-town Ohio — AmEx figured the best way to connect with those who watch it was Twitter.

With the cast of Glee about to embark on a national touring stage show, AmEx knew it could appeal to Glee fans by offering "the ultimate, VIP Glee fan experience," says Leslie Berland, vice president of social media at AmEx. The prize includes free seats and VIP access.

So it turned exclusively to Twitter to promote the contest, which will have two pairs of winners in New York City and Los Angeles. To be entered, fans must tweet before 11:59 p.m. ET today a special message provided by AmEx.

This isn't the first time that AmEx turned to social-media for a promo. It learned the power of Twitter last year, Berland says, when it used it exclusively to promote a special Bon Jovi concert for card holders at New York's Lincoln Center. It pushed out one tweet about the concert and sold out within hours.

AmEx also is sponsoring Conan O'Brien's tour. In March, it announced a Twitter exclusive promo to win VIP seats to a show and meet O'Brien. Over one weekend, more than 250,000 people on Twitter clicked on the link.

► **Papa John's.** Last week, the pizza chain rolled out a promo exclusively on its Facebook page urging its 1.2 million followers to enter a contest to name and create their own pizza, which ultimately will be sold at Papa John's.

Its Facebook fans must select from the chain's 19 toppings. One fan proposal: "Fire in the Hole" pizza made with barbecue sauce, bacon, Italian sausage and jalapeno peppers.

The promo offers to split a share of the profits, up to \$10,000, with the winner.

"With social-media, we can communicate with people, and they can communicate with us," says Jim Ensign, vice president at Papa John's. "It also allows our fans to tell their friends what they're doing. Facebook spreads the news."

► **Mountain Dew.** To generate buzz among Mountain Dew's 845,000 Facebook fans, PepsiCo reached out to them last month — for a second time — to help it develop a flavor, name and marketing plan for a new Mountain Dew drink.

From the Mountain Dew Facebook page, PepsiCo created a smaller online community, Dew Labs, made up of 4,000 of the more-die-hard Dew fans. They helped narrow the next new Dew drink down to



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three flavors: Mountain Dew Distortion, Mountain Dew Typhoon and Mountain Dew White Out.

These three contending drinks will be on store shelves through June 14. Fans can vote online for their favorite. The winner will be announced on Labor Day.

“We have such avid fans in social media,” says B. Bonin Bough, global director of social-media for PepsiCo. “If we let them play a role in the product creative process, we’ll engage them.”



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Assessment Questions

1. What is the main idea of this article?
 - A. Mountain Dew is unveiling new drinks and consumers get to vote on them.
 - B. American Express knows what its fans like: Jon Bon Jovi.
 - C. Some companies are using only social-media to promote some events.
 - D. Some companies are trying to use traditional and non-traditional marketing.
2. What was the effect of AmEx's tweet about its Bon Jovi concert?
 - A. They had such a small response, AmEx decided to tweet about it again.
 - B. The concert sold out almost immediately.
 - C. AmEx decided to sponsor Conan O'Brien's tour instead.
 - D. AmEx decided to send a tweet to people for every concert.
3. What is the central problem with social media-only advertising for other media avenues, as inferred by this article?
 - A. If marketers only use social media to reach a target audience, companies that create and sell TV, print and radio ads will lose advertising revenue.
 - B. Marketers could stand to lose a lot of money if Facebook or Twitter servers are hacked.
 - C. Advertising at sports stadiums would decrease and as a result, sports ticket prices would increase.
 - D. It will decrease the number of celebrity endorsements used by advertisers.
4. In this text, what does "social media" mean?
 - A. TV shows like "Friends" and "Glee" that portray social scenarios.
 - B. Online tools people can use to interact with one another.
 - C. Obscure media forms that promote socialism.
 - D. Societies that provide the freedom of speech and press.
5. What can the reader conclude about social media marketing after reading the article?
 - A. If done right, it's effective; people do get the message and respond.
 - B. It's ineffective no matter who does it; most people never get the message.
 - C. TV and cable advertising is still cheaper, faster, and better for marketing.
 - D. Social media is sometimes a success and sometimes a failure.
6. According to the reporter, what is the MOST VALID argument for using social-media for marketing a product?
 - A. Papa John's was looking for new names for its pizzas.
 - B. Some companies ran out of marketing money, and this option is free.
 - C. Social media provides two-way communication.
 - D. Most advertisers like to mix traditional formats with non-traditional formats.