

The real challenge is not just about being able to talk about bought, owned and earned media, but to be able to do it'



Kellogg's Field of Dreams celebrity ambassadors (l-r) Jacqui Hurley, Rob Kearney and Tracey Piggott

Increasingly, advertisers appreciate that 'media' is no longer a subset of 'advertising' but rather the reverse and that it is 'Media' (with a capital M), with all its new varieties, that needs to be considered in a different way. This has resulted in the growth of a new communications framework: bought, owned and earned (BOE) media.

From linear to fragmented communications

The old model of communications that evolved in the 1950s and early 1960s, the era of *Mad Men*, had it that the advertising process was fairly linear. The sender (or advertiser) sent their message via a channel (or medium) to the receiver (the consumer), who got the information they needed and then acted upon it.

It assumed that the basic input and output of the human brain was sequential – given enough messages (ratings, press insertions, poster sites etc), consumers could be transitioned through the nice simple steps of Awareness, Interest, Desire and then Action (the old AIDA model).

This was accepted wisdom across the advertising world until the early Nineties, but as the early impact of digital technology became apparent, a new lexicon of 'one-to-one marketing', 'interactive communications' and 'customer dialogue' began to take hold. Advertising and media was less about blunt persuasion and more about providing interaction for consumers with the hope of establishing a more lasting relationship. This was also the era of 'advertising as entertainment', where overt sales messages were often avoided in favour of more oblique methods (including media sponsorships) designed to build brand image and likeability.

The growth in consumer adoption of all things internet-related and the advent of social media has resulted in a further evolution of this model where 'word of mouth' is now seen as one of the most powerful ways to transmit branded messages. And what better way of spreading word of mouth than by encouraging consumers to become ambassadors of a brand through their own media – hence the reason why a channel such as Facebook is often referred to as facilitating word of mouth 'on steroids'!

It has now become accepted that in an era of highly fragmented media the old linear model of 'sender – message – receiver – result' is completely outmoded, and for consumers different types of media have different influences on the way in which they engage with brands. Sometimes brands just want to talk to them using one-directional messages in bought media channels, to gain as much awareness as possible. Alternatively, when a brand needs to provide a deeper level of engagement or create a richer experience for their customers they may leverage their owned media assets such as a website, a mobile app, an event or a retail store to talk with them.

Finally, when consumers want to talk about brands to their friends, peers or the world at large, they now have the wherewithal to do so through a plethora of online channels. Here brands hope to stimulate positive conversations about themselves so they earn exposure or kudos on these increasingly influential media. So the three classifications of bought, owned and earned media has arisen. (Recently, management consultancy McKinsey posited two

additional types: 'sold media' – where one brand's owned media, say an online retail site, sells ad space or takes content from another partner, and 'hijacked media' – where a brand's website is taken hostage by consumers or activists who make negative allegations about the company or product.)

BOE in action

We have seen some great examples of bought, owned and earned media strategies created in the Irish market over recent times. The Bord Gáis 'Big Switch' campaign used all three media categories to great effect. Two other high profile examples from the Carat client base were Kellogg's and its 'Field of Dreams' initiative and Cadbury Ireland with its involvement in the 2009 series of *The Apprentice*.

The Kellogg's 'Field of Dreams' BOE strategy was designed to create a local groundswell that would gain national momentum. To achieve this, Carat collaborated with RTÉ, using its cross-platform assets in a way that had never been done before. The agency used RTÉ personalities as advocates, visiting sports clubs, creating content that was used in programme editorial both on television and radio, in digital and print, and in television commercials that had a realistic homemade feel.

The momentum built further as clubs sought to influence the public vote through Facebook pages, websites, blogs, YouTube videos, local media and community activity. The campaign was phenomenally successful with over 250,000 people actively participating in the activity and over one million visits to the Field of Dreams website alongside thousands of euro of earned media.

For Cadbury, Carat used the opportunity provided by the relatively novel concept at the time of product placement on *The Apprentice* to heighten awareness of the Irishness of Cadbury Dairy Milk. It did this through bought media in the form of task sponsorship during the show itself, and then leveraging that through pre-promotion in press on programme day, ad break domination throughout the show and search engine marketing throughout. This was designed to drive awareness of and traffic to a Cadbury-owned microsite, where members of the public were encouraged to design their own Dairy Milk wrapper and then vote for the best entrant. This they did in large numbers but they also created lots of free, third party exposure on their own social and mainstream media channels.

Death of mainstream media?

While a successful campaign can begin using owned media, it is clear from the most successful BOE media strategies that far from being redundant, paid for media still has a vital role to play in creating this virtuous loop across the three types. Owned media may be more cost efficient and allows for depth of customer contact, but bought media, whether through a press or radio campaign, makes these owned channels work harder, providing scale and driving numbers.

Similarly, expecting to gain word of mouth just by putting something funny, clever or free up on the internet is naive as few campaigns will succeed in generating 'earned' exposure through online media alone. Advertising in traditional media still outperforms digital

media formats on measures such as brand stature, relevance, content enjoyment, word of mouth generation and acceptability, and is essential for boosting web traffic.

The important thing to understand about BOE is not that it just provides a new categorisation of media channels. The real benefit is that that it enables us, as marketing and media people, to think about the creation of a total brand experience using media environments that consumers actually use, in the way they use them and in a manner that complements the brand. It provides a framework for understanding how different touchpoints can work together and how best to manage various media assets (tangible, intangible and monetary) to get the most out of them.

Implications of BOE

The implications for marketers as a consequence of the BOE media framework are immense. Because media exposure is no longer in the hands of the few or just for large companies who pay for mass exposure, it means there are no places left to hide. Earned media is extremely hard to control and measure because it can turn from positive to negative very quickly. This means that brand marketing teams are very much on the customer frontline where there are high expectations of product and service delivery. It means the whole concept of crowd-sourcing is moving from theory to practice, as brands can now avoid the expense of indirect third-party channels, be they media or retail, to source ideas or sales. Finally, it means a whole new set of skills are required to expertly design or manage campaigns across a broader scope of channels, from broadcast media to search and to social media.

Agencies too are grappling with this interpretation of Media. The real challenge is not just about being able to talk about bought, owned and earned media, but to be able to do it. There are many different ways in which bought, owned and earned media can be integrated and it's therefore important that agencies have a process that enables consistent consumer-driven strategies to emerge. This will vary depending on the consumer's interest or relationship with the category, brand and media. For example, interest in a brand like Adidas is likely to be completely different to one like Kerrygold.

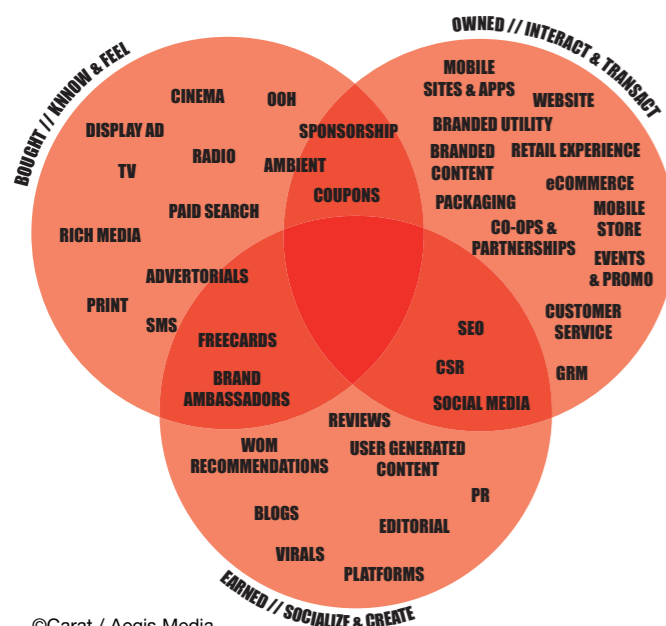
Achieving coherence and a sales or reputational-enhancing impact for a brand often demands the collaboration of experts from advertising, media, PR, digital and experiential disciplines. It means that agencies have to be more prepared to be truly collaborative as no one has a monopoly on all the skills required to exclusively undertake a BOE strategy.



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Bought – owned – earned media classifications

CHANNEL CLASSIFICATIONS



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