

Engaging with connected consumers - Part 1

 By [Danette Breitenbach](#)

11 Feb 2015

Yes, consumers are all in the digital space. Not all consumers are not the same, and no, not all digital consumers are same. Digital consumers are all different and do different things in this space and so, brands need to be savvy to reach them.

In Part 1 of this three-part series, the consumer in the digital space is examined with the goal of assisting marketers to reach consumers successfully online.

Connected Life is a leading global study by TNS of the digital attitudes and behaviours of over 55,000 internet users across 50 countries, exploring how technology is transforming the lives of consumers across the world.



Aggrey Maposa, Regional Director, TNS Connect Africa, Middle East and Mediterranean, explains that internet users worldwide all have their own unique digital footprint. "Digital is all about personalisation - the segment of me. This makes it vital to build a meaningful understanding of the different types of connected consumer."

The TNS study examined digital influence and social engagement. "We believe that two dimensions differentiate connected consumers, and each has its own implications for how marketers reach them," explains Maposa.

The detail is in the differences

He adds that clearly when simplifying the entirety of human online behaviour down to two dimensions, there are going to be nuances. "Every market is unique, so you need to recognise that a high 'digital influence' individual in one market may only be a low 'digital influence' individual in another."

However, he says, when they looked at the two dimensions together, they ended up with four different patterns of behaviour and these four different personas with core behavioural characteristics are remarkably similar no matter which part of the world we are talking about.

Observers

Highly curious about and enthused by technology, Observers take pride in knowing about the latest innovations. They are extremely comfortable around technology and enjoy being able to figure things out for themselves. They are set apart from Leaders by their lack of a similar enthusiasm for social media. Once on the digital platform some people know exactly what they want. They are focused. They go there and then they leave. This is not because they are not comfortable or competent with technology, but they are time pressed.

Connectors

The opposite of Observers, in that their interaction with the online world is driven primarily by social media. They tend to form 15% to 20% of the online population in most markets. They are not especially interested in having the latest devices, provided the ones they have are good enough for accessing social media and connecting with friends and family. They might not spend as much time on the internet, but when they do they are very social, so when they are online, they are on social media. They are highly connected.

Leaders

They are at the top end of digital influence and social engagement. Leaders are people who are highly invested in both digital and social media. Leaders 'live online', tend to be constantly connected through the day, and are typically more vocal on social media. They spend lots of time on the internet and are very social. They are easy for marketers to reach. They buy online, blog, tweet, etc.

Functionals

They are at the other end of the spectrum. They typically form another third of the digital population in most markets. Functionals are slower, more cautious adopters of technology, often being nudged along either by the need to keep up with the world or a conscious awareness of tangible practical benefits. They are more traditional and spend little time on social media, viewing it as disruptive and preferring more traditional mediums, such as newspapers.

In South Africa, we find large segments of Leaders and Functionals says Maposa. "This is because of issues of access and cost to being online. Leaders have the resources to be on the internet, while Functionals might be on the internet more if they had the resources."

The point, he says, that is important is that just because it is digital, does not mean that you can treat all people the same. "Therefore more is required from marketers and planners if they are to maximise their opportunities from digital," he says.

Not all categories are the same either. For example, he says, if you travel frequently you use the internet more than if you are shopping for groceries. "People also share ideas in some categories and connect socially, such as baby care where experiences and advice is shared."

This is important for when marketers engage with consumers. Marketers need to recognise that everyone does not access the internet in the same way, at the same time or on the same devices. Understand that difference between a person using a desktop to a person on the move with a mobile. "Also understand what channels people are using. Are they on Facebook, Google, Twitter, etc? So where can they be found?"

Marketers also need to be aware of how consumers online perceive brands talking to them in this space he says. "Are brands a nuisance or are they welcome? Lastly, marketers need to ask themselves how consumers are shopping. Are they actually shopping online and if so, in which categories?"

[Engaging with connected consumers - Part 2](#)

[Engaging with connected consumers - Part 3 \(going live 13 February\)](#)

ABOUT DANETTE BREITENBACH

Danette Breitenbach is a marketing & media editor at Bizcommunity.com. Previously she freelanced in the marketing and media sector, including for Bizcommunity. She was editor and publisher of AdVantage, the publication that served the marketing, media and advertising industry in southern Africa. She has worked extensively in print media, mainly B2B. She has a Masters in Financial Journalism from Wits.

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