

Buying Media to Earn Media

by Julian Tooke, Kantar Media

Once again, we have a new paradigm that attempts to explain our rapidly evolving media landscape. Terminology developed reportedly for Nokia has become the new way of understanding the media world in which we work. Media can now be described as being either 'Owned media', "Earned Media" or 'Paid Media'.

Owned media describes the media that the brand owner can actually create themselves and fully own such as, for instance, websites.

Earned media describes the media that the brand owner has to work hard to *earn*, such as word of mouth, online buzz (perhaps via social networking sites or blogs) or PR.

Paid media is the media that is bought and sold - the media which lies at the heart of the media planning and buying industry.

Over the last few years, earned media has exploded. Consumers have always had conversations about products and brands (word of mouth) but now, via the internet, they can do so much more powerfully. Social networking, blogs, micro-blogs and consumer review sites mean that offline conversations are going online and becoming broadcasts rather than simply discussions between a few friends in a room.

Let's focus just on Facebook. There are 300 million active Facebook users. According to Facebook, the average Facebook user has 130 friends. If we accept that each user is potentially a new broadcaster in their own right, that means that there are potentially 300 million new media vehicles with a maximum reach of 130 each. Individually each user/consumer on Facebook may not be able to reach that many people (although it's a much higher number than they could have managed via an offline conversation) but we only need to have a relatively small number of Facebook users discussing the same thing for the number to become quickly much higher.

The very term 'Earned Media' implies that, as a brand owner or agency, one can earn the conversations (or perhaps we should call them broadcasts) of the UGC (user generated content) producer. Is this really the case? Can 'Paid Media' be at the centre of this action or does it sit somewhere to the side on the margins?

The answer seems that paid media can influence earned media. TGI Net demonstrates that there is a very positive relationship between Paid Media and Earned media. 52% of bloggers and 53% of Twitter users have visited a national newspaper website within the last month. Online UGC creators also consume print offline. Bloggers are considerably more likely to read national quality newspapers; the highest synergy being with the Financial Times whose readers are 81% more likely than the average Briton to blog. If we look at Facebook users they are more likely than the average Briton to read any national newspaper.

At a recent IMM conference, Steve King (Chief Executive of ZenithOptimedia) reportedly commented 'The purchase model of earned, paid and owned media is becoming a circular relationship. So remember you can enter that model anywhere you want'. The good news for all who rely on monetising the audiences of 'paid media' is that paid media seems to be an excellent way to enter the model.