

Does Local Matter? The Role of Local Community in Peoples Lives - Helping Advertisers Connect

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Does Local Matter? The Role of Local Community in Peoples Lives – Helping Advertisers Connect Locally

Now, more than ever, brands and advertisers are striving to connect with their consumers'™ daily lives in more relevant ways. But the growing media hype around the disintegration and decline of community suggests there may be little opportunity for advertisers to get closer to consumers'™ local lives. However, a recent Millward Brown study, conducted on behalf of the U.K. Newspaper Society, found that local community really matters, and people across many different life-stages are becoming more and more connected to their locality.

The study identified six key areas of community cohesion which resonate with consumers. This suggests that local media has an important role to play as a communications platform for advertisers at both a local and national level. National brands and advertisers can use the range of local communication channels to connect and forge a relevant relationship with consumers.

A bottom-up approach

The study encompassed two key phases. Firstly, qualitative research was conducted across a range of locations with people at different stages in their lives to understand why, when and how people engage with local community and what it means to them.

This posed a challenge because community is an abstract concept and people are likely to engage with it in both an explicit and implicit way. Therefore, qualitative research was employed to deliver a bottom-up understanding of all the different ways that people engage with their local communities. A number of creative techniques were combined in the focus groups – respondents were asked to undertake a pre-task to create community collages to help bring their ideas to life, and reveal less rational and considered responses on community.

The second phase focused on understanding the role these aspects play, individually and together, in the wider scheme of people'™s lives. The qualitative work revealed 35 different aspects of people'™s lives across eight key areas.

Using a nationally representative sample of 5,200 people, we then quantified people'™s attitudes to all the different aspects of both local community and their wider lives. We then modeled the relationship between their community lives and their general happiness. We found that local matters in many different ways.

Six key themes that advertisers can tap into

This research assists advertisers on different levels. Firstly the study identified six key themes which have particular resonance amongst consumers'™ daily lives, and are important in connecting them to their locality. These are:

- Leisure and Entertainment
- Public Services
- Family and Social interaction
- Sport
- Environment
- Finance

This presents advertisers with an opportunity to be far more relevant in consumers'™ daily lives and provides key areas for advertisers to connect with them locally.

These key themes represent important aspects of consumers'™ lives which bind them to their communities in different ways depending upon their life-stage. For example, the need for leisure and entertainment is driven differently for pre-family compared to empty nesters, whereas the reliance upon government and local services varies considerably.

In each of the key themes identified, agreement with a number of attitudinal statements was measured according to life-stage and region. For example, under Family and Social Interaction, agreement with the statement 'œI support and help out with local community activities'• is highest among Young and Teen families at 30 percent and 31 percent respectively, versus 21 percent for First Jobbers. Whereas under Sport, agreement with the statement 'œI attend sports events regularly'• is highest amongst pre-family at 28 percent.

The study also demonstrates how local media plays a vital role in supporting and driving connection with these key themes. For example, 34 percent of those surveyed agreed that local media helped make them feel part of their local community compared to only 8 percent for Internet and 4 percent for TV. Less surprising, but still important, was that 32 percent agreed that local media was the best way to find out about local institutions, services and facilities.

Lastly 38 percent agreed that local media helped raise awareness about recycling and minimizing waste in their household, compared to 14 percent for national newspapers and 20 percent for national TV.

Strong local identification

Contrary to media speculation, the study found a strong sense of identification between people and their local communities – 71 percent were proud of the area they lived in and 67 percent felt connected to their area because they knew a lot of people in the neighborhood.

Surprisingly, the study revealed that even the pre-family group viewed themselves as connected to their local community, despite their relatively selective connection to it. It also showed how relevant community becomes when the pre-family group transitions into a young family unit. Community is then discovered and embraced through activities relating to their child/children.

This study clearly reveals that the way people talk and feel about their local lives contrasts with what we may read or hear on a day-to-day basis.

Advertisers should embrace local & diversity within it

By pursuing one uniform communication strategy at a national level, brands and advertisers are not taking advantage of the strong relationship that exists between consumers and their locality, and are thereby missing a key opportunity to connect.

Advertisers that recognize the importance of the local community in people's lives and the significant variation across life-stages and localities can produce communications that are more in tune with people's needs, motivations and aspirations.