Native Advertising: Orange is The New Black/House of Cards

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“Netflix I love you”, Netflix is Bae”, “and “Without Netflix the world would go mad” these are all saying that many of us have come across in our life whenever Netflix enters the conversation. The reason for that is that Netflix has become a cultural phenomenal the likes the television and internet world have never experienced. The reason behind that is that there is nothing out there like Netflix. According to the Netflix website “Netflix is the world’s leading internet television network 62 million members in over 50 countries enjoying more than 100 million hours of TV shows and movies per day, including original series, documentaries and feature films. Members can watch as much as they want, anytime, anywhere, on nearly any Internet-connected screen. Members can play, pause and resume watching, all without commercials or commitments” (Netflix, 2015). This statement written by Netflix shows how powerful, how unique they are, their statement is a representation on how they were able to conquer the world and make sure that everyone knows it.

Netflix massive success is due to the fact that they refuse to bow down to the conventional, they find ways to give the audience what they want all by paving their own path to greatness. Netflix started in 1997 as a delivery to home DVD system, where they would deliver DVD’s to the person’s home and all they had to do was pay-per rental model that then moved into a monthly subscription system. The idea to found Netflix started when one of the original founders and Reed Hastings was forced to return the DVD Apollo 13 but before he was able to he had to pay 40 dollars in late fees which prompted him to come up with the idea which was Netflix. He then founded with his partner Marc Randolph. As Netflix began growing and experiencing changes the company realized that in order to avoid the fate of its competitors such as Blockbuster it need to adapt. Netflix did that very thing when it introduced the video on demand system as a way to cope with the ever dropping DVD sales. So as the DVD sales continued to drop massively Netflix continued to expand. They soon became one of the top Fortune 500 companies destroying the competitions and producing incredible profits currently worth around 34 billion dollars all while maintain a share price of about $600 (McDuling, 2015). This company is all about the money it brings back and that is clearly shown in the Figure 1 below that shows the price return for their stock.

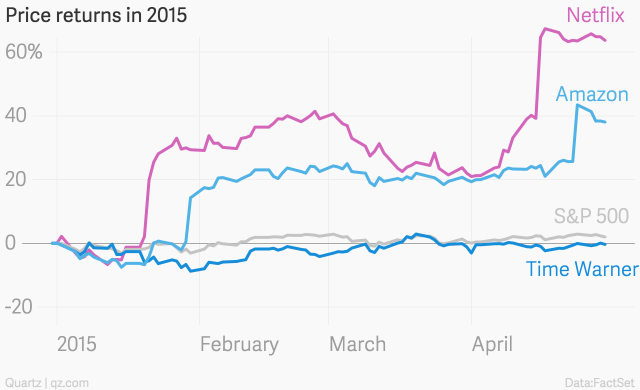
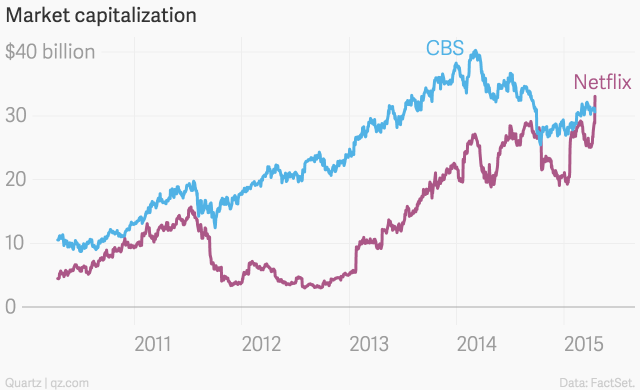


Figure 1. (McDuling, 2015).

Then the question is asked, how is that possible? The reason goes back to the Netflix’s unconventional way of thinking and applying. To begin with they were the first to create what is known as binge watching. Binge watching is when you watch 4+ hours of television, since Netflix offered their entire series all available at once the created this. That was part of its charm the ability to watch your favorite shows, without interruptions and the best part, you could watch it all at once. As their growth continued they continued to expand and hit areas that were not even considered to other networks, the ability to watch anywhere, anytime. They were the first to implement this design as a way to watch on your laptop or desktop, to watch on your tablets, smart television’s that have Wi-Fi but more importantly the ability to watch on your Smartphone. Another thing that made Netflix surprising was its refusal to bow down to traditional advertisers that usually force them to play ads. With their subscriptions the consumer avoids those ads and they are able to watch freely in a manner that suits them This then created a shift that soon led them to create their own original programming such as television shows like House of Cards, Daredevil, Orange is the New Black and many more that are in production. The key component of their strategy is that they created competition rivaling the monster of current television primetime giants such as FOX, NBC, ABC and CBS. Not only was Netflix rivaling these networks it actually managed to beat one of them CBS. According to McDuling Netflix “…pushed the market value of the disruptive streaming TV company above CBS Corp, which, by most measures, operates the highest rating broadcast TV network in the US” (McDuling , 2015). Figure 2 below shows a graph directly pointing to that disruption that caused shift in modern television. That’s what makes Netflix special is the way it disrupts modern television broadcasts by implementing its own style.

 Figure 2. (McDuling , 2015).

Disrupting the modern television is harder than it seems but when you have a powerhouse show like Orange is the New Black things often look brighter. The reason I am pointing this particular show out is because apart from its amazing cast of talent is provides a look on how Netflix operates. Netflix took a simple concept which is life in a women’s prison and somehow transformed it into comedy gold. The reason that we can say this is because apart from the fact that it was renewed for a 3 straight season the show got nominated for a bunch of awards in 2014 ranging from Outstanding Casting for a Comedy Series all the way to Outstanding Single-Camera Picture Editing for a Comedy Series. Unfortunately Netflix does not discuss the viewership for it show but variety managed to get a sense of how much of an impact the show really has. Orange is the New Black found that 44% of its Netflix members have seen the show, at the same time 94% of its subscribers have heard about the show and that 72% of non subscribers have heard about the show (Spangler, 2014). All of this shows that Orange is the New Black has created an impact on the new, the old and the future subscribers to the Netflix. But why is the impact of one television show so important? The reason that Orange is The New Black is so vital to understand is because it is part of a new media campaign organized by Netflix.

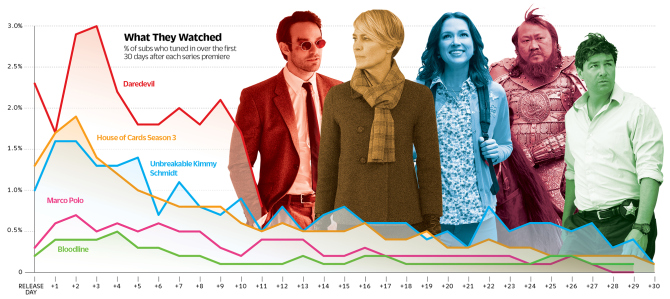
In terms of new media Netflix decided that it would be best for them to do continue doing what they would normally do in any other situation and that is to continue applying an unconventional way to deliver advertisements in the best fashion they know. So for network that doesn’t allow for advertisements during their shows it great to see that they have applied a new method of deliver. The new media that they focused on is one that is constantly growing and being applied in various sections is known as native advertisement. Native advertisement is when an ad is placed into story, a format or work of art, but the advertisement directly matches the product that is placed without actually interfering with the story, format or work of art. Unlike placement ads that just appear the native advertisement compliments the story in which they are placed. The best definition of native advisement is can be found by sharethough.com their definition of native advertisement states “…is a form of paid media where the ad experience follows the natural form and function of the user experience in which it is placed” (sharethough.com, 2015). Usually native ads are often difficult to spot since they are blended into the story almost as they are camouflaged to make them appear like news stories to the consumer. The native ads are so perfectly combined that if the consumer doesn’t pay enough attention they can be overlooked as part of the presentation. Most of these native ads are often boldly done and often confuse the consumer, but the native ad that was ran for the New York Times piece for season 2 of Orange is The New Black was done is a very professional, flawless and honest manner, that did not intend to hurt the story in which it was ran but actually helped it gather the steam it need.

The native ad was ran by the newly established T Brand Studio which contained 9 members that specifically focus on making ads for the Times (Sebastian, 2014). The specifics for how much the ad actually cost are relevantly secretive due to the privacy that Netflix has in almost all of its areas. Another reason why it does not have much information on it is due to the fact that it is not part of an actual campaign but a standalone section that wants the readers to see. The main selling point to this is ad is that it does not force, infringe or sell the Netflix show. According to Sebastian it is a“…paid post never explicitly tells readers to watch the show, it does delve deeply into the topic of women in prison” (Sebastian, 2014). The T Brand Studio made an amazing effort to make sure that the story focused on the topic of women’s prison without boasting about the show. What the ad does do is that it creates these amazing visual images that bring the story to life by merging both images and facts to inform the reader in a way that will make them see the things going on, such as the ones in figure 3 that combine both.

 Figure 3. (Deziel 2014)

Although this had has not won a particular award for the great job it did because it was not a full campaign it has received some very positive reviews from various sources that indicated that it did contain a massive amount of integrity due to the fact that it no drive the story but only added to it. The ad received praises from all over the twitter sphere with comments like “Can't believe I'm sharing a paid post, but interesting work in the Times. Even mobile-friendly” and “All brand-sponsored journalism does not suck. Witness this peach by [@mdeziel](https://twitter.com/mdeziel) on women in prison. From Netflix, natch” (Moses, 2014). Another thing that shows that it had such a positive impact is the fact that people noticed the article and began appreciating the creators by following them on Twitter. Originally T-Brand Studios had 74 followers on June 13 but as soon as their paid post reached a nationwide praise their number of followers on Twitter quickly skyrocketed to 52,000 with the help of various celebrities from the television show Orange is The New Black (Moses, 2014). Moses manages to get various perspectives on the matter from various sources when she states “The article acts like real journalism in that it takes a subject people are interested in and gives them a way to explore it further” (Moses, 2014). Things like this is why native advertising can work and it shows the powerful impact it can have when a combination of ads and real raw story telling come together to formulate a real issue that is facing the American public.

In order to really show the true power of native adverting I have to switch gears a bit, and talk about another native advertising campaign that was done on Netflix’s part and that was the native advertising for the television show House of Cards. House of Cards is another hit television show that premiered on the Netflix world. The show received well praised reviews from various sources. Unfortunately the numbers for the viewership are hidden due to the fact that Netflix likes to play things close the chest and not really review the numbers due the fact that it might create scrutiny, but that in itself creates and inspires creativity in a way that really shows where modern television and film are headed. But what was recently shown was graph figure 4 below shows the graph used by Luth Research, a San Diego based company that gathered a group of Netflix subscribers in the United States to show what they were watching as a method to indentify which were the most popular(Wallenstein, 2015). The graph was able to touched upon the an approximation number of people viewing the show, with Netflix holding 41 million subscribers it’s easy to show that an approximation of a 6.4% in March for all 3 of its seasons making it the most popular on Netflix (Wallenstein, 2015).

Figure 4. (Wallenstein, 2015).

All of this shows the popularity that these Netflix shows bring to the people and it shows that people are willing and able to watch these especially when they are able to binge watch them. But in order to reach those audiences and keep them interesting Netflix does what Netflix does best and that is advertise unconventionally. Once again Netflix turned to native advertising to get their point across and get people talking. This time it was not as powerful or as dramatic as their New York Times Piece of Orange is the New Black. Their piece was this time published on The Atlantic for their television Program House of Cards. But the question then lingered was it as good as the one The New York Times ran?

The piece that The Atlantic ran was just as expected a great masterpiece of combining the elements of storytelling and illustrations. The illustrations found in the piece were done by Thomas Danthony in a manner that made the piece flow so well that the makes the viewer engaged into the story that is being told without being forced into watching the television show. The only problem that was specifically obvious was how much they tried to incorporate the television show House of Cards into the ending part of the piece. Unlike The New York Times piece that just showed the ending logo at the bottom this one actually tired to mix it which in this case is very bad since the story and the advertising should be separate in order to distinguish one from the other in an effort to try and avoid as much confusion regarding the story. The one thing that really gets the reader sucked in is the illustrations they flow with the text in a seamless manner that does not force the story. An example of that is figure 5 below that really sets up The Atlantic piece which focuses on couples and politics just like in the show House of Cards. All of these elements drive the story in a manner that was unexpected from The Atlantic since the last time they ran a piece like this it got so real bad heat, due its almost blasphemy in its writing. But just like Netflix standards this piece showed that if done correctly native advertising can be a real tool to capture real attention on issues that are affecting the nation both domestically and internationally.



Figure 5. The Atlantic Piece; Illustration by Thomas Danthony.

As good as native advertising is to both the company and the publisher it is with its faults. Native advertising is still a rather young principal idea that has developed and along it will suffer faults. Even this early on its application native advertising has already suffered a very bad hiccup. The story that I am talking about revolves around a piece that The Atlantic did over the church of scientology. In this piece the Atlantic talked and raved about how amazing the church of Scientology was and how great their leader really as. The article that has now been removed raved towards how without the leader the church would have faced some very unfortunate dilemmas but it was all thanks to him that the church was saved along with all the individuals that followed it. In his article Berman stes some of the quotes that the article ran such as “Mr. Miscavige is unrelenting in his work for millions of parishioners and the cities served by Scientology Churches. He has led a renaissance for the religion itself, while driving worldwide programs to serve communities through Church-sponsored social and humanitarian initiatives” (Berman, 2013). Unfortunately all of this was just massive amounts of life that did not contain any actual reporting on the church but just a pretty way of painting the church in a very positive light. This did not work it caused anger amongst the people who read the article citing that they were not given a full real story but a galvanized story about a man and his church.What this did to native advertising is that it hurt the concept as a whole, it made people realized that the print media that they had trusted had now become tainted by this method of payment. Shortly after receiving all the negative feedback from this story the Atlantic did two things; it suspended the article by stating “"We have temporarily suspended this advertising campaign pending a review of our policies that govern sponsor content and subsequent comment threads"(Berman, 2013). Then it followed up by sending out an apology that reads as follow

**“We screwed up. It shouldn't have taken a wave of constructive criticism -- but it has -- to alert us that we've made a mistake, possibly several mistakes. We now realize that as we explored new forms of digital advertising, we failed to update the policies that must govern the decisions we make along the way. It's safe to say that we are thinking a lot more about these policies after running this ad than we did beforehand. In the meantime, we have decided to withdraw the ad until we figure all of this out. We remain committed to and enthusiastic about innovation in digital advertising, but acknowledge--sheepishly--that we got ahead of ourselves. We are sorry, and we're working very hard to put things right” (Fallows, 2013).**

The reason that this entire apology needed to be stated in this paper is because it shows how dangerous native advertising can become if it is not carefully overviewed. The apology shows that even big media sources that are used to reporting on news are susceptible to influence from big money. This apology also shows that if things like these continue to plague the native advertising world then there will not be room for this new media any time soon, since most consumer will ignore and think that they are getting sold a load of crap. As advertisers it is a responsibility to show case the product without violating the integrity of the news sources that are providing us with credibility. If we start to ignore our own credibility and start delivering half harder stories on topics like these then the entire future of native advertising will suffer drastically.

Apart from the fact that if we are not careful with native advertisings we might be forced to issue apologies the other thing that will happen is that we will lose our own credibility as advertisers. When we lose our credibility as advertisers we are going to hurt, our market is going to hurt because the public will feel that we are delivering them lies and then they will refuse to follow us. Even the most loyal of costumers can be put off by this and will more likely shift to our competitor as they might seem more trustworthy. IAB reports that “…with less than half (41%) recognizing that the material was advertising” (IAB, 2014). This is scary because they don’t know what is a real story and what is just a brand making their image. But a positive has come out of this where again IAB reports that “Nearly two-thirds (60%) of online news visitors said that they are more open to digital advertising that focuses on a story rather than selling a product” (IAB, 2014).

This shows that at the end of the day a balance is needed for native advertising to grow. One where we as advertisers will not violate the integrity of print media of the most trust sources of media out there and print media can tell honest stories about real issues. If both advertisers manage to combine both real stories and the program that we are trying to sell real change can happen like in the case of Orange is The New Black where a story was told and a real issue was brought to light. It is things like these that will help us develop a good branch with this powerful media that can bring some good out of it, but it all relies on balance.

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