

Crowdsourcing needs expertise

The recent winning paper, 'Crowdsourcing: The end of marketing research?' presented by Kirsty Alberts, Joanne Campbell and Alice Louw of TNS Global Brand Equity Centre at the annual [SAMRA conference](#), analysed existing literature and interviewed key stakeholders with crowdsourcing experience.

Conclusions

A crowdsourced strategy has a number of potential advantages, including access to a plethora of ideas, greatly reduced costs and highly targeted, effective advertising. For these reasons, both advertising agencies and marketing research companies would be wise to heed - and harness - crowdsourcing for the purposes of new product development, advertising and promotion and marketing research.

Increased speed and quality, a better match between product and consumer needs and increased consumer satisfaction with the product, are some of the key benefits luring more and more clients to crowdsourcing. In addition, clients are looking for cost-effective solutions, and it is becoming easy and inexpensive for them to dabble in crowdsourcing themselves.

Guidance in design

"But while clients might have access to the tools to harness the power of the crowd, they don't always have the know-how to make it work. So, there is a need for expert guidance in designing and executing a crowdsourced strategy, sifting through and assimilating output and finally turning this into actionable insights," said Alberts.

Hence, in order to remain viable, agencies and companies should embrace crowdsourcing principles, recognise where it has advantages over traditional approaches and find ways to incorporate crowdsourced ideas into client offerings where appropriate.

"Forward-looking agencies and companies of all types need to adopt the role of expert consultants capable of guiding clients in their crowdsourcing endeavours: helping them to achieve optimal community engagement, to build and sustain a level of trust and authenticity with the community, to implement appropriate incentive schemes and to make appropriate tactical decisions. This will mean stepping outside of engrained ways of thinking, adopting new philosophies and re-evaluating traditional cost models," Louw argued.

To draw persuasive messages from the very audience one is trying to persuade is an ultimate form of marketing research. In theory, customers know what they want, and in practice, the goal with crowdsourced advertising is to get customers to produce it in the first place, Campbell explained.

SA example

The South African-based crowdsourcing intermediary, Idea Bounty, was singled out for its successful business model appealing to clients, by offering them a wealth of creative ideas and opinions sourced from its large pool of participants at a fraction of the cost of hiring a traditional agency.

The participation of the creative community, explains Idea Bounty's Daniel Neville, is motivated by a desire to keep their minds sharp, to do work for 'cooler clients' and by the potential to earn some pocket money for relatively little effort.

Furthermore, clients stand to gain valuable consumer insights. "People are also inherently very honest, so in that way, you learn more than (from them) than in a traditional market research questionnaire. You find people spilling their guts about how they see and feel the brand working."

Neville cautions, "Agencies need to start embracing crowdsourcing as a tool very soon - or risk having clients dump them."

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