

Shorter is Better: Advertisers Use Vine Videos to Target the Younger Demographic in the United States

Author: Rapid Access International, Inc. September, 2013.

There is a new social media phenomenon spreading from coast-to-coast in the United States, and it comes in the way of quick bursts of moving images. Each video is six seconds or less, so in the time it takes a person to purchase a few items at a convenience store, a user can watch literally hundreds of videos.

The application used by these teenagers, and many others, is known as Vine. Since the beginning of 2013, Vine has exploded in popularity, especially with the younger generation. While it had only thousands of unique monthly visitors in January, that number reached nearly one million in March, and reached three and a half million in May. Short, funny, and visually appealing Vine videos provide rapid-fire entertainment for the youth segment. And recently, the app's platform has caught the eye of advertisers, too.

For example, on September 9th, Dunkin Donuts released the first-ever Vine-based television commercial, which aired on ESPN during Monday Night Football. The five-second commercial, created through stop motion animation, depicts a football match between a team of Dunkin Donuts' regular coffees and a team of iced coffees. The iced coffee team hikes the football, which is intercepted by a cup from the regular coffee team. The short commercial ends with a regular coffee cup scoring a touchdown.

As of September 30th, 426 viewers liked this Dunkin Donuts commercial and 212 users "revined" (reposted) it. This number is likely only a percentage of the total, as Vine does not publically disclose a video's total views. In addition to the video released on the 9th, Dunkin Donuts released two more five-second Vine videos to-date, one on the 16th and one on the 23rd, each of which have drawn a similar number of likes and revines. (The regular coffee team scored a touchdown in the first video, and it continues to dominate in the second and third.)

While Dunkin Donuts is the first company to combine Vine-based and television advertising, it is certainly not the first to understand the importance of advertising on the Vine platform. Also in September, Trident Gum released a Vine video in which two young males sing a short, catchy jingle about the flavors of gum. Nissan adopted a different tactic by sponsoring the "Your Door to More" contest, which encouraged contestants to make Vine videos that promoted



The first-ever Vine-based television commercial, aired on ESPN on September 9th, 2013.

Nissan's products. Virgin Mobile also sponsored a contest via Vine in which users created videos based on the theme of a "Happy Accident," which plays off the theme of users destroying their own phones so that they can get a new one without a contract under Virgin Mobile.

In August, the total number of Vine users surpassed 40 million. Vine-based advertising is expected to experience a similar upsurge. As it moves forward, Vine continues to maintain the dominant position in its niche market. Instagram is the only other app of comparable size and popularity that offers features similar to Vine, and as its videos can be up to 15 seconds in length and the main purpose of Instagram is sharing pictures, few see it as a legitimate competitor.

One attractive aspect of using Vine as an advertising platform is the fact that Vine videos can be created even on an extremely limited budget. While traditional, television-based commercials may cost millions of dollars, videos viewed through Vine are expected to be less polished. While this does not mean that the app's users do not demand high quality, there is less of an expectation for studio-like images, as Vine has carried user-created videos from the very beginning. In such an environment, companies can be more cutting edge and experimental while still getting a return on their investment.

Young people in the United States have long been criticized for having short attention spans. It's a direct product of the information age: with the rapid proliferation of computers, the Internet, and mobile devices, a user can get the latest news, connect to others over social networks, and access entertainment, all with just a few clicks. Vine perfectly suits the viewing habits of this demographic.

It should come as little surprise that Vine is owned and operated by Twitter, the originator of the ultra-short message in social media. Twitter limits user-created messages to 140 characters, or about several English sentences. This approach forced users to compress messages and succinctly convey their meanings. Twitter solved the problem of "TLDR" (too long, didn't read) that users are known to passive-aggressively insert at the bottom of exceptionally verbose Facebook and Tumblr posts. Vine, then, is the perfect complementary app to address the issue of "TLDW" (too long, didn't watch).

The recent upswing in companies promoting their image through the Vine platform is just a sign of what is to come. Looking forward, companies interested in promoting their image through Vine should remember these three basic rules:

1. **Keep it short.** Due to the Vine app's self-imposed limitations, this goes without saying. While apps such as Instagram allow for 15-second videos, Vine allows a maximum of six seconds per video, while some videos are as short as four or five seconds. Companies advertising on Vine must get to the heart of their message within this period.
2. **Keep it funny.** The principal driving force of Vine is entertainment. Viewers rapidly sift through videos in search of something that will make them laugh. In many cases, the

humor is driven by a sudden, unforeseeable event, such as someone being struck in the face by a ball or falling into a pool. In other instances, videos trigger laughter through ridiculous situations, such as an overweight man shaking his tattooed belly or a cat learning how to “twerk” (a dance move popularized in 2013). A company’s Vine advertisement must not take itself too seriously; this is not the place for a company to speak of its tradition, investments, and achievements.

3. **Keep it fresh.** While some content found on Vine is highly predictable (a small child dances to Elvis, a girl falls off of a horse, etc.), perhaps the most important aspect of Vine is that it delivers content that viewers haven’t seen anywhere else. Many videos incorporate crazy costumes, creative video editing (stop motion is very popular), and extremely memorable characters. For a company’s advertisement to be successful on Vine, it needs to be drastically different from others, standing out from the hundreds of uploaded videos that are viewed and forgotten each day.

The meteoric rise of Vine as one of America’s most popular social media applications represents new advertisement opportunities for US companies. As long as companies fully understand Vine, and how it is used, it should not be difficult for a company to prominently display their product across this widely used smartphone application.

Sources:

Mobile-based Vine application

<http://www.wired.com/business/2013/06/twitter-vine-growth/>

<http://marketingland.com/dunkin-donuts-trident-gum-turn-vine-videos-into-tv-commercials-58720>

<http://www.adweek.com/adfreak/trident-gum-airs-its-own-tv-commercial-made-single-vine-152322>

<http://marketingland.com/nissan-will-tap-instagram-vine-videos-for-upcoming-tv-commercial-51444>

<http://www.slashgear.com/vine-users-skyrocket-now-exceed-40-million-20294421/>

<http://www.virgin.com/news/ever-had-happy-accident>