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MEASUREMENT

Cutting Through the Communications Data Wilderness: Reputation Measurement Challenges

[Editor's Note: In the fourth article of this five-part series produced with partner **PublicRelay**, a media monitoring and analytics firm, we examine some of the challenges of reputation management. The first article in the series (*PRN*, November, 7, 2017) looked broadly at communications data and measurement. The second article (November 21) looked at how data could be mined to offer significant operational direction to companies. The third article (December 12) reported on a forum where 12 senior PR leaders commented on the state of data and measurement.]

What a time to be talking about reputation. First there was a global hubbub over how President Trump reacted to a New Year's Day statement from N. Korean leader Kim Jong Un about his country's nuclear weapons being able to reach the U.S. [see page 8]. Then, a few days later, a book claiming to be based on countless hours of observation and interviews paints an unflattering portrait of the president and his team.

We'll switch the focus from political reputation and image to measuring brand and corporate reputation, which often is thought to be more problematic than garden-variety measurement of communications efforts. Part of the reason is because it's nuanced and requires more human intelligence. As one PR exec says, "Measuring reputation is very context-heavy...it's not just a few keywords...you have to be looking at a variety of factors that make up reputation and looking at them constantly."

Catherine Hernandez-Blades, chief brand and communications officer, **Aflac**, provides an example. "We are launching My Special Aflac Duck this week at **CES**...a social robot, it



Andrew Bowins
Executive Director,
Corporate
Reputation, **KPMG**

is designed to support children undergoing cancer treatment...Aflac is committed to putting them into the hands of all of the approximately 16,000 children diagnosed with cancer in the U.S. annually, at no cost to the child or family," she says.

"Yet, we know people are reluctant to believe a corporation would do something so wonderful without an angle, which is deeply unfortunate as it's a philanthropic rather than a commercial venture...My point being, even when you do good for the sake of doing good, you're still going to have cynics. In terms of measurement, you have to find a way to capture the impact of the behavior of cynics and that can be very difficult."

REPUTATION AS THE NEW MEASUREMENT

For Andrew Bowins, executive director, corporate reputation, **KPMG**, "Reputation is the new measure of communications." He believes communicators need to "abandon the old model of communications measurement and recognize that insights, understanding of stakeholders and their perception of a brand/company are the most important measures."

Bowins goes a step further. He says this new measure of communications means communicators must accept that "traditional measures like impressions, reach and media clips largely are meaningless without insights attached. It also means that the profession has to abandon separate measures for [social] channels and instead look at the aggregate of conversa-

Continued on page 3



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 MARCH 20, 2018
 NEW YORK CITY

SEO

Link Authority Tops List of Most Important Google Ranking Factors

If someone tells you they know how Google's search engine ranks articles, walk away from them. In 2006 Google said its search engine used more than 200 signals to rank pages. Has that total reached 1,000 by now? Several thousands? What we know, says Stephen Kenwright, strategy director at U.K. PR firm **Branded3**, is how important optimizing is. He also emphasizes the importance of ranking factors that can be influenced without too much trouble and money. Kenwright's new study that ranks important factors is based on the firm's

work with some 100 companies and tracking about 15 competitors and 500 keywords per website. His results of the 10 most-important SEO ranking factors are below. Nearly as significant, his list of the easiest factors to influence follows (left). The table below shows a slew of factors beyond links that can influence SEO, such as page load speed, responsive design and mobile optimization. Of course strong content that results in long periods of time spent on the page remains critical. ■

Top 10 easiest things to implement

Ranking factor	Importance
Page contains Open Graph data and/or Twitter cards	7.75
Length of time until domain name expires	7.63
Use of images on the page	7.38
Page contains Schema.org or other structured data	7.25
Domain lists contact information	7.25
Quantity of error pages crawled on the site	7.13
Existence/quality of verified real-world business info	7.00
Use of rich media (video, slides etc.)	6.50
Uniqueness of content across the whole site	6.38
Length of content on the page	6.38

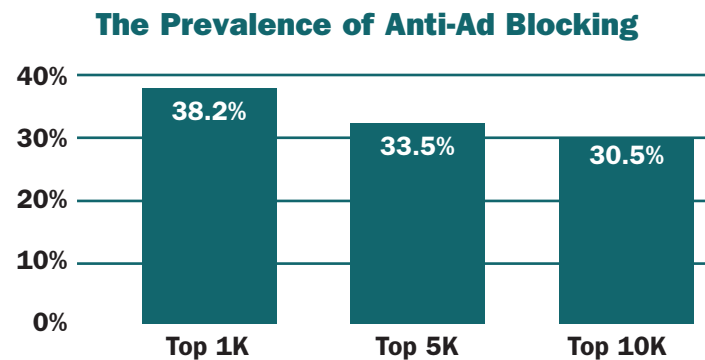
Top 10 most-important Google ranking factors

Ranking factor	Importance
Domain-level, link authority features	9.47
Page-level keyword and content-based metrics	8.76
Dwell time or long click metrics	8.66
Page is mobile friendly (for mobile rankings)	8.64
Quantity of searches for this keyword+specific brand name, URL or domain name	8.13
Page load speed	8.07
Use of responsive design and/or mobile optimized	7.93
Relative CTR from Google SERPs to the page for the keyword	7.88
Uniqueness of the content on the page	7.87
Page supports HTTPS/SSL	7.84

Source: Branded3

MARKETING

Anti-Ad-Blocking Technology More Prevalent Than First Believed



Sources: U of Iowa, U of CA Riverside

To some, ads are the scourge of social media. Of course, brand marketers spend much time fixated on digital advertising. Ad blocking is *their* scourge. The next steps are anti-ad blocking measures. A new study from university researchers, first reported in *TechCrunch*, looked at less-obvious anti-ad blockers. It found some 30% of the top 10,000 sites use anti-ad-blocking measures, far more than initially thought. ■

How to Measure Reputation Regularly

tions across social media, traditional media, online and word of mouth. This is a real challenge for any professional hanging onto the traditional measurement model of communications.”

TIMING IS CRITICAL

Bowins and Hernandez-Blades agree reputation management needs to be a regular part of communications measurement.

“The biggest hurdle is when to measure reputation,” Bowins says. “Too often a company’s reaction to issues is the starting point for reputation measurement and management. If you begin [measuring reputation] during a crisis, then it’s too late. Reputation has to be managed in real time, over time and benchmarked against defined themes and goals.”

Adds Hernandez-Blades, “All good measurement requires a strong baseline, as well as relevant and accurate data that is meaningful and benchmarking.”

Bowins notes, “You need to have a set of defined reputation goals, stories and themes that you drive in good times and bad. This multi-layered model of measurement is critical to reputation management and one that does not come easily if you are still counting clips, measuring reach and looking at impressions alone.”

WHAT GETS MEASURED?

A cliché is that the conversations people are having about a company define its brand and reputation. What should be measured to determine reputation?

Hernandez-Blades suggests measuring corporate governance as a start. Aflac conducts an annual survey of private and institutional investors. Three years ago, the first year of the study, 6 in 10 investors would not invest in a company without a stellar CSR reputation. The elements of which are most commonly workplace procedures, corporate governance and citizenship. In 2017, that number rose to 8 in 10.

Bowins adds, “It is critical to listen twice as hard as you speak. Understanding the sentiment and themes [good or bad] that people say about your brand is the first step toward measuring reputation. Once you have the ability to listen and collect the data that shows trends in perceptions, you can set a baseline or benchmark for your reputation goals. Match those in-

sights with the measurement of clearly defined stories, themes and attributes and you will begin to see the whole picture.”

BUDGET CONCERNS

Turning to cost, Bowins believes large budgets are not needed to measure reputation and unlock insights. One needs simple



Catherine Hernandez-Blades
Chief Brand and Communications Officer, Aflac

tools that capture and organize data from online, social and traditional media. The key is finding a vendor, partner or in-house expertise that can analyze the metrics and derive insights from the data. “This is a required skill-set of the modern communicator,” he says.

Start small and grow, Bowins counsels. “Start with defined audiences and a handful of reputation attributes like trust, integrity, citizenship or product quality. As a starting point, align your themes and measure them against a finite group of journalist, influencers, analyst or bloggers. Once you lock that group down, add another group and grow...refine your listening engine.”

Always ask your senior leaders, “What is the cost of *not* managing our reputation and *not* knowing what people say and think about the brand until it is too late?”

A significant problem, Bowins believes, is some PR pros have been slow to evolve and adapt. “Once you unlock the insights, you have the keys to manage your reputation and the ability to listen to signals in real time and over a period of time. You also have the ability to benchmark reputation to points in time, competitors or with key stakeholder groups.”

Adds Hernandez-Blades, “At Aflac we use this data to inform our communications strategy. And, because we measure outcomes—think results vs. activity—we can see the needle move in almost real time.”

Both believe another challenge is avoiding getting lost in the data and actually unlocking meaningful insights that will shape communications recommendations. “You have to always remind yourself,” Bowins says, “the data is only as smart as the questions you ask. You must know what questions to ask.” ■

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Consumer Engagement With B2C Brands in 2017 Grows Slightly, Engagement With Video Up 40%

Arguably 2017 was the year of social video, particularly for U.S. B2C brands, as data provided exclusively to *PR News by Shareablee* demonstrates. It was also a year where brands operating in the fledgling social media ecosystem began to show some maturity.

With 2017 finished, we asked Shareablee to compile data on the B2C brands that had the most consumer en-

gagement with its posts across **Facebook, Twitter & Instagram** during 2017. [The most engaged B2B brands for 11 months of 2017 were featured in our previous edition on December 19, 2017.]

Across the entire B2C category, brands garnered more than 9 billion consumer actions during the year, up about 5% from 2016. This happened despite posting 13% fewer pieces of content, says Shareablee's Ron Lee. The brands also increased their audience count by 15%, to 8.1 billion followers across the platforms.

As you might have guessed, B2C brands' biggest growth came from consumer engagement with video content. Consumer actions, comments, likes, shares, retweets, jumped 40%, generating 1.3 billion actions. While the brands were more efficient overall, the growth in consumer engagement with video posts was boosted through a 38% jump in video content posted, Lee notes.

It's fitting for online fashion purveyor **FashionNova** to be the most-engaged brand. In 2016 it posted just 1 video that drew some 2,000 actions, Lee says. Last year, it posted 173 videos, generating more than 1.5 million engagements and 2 million views. In all FashionNova generated 360 million actions, up 28%, besting **Victoria's Secret**, with 352 million actions, and Kylie Jenner's **Kyle Cosmetics** (340 million actions). Kylie also was on the video bandwagon, boasting growth of 53% in consumer engagement with videos. Other notables: **Red Bull** had posted an impressive 84% growth in consumer engagement and a 150% growth in engagement with video content; **Gucci** experienced the most year-over-year growth in engagement of the top 15, up 93% vs. 2016, despite posting just 6% more content. That sort of efficiency is a sign of the maturity we mentioned above. ■
















Shareablee

SOCIAL SCORECARD

TOP B2C BRANDS – 2017

Based on Total Actions (likes, comments and shares)
Data provided exclusively to PR News by Shareablee.

Sources:   

Rank	Brand	Total Actions	Total Content	Actions per Content	Total Audience
1	 FashionNova	359,775,299	17,224	20,888	4,314,425
2	 Victoria's Secret	352,211,007	3,349	105,169	94,307,300
3	 Kylie Cosmetics	340,153,773	3,623	93,887	17,620,379
4	 Anastasia Beverly Hills	307,113,209	6,038	50,863	15,771,264
5	 Red Bull	201,971,942	7,402	27,286	57,354,053
6	 GoPro	183,663,611	2,486	73,879	25,093,117
7	 Urban Outfitters	161,776,037	3,775	42,855	10,368,693
8	 MAC Cosmetics	151,794,013	2,455	61,831	34,598,425
9	 Morphe Brushes	145,380,026	3,258	44,622	5,291,214
10	 Forever 21	123,965,431	5,467	22,675	29,694,269
11	 Too Faced Cosmetics	113,600,614	1,845	61,572	11,901,942
12	 Tarte Cosmetics	113,514,602	6,046	18,775	8,266,678
13	 Gucci	110,245,736	3,833	28,762	36,537,590
14	 Victoria's Secret Pink	104,990,950	2,124	49,431	22,427,515
15	 H&M	97,370,595	2,653	36,702	61,010,244

Investors Urge Apple to Consider Dangers of Youth Phone Usage Yet Adults Are Addicted Too

It's a truism that Americans are addicted to their mobile phones. The group most addicted might be young people. None of this is surprising to communicators and marketers.

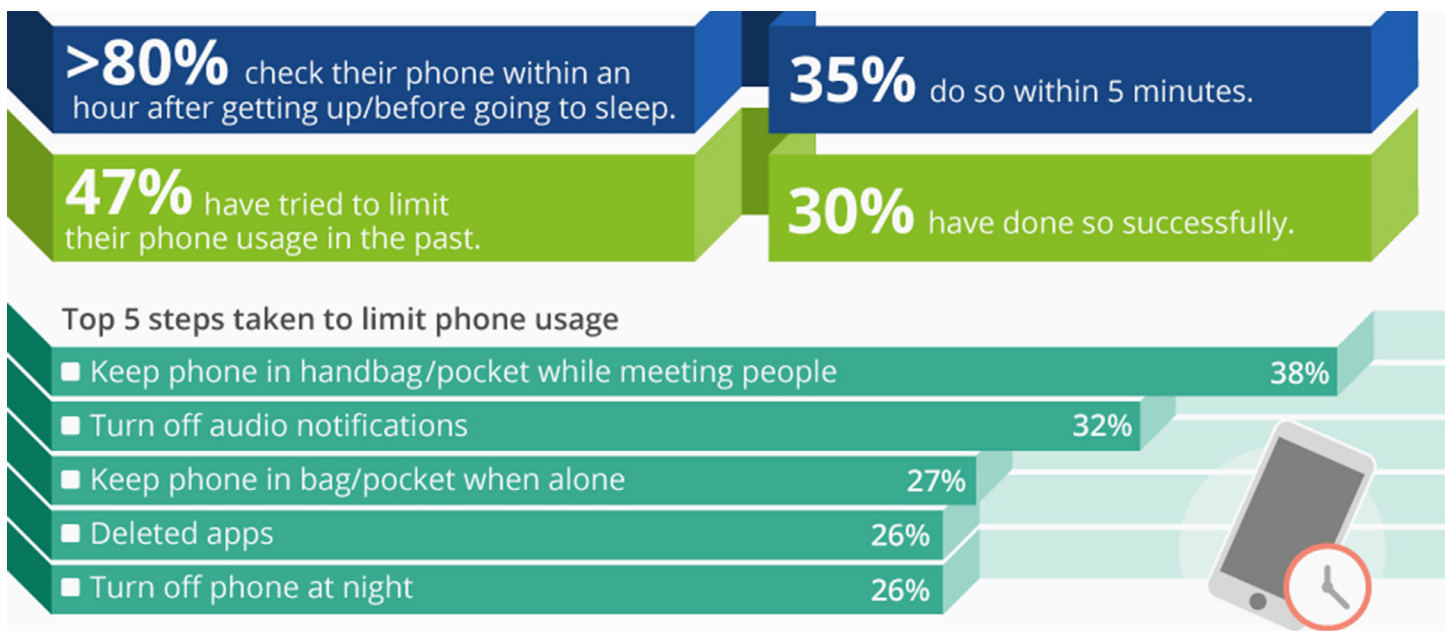
At least that's the contention of two organizations that sent a letter to **Apple** January 6, urging the company to take seriously some of the damage addiction to the iPhone is doing to children and teenagers. The letter was released to the media over the weekend and made headlines January 8.

While Apple undoubtedly receives countless similar letters, this one is thoughtful, backed up with original research and is the work of two stock holders: investment management firm **JANA Partners** and the **California State Teachers' Retirement System**. The groups collectively own some \$2 billion worth of Apple shares. [The groups' letter can be

found in the new *For The Record* section of the PR News Essentials Page: <http://www.prnewsonline.com/pr-news-essentials/>]

The chart shows how nearly half (47%) of 2,000 U.S. mobile phone-using adults resolved to divorce themselves from their mobile phone addiction. The study says we check our phones some 50 times daily. 89% say they look at their mobiles within one hour of rising, 81% do so within one hour of going to bed. These figures have held steady for the past 3 years. As you can see from the chart, just 30% of those who try are successful in limiting mobile phone usage. Marketers should be aware of the trend that Americans are concerned with adult and children/teen usage of mobile phones, although concrete action to reduce use may be far off. ■

Americans Are Unsuccessful in Limiting Mobile Phone Usage



Source: Statista, Deloitte

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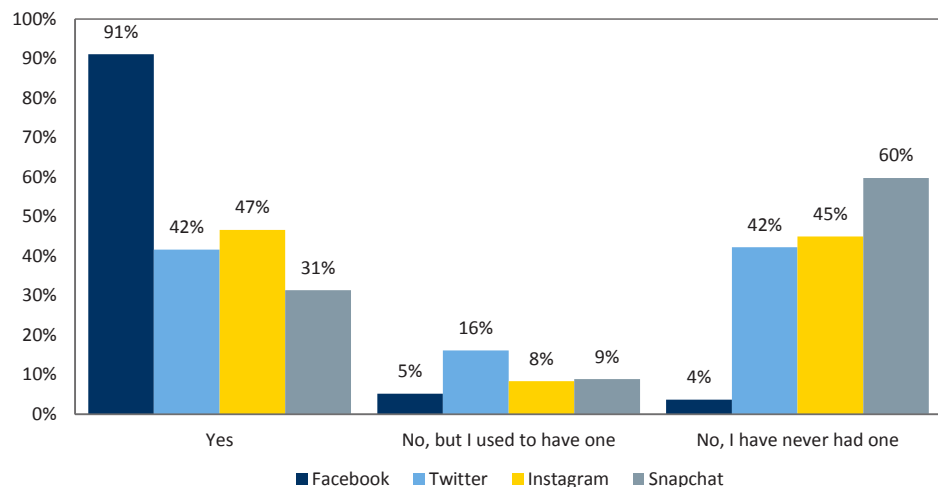
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Facebook Dominates, Snapchat Tops With Teens

Exhibit 4: Do you have a Social Media account?

December 2017:



There's little surprise in the dominance of **Facebook** in the 3rd annual **RBC Capital Markets** study of 5,000 U.S. Internet users. The surprise goes to **Snapchat**, as you'll see below. The top chart shows 91% of social media users have Facebook accounts, well ahead of number two Instagram (47%). Also note the impressive churn rate (middle section of the chart), as just 5% of respondents said they used Facebook but no longer do. **Twitter** ranked as the #2 network in the 51+ age groups, yet it decreased across all age younger than 51.

Facebook also was seen as the most important social net for anyone older than 18. RBC asked what social site would you use if you could take one to a desert island? Here 64% of participants chose Facebook, 8% took **Instagram**, 5% for Snapchat and 6% for **Twitter**.

The middle chart shows satisfaction levels are best at Snapchat and Instagram, but declining at Twitter (the 280-character change, perhaps?). Also note the dropoff in '17 at Snapchat (is its new status as a public company causing that?).

Snapchat can take much solace in the bottom chart and marketers should note what the platform's dominance with teens implies about visually delivered messaging. 44% of teens chose Snapchat for their desert island platform, up from 28% in '16. RBC also found 79% of 13- to 18-year-olds have Snapchat vs. 73% for Instagram and 57% for Facebook. ■

Exhibit 8: How satisfied are you with...?

Extremely or Very Satisfied:

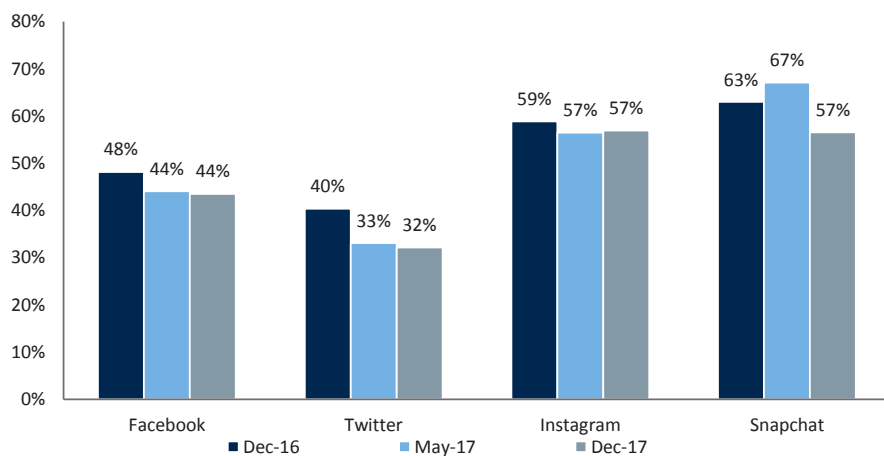
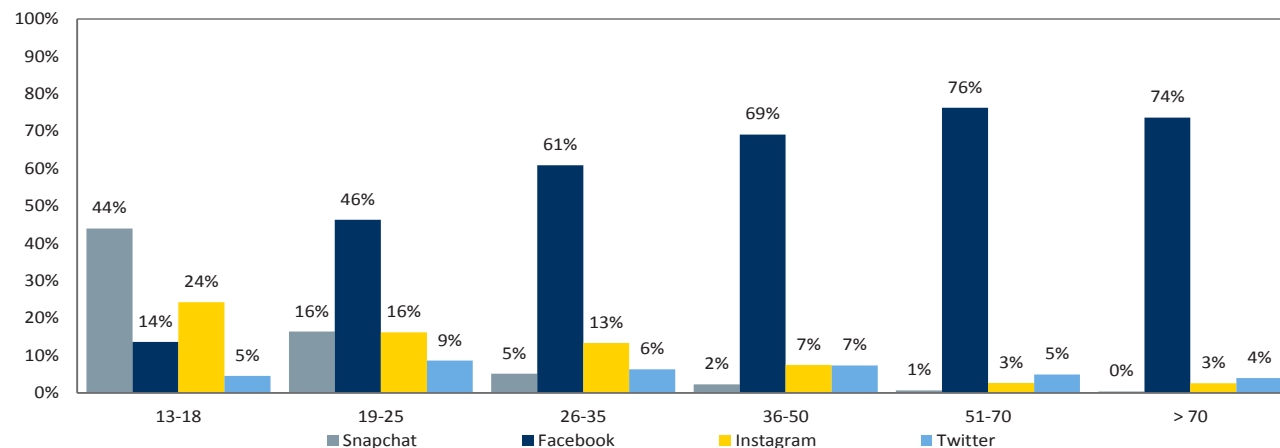


Exhibit 7: If you were trapped on a deserted island and could choose to access only one Social Media network, which one would it be?

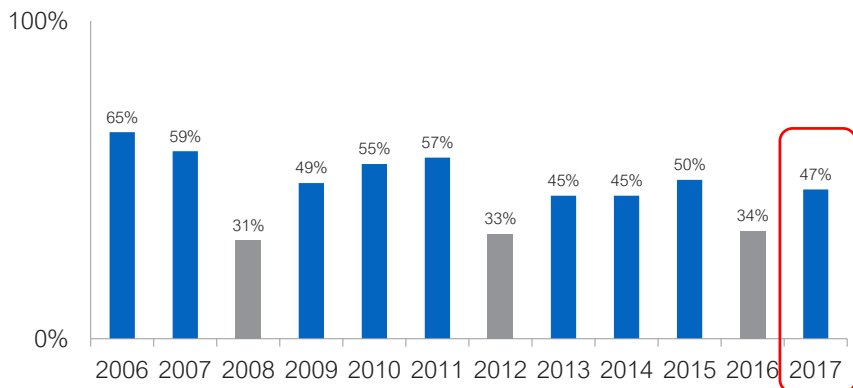
December 2017:



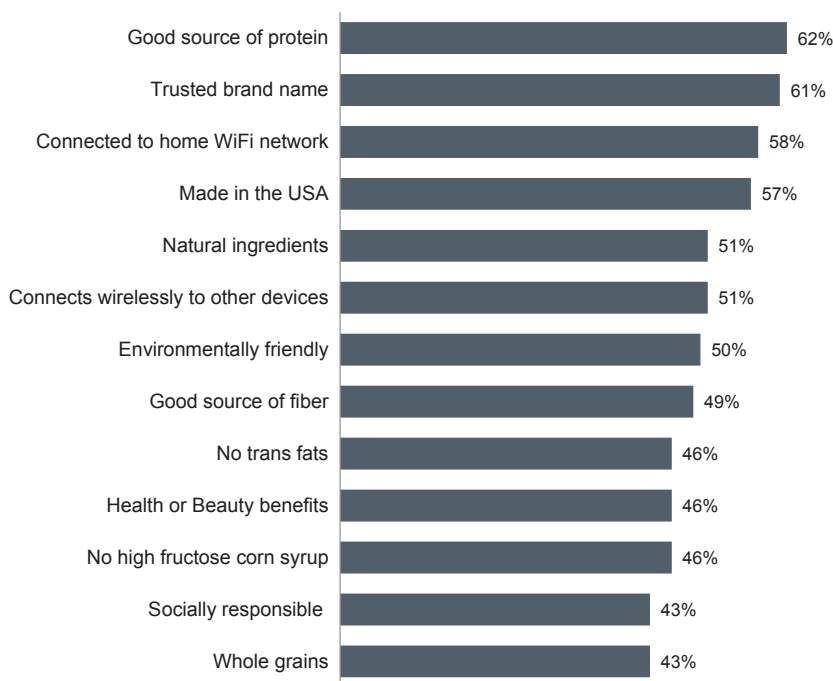
Source: RBC Capital Markets

Home/Personal Technology Dominates Most Memorable Product Launches List of 2017

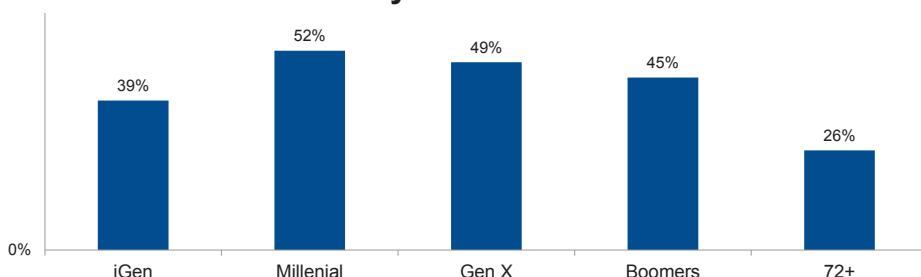
% of people who recalled Any New Product Year by Year



How important are the following in your decision to buy a new product? (Top-2-Box)



Recalled Any New Product in 2017



Source: Schneider Associates

Communicators wonder if their messages resonate. You hope great content will impress, but human memory can be fickle. Memory also is not infinite, as the top chart from the *16th Annual Most Memorable New Product Launch* survey from **Schneider Associates** shows.

Note that every time there's a presidential election (2008, 2012 and 2016) the percentage of people who can recall product launches declines significantly.

What about the younger members of the public, whose brains often are compared to sponges? The bottom chart seems to indicate that age plays a smaller role in recall than one might expect. The low total for iGen, those born after 1995, is attributed to a lack of spending power, resulting in the group's relative indifference to product launches.

As **CES 2018** plays out this week, it's notable that tech provided the 3 most memorable product launches for 2017, according to the survey of 998 people. The top 10: **Apple's** iPhone 8 (#1), **Samsung's** Galaxy Note 8 (#2), **Nintendo's** Switch (#3), **Starbucks'** Unicorn Frappuccino (#4), **Google's** Home (#5) **Dominos'** Bread Twists (#6), Google's Pixel (#7), **Taco Bell's** Double Stacked Tacos (#8), Taco Bell's Naked Chicken Chalupa (#9) and **Microsoft's** Surface Laptop (#10).

What makes a product memorable? Large-scale marketing and emotion. "The heightened attention to polarized political news" has raised the importance of emotional marketing, says Aaron Reid, chief behavioral scientist at **Sentient**, a Schneider partner. "Emotions focus attention and make memories." Sentient found a significant correlation between emotional connection to products and their ability to be remembered. The lure of Starbucks' Unicorn Frappuccino? It begged to be photographed and shared socially.

Despite significant increases in the use of social media, TV commercials did not see a corresponding drop in use, Schneider says. They continue to be the top-cited source of information about new products. ■



Hoda Kotb,
Co-anchor,
NBC's Today Show

1. News Bits: It seemed inevitable smart speakers eventually would carry PR or marketing messages (*PRN*, June 12, 2017). Indeed *CNBC* reports **Amazon** is exploring ads for its Echo smart speaker and Alexa voice assistant. Amazon seems wise to the customer experience, though. Apparently Echo and Alexa will remain silent and won't spew ads unless a human talks to them first. – As readers of this publication know, we applaud that **#MeToo** has exposed decades of sexual harassment. We believe much more is to come. **Time's Up**, aimed at fighting sexual harassment and unveiled Jan. 1, also is uplifting. As is a \$1.25 million settlement between **USA Gymnastics** and gymnast **McKayla Maroney**, who allegedly was subject to years of sexual abuse from team doctor **Larry Nassar** (*PRN*, July 17, 2017). Still, corrective actions speak louder than words. Brands harboring sexual harassers (who also were top talent) for years have yet to communicate the kind of action-based correction plans expected in a post-crisis scenario. Yes, **NBC** made a good PR move Jan. 2 inserting **Hoda Kotb** to replace **#MeToo**-ousteed **Matt Lauer** at *The Today Show*. Yet there's so much we still don't know about the timing of Lauer's departure and how long NBC execs knew about the former anchor's behavior. Only after such housecleaning can we accept NBC will take sexual harassment seriously. A sticking point: Kotb confirmed reports Jan. 4 Lauer's \$20 million+ salary dwarfs hers, estimated at \$7 million. – Will fans of **DJ Khaled's** music emulate his lifestyle choices? **Weight Watchers** believes so, naming him its social media ambassador Jan. 1. Financial details were not released. Shares rose \$4 Jan. 3 on the news, adding considerable value to **Oprah Winfrey's** 10% of the company she bought last year. Khaled's largest social aggregation is on **Instagram**, where he has nearly 9 million followers. Oops. Khaled's initial IG posts lack mention of his being a sponsored influencer, disregarding **Federal Trade Commission** rules.

2. Deals and Growth: One day after Christmas **Cision** said it signed a definitive agreement to acquire **PRIME Research**, the global media measurement and analysis firm. Cision said the deal is expected to close this month. In response to a question from us about the future of **PRIME's** employees, Cision said: "PRIME Research brings a ton of industry expertise and we are excited to have them as part of the Cision family." Asked about financial details, Cision directed us to a Dec. 14 statement about its agreement on a \$75 million loan facility with **Deutsche Bank**. Cision acquired digital media monitoring firm **CEDROM** Dec. 20. – **Highwire PR** acquired PR firm **Inner Circle Labs**. Financial details were not disclosed.



President Donald Trump

3. Platform Prater: In our last edition (*PRN*, Dec. 19, 2017) we told you about **Twitter's** Dec. 18 blog post that spelled out its policy for "reducing hateful conduct and abusive behavior" on its platform, which went into effect that day. Why, then, is **President Trump** allowed to tweet seemingly violent statements about nuclear war, such as his Jan. 2 blast about having a nuclear weapons button on his desk? (The tweet responded to a statement N. Korean leader **Kim Jong Un** made Jan. 1 about N. Korean nuclear weapons reaching U.S. territory.) The answer is Twitter's rules against violent invective are vague, allowing for interpretation. The rules also exempt "government entities," which Trump is, and newsworthy tweets. – Not all is wrong with social, though. You might recall predictions of senior communicators in our Dec. 19 edition envisioning brands and or-

ganizations in 2018 working to quell societal divisions and project a sensibility on social media. Early in 2018 the social media community blasted a video **YouTube** star **Logan Paul** posted Dec. 31 about suicides in Japan. Paul removed the vid and apologized, as did YouTube. Unfortunately for YouTube, someone claiming to be one of its content assessors tweeted Jan. 2 the company gave the Logan video a green light Jan. 1. As of our press time, YouTube failed to respond to that *BuzzFeed* story. On Jan. 4, Paul said he'd be stepping away from posting vids so he could "reflect."

4. People: At our press time **Cision** said it hired 15-year **Adobe** veteran **Pritham Shetty** as chief technology officer. Among the positions Shetty held at Adobe was VP, product development. – **Hotwire** upped **Lindsay Riddell** to VP, corporate & executive communications. **T-Mobile** raised **Janice Kapner** to EVP, communications & community engagement. **Durée & Company** elevated 15-year PR vet **Chrissy Cox** to VP. – **Ruder Finn** named **Laura Ryan** EVP in its corporate communications practice. – **Stephen Chavez**, owner of **ChavezPR**, was elected president of the 2018 **Hispanic PR Association/LA Chapter**. – We're sad to report Chicago PR icon and *PR News* Measurement Hall of Famer **Louis Williams Jr.** passed two days after Christmas. In 1985 he founded **L.C. Williams & Associates** (LCWA). He also chaired and was a Fellow of the **International Association of Business Communicators**. He also was a Fellow of the **Institute for Public Relations** and its measurement commission. ■



Janice Kapner EVP, Communications & Community Engagement, T-Mobile