

MAGAZINE



When culture goes live

CULTURE



BY NICK BURCHER, HEAD OF SOCIAL MEDIA EMEA, MEDIACOM 30 MAR 2017

Live broadcasts on social media not only reveal our personal identity and local cultures, they also transform the entertainment we consume.

A few months ago I went for an evening run. I took my phone so I could broadcast it through Facebook Live. My Facebook friends were not only able to join me without the actual effort of running but they were also able to leave comments.

Along the way, I passed Alexandra Palace, the birthplace of TV, where the BBC launched the world's first regular high-definition television service on November 2, 1936. Eighty years after those first BBC pictures, Facebook Live, Periscope, Live.ly and more are allowing all of us to broadcast whatever we want to anyone and everyone.

These live video platforms are not only changing the media landscape and cultures of consumption, they're also challenging programming norms and changing how we consume events.

The 2016 US presidential election debates, for instance, were broadcast live across social, while NFL 'Thursday Night Football' games are now streamed on Twitter, and frontline reports of protests and disturbances are often shown in real time.



In Scandinavia, an innovative new show called *Skam* (renamed *Shame* for launch in the US) has challenged traditional broadcast approaches further, scoring massive viewing figures among teen audiences.

Set in a high school, scenes from the show are broadcast live, across multiple platforms, in real time. A full episode is then posted online every Friday stitching everything together. Throughout the week characters interact live with audiences on Facebook and Instagram.

But let's be clear: live culture is not just based on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube.

To be really useful, marketers need to use live video in line with their overall strategic objectives

Twitch, Amazon's game-streaming platform, for example, is widely used in gaming circles, generating up to one million viewers per day. In China, live streaming has become [an alternative form of entertainment](#), with live streamers potentially earning thousands of dollars a month. In this market, live video is huge with 325 million users across 106 different apps.

All of this is tapping into the culture of impatience and the need for instant gratification. Chatbots now provide instant customer service, broadcasters show *Game of Thrones* at 2am to avoid spoilers, and in 2016 game players abandoned their cars to chase Pokémon across Central Park.

Facebook is working hard and spending a lot of money to promote its live video capabilities to its user base and 'Live' creates new dimensions for brand storytelling. But to be really useful marketers need to use live video in line with their overall strategic objectives.



Telling brand stories with live video

Live video is a great way of telling brand stories. Land Rover, for example, has run "Live test drives" to demonstrate its off-road capabilities, while Coca-Cola used Live to bring the Coca-Cola Christmas Truck Tour to life for Facebook users that couldn't attend the events in person. What's more, every movie premiere now seems to have 'Live from the Red Carpet' streamed for social media fans.

The other rich area for brands is in partnering with influencers for live video. A study by Tubular found that the engagement generated for live videos is significantly higher if a

celebrity or social media star is involved. This is especially true when influencers help share messages through their own channels and notify their followers to tune in.

For Deutsche Telekom in Germany, we let Izzy, a games influencer, take over the brand's Twitter feed to broadcast live from GamesCom, Europe's largest gaming conference. Izzy asked his thousands of followers to tweet the names of the games they wanted to see and then streamed live content from those arenas, helping Deutsche Telekom's message reach a new audience of hyper-engaged consumers.

The other rich area for brands is in partnering with influencers for live video

Celebrities can be an even bigger draw. In 2014, we worked on the FIFA World Cup Trophy Tour for Coca-Cola and had Brazil's Rivaldo do a live chat on the official Facebook Page – although back then it had to be run as Q&A in the comments section of a Facebook post.

More recently, we've worked with the 2016 Formula 1 champion Nico Rosberg to host a live video Q&A with BOSE (an F1 sponsor). It allowed fans to get even closer to their hero by asking questions and receiving real-time answers in the video itself.

Live video definitely opens up great opportunities for advertisers. But it needs to be integrated into the wider communication system, planned and promoted to connect with specific audiences in a credible way.



A blueprint for going live

If your brand is considering going Live, you should consider the following:

1. To semi-paraphrase a 1980's pop song, 'Live is Live!' There are no edits so you need to ensure your messages are carefully planned in advance. You should also think about concepts and plan for any worst-case scenarios that might interrupt your live stream.
2. Timing is also crucial, especially if you are targeting a global audience. Wherever you're broadcasting from, some markets on the other side of the world will be asleep. It's critical that you time your messages to hit your biggest targets when they're most likely to be engaged.
3. Don't forget about post-event audiences. Some platforms like Facebook Live allow content to be saved for (and promoted to) a catch-up audience, so it's important to ensure your video can live on when the live stream stops.
4. Using a social media star or celebrity in your campaign can help drive reach and engagement, but different personalities resonate in different markets. Some YouTube stars have global awareness, but the majority of influencers are region- or country- specific.

Using them in your brand programs will only be effective if your message resonates in their sphere of influence. It's also important to think about content. What may be acceptable or feel 'authentic' in one place may not work in another.

5. Use your system. Pre-promote your live activity as widely as possible by using different channels to steer to your content.

CULTURE