

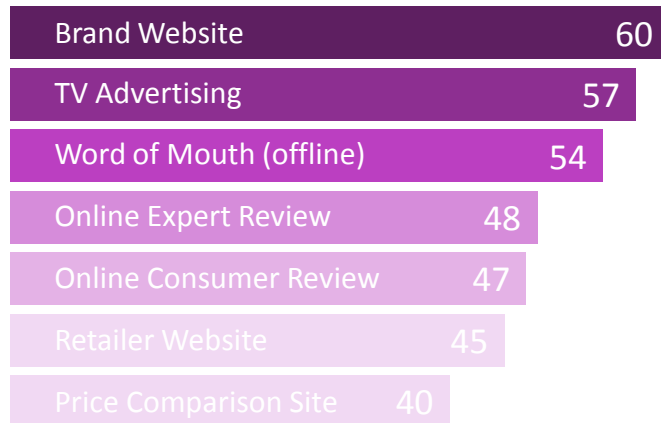
# Are You Making the Best use of Your Website?

Research from the UK Digital Life study shows that despite ever increasing consumer generated brand content online, the brand website is still hugely important throughout the consumer journey, from driving awareness of products, through to keeping in touch with the brand post purchase.

As such, it represents a key asset in driving growth, through the acquisition of new customers as well as maintaining relevance with existing ones.

Here we explore how the importance of the website differs by category, versus other media and how it can play a critical role in reinforcing a brand's core values as an integral part of the overall marcomms strategy.

## % Using Touchpoint to Research a Product / Brand



UK Digital Life Study 2011  
Note: data averaged across all categories

## What's the bottom line for brands?

- The brand website is a key source of information for consumers and as a result a crucial instrument in driving brand growth. They have made an active decision to come to you – don't waste it
- Engage the head and the heart. Consumers may come looking for information, but this is the perfect opportunity to engage with them emotively
- Be true to your brand. In many categories consumers are more likely to see your website than they are your advertising, so make sure it reflects your brand values
- Make sure all the different elements of your website, from the type of navigation through to the talent used, work together in communicating your brand values



## Driving Brand Growth:

### The Importance of the Brand Website in the Purchase Process

Whilst having an effective presence on social media is a challenge to brands, and competition with consumer voices is high, brands are as influential as consumer-generated sources for consumers who are considering what to buy. In particular, the brand owned website remains a critical owned asset.

The UK Digital Life study showed that 60% of consumers used a brand's website at some point during the purchase journey, from generating awareness through to (and after) purchase. This figure is higher than for traditional bought media, with 40% and 26% claiming to get information from TV and print advertising respectively.

Moreover, it remains higher than consumer generated reviews and offline word of mouth.

Critically, the proportion of those visiting brand websites is similarly high (56%) among those online users (Influencers\*) who are heavy users of social networks and who are very active in making brand comments online.

These results show that the website is retaining its relevance for consumers in the face of ever increasing consumer generated content online. Moreover, it has the ability to reach influential online users and potentially create online brand advocates.

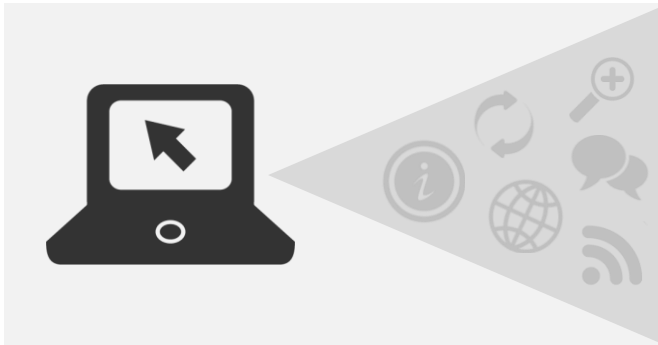
\*Influencers represent 22% of the UK online users

# A Category Specific Story

The importance of a brand's website as an information source differs markedly by category.

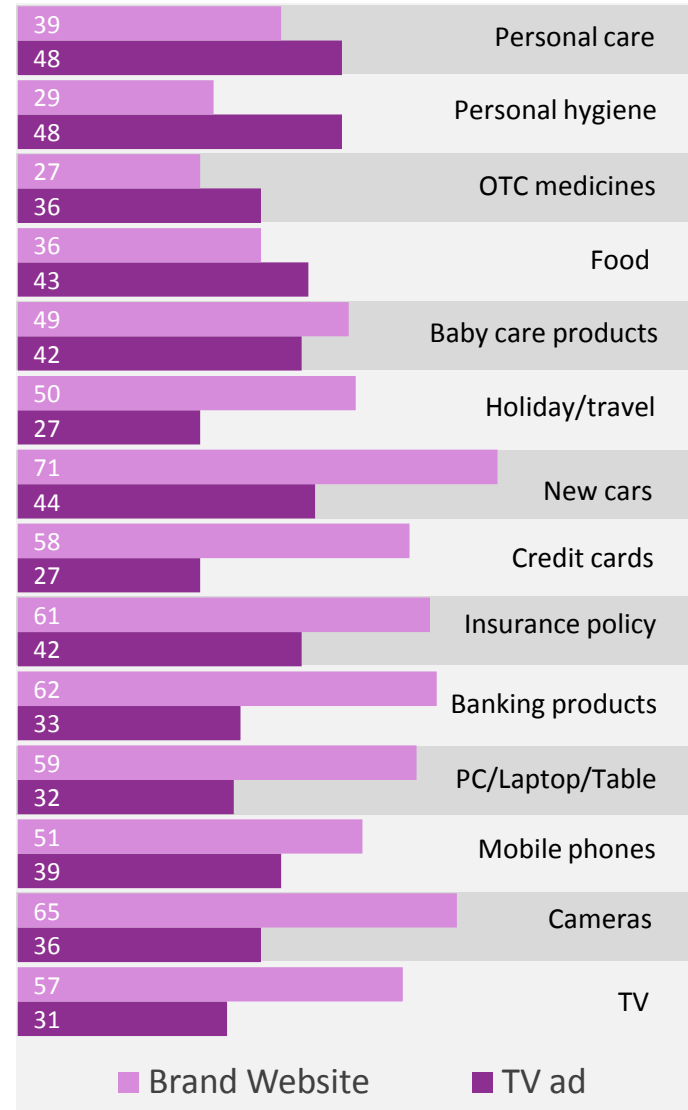
As may be expected, the more complex and involved the purchase decision, the more likely consumers are to reference the brand website; particularly when buying a new car and choosing technology and financial products.

Perhaps what is more surprising is the role that the brand website plays in low cost and lower involvement categories, such as personal hygiene, food and personal care. Whilst consumers are slightly more likely to cite TV advertising in these cases, the brand website has a significant opportunity to influence both the online/offline purchasing decision.



The cross category usage of brand websites, particularly for lower involvement products suggests that consumers are looking for more than just information and are open to brand messages – especially as they have made the decision to be there!

## % using touchpoint to research a product/brand



## Engage the Head & Heart

Bombarded with information and the need to make decisions, consumers will always look for ways to simplify their decision making, by engaging the emotive part of the brain. As argued by neuroscientists like Damasio in his book *Descartes' Error*, emotion is critical in human decision making and works with the rational part of brain to help us make decisions.

**“Far from interfering with rationality the absence of emotion and feelings can break down rationality and make wise decision-making almost impossible”**

*Damasio, A. Descartes' Error*



With consumers more likely to look at your website than see your advertising in many cases, the website needs to do all the things that advertising is supposed to achieve. Ultimately it must inform the consumer what the brand can deliver, both at a rational and emotive level. The key difference with advertising is that consumers have made an active decision to be there, so don't waste the opportunity.

# Leveraging Different Website Elements to Communicate Brand Values

## Be True To Your Brand

The first question to ask when designing a website is how do you want the consumer to feel when they are using it? Do you want to give them a sense of control, of order and precision; that they are researching using all the information available?

Or do you want to give them a sense of pleasure and enjoyment, or perhaps a sense of prestige and status? The answer of course depends on your brand ambition and how it is represented across other media.

Consistency is key in attracting new customers and retaining the ones you've got. The last thing you want is for consumers to have one impression of your brand and then find another type of brand on the website.

So, the website must play a consistent and reinforcing role in the communication of brand values across the marcomms strategy. But think beyond this to your online marketing strategy - how does your website compare with the retail experience and is it joined up with your customer service delivery?

Once you know the values that you want to portray, there are a multitude of different elements of the website experience that you can leverage:

**STYLE** – Is your homepage constantly being updated, showing that your brand is contemporary or is it simple and predictable to foster a feeling of reassurance?

**COLOUR** – As with any communications, colour is key. Use reds to denote potency, browns warmth and so on.

**INFORMATION** – Catchy and playful or rational and thoughtful? How you say it is as critical as what you say.

**TALENT** – whether you use celebrities or ordinary people, who you show on your website speaks volumes about your brand

**SOUND** – Too often just a gimmick, if used correctly it can help create the right tone for the site experience

**NAVIGATION** – Is the way you navigate around the site practical and straightforward to give a down to earth feeling, or unpredictable and exciting?

In order to help make sense of all these different factors and how they can reflect brand values, we use a psychological model to help structure our decoding of these elements. Moreover, we can view other marcomms within this framework to understand the degree of consistency.

## CONCLUSION

The rapid rise of consumer generated content online is indicative of the shift in power from the manufacturer to the consumer. However, the brand website still represents a huge opportunity for brands to send a clear message to the consumer and critically cut through the clutter and mixed signals that consumers will experience online. That message needs to align with your brand values and your site needs to connect with the heart as well as the head.

An example below, looks at how different homepage styles can produce different types of emotion.



Cartoon animation gives a sense of playfulness and fun  
Each page looks different, giving a sense of spontaneity



Logical, minimalist layout  
Carefully and artfully structured. Pared back with an equilibrium of elements



If you would like to learn more about Digital Life or how TNS advises brand strategies across the product marketing lifecycle, please contact:



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