Transforming Media Experiences with Modern Platforms

By Jason Rowe

If "content is king," then the experience through which content is consumed is the queen. And this queen is the fashionable media darling garnering worldwide attention.

When Bill Gates said **"Content is King"** in January of 1996, he envisioned the business model for the internet to be similar to that of broadcasting. However, technology advances have disrupted traditional broadcast with innovations like OTT (over-the-top content), time-shifted media, and the ability to bypass traditional monetization archetypes, leaving broadcasters scrambling to create new business models. Content is king when all methods of consumption are equal, but in today's hyper-connected world, content is being consumed by an ever-increasing array of methods and devices that are anything but equal.

Content is where I expect much of the real money will be made on the Internet, just as it was in broadcasting.

There's no arguing that consumers are seeking quality content. People are eagerly willing to pay for content that aligns with their tastes, reflects their lifestyles, or helps them achieve their professional and personal objectives. But most of today's content is highly portable and available in multiple locations across an array of platforms. With essentially the same content available in a myriad of locations, it's the *platform experience* that is driving much of the revenue. True, without the content the platform's value is worthless. But what leads a person to subscribe or consume content on one platform versus another? **The experience**.

The Experience is the Platform

Through various media platforms and super platforms (think Amazon, Apple, Facebook, Google) today's content is portable across devices, screen sizes, online and offline, and operating systems. Whether it's watching, listening, reading, interacting, playing, or competing; how the content gets consumed is largely related to how well the platform experience is designed and tailored towards the needs of the user.

Let's take Spotify for example. In addition to having a great library of content and a slick user interface, Spotify is doing something even more amazing to deliver an incredible media experience. Spotify's "Discover Weekly" feature creates a *personalized* playlist for each user every Monday based on their listening habits. A recent **Adweek article** described Spotify's users as not just fans of Discover Weekly, but "addicts." That's a fact that only became clear to the company when it recently suffered a service outage due to the high demand.
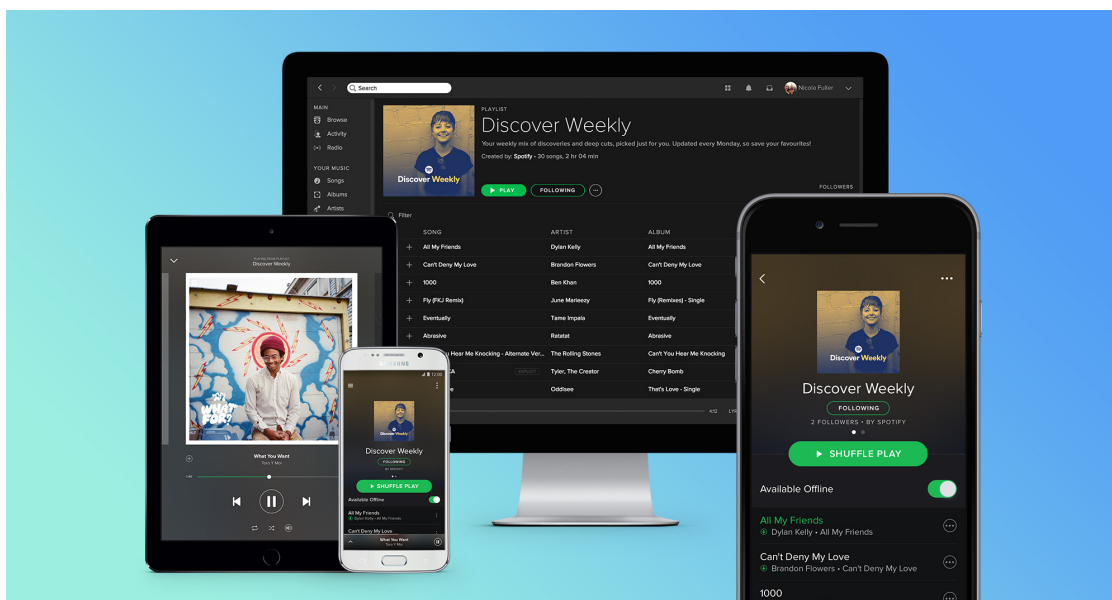

Image source: Spotify

In the Adweek article, a Spotify product owner is quoted as saying, "The feature's success has completely changed how the Swedish company thinks about experiences for its more than 100 million users." And based on the success of Discover Weekly, Spotify is looking to invest more heavily into algorithm-based playlists.

Content creators are no longer relying on just one single platform as their media outlet, but rather ensuring maximum audience exposure through distribution agreements with many different platforms and providers. The same content, independent of its value or quality, is now available everywhere. The portability of the content has created a scenario where it's the ability to provide a variety of content from multiple different creators and publishers - as well as how that content is served up and experienced by customers - that drives user engagement on one platform versus another.

The old broadcast model of content distribution was a very passive linear model. Now that model has been turned on its head and requires varying content to be served up on-demand based on tastes and behaviors. Audiences look for experiences where they can consume a range of content curated to their liking when and where they want it.

Disruptive Factors
for Content Consumption

Digital leaders and industry disruptors like Spotify have leveraged experience design and technology innovation to create transformational digital experiences for their customers. Content creators and providers can apply these same elements and characteristics to their distribution platforms to create unique experiences that transcend the content and set themselves apart from competitors.

Exceptional digital experiences can generally be broken down into the following critical elements: personalized, convenient, real-time, socially connected, and valuable beyond the transaction. The following are recommendations on how these elements can be applied to content:

1 Personalize the Experience for the Individual User

Know who is using the platform at any given moment and tailor the content to the individual user's tastes. Learn from their choices and behaviors to suggest similar content they would likely enjoy.

2 Be Convenient (Digitally Speaking)

Understand that we're now a mobile society with consumers who are passionate about our content and experiences. We want our content to be available wherever we happen to be at the time. Convenient options like content that is available both offline and online are game-changing differentiators.

3 Connect Socially with Your Audience

People love to share and discuss great content so ensure they have the ability to do so right from the platform itself. Subsequently, when users are not on your platform, make certain they're getting updates about new content from their social feeds. Social platforms such as Snapchat, Instagram, and Facebook are especially good for providing off-platform content updates promos and teasers.

`4` Connect in Real-Time

In addition to ensuring your content is timely and relevant, it's likely you have access to a whole host of real-time data that can be used to enhance your customer's experience. Considering the customer's context is equally as important. What device are they're currently using? Are they in motion? Walking or driving? What time of day is it? Answering these questions can help you serve up an experience that is tailored to real-time factors.

`5` Provide Ongoing Value, Not Transactional Value

Ensure the platform is a true go-to destination. Delivering value may mean a personalized experience, but it could also be features like providing updates on new releases, events, appearances, signings, supplementary content, recommendations, and - most importantly - the feeling of a community.

`6` Choose the Right Platform to Deliver the Right Experience

One thing content creators and publishers need to keep in mind is that not all platforms are designed to deliver exceptional experiences for all types of content. Gaming platforms are obviously ideal for video games, but they are also well-suited to deliver a great streaming audio and video experience. However, they tend to be limited to being able to deliver this experience only on their hardware and do not cross over easily to seamless web and mobile experiences.

Similarly, content types that require complex interactions are not well suited for platforms that have limited input control, such as a simple remote. Attempting to consume content on a platform not built to deliver the expected experience can lead to a negative impression – not only for the platform, but for the content as well.

Simply put, the experience around how content is consumed heavily influences the content's worth to the consumer. In other words, great experiences increase the content's perceived value, while a negative experience can rapidly diminish it. Though the content remains the same, consumers are quick to judge its value by their experience around its consumption. To bring my point full circle, if content is king, the experience surrounding that content is queen - and the platform that delivers that content has a significant impact on the user's perception of that experience. Great content on its own is no longer enough.

The current strategy for content providers is to either build their own platforms, leverage an existing industry solution, or a combination of both, and this trend varies greatly by content types as well as consumer types. But no matter what strategy is taken, the consumption of the experience needs to be a key component of the equation.

About the Author

Matt Kollmorgen is a digital strategist with a focus in enterprise technology. As a business transformation leader, he brings a breadth of experience from agency to corporate environments. Matt possesses a keen understanding of modern digital technologies, innovative user experiences, and effective data management to transform businesses to the digital age. As a change agent and pioneering catalyst, Matt participates in client workshops and strategy sessions, speaking at several industry events, including Henry Stewart DAM Conference and the American Marketing Association.

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