



Vlogging and

digital marketing

As an A-level business studies student, you need to have a good understanding of digital marketing methods, and vlogging is an important aspect of this

Attaching a brand, product or service to a well-known personality has always been a popular way to increase sales or brand awareness for a business. For example, Under Armour's relationship with Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson sees him wearing their training kit both on the big screen and when he is being followed by the paparazzi. Likewise, businesses pay large sums of cash for the likes of David Beckham, Keira

Knightley and Charlize Theron to promote ranges of products.

This form of promotion is now growing fastest in a new area, with ordinary people doing the promoting. Video blogging (vlogging) entered business parlance in 2005, coinciding with the founding of YouTube. In business terms, it involves customers reviewing and promoting products by posting videos of themselves using them. The appeal of normal people doing the promoting is perhaps down to the ease of entry into the vlogger world. Anyone with a broadband connection and a laptop can get in on the action, and of the hundreds of thousands who have a go at vlogging, a few are bound to prove outstanding in the field.

PewDiePie

If you ask most people who Felix Kjellberg is, you are likely to be met with a blank expression, but they may have heard of his online alias PewDiePie. Kjellberg is seen as possibly the most valuable marketing asset a business could get their hands on, as he has 53 million subscribers to his YouTube channel. To put that into perspective, Justin Bieber has 27 million, One Direction have 20 million and Taylor Swift has 21 million.

PewDiePie's channel focuses on playing video games and chatting to the camera about them while doing so. It might not seem a lucrative way to make a living but *Forbes* reported PewDiePie's income as \$12 million in 2015. With over 12 billion video views, it is understandable why a firm might want to feature in the advert at the beginning of his videos.



Vloggers can raise revenue through advertising and through product placement in their videos

Growing pains

While the relationship between YouTube and its biggest stars has always been unclear in exactly how sharing of revenue from advertising is divided up, many YouTube vloggers receive good incomes from their videos. The main reason that firms want to be associated with the rising stars of the vlogging world is that businesses have known for a long time that 'word of mouth' promotion is the most effective way to get new customers. Vlogging takes word-of-mouth promotion to the masses.

The growth of vlogging has not been without its controversies. After fast growth in this area and a number of complaints stating that it was unclear whether vloggers had been paid to feature or promote items in their videos, the UK's Advertising Standards Authority introduced new guidelines in 2015. These require a greater level of clarity as to whether a fee has been paid to promote a product or service.

Vloggers continue to cross over into mainstream media. Increasing numbers are signing book deals, releasing music singles or partnering up with big businesses. If you are unsure about how much room

there is for growth, for his 53 million subscribers PewDiePie's reported take home pay for 2015 by *Forbes* was only 15% of Taylor Swift's \$80 million from her 21 million subscribers.

In exams

So how do insights about vlogging fit into A-level business studies specifications? The obvious place is in 'Understanding the value of digital marketing'. This could come up as an exam question, or an argument involving digital marketing could be used to analyse a more traditional question about the marketing mix or marketing strategy. A quick look at PewDiePie's site reveals little overt advertising, but a clever marketer is likely to provide some funds and free samples, so when Kjellberg takes a swig from a bottle or can there's probably some marketing thought behind it. It's important for the marketer to understand the vlogger and the audience, and to be able to work out which brands will work and which would seem phoney.

So does this mean that digital marketing is radically different from traditional approaches? PewDiePie is interesting to advertisers because 53 million consumers aged between 10 and 25 is a fantastic audience, especially if you're marketing Playstation, Nike, Red Bull or any other brand targeted at this age range. So the first attraction is the size of this audience. Compare it with the *X Factor* final, which drew 8.4 million viewers in 2015, of which a maximum of 2 million would have been in the 10-25 age category. PewDiePie draws a global audience, but that's fine for the three brands mentioned earlier.

Whether promoting a product by traditional or digital means, the rules are the same: be clear on your target market, focus on making a credible impact on that market (even if other groups are indifferent or even offended) and find the best-value way to hit your market with as many repeated messages as possible. Saying something once will almost never work in a crowded marketplace. Vlogging offers scope for modern, digital marketing, but the underpinnings of marketing are unchanged.



Vloggers continue to cross over into mainstream media by releasing music singles, signing book deals and partnering up with big businesses

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