

they suddenly have increased spending ability without the monetary commitments of their parents, meaning they're in a once-in-a-lifetime mindset to develop independent, strong brand loyalties.

Therefore, college marketing is more than just the seemingly simple act of promoting products or services to college students, who are typically consumers between 18-to-24-years-old. It's the chance to tap into \$120 billion in annual direct purchasing power and gain engaged, repeat lifetime customers.

In our conversation below, Sorel discusses college students' surprising and often overlooked purchasing power and the challenging process of reaching this key demographic .

DailyVista: What is college marketing? Do you find that marketers often either don't understand college marketing specifically or lump it into broader areas like millennial marketing?

Marc: At a glance, college marketing is a relatively straightforward concept: brands promoting their products or services to college students. In practice, however, reaching college students is anything but simple. The college demographic is increasingly distrustful of institutions and wary of corporate advertising and brand messaging. This is not surprising, given the fact that college students are living in uncertain times and face economic challenges ahead.

College marketing provides brands with the opportunity to overcome these obstacles – through the use of innovative peer-to-peer marketing tactics utilized on-campus, online, and on mobile devices – in order to reach this highly lucrative demographic. Most undergraduate students are young, many of them fresh out of high school. As young adults, they suddenly have increased spending power, and they *don't* have monetary commitments that come later like children, pets, or a home. This ideal balance, combined with the newness of having free reign over money (often money they didn't earn), forms the perfect storm of financial indiscretion, which works in the favor of college marketing.

The core college consumer is between 18-24 years old, while millennials range from 16-34-years-old, though definitions vary. For all intents and purposes, the majority of college students are millennials. The benefit of college marketing is that it hones in on this niche demographic – it brings the advertising to the students' physical and online space – reducing the waste of advertising dollars. College marketing drives conversations through organic outreach; this type of advertising resonates with students.

DailyVista: Why should brands and agencies make college marketing a bigger piece of their budgets? What makes the college demographic so lucrative and this type of marketing so engaging?



Marc: College students are a worthwhile niche demographic that marketers should pay attention to and invest in. College students are at a transitional time in their lives – a time where they are developing their independence and establishing consumer buying trends. The beauty of the college consumer is that they haven't formed many strong brand loyalties yet. Their college years are the formative years in their adult consumer lives and brands that reach students during this impressionable period have the chance to gain lifetime customers.

Today's college students represent a lucrative demographic. Enrollment is on the rise and discretionary spending is around \$120 billion in direct purchasing power. The 18-24 year old demographic are among the first to embrace new forms of technology and they set trends in food and beverage industries. They're the economic force of the future.

College marketing breaks down advertising barriers and enables brands to interact directly with students. There are many different ways to effectively engage the college consumer using college marketing; the trick is authenticity and deliverability. College students value genuine ads and peer recommendations. That's why word-of-mouth marketing and peer-to-peer marketing play such an essential role when reaching college students, as they want real and relevant ads from trusted sources.

DailyVista: How does the return on investment for college marketing compare to other strategies that brands and agencies typically use to target 18-24-year-olds?

Marc: Agencies and brands can tailor an ad specifically for 18-24 year-olds and target it on channels they commonly frequent, but this process doesn't always yield great results as the marketing can miss the intended audience. You can't use the same marketing campaign on college campuses that you would elsewhere; it simply won't work. Marketing to this niche audience takes ingenuity, finesse, and extensive peer-to-peer networks to fully realize success.

College campuses are unique in so far as they have a high concentration of 18-to-24 year olds gathered in a relatively small, compact space. With college marketing, brands are advertising on college campuses where students spend the majority of their time. This niche marketing approach ensures that the 18-24 year-old demographic will be reached and yields a higher return of investment, as it maximizes efficiency by zeroing in on the target audience.

DailyVista: Multicultural marketing has become a much bigger priority for brands and agencies in recent years, and it should continue to make up a larger part of their budgets. How does college marketing help take multicultural marketing to the next

level, as well?

Marc: As the U.S. population becomes increasingly diverse, there is a growing need for multicultural marketing. Instead of marketing to college students as a whole, multicultural marketing allows brands to focus on specific consumer segments within the college market that are more likely to engage with the promotion.

Brands can get very specific in terms of school selections and targeted marketing on and offline. Colleges are very supportive places and have many clubs for various ethnicities, races and nationalities. With multicultural marketing, brands can direct their messages to these focus groups. This increases efficiency and ensures that advertising dollars are not wasted!

College campuses are diverse. The population at most universities is comprised of students from various countries and ethnic backgrounds. This diversity allows students to exchange cultural ideas and stimulates classroom discussions.

Just as colleges and students benefit from a diverse campus, employers and employees benefit from a diverse workplace. Diversity promotes new ideas and new innovations due to the input of varying perspectives. Brands wanting to increase employee diversity can use multicultural marketing to [advertise internships and job positions](#).

DailyVista: What types of brands and categories can benefit most from utilizing college marketing in their strategy? Does this include travel and tourism too?

Marc: In some cases the obvious answer might be that the client's product or service is tailored to them – but there are other reasons why this demographic should be in youth advertisers' sights. The majority of college students are from middle-class or higher backgrounds, and this means they will likely have more disposable income, making them better targets for youth marketing companies.

The "college image" also plays an important role for brands trying to reach college students. A medley of cultural influences (movies, television, parents, peers, etc.) work together to create an idealized image of life on campus as some mixture of playground, networking site, academic Mecca and general promised land. This image drives college students to consume the various products that support it in real or imagined ways: alcohol, designer fashion, cars, entertainment, textbooks, travel, electronics and even certain kinds of food (energy drinks and pizza jump to mind). Brands that fit these categories should use campus marketing to capitalize on this semi-fictitious image.

Vacations and traveling are an essential part of the college experience. Companies that revolve around tourism should use college advertising to help increase their customer base. College students readily accept promotional materials regarding vacation opportunities. They want to travel with their friends and have new adventures. College advertising is a great way to make your destination known.



DailyVista: What overall services and expertise does NAM provide?

Marc: Since 1997, NAM Youth Marketing has been implementing [innovative and effective marketing and solutions](#) for clients seeking to improve their [advertising](#) presence in the college and youth marketing arena. College advertising can be so much more than media distribution – with NAM, you’ll meaningfully connect with students, build brand recognition and establish a digital and on-campus presence. We offer [targeted marketing](#) to millions of students at over 4,000 college campuses in the United States, Puerto Rico, and Canada.

NAM specializes in developing customized marketing solutions. We take the time to truly understand our clients’ college marketing goals and then we work with them in determining a plan of action to achieve those goals, utilizing and adapting our extensive P2P networks to suit their needs. We engage the college consumer using a combination of print, online, face-to-face, social media, and experiential marketing techniques. We help companies rise above the noise using peer-to-peer marketing.

DailyVista: Are there particular obstacles and/or opportunities that NAM is most often asked to help clients overcome and/or take further advantage of?

Marc: Clients sometimes have trouble reaching college students on campus due to limited access and students’ tendency to avoid corporate advertising. We help clients reach the elusive college consumer by breaking advertising barriers using our extensive P2P networks. P2P marketing allows brands to access college campuses and space typically reserved for students, such as dorm rooms, dining halls, libraries and student unions.

P2P marketing does more than just bypass the physical obstacles; it also breaks down barriers with students. College students are more likely to engage with their peers than with companies. Student brand ambassadors have points in common with other students and can foster organic conversations about your brand with their peers, generating real interest. First impressions matter and students are more willing to listen to a peer – someone they can easily relate to – than a business trying to sell them something. NAM makes these

connections a reality.

This is not restricted to the physical campus. We also use peer-to-peer marketing on social media sites. Social media is all about self-expression. College students construct their online image through social media networks and one of the ways they do this is by aligning themselves with particular brands. They use social media to follow trends and they pay close attention to the brands their peers are interacting with. Unlike banner ads, P2P marketing via social networking channels produces results and garners attention.

DailyVista: What were some of NAM's biggest accomplishments from the past few years, and what opportunities is the agency looking to capitalize on further in 2014?

Marc: These are some of the brands and agencies we've worked with in recent years:



In 2014, we wish to continue to foster consumer-brand engagement among 18-24 years olds through careful assessment of the college market place.

DailyVista: What separates NAM from its competitors, including from a philosophical and cultural standpoint? Why should marketers utilize a college marketing specific agency like NAM to reach this audience over a larger, more all-encompassing agency?

Marc: Our philosophy is to connect brands and students by fostering meaningful engagement. We provide innovative marketing solutions individually tailored to meet our clients' needs. We ensure that our clients achieve maximum exposure at every targeted campus, or even a specific section within. Spot checks, monitoring, and photographic documentation let our clients know that a successful college advertising campaign has been carried out.

The college market is a tough market to crack without experience; it's a better investment to use a company that is purely dedicated to college marketing because they will have greater expertise and experience in that field. They will understand the true ins and outs of the college market and the best ways of engaging students.

DailyVista: What are some common misconceptions about the college market or facts about this audience that marketers often overlook?

Marc: Many brands and agencies overlook the college market because they don't think college students have significant purchasing power. However, the college market is one of the few demographics to actually have a significant increase in consumer spending over the last few years despite the sluggish economy. They also have huge social influence over their peers and other generations, making them an ideal target audience.

Another common misconception is that since college students spend a large amount of their time online and on social media, digital marketing is the only way to reach them. However, companies that only use online advertising channels are missing out as college students value face-to-face marketing. Using a combination of in-person marketing and online advertising will ensure maximum exposure and leave lasting impressions.

DailyVista: Who should readers contact if they are interested in learning more about the power of college marketing and NAM's expertise?

Marc: Marc Sorel, NAM Youth Marketing President, at (888) 631-9222 or marcsorel@collegemarketplace.com