AT&T Mobility – Love Connection (796 words)

AT&T, the original powerhouse in the American telecommunications industry, has connected people together despite creed or distance for over 100 years. The company has carried on its longstanding legacy through maintaining a commitment to ally with its diverse customer base. This is why AT&T strives to support LGBTQ+ individuals through partnering with organizations representing the best interests of those in the community.

In June 2021, AT&T extended its support to The Trevor Project, through a two-year $750,000 commitment. The organization is aimed at LGBTQ youth, focusing on suicide prevention and crisis intervention. They asked us to tell the stories of the lives of real people from these communities and showcase them in an online documentary series. This in turn would bring a needed awareness to the diversified LGBTQ+ community.

The next step was connecting with a fitting outlet to reach the intended audience. We partnered AT&T with ATTN:, a distribution network comprising socially conscious content and followers. We created a video campaign entitled “The Love Connection” featuring non-binary, transgender and gender nonconforming people which provided insight into their daily life including hardships and violence they regularly endure. The content was initially distributed through TikTok, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. In this campaign, AT&T was not highlighted; The Trevor Project took center stage so the substance of the intention of LGBTQ+ awareness remained intact.

In one video, Alok - a gender nonconforming person - describes the harassment he regularly experiences. Due to his flamboyant appearance, he often receives antagonistic remarks however despite the negativity, he encourages others to “live life on their own terms.” He explains the benefit of resiliency practices which are promoted between LGBTQ+ individuals. The video highlights the way the community’s sense of unity is reinforced through the ability to reach out via a simple call or text messages.

Peppermint, a black trans woman, speaks out about the issue of shame connected with dating in the trans world. She explains how through technology, her and her partner remained connected even while living in separate countries. Peppermint highlights the importance of engaging with other individuals experiencing similar circumstances via digital platforms such as the Trevor Project.

The final campaign video features Tyshon and Cristian, a black trans/gay couple who illustrate the importance of boosting each other’s morale by “hyping” each other up. A simple and concise TikTok video gives a peek into their life together, allowing their circumstances and experience to be normalised by viewers.

A major challenge presented itself during the campaign process. Protecting the LGBTQ+ community from online backlash necessitated strategic moderation tactics. From closely monitoring and at times blocking video comments to updating red flag words, The Love Connection required enhanced maintenance. Ultimately, we made the decision to discontinue the campaign on Twitter as it proved impossible to fortify it from online hate. However, we continued the campaign on all other social media platforms and via The Trevor Project. The key takeaway was refining how to navigate such a sensitive campaign on public platforms while protecting the community we sought to uphold. With The Love Connection, AT&T has proven to be a brand of integrity through endorsing such a controversial topic amidst online hate, meanwhile ensuring the protection of the vulnerable people involved.

The Love Connection has resulted in a major success. The Alok and Peppermint videos overdelivered against 2021 contracted views so far by a staggering 141K.. TikTok also performed exceptionally well with 1.3MM views. In total, 244,896 video engagements were received with an extraordinary 10,815,032 impressions.   
  
Alok’s video received a 9.5% Facebook engagement rate, almost double the 4.6% ATTN: benchmark. Peppermint’s video received a 6.6% Facebook engagement rate which was 1.7 points above benchmark.

Despite the negative backlash, The Love Connection campaign garnered overwhelmingly positive responses. Peppermint’s video took in 92% positive emotional responses with the remaining sitting at 3% neutral and 5% negative. Tyshon and Cristian’s video received 77% positive emotional responses with the remaining at 13% neutral and 10% negative. Meanwhile, Alok’s video received 51% positive responses with the remaining at 33% neutral and 16% negative.

Comments on the videos ranged from defending the LGBTQ+ individuals to remarking on their attire, to mis-labelling gender while other commenters corrected the language. Tyshon and Cristian’s video received overarchingly positive comments, namely from how sweet viewers found their video and praise for their love.

The Love Connection campaign resulted not only in a major success for The Trevor Project and ATTN:, but also fortified AT&T’s commitment to the LGBTQ+ community. Though AT&T’s branding within the project was subtle, a seed was planted. Customers could associate the company with an upholding of tolerance and acceptance of all people no matter their identity or personal preferences. This is the cornerstone of AT&T’s mission: to evolve and expand their commitment to a multifaceted customer base.