Up-Level Your Audience Segmentation: Beyond Demographics

How to segment audiences based on the shared values, passions, and behaviors of digital Tribes
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Audience segmentation has been a cornerstone of marketing strategy since its development in the 1950s. However, gone are the days where it leans on superficial data like age, gender, location, and income. Social media has forever changed how brands and organizations position themselves to different audiences, and Linkfluence’s Tribes product makes it easy to identify and understand these new breeds of digital consumers.

Thanks to advances in AI and machine learning, organizations are now able to create much more sophisticated pictures of their different customer personas. Going beyond simple demographics, brands can now hypertarget customers based on specific interests, behaviors, and other indicators, all supported by hard data instead of guesswork and instinct.

Linkfluence’s Tribes adds another layer to the process by stripping away several layers of complexity and delivering clearer, more tailored snapshots of customers at scale. Here’s a closer look at how Tribes is creating the next-level approach to audience segmentation, engagement, and activation.
INTRODUCING TRIBES FROM LINKFLUENCE

Audiences are less passive than they used to be. In fact, they’re increasingly social, often turning to family, friends, and even complete strangers to share new products and brands. They crave interactions with others, but they also expect these interactions to be authentic and trustworthy. When people receive information from other people they trust, credibility becomes a natural by-product.

Consumers already form “tribes” with the people they know, whether it’s an inner circle of friends or strangers in an online community. These tribes represent groups of like-minded individuals who are actively engaged with each other and share many of the same interests and values. These influences help to shape their perceptions of the world. While tribes may be heterogeneous in terms of age, gender, and other demographic details, they’re often connected by passion, emotion, and priorities.
Linkfluence takes this concept of a Tribe and turns it into a competitive advantage for marketers. It’s a combination of influencer marketing and audience segmentation, allowing brands to expand and simplify the possibilities of both. Tribes goes beyond basic details to include interests, values, motivations, and behaviors to form better insights about an audience.

In their quest for authenticity, consumers are building online communities that will satisfy their need to connect and interact with others. “Members” of these communities trust their peers and see their communities as being authentic.

For brands to gain the trust of their social media audiences, they must first seek out the tribes that already share similar interests and values. Brands that can do this have a better chance of building credibility with their audiences by learning how to address their communities. This is the beating heart of Tribes.

Segmented campaigns — those that are personalized, relevant, and customized — drive a 760% increase in revenue.

Source: Campaign Monitor
In the past, brands catered to different audiences based on data they assumed never or rarely changed. Then came social media and smartphones, and consumers became increasingly mobile in where and how they conducted business.

As social media usage increased and technology grew more advanced, data tools were able to learn more about people’s preferences and behaviors than ever before. This continues to give marketers new ways to “categorize” their prospects and connect with them in different ways.
By using Tribes, brands gain a deeper understanding of what defines an online community beyond the demographics of the “old way.” As a result, brands can attract new customers and prospects and earn their loyalty by connecting with them at a deeper level.

For example, what is the common thread that holds this Tribe together? Is it a special activity or interest? Do they share core values or a unique perspective on life? These are unique hallmarks of an online community, something that’s not easily tracked and monitored in the physical world nor defined by social demographic criteria. These connections are more powerful than those based on social demographics and economics.
Linkfluence Tribes discover and monitor existing Tribes in real time to detect new opportunities or behavior changes. This real-time insight allows brands to be proactive in using exhibited customer behavior. Rather than jumping on a bandwagon trend in a weak effort to share in a trendy conversation, brands can integrate themselves organically by participating in shared interests and behaviors. Brands are better able to speak the languages of their customers by knowing what matters most to them.

In the process, brands can build their authenticity and credibility with those audiences. They’re no longer playing catch-up to societal issues or pop culture interests after they’ve already gone viral, but rather keeping pace with conversations by making their audiences’ tribes part of their own.

Segmentation makes firms 60% more likely to understand customers’ challenges and concerns and 130% more likely to know their intentions; 82% of firms using personas have come up with an improved value proposition based on segmentation.

Source: NotifyVisitors
Online tribes tend to form naturally; either members gravitate toward existing groups of like-minded individuals, or people collectively decide to create their own groups to share a common interest or experience.

So how does Linkfluence discover Tribes online and turn qualitative data into segmented insights? Here’s a closer look at our three-step process:
STEP 1:
**Source and structure data to reveal potential Tribes members.**

Tribes analyzes more than 250 million social profiles, exploring content timelines, bios, and more. It searches social interactions, values, interests, and motivations to discover common denominators and levels of influence.

STEP 2:
**Import profiles into Radarly to find the nuances of your Tribes.**

Selected profiles are further explored by our AI consumer intelligence tool, Radarly. The tool creates new Tribes that contain hundreds or thousands of accounts. Profiles are updated every six months to keep pace with shifts in consumer interests and preferences.

STEP 3:
**Filter data to discover trends, segments, and brands.**

After compiling and analyzing the data, Tribes will automatically pull out trends, segments, and brands to help you better understand how your Tribe members live and interact.

This process is ongoing. Instead of updating audience segments once per year, you gain an always-on view that keeps pace with your audiences’ social lifestyles.
What is Tribes’ main purpose? More importantly, how can you use Tribes across your social listening and consumer intelligence objectives? Let’s look at some use cases.
Strategic Planning

Confirm tribes’ existence and relevance for your brand.

Not all tribes are created equal. How do you go about finding the tribes that will best fit your brand and content strategy?

It starts with knowing where to look, and then determining the tribe’s relevance to your brand’s products, services, and image. Linkfluence’s machine learning algorithm maps more than 250 million profiles across 6 million topics to identify tribes in all areas of interest.

For example, one project Linkfluence recently executed for a client was to identify a tribe of NBA fans. The objective was to deeply understand who they are and what defines them among the NBA. Are they also interested in music? Food? Are they politically engaged? Do they talk to fellow NBA fans about innovation, etc.?

Discovering these insights supports strategic planning because it allows brands to be proactive instead of reactive to exhibited customer behavior on topics of interest.
Content Strategy

Connect with your audiences with a more authentic voice and identify opportunities to engage with them.

Trust among consumers has been wavering in recent years, forcing brands to increase their emphasis on transparency and authenticity. It’s no longer enough for brands to say they’re a sustainable company or a company that cares about social or ethical issues. Consumers are holding companies accountable and rewarding those that walk the talk. Brands that keep silent about social issues that their fans believe they should care about won’t be tolerated.

Last year, we discovered that affluent Millennials are the demographic most likely to feel this way, so we turned to Tribes to learn more. We started by selecting Tribes from more than 250 million profiles, then populated Radarly with the profiles we filtered out to understand more about what else defines them.

We weren’t surprised to learn that Millennials were reacting to George Floyd’s death last year and that they felt compelled to post trending hashtags. We discovered a viral hashtag at that time, #BlackOutTuesday, as well as an emerging hashtag, #theshowmustbepaused.

The takeaway for brands is to accept that consumers do not expect brands to stand by idly. People are waiting for concrete calls to action; in this case, consumers expected brands to take immediate action and stand up against racism.
Innovation in Marketing

Track developing trends among your tribes and the media they follow.

Some trends in marketing are easy to spot, like using models that represent diversity and inclusivity. Others, however, are more niche and speak directly to a very small market segment. It’s hard to attract as many people with niche marketing, but it also means that brands have identified a population that may be easy to activate with the right message.

We used Tribes to help a cosmetics brand do exactly this. The goal of the project was to identify a tribe based on Japanese DNA and Asian spirits while taking into account small cultural nuances. The brand wanted to assess the tribe’s potential and relevance for use in marketing by finding interesting influences within the tribe. They also wanted to know which sub-tribes to focus on.

The brand is French, so identifying social differences between territories was key. After feeding thousands of social profiles per territory into Radarly, we delivered a deep dive report to the client containing shared passions, inspiration, lifestyles, and digital habits of each sub-tribe.

Our insights indicated which subtribes to pursue based on the alignment with the brand and mission. We also identified relevant influencers for brands to continue to monitor for potential partnerships.
Influencer Strategy

Identify tribe leaders and find the right advocates for specific topics.

Remember the celebrity-driven “Got Milk?” ads of the 1990s-2000s? Stars knew they’d hit the big time when they were asked to model their milk mustache as part of a large campaign. Although some fans may have preferred Elton John to Jessica Alba, the message remained largely the same. Just how influential each celebrity “endorsement” was likely varied between audiences.

We tested a similar scenario with a clothing brand known for using a diverse cast of celebrities, athletes, and influencers in their marketing. A recent Tribes project sought to learn how celebrity sponsorships impact consumer perceptions.

To fuel this project, we fed more than 100 million social profiles and 6 million topics into the Tribes product and used machine learning to analyze them. We discovered multiple fashion and sports tribes with shared interests, including lifestyle topics, brand affinities, and activities.

After modeling the data, we identified which celebrity athletes resonated with which tribe across topics like social consciousness, sneaker culture, fashion, and others. We shared this data with cross-functional teams and provided insight reports to the client to share with their celebrity endorsers to help shape future communication strategies.
The key takeaway for this case study is to not only identify people who share a common interest, but also take that next step in going beyond basic fandom membership. We found many like-minded, clothing-obsessed individuals, and we now have a group of individuals that we want to follow and monitor over time beyond this passion. From there, the client can use that insight to activate consumers to ignite its audience on topics that aren’t clothing-related.

What’s more, using Tribes to find influencers rather than simply choosing a celebrity endorsement is a more authentic approach because it finds who the real influencers are in a given space.
We’re living in a world driven by quantitative data and tools. However, behaviors and buying decisions are driven by qualitative factors — opinions, values, perspectives, and ideas that are shaped with and by the people around us.

At Linkfluence, our approach is complementary to audience segmentation. Tribes are not based on demographic data, but rather by shared interests and motivations. Our Tribes reflect real-world, naturally formed psychosocial groups. These groups are considered the most trusted media with the ability to influence others’ attitudes, behaviors, and aspirations.

It’s time to take your audience segmentation to a deeper level. Explore Tribes when you request a demo.
Linkfluence brings market research into the social media age. By applying AI, data science and market research expertise to a live feed of global social data we can give you high-value consumer insights in real time, instead of waiting months for reports to be created.

Empower your marketing team with consumer insights
Create a clear view of consumer trends that impact you
Explore and analyze real-time data from social media
Tap into online conversations that are happening right now

Speak to one of our consultants today

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