

The *Taste* of custom publishing success with Kate Wilson



By Leigh Andrews

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Woolworths' *Taste* magazine keeps scooping up international awards, and they've baked their role in the customer journey to a delicious crisp, stating: "On our digital platforms, consumers should only ever be two clicks away from shopping the exact recipe they are interested in." Editor Kate Wilson takes us on a delicious journey of customer experience and how they've perfected the tricky terrain of custom publishing...



Kate Wilson, editor of Woolworths' *Taste* magazine.

Woolworths' *Taste* magazine ended 2018 on a sugary high. Not only did the team celebrate its 15-year anniversary with their October 2018 issue, but the November 'Avocado toast' issue outsold all previous issues from the last three years.

Not surprisingly, their latest ABC results also show an 18% year-on-year increase.



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And they're winning favour for their publishing flavour across the globe, having bagged the Eddie & Ozzie Gold for overall editorial excellence in custom/content marketing for the March 2018 issue of *Taste*, as well as honourable mentions for design, best full issue and social media/community.

Then, to cap off the year on the ultimate sweet note, they won a Silver Pearl Award from The US Content Council in the Best Print Experience B2C category on 7 December, for the same issue.

And they keep the innovation coming, having just launched [TasteTube](#), a video channel for Woolworths' food content.

Here, Woolworths *Taste* editor Kate Wilson, with the title [since 2015](#), talks us through some of the challenges unique to creating custom content in the SA media space, how their digital offering enhances the print copy and Woolworths *Taste* magazine's role in the overall Woolworths customer journey and brand experience...

■ ***Congratulations on your 12th Eddie and Ozzie win since 2010! Share the importance of being awarded for excellence in custom publishing/content marketing.***

New Media has had a long history of publishing excellence and has always entered its titles and client work into international awards. Our wins show that we are on par with major international content marketing platforms.



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Woolworths and New Media's *TASTE* bags gold at Folio Awards in New York

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On top of that, in the last few years we have repositioned Woolworths *Taste* to be more commercially-aligned with the retailer's focuses, which can sometimes make it difficult to push the envelope, so it is very gratifying to be recognised for the excellence of our content, while still offering strong commercial value to our client.

It proves that true content marketing can be just as innovative and compelling as any other consumer content. Especially as the same issue for March 2018 also just won a Silver at the US Content Council's Pearl Awards in the category of best print experience (B2C)!

■ ***There's no denying that strategic partnerships with your clients are crucial in making custom publishing work. Talk us through that relationship with Woolworths, and how you ensure the end result gives value to both the reader and the client brand?***

It's all about finding that balance between credible content and commercial value. We work exceptionally closely with the Woolworths team, and Abigail Donnelly, *Taste*'s food director is also employed by Woolworths as their chief food creative, which means we speak the same brand language as the client, but also have real insight into Woolworths' priorities and what content needs to be reinforced.

This also gives us the freedom to innovate within the brand parameters editorially, because we know exactly what those are. And because Woolworths continues to set the standard for products, food trends and creative marketing ahead of other retailers, we have an inspired food-content space in which to operate.

■ **Fantastic. It's not all sweet moments, though – let us in on some of the challenges unique to creating custom content in the SA media space.**

Over the last three years, we have tried to bring *Taste*'s content in line with how real people cook and eat, rather than aiming above the audience - the idea being that presenting real food solutions and stories in an authentic, valuable way would build stronger connections with the audience and the retailer.

“ Our biggest challenge is that while we are a Woolworths' brand extension, *Taste* is also a consumer magazine with a cover price, and to some extent we face all the same challenges that other print media faces today, so it is essential that the content be seen as independently curated and relevant, not merely a hard-sell marketing vehicle. ”

Providing a credible product to a shifting audience, while also meeting the client's objectives, is a real balancing act.

■ **That ties into my next question: Let's talk about CX, UX and CRM: Explain Woolworths Taste magazine's role in the overall Woolworths customer journey and brand experience.**

The client brief from Woolworths now is that *Taste* be positioned as the retailer's food authority but in an accessible way. The brand is also fundamentally different to all of Woolworths' other marketing in that it is produced independently, so we can tell stories and show Woolworths products in a very authentic, credible way.



The award-winning March issue, best-selling November issue and festive December 2018 issue of Woolworths *Taste* magazine.

The intention is that *Taste* as a lean-back media experience can offer end-to-end solutions for Woolworths customers who love food, but also have to navigate issues around time and budget.

“ As the “food authority” in Woolworths' arsenal of communications, it's not *Taste*'s role to drive promotions and specials with a direct-marketing approach, which gives us a lot of freedom to tell authentic stories in the print magazine. ”

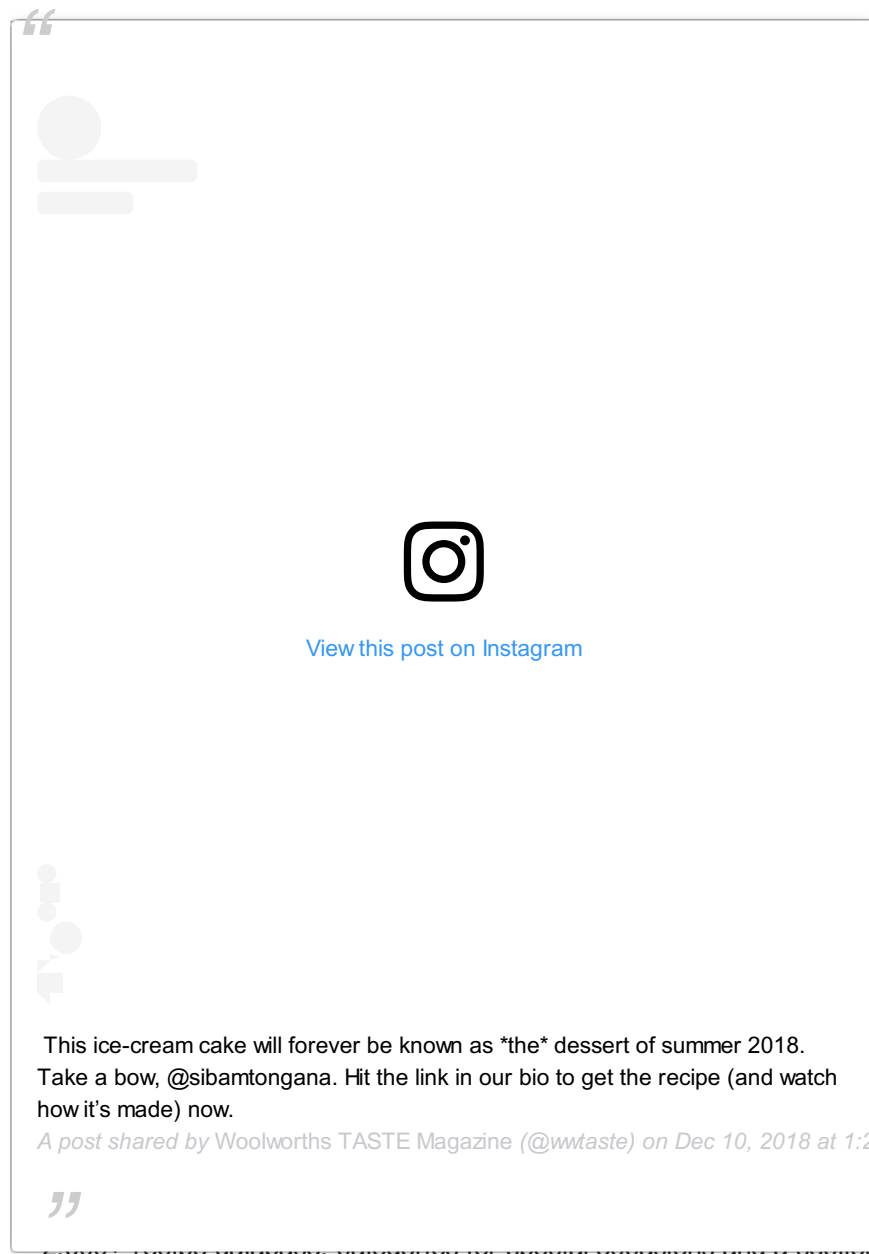
On our digital platforms the same applies, but we are also trying to add value and convenience here and can do so with more agility than we can in print, so we do communicate relevant specials.

For example, via our newsletter, we might match that week's content to a four-day deal on a particular item like avocados, which makes perfect sense for an audience looking to save money but also needing ideas and inspiration.

■ **Definitely. Elaborate on how your digital offering enhances the print plate.**

Woolworths Taste's digital platforms are actually by far the biggest part of the audience footprint.

We currently reach over 337,000 consumers across our web and social platforms. Our strategy is to leverage the particular strengths of each platform so that we create unique content – for example, to compete on Facebook, you need to have a strong video offering and ability to engage with your community, while on Instagram strong visual images and in particular sweet, indulgent recipes do very well.



... is easily searchable with multiple terms for the
2,000+ recipe database, categories for special occasions and a section for menus.

Our digital offering is about being able to offer daily solutions every day on whichever platform you happen to find yourself.

“ To close the loop on the customer journey, all the content is shoppable – either via linked catalogues on social or via a link on Taste, which takes you directly to a Basketed recipe on Woolworths' online shop, so the shopping experience is seamless. On our digital platforms, consumers should only ever be two clicks away from shopping the exact recipe they are interested in. ”

Knowing what your customers want and giving it to them is the ultimate in customer experience, so it seems 2019 will be just as tasty for the Taste team! Visit their [press office](#), [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) pages and their new [TasteTube Youtube channel](#) for the latest updates.

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

Leigh Andrews AKA the #MilkshakeQueen, is former Editor-in-Chief: Marketing & Media at Bizcommunity.com, with a passion for issues of diversity, inclusion and equality, and of course, gourmet food and drinks! She can be reached on Twitter at @Leigh_Andrews.

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