

7 Reasons Why You Lose Sleep Over Digital

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DIGITAL MARKETING CHALLENGES

Regional - The digital era has been picking pace quicker than ever before this year, where marketers in the region are concerned.

But while more companies such as Great Eastern are openly embracing the digital medium and spending a key portion of their marketing dollars on it, there's no question that there are a good number of marketers (and agencies) on the far side of the spectrum (Read: Agencies' worst digital horror stories).

Horror stories aside, Marketing spoke to key brand leaders on some real issues in taking to the space.

1. Metrics madness

Impressions, clickthroughs, unique visitors, cost per click, cost per acquisition and the list is endless. These various metrics are stumping marketers. What's a good benchmark?

Aside from the horror stories in the link above, Benny Toh, head of corporate marketing, Singapore Management University gives another example of marketers' confusion. "Internally, there is a lack of knowledge on the digital space," shares Toh.

"For example, it's really challenging to explain the difference between impressions and click through. Many would say 'we got millions of impressions' but the clickthrough is only in thousands, so it tells them instinctively that the piece is not attractive when the fact of the matter is that the industry benchmark for clickthroughs are always in less than 1%."

Maria Nakpil, senior director - eCommerce, Asia Pacific, global online, Hilton Hotels said: "Everything is measurable. Sometimes you have to make a management decision to decide what to look at."

"One of my top concerns is: How do you measure the impact on the brand beyond just click through, downloads, impressions?" said Christina Lim, director, brand & marketing, NTUC FairPrice.

2. Targeting Asia- there's no one solution

And getting the global corporate office to see this point is a nightmare, some marketers say. Most of the digital media decisions, especially social media for large multi-nationals is still made out of the US or Europe, even though it's for Asia.

These marketers, who declined to be named, lamented that it is heavily restricted how they could use social media for their audiences, and this in turn slows the processes down. More autonomy to the region in making such decisions will help the brand go a long way in Asia. Whilst they said, the corporate office is beginning to see this there's more that can be done.

And within Asia itself, the diversity is a huge challenge. With more brands targeting Asia from regional headquarters, challenges of cultural nuances and seasonality arise.

Isaac Poh, associate director, digital marketing, Asia Pacific at Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide, said one challenge was needing to work on the different markets in the region.

"Different markets have different seasonality. We need to meet each market's customers at their individual contexts," he said.

Hilton's Nakpil agrees. "This goes for anyone working in an APAC perspective. I have to keep emphasising that China's different, Hong Kong's different - There's no Google or Facebook in China! You need to have a voice on how your markets work," she said.

3. Staffing

While most know the importance of going digital, hiring the right staff for the job is a major issue.

"They are not sure what kind of staff they need to manage - social media, content marketing, automation, lead generation - these can sometimes be quite specialised. That said, most will not have the luxury of having a dedicated person for each area. This results in hiring people with very generic knowledge and skill sets," continued Toh.

Christina Spykerman, senior director of sales, APAC, WorldHotels, who sets the digital direction for the group, also said one issue was the amount of messaging needed for digital - all done with a lean team, which is also an issue for several marketers.

Besides, there are other issues such as training existing staff on content and getting various stakeholders to speak the same language as the brand.

Marketers need agencies to bring in a specialised/expert viewpoint. Not every capability can be brought in-house. But some feel the dependence is not always warranted.

SMU's Toh feels brands have the tendency to rely on their agency on record for as many things as possible. This is to minimise the number of contact points and having to brief several parties about the brand repeatedly. But that's also where his gripe is.

"Any agency will convince the client that they can do traditional and new media and can plan a digital or integrated campaign, but that's not truly integrated," he says.

For instance, in his experience an agency often says let's do a video and since social media is hot, we want the viral effect. So let's create a Facebook page and share/tell people what we have. In such scenarios, where it not properly thought out, low participation is almost expected, according to Toh.

Let's face it. The vendor space is fairly fragmented with not many end-to-end propositions out there. There are specialists, and plenty of them but not enough of agencies that are truly integrated who stitch it all together.

"There is a real shortage of truly integrated agencies here in Singapore," Toh said.

And for how the vendor landscape is changing, read these two stories.

5. Regulations

Now that's a major reason for certain industries, namely financial services, healthcare and pharmaceuticals.

Stanley Toh, vice president, internet & digital marketing at United Overseas Bank whilst highlighting the grip regulations have says marketing will get even more restricted with the Do Not Call registry coming into play. "This would make things even tougher, together with the issues of data privacy."

Tan Mui Mui, director, pharma business, GlaxoSmithKline added that the healthcare industry is also facing issues in marketing digitally given its highly regulated nature.

"If you want to put something on a website it has to be approved by the MOH. The content we have to put up has to go through multiple checks and if it links to some other website, that content has to be approved too,"

6. Data influx

Is there something as too much data? The answer is yes if you don't know how to make sense of it and marketers are facing a huge managing this deluge. Managing all the data points to ensure nothing gets lost is easier said than done.

Jacquie Lindsay, director, marketing & corporate communications Asia Pacific, Carlson Waglit Travel, said this is a huge issue for many companies. "We have so much data from different sources, not just geographically. We are trying to see how to process it all."

UOB's Toh also talks about syncing the data across different departments, especially with the company's many credit cards.

"We have so much data from so many systems; we even have different managers on different systems," he said, explaining how different brand managers would take care of each card.

But that brings to the last but perhaps the biggest issue of all- organisational silos.

7. Silos within brands and agencies

How do the different departments interact with each other? How do you ensure that the customer who deals with different product teams in your company gets the same consistent brand experience?

According to John Sinke, assistant vice president digital marketing & e-Commerce, Resorts World Sentosa managing digital marketing whilst operating in silos is a mistake.

"Product marketers will work with the agencies who think of TV, print, outdoor and then digital. We are trying to flip that trend. Now our CEO is asking to look at digital first. Digital shouldn't be treated as a separate channel," Sinke said.

And the magnitude of this issue will only grow as the media proliferates further. Think tablets, phablets, smartphones and so on.

UOB's Toh, first vice president, internet & digital marketing at United Overseas Bank said it is already an issue deciding how to market on multiple platforms.

"Mobile is popular for us, and then we also are on site. What about going onto tablets? Do we throw in new functionalities?" said Toh.

The problem is no different on the vendor side. Agencies are equally guilty of operating in silos, even though many claim to be integrated. A reflection of what's happening on both sides is evident from this: **Keep that ego aside, please**