

# Digital (communications) is key to a cost-effective post-Covid marketing strategy

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Traditional media has always been the cornerstone of marketing and advertising strategies. But in a post-Covid-19 world, where people have comfortably adapted to a mobile-first, digital consumption model, the impact of this shift is now palpable for this industry.



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The commercial business model for this sector has also been impacted. Today, the digital-first approach affords brands a 'self-serve', highly measurable environment where data is so granular brands no longer need to work with broad brush strokes when it comes to targeting new and existing customers. In this sense, traditional media works from a much less detailed audience datasheet.

When you also consider that customer touchpoints are limited too, those shortcomings become even more impactful on customer experience and a brands ability to grow. In an era where most brands now know their customers are found on myriad channels, media partners need to put in place pathways to these customers too - meeting them where they already are and can be reached easily. Brands need to start thinking of digital channels, if they have not already, to ensure continued brand exposure now and in the future.

## Changing strategy

With marketing budgets under strain, it has become imperative to find ways of marketing that are both cost-effective and

gain traction quickly. Covid-19 has caused many challenges, but here it also presents an opportunity for Brands. As the work from home strategy becomes interwoven into the future of business, people are spending more and more time online. There are many different digital channels available for brands to use to reach out to customers.

This fits in with the demands of a newer generation as well who want content on demand. In the 'new normal' and in the future, it has become more important than ever to have a digital strategy that helps people connect with brands instantly. From social media to instant messaging, having channels your customers already engage with and are familiar with, can help brands get great return on investment in many different forms.

### **The customer journey is king**

In South Africa in particular, customer service levels have a lot of room for improvement and digital channels have the potential to vastly improve this. The customer experience and the customer journey with a brand have become all-important. Creating excellence in these areas requires a multi-faceted approach that incorporates digital channels, highly targeted marketing content, and the ability to quickly resolve customer service queries.

With the plethora of available channels, it can be tempting to do too much, using too many different areas. However, this can become difficult to manage, because a consistent customer experience and messaging remain critical. Without a clear plan in place, budgets can also quickly spiral out of control, which negates the ROI. An intelligent digital strategy, supported by an integrated, intelligent technology platform, is essential.

### **Can you measure it?**

Marketing is often the first budget to be cut because it is difficult to quantify ROI, either in terms of an increase in customers or in revenue. This requires an effective strategy and targeting, however, it also requires the ability to measure the effectiveness of campaigns and channels. An intelligent, integrated technology platform that brings together various digital channels and strategies into a single view, integrates with third-party solutions such as CRM systems, and delivers analytics around the data, has become key.

Harnessing the power of granular data in real-time, it is possible to get a very clear picture of exactly how effective a marketing strategy is across individual channels. The strategy can then be tweaked based on which channels are receiving engagement, the best conversion rate, and ultimately the success of marketing spend. Digital does not benefit from a blanket strategy; it is essential to match channels and rather focus on two or three that are successful, instead of trying to hit every touchpoint.

### **Digital is the key**

An integrated marketing strategy is not just about advertising spend, but about all the touchpoints, and about a clear, consistent and overarching communication strategy. Digital should form the foundation of this strategy in today's post-Covid-19 world and as we move into the future. However, it is imperative to make use of the right channels and reach the right customers through effective segmentation and targeting.

Digital is constantly evolving, which means strategy needs to evolve and adapt too – it needs to be forward-looking and always keep a clear picture of customer segments in focus. Importantly, it also needs to be measurable and quantifiable, to prove ROI and create a plan that can be changed according to success rates based on data rather than guesswork. Becoming a winning brand in a tough economy is a challenge, but those that progress and survive are those that are able to effectively integrate digital strategy (and digital channels) into their core.

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