

Embrace digital but ignore traditional media at your peril

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Digital content marketing has disrupted brand communication over the past decade. The sharp rise in internet access and social media platforms has created opportunities for companies to tell their stories by adopting these new techniques. Through these developments, we have witnessed marketing and communication teams split their budgets between traditional media and digital channels in a balancing act as they try to weigh up the most effective platforms to utilise in reaching their target audiences.



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Some marketers have been so captivated by the online world and its promises of data driven analytics, to the point that they have 'realised' digital is the only way to go and traditional should be neglected. Despite a drop in TV viewership, radio listenership and print readership, disregarding these platforms comes at a great risk – one which should not be taken. If you are one of those communicators in the process of severing ties with journalists, maybe you should look at the following reasons why you need to develop that relationship now more than ever.

Website

Websites serve as a company's most important tool for consumers to get more information about its products and services. We now live in an era where people are reluctant to pick up the phone and contact you. A company's web presence gives it credibility, entities without a website raise suspicion. In 2017, websites are no longer an online brochure but serve as a platform for companies to display their expertise and tell stories.

Blogs hosted on a company's website are being used as an effective tool to position the company as a leader in its industry and to attract people to its online platform. This however doesn't mean companies should disregard features in traditional media outlets by solely concentrating on their online platforms. Companies should strive to improve their blogs but need to also regard them as an extension of their various communication channels at their disposal.

Social media

It is imperative for companies to have a social media presence in this day and age. This is triggered by social media's ability to be an affordable and easily accessible platform for consumers to engage with the company. What's of major concern is that some companies believe in prioritising social media activity over other platforms. This shift in mentality could

be based on social media's growth over the years. However, algorithm changes across major social networks have resulted in owned content reaching a small percentage of a page's audience.

Going all out social at the expense of traditional media should be discouraged purely because decision makers are not going to make a decision based on a tweet or post on Facebook and LinkedIn, especially because we are bombarded with messaging from other brands on these platforms. Social media needs to run concurrently with traditional media campaigns. This will result in a synergy where different platforms work together to realise a campaign objective.

Traditional media channels

Traditional media channels are very important in South Africa where the population continues to consume a tremendous amount of content from these platforms. A large section of the population still derives their daily content consumption from TV, radio and print publications. It is true that ad spend on these platforms appears to be dropping in favour of digital spend. This however, does not translate into the death of traditional media which continues to play an important role in the South African media landscape. Digital channels can be effectively used to promote activity on traditional media and vice versa.

Contrary to popular belief industry publications are here to stay. These magazines are used by industry leaders as a source of information and play a large part in decision making. While people have adopted content posted online, our attention span is quite short on the internet due to the manner in which information is shared resulting in us rapidly shifting through different pages. Maintaining a customer's attention online has become a skill. Print publications provide a much longer 'shelf life' and can be used to provide more information which could not be showcased online hence their continued popularity and being deemed to be an important information resource.

In conclusion, online or digital marketing plays an important role in the communications mix but not at the expense of the other communication channels. For a communications strategy to be successful all elements of the communications mix need to be effectively utilised as a means of reaching your particular target market – they all have a role to play. Traditional media can be effectively utilised to drive digital traffic and vice versa, truly maximising your message by providing impact across all communication channels.

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