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Managing brands in a digital world

Jean-Luc Ambrosi | 12 April, 2016 09:02 | 0 Comments | Share this post

With digital integration at the core of customer management, many marketers have been questioning whether the principles and approaches to branding are fundamentally different in a digitally led environment.

The rise of digitally native brands such as Uber, Netflix and Amazon, and the fear of more disruptors to come, have driven a review of many business models, but should they also challenge the foundation of brand strategy?

To answer this question, we first need to consider what digital means. First is foremost, digital is an enabler – it's a multi-faceted communication medium as well as a sales and services distribution channel. Therefore, while the communication approach and techniques inherent to this medium must be very specific and tailored, fundamental principles behind effective brand communication should still hold true.

Look back, for example, at when television revolutionised older mediums of communication. The core principles of branding and communication did not change with its development, it is the tactical application that evolved and its associated techniques and modalities.

In many respects, the same applies to digital. Strategically, the principles of branding remain constant: Primarily the need for differentiation, the necessity to demonstrate a clear value proposition, and a holistic approach to branding. While the environment for customer interaction has changed, customer rational thought processes and fundamental emotional drivers have not; therefore the same brand requirements remain.

Whether the digital presence is the main interface with prospects and customers or a support mechanism, it must reinforce the core positioning and value-add that the brand brings to its customers. The repetition of the promise and expression of this promise must be recurring across all channels again and again, provide consistency and reinforcement.

At the same time, consistency does not mean bland sameness. Tactically, digital branding needs to be adapted to new and varied forms of customer interactions. Digital consumption is often closer to the fast and furious than to the leisurely stroll of shopping centres. Because it is anywhere anytime, it requires much greater communication adaptability such as calibrated designs for different formats, customised content to different segments, tailored offerings to different times or locations and so on.

But I still argue the core essence of the brand, what makes consumer tick both rationally and emotionally, needs to remain constant.

The environment we're operating in may be fast, may be varied, may be transient but the brand must continuously work in one homogeneous and continuous direction. As Paul Simon once sang, "nothing is different, but everything's changed".

Tags: digital strategy, brand strategy, marketing strategy, digital marketing

0 Comments



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Jean-Luc Ambrosi is an award winning marketer and recognised expert in branding and customer relationship management. He is the author of the new book, Branding to Differ, a strategic and practical guide on how to build and manage a successful brand.

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