

# BrandWagon AdTalk with Mphasis' Veda Iyer

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The pandemic has brought about notable shifts across industries, and the case has been no different for marketing. Today, digital marketing has become a crucial aspect in order to acquire new customers and retain existing ones. In our weekly BrandWagon Ad Talk series, industry experts highlight what has changed over the past two years and more importantly, are these changes here to stay. Veda Iyer, global CMO and head sales APAC, Mphasis, talks to BrandWagon Online, about the dos and don'ts of digital marketing, best marketing campaigns, and more

## **What is the difference between launching a brand in today's digital era versus earlier?**

The remarkable strides in technology have revolutionised the way brands are introduced, departing significantly from traditional methods. One standout difference is how we approach branding itself. In the past, it was all about getting across the basics: what a brand stands for, whom it is meant for, and what it is all about. However, in today's digitally driven world, there has been a substantial shift away from traditional brand loyalty, which consumers once relied upon, to the establishment of trustworthiness between a brand and its consumers. Brands have to walk the talk and consistently deliver on their promises to build lasting trust and loyalty.

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Within the digital landscape, two fundamental shifts in brand marketing strategy have become evident. Firstly, there is a significant emphasis on personalised communication. It is not just about pushing out the ideas; it is about making a real emotional connection with the audience. That means showcasing values, commitment, what a brand stands for, and the promises. Secondly, the modes of engagement with consumers have evolved considerably. While traditional channels like TV, radio, hoardings, and posters held sway in the past, the rise of digital platforms has opened up new horizons. Social media

platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram have become integral to brand outreach. These platforms provide versatile tools that not only expand reach but also enable real-time interactions with the audience, fostering deeper connections.

### **What are the recent best marketing or advertising campaigns you have seen and why?**

I have always admired marketing efforts that effectively resonate with their audience, one brand that stands out in this regard is CRED. Their campaigns consistently showcase an impressive fusion of creativity and relatability. One recent campaign by CRED that grabbed my attention, as well as that of many individuals who grew up in the 90s, is the 'Not everyone gets it' campaign.

This undertaking was astutely launched during the IPL season in 2020, leveraging CRED's sponsorship to strategically capitalise on the cricket fervour in the country. What made this effort truly outstanding was its decision to feature renowned 90s celebrities such as Anil Kapoor, Bappi Lahiri, Govinda, Udit Narayan, and Alka Yagnik. The selection of these personalities was deliberate, forming a strategic approach to engage a specific customer demographic—the 90s generation. This demographic shares a strong affinity with these celebrities, holds a deep connection to bollywood icons and have a fervent passion for cricket.

By featuring this iconic ensemble, CRED effectively conveyed its message to a mainstream audience while evoking nostalgia. It's worth noting that this advertisement went beyond mere celebrity endorsements; it etched CRED's name into the minds of viewers through repeated mentions, ensuring that the brand left an indelible mark in the audience's memory. Ultimately, in my view, a brand's core emphasis should perpetually centre on the connection it forges with its customers and the alignment of its efforts with that messaging.

However, it is important to remember that an impressive marketing campaign is merely a starting point. To truly sustain a positive brand image in the long run, the product or service that a brand offers needs to take centre stage. It reminds us of the fact that "Product is ultimately the Hero". CRED's sustained excellence in its offering serves as a prime illustration of this principle in action.

### **Which brand in the last year has made the best use of digital and how?**

In the last year, one brand that has demonstrated exceptional prowess in leveraging digital technology is Airtel, specifically with their advertisement campaign 'Airtel 175 replayed.' This campaign merits recognition for its innovative use of technology. In a period when the introduction of 5G technology was making waves in the tech world, Airtel embarked on a remarkable journey to recreate a historic moment in cricket history by revisiting Kapil Dev's iconic 175 not-out innings against Zimbabwe during the 1983 Cricket World Cup.

This campaign's brilliance lies in how Airtel harnessed the power of digital technology to recreate this legendary cricket moment. Leveraging cutting-edge technologies, viewers were immersed in an experience that allowed them to relive the excitement and significance of that inning. Airtel successfully blended nostalgia, sports, and advanced technology to engage cricket enthusiasts on a profound level. This campaign serves as a prime example of how a brand can effectively utilise digital tools to create memorable and engaging content, leaving a lasting impact on its audience.

### **In a post-Covid world, what are the dos and don'ts of digital marketing?**

In a post-Covid digital landscape, it's crucial to acknowledge the array of best practices and pitfalls in digital marketing. Among these, several critical practices stand out:

#### **Do's:**

Firstly, adaptability is paramount. Embrace agility, allowing for quick adjustments and a 'fail fast' mindset, which facilitates rapid learning and course correction. It is also crucial to meticulously define your mar-tech stack, ensuring it aligns seamlessly with the brand's goals and objectives. Leverage data judiciously, utilising insights to inform and optimise your marketing strategies continually.

One mantra to live by is 'Content is King'. The art of creating precise digital content is crucial —neither overly lengthy to risk tedium nor excessively brief to leave gaps in information. It's important to message thoughtfully and prioritise personalisation.

'Multi-Channel' approach is key for a cohesive cross-channel strategy to enhance customer engagement. Simultaneously care needs to be taken to avoid concurrent campaigns to prevent overwhelming your audience.

It is crucial to set well-defined objectives. Determine early on whether the aim is to achieve impressions, clicks, leads, or another specific metric, and establish transparent ROI targets to gauge success effectively.

'Collaboration and Ecosystem Building' has become an imperative. It involves forming strategic partnerships with organisations that share similar goals, enabling the creation of shared marketplaces that amplify customer value. Consistent, real-time monitoring is an absolute necessity for achieving success in this endeavour.

CMOs today play an essential role in driving brand growth and customer engagement, architecting brand narratives, and fostering lasting connections. In an ever-evolving business landscape, their role has become pivotal in driving innovation and shaping compelling brand experiences, thus influencing the core of the brand's success.

#### **Don'ts:**

As digital marketing continues to evolve, there are certain definite no-no's that brands should be cautious about. One critical consideration is avoiding extremes in content length. This means, refraining from creating content that is either excessively lengthy or

overly concise.

Overloading the audience with excessively long content can lead to digital fatigue, potentially driving them away. Overly short content, on the other hand, may fail to convey the message effectively or deliver value. Striking the right balance between the two is key.

Additionally, avoid bombarding the audience with irrelevant or intrusive content. Respect their privacy and preferences, and refrain from intrusive marketing practices that can be off-putting. A barrage of content can lead to information fatigue and alienate potential customers. Furthermore, attempting to be everything to everybody is a pitfall to sidestep. Instead, it is crucial to identify your core audience and focus your efforts there, avoiding overinvestment in platforms that do not align with your target demographic. Blindly chasing trends without considering their relevance to your audience can lead to disconnected marketing efforts.

Lastly, trying to handle everything in-house, especially without the necessary expertise or resources, can be counterproductive. Collaboration with external agencies or service providers can provide the expertise and focus needed to achieve marketing objectives effectively.

In this competitive landscape, adaptability and strategic planning are paramount. Embrace these dos and steer clear of these don'ts to thrive in the ever-evolving digital marketing world, even in the post-Covid era.

### **One recent bad case of advertising you have seen, and why?**

One recent advertising campaign that sparked discussion and provided a valuable lesson in marketing sensitivity was the controversy surrounding a Dove body wash ad. While Dove as a brand is known for its commitment to celebrating diversity and promoting a positive self-image, in this particular campaign, they faced unintended backlash.

The ad featured three women of different ethnic backgrounds, and it intended to convey that Dove's product was suitable for people of all races. Unfortunately, the message was misconstrued, and some viewers interpreted it as implying that using Dove's product would change a person's skin colour. This misinterpretation resulted in accusations of racial insensitivity.

Campaigns that touch on sensitive social issues, like diversity, require a deep understanding of cultural nuances. Dove's intentions were to highlight inclusivity, but the unintended interpretation caused a different narrative to emerge. This situation underscores the importance of thorough market research and cultural sensitivity when crafting marketing messages.

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In the fast-paced digital era, where campaigns can quickly gain traction, brands must be cautious to ensure their messaging aligns with their values and doesn't inadvertently create controversy. Dove's misstep serves as a reminder that even well-intentioned campaigns can be misinterpreted, and it highlights the need for ongoing dialogue and learning in the marketing industry.