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[In a crisis, marketers must explore alternatives like cross-promotions: Industry experts](#)

Industry leaders spell out the different strategies marketers need to venture into during a disruption such as the COVID-19 outbreak

By Noel Dsouza | Updated: Apr 1, 2020 2:44 PM



In light of the COVID-19 outbreak, many brands and marketing agencies are adapting to the new normal. Brands across the globe are constantly communicating with their audience through different digital means in hopes of staying relevant and making sure there is brand awareness in their communication.

While brands await a post-crisis world, e4m reached out to eminent marketing heads to share different avenues of investment marketers can venture into during disruption and the alternative marketing channels brands can explore.

Rahul Mishra, Head of Marketing & Communications, Shemaroo Entertainment Ltd feels that brands will need to work harder to create compelling stories that will bring out the messaging and hence it's important to keep a strong digital focus. "As the traditional options such as ground events are at a standstill, brands will continue to build virtual touchpoints for consumers and try to create and build similar experiences by the use of technology. Marketers should be exploring every alternative now, such as collaborations with other brands through cross-promotions can lead to a win-win situation for all", shares Mishra.

According to Kartik Johari, Vice President, Nobel Hygiene, brands are reaching a state of exhaustion because the consumers are in a state of exhaustion. He commented, "Consumers

are not logging into IG or FB with a sense of positivity as in the past. In a couple of weeks now all the standard ways of the brand talk are going to be dead. The number one place a brand's money should be going in is talent. At the end of the day what's going to work for the brand is witty conversations in UGC and how well designed the posts are going to look. Brands need to start investing in the right people and the right partners. Standard operating measures are not going to apply anymore. We are down to the fundamentals of what the conversation is and how to create an engaging conversation with the consumers."

The path to recovery Neha Dk, Marketing Director, Pizza Hut India pointed out will be a paradigm shift in business strategies and consumer sentiment along with execution agility. She says, "Marketers must take this opportunity to upgrade safety and hygiene aspects of their product/service and we as a trusted brand are ensuring we provide this comfort to consumers."

Gurmit Singh, GM, Quora, sharing his tips on how marketers can plan for such a disruption shared, "Brands and Agencies should recognize that these circumstances require changes in their current process of doing business. A leading agency required tens of documents to be signed, stamped and iterated. Getting these documents signed electronically through DocuSign or Adobe sign can help in such disrupting times."

Chandramohan Mehra, CMO, Bajaj Allianz General Insurance remarks that marketers sustaining purposeful brand-building efforts, investment with a relevant integrated media mix will see a rebound of business several times faster than others.

Talking about different marketing avenues, brands need to venture into Abhishek Gupta, CMO, Edelweiss Tokio Life states, "Marketing avenues will keep changing, but the content will always remain relevant and critical. Content determines customer attention and it has to keep changing as the situation evolves. Also, The marketing avenues need not necessarily correlate with your business directly."

Swati Rathi, Head – Marketing, Godrej Appliances comments that the bigger focus area has to be beyond promotions. Rathi adds, "People investments should be a key focus area across brands at the moment which can include training promoters and sales teams. The focus should be on moving further towards automation across processes, relooking all existing customer touchpoints and strengthening remote service deliveries and remote marketing assistance to customers should be some of the other key investment areas for marketers. Any social communication during such times has to be well thought through and relevant instead of just regular promotion."

Maghan Varkey, Head of Marketing and Brand Strategist, ABND feels that every industry will have to focus on making their consumers feel safe and secure, not only physically, but also mentally. "We need to focus on creating a modular, self-sustainable framework to reduce fragility. For instance, newer benefits, grievance addresses, and refund policies will prove beneficial for travel and tourism companies, whereas content transparency will help establish customer trust and loyalty for F&B. Financial institutes like banks can focus on understanding a customer's experience in this turmoil, by promoting safer means of investments. For B2B manufacturers, establishing meaningful brands with an articulated essence is extremely

important and Branding in this space should be looked upon as an investment”, shared Varkey.

Sanjeev Shukla, Group Chief Marketing Officer, Muthoot Pappachan Group says that in a crisis, the most effective channel is, one-to-one. “Brands should do only what makes a tangible difference and not indulge in romanticizing the situation. Tweaking of the logo makes no difference to appreciate your creativity. Importantly, beyond the current needs, we must plan for future challenges and needs, as they are struggling with survival while a corporate has that strategic heft.”

Speaking about what is working for Harsha Belavady, Chief Revenue Officer, KLAY Pre-schools and Daycare during this disruption, Belavady says, “Brands will need to reinvent their engagement in an agile manner to remain relevant. What helped us was our attitude towards investment in technology as an enabler and our efforts in building capabilities like design and content in-house.”

Rohit Jain, MD, Lionsgate South Asia is chasing the urban millennial consumer who loves entertainment. “Everything from music apps to video platforms like YouTube, Instagram, Twitter and new-age apps like In shorts, etc are extremely relevant. We try to be present on all of these platforms via our owned channels or advertising. We also look to innovate in ways we can engage our consumers even with our marketing approach. One fine example of that is our research that shows Indian consumers love their movies and trivia around the same. With that we often use contests as a mechanism to engage with our consumers and have found heavy engagement”, stated Jain.

Whereas, Manu Prasad, VP, Marketing, Scripbox focus is on communication because, in the financial services domain, this is the job to be done now since volatile markets are unnerving investors. We have amplified our content marketing with specific segment-driven messaging that’s in line with our consumers’ needs.

Prashant Deorah, MD and CEO, Puretech Digital says the Alternate Marketing Channels brands can look into are:

- Information/ Entertainment Content: Learning that you can give for people to feel more confident about their knowledge of common subjects like e.g. – Mutual Funds, Equity Trading, etc. This content can either be produced or product integrations could be done in some of the content.
- Native Advertising: More news is more people reading up content that is going to keep them in the loop. Catch their attention with a Snappy line and lead them into your brand's online experience.
- TikTok: It's more than massive at the moment. More people at home again means more content here. Take advantage of the new channel.

Prasad Shejale, Founder & CEO, Logicserve Digital shares that Data has always been vital, but effective use of the data to create specific measurement parameters will be even more critical. This is the time to open up the floodgates of digital across channels and publishers.

On a parting note Sameer Makani, Co-founder, MD, Makani Creatives says, "Brands need to aggressively service the 'at home' need right now, and not only leave it to existing online shopping marts. This kind of 'reaching out' to customers will not only improve the bottom line but will also generate a lot of goodwill and create another point of contact with the customer."