Editorial

Do you add, multiply — Or see mobile first?

Journal of Direct, Data and Digital Marketing Practice (2013) 15, 3. doi:10.1057/dddmp.2013.47

Many marketers currently practising have a channel-specific view of their routes to market. Depending on age, they may have a mental media map that sees each channel in isolation and builds a multi-channel strategy through careful combination of a number of those elements. In case you think that sounds like a view limited to those aged over 40, there are plenty of younger digital marketers whose first instinct is to put email or search at the heart of their marketing, only turning to alternative channels to provide additional support.

Alongside these marketers who see multi-channel as a process of addition, there are others for whom it is natural to lay out plans across many, linked channels from the outset in a process of multiplication. Their campaigns weave a customer journey that offers multiple, simultaneous touchpoints and assumes their targets will follow whichever route suits them at a given moment.

The latest generation of marketers, including those still studying to enter the profession, is more likely to hold this multiplying view, rather than the additive approach. This is very evident in the winning entries for this year's IDM Student Marketing Competition (see pages 51–55). Sunflower's gold award proposals involved a blend of printed media and digital channels, together with mobile, to help draw consumers towards English wine.

This matrix of media is the very essence of contemporary marketing, and most of the challenges that marketers face relate to how to attribute outcomes to any given channel. (English Wine Producers specifically set this as part of the brief that students had to answer.) While few have managed to completely resolve this problem, attribution will improve as models become more accurate, even if it seems unlikely that there will ever be data for 100 per cent of activity.

Just as the spectrum of marketing is becoming more multi-hued than ever before, there are those who see a future in which marketing adopts a narrower, more focused approach with fewer rather than more channels. Mobile is pulling this focus ever tighter, seeming about to become the hub via which audiences will primarily interact with marketing as a result of their adoption of smartphones and tablets.

While it is true that mobile contains within it all of the digital channels (email, web, SMS, social), it both integrates them and also makes them less visible to marketers. Tracking the mobile consumer is complex and also involves a shift in power towards network operators and non-traditional media agencies.

For the *Journal of Direct, Data and Digital Marketing Practice*, this represents simply the next phase for marketing, which is targeted, responsive and accountable — the key characteristics that differentiate our area of interest from those of brand marketers. If mobile moves into centre stage, our content will reflect that, while at the same time maintaining a watching brief on traditional media as well as digital, social and anything else that comes along.

David Reed F IDM