

From Web Traffic to Foot Traffic:

How Brands and Retailers Can
Leverage Digital Content to
Power In-Store Sales

A Thought Leadership Study

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Executive Summary:

Driving customers into stores has long been the end-goal of nearly all types of advertising. However, traditional campaigns are limited in their ability to continue doing this, as consumers require more than just brand awareness to make a purchasing decision.

Fortunately, there is a great opportunity in harnessing the power of digital content and media to reach customers, and influence their decision not just to come into a store, but to take action once they're there. Brands can now communicate with customers in the way they demand, which is to be recognized as unique individuals, with unique histories, preferences and buying behavior. By embracing the one-to-one advertising model instead of one-to-many, brands stand not only to gain foot-traffic into their stores, they are able to gain the all-important loyalty of a customer.

This report shows how brands can reap the numerous benefits of this approach. Through in-depth interviews with marketers from today's leading CPG and retail brands, the report highlights the efforts companies are making to embrace this vision, as well as the wins they have recorded as a result.

The report also explores the organizational, logistical and technological challenges that can impede the implementation of a targeted advertising strategy, while at the same time listing the risks, and opportunities that would be missed by not embracing the strategy at all.

As a final takeaway, we have included a list of requirements and recommendations that each company can utilize as a roadmap to get started on creating targeted content, unifying messages across multiple digital channels, and building long-lasting relationships with their customers.



local



social



onboard

Introduction:

Reports on the demise of bricks-and-mortar stores aren't just greatly exaggerated, they're simply untrue. Despite the rise of the internet, e-commerce and Amazon, in-store purchases still account for 90% of customer transactions.¹ No matter how digitally savvy the customer, walking into a physical store to purchase has been, and will continue to be not just a significant part of the shopping experience, but by far the most important touch point.

What has changed however is the way people consume messages about the stores they visit, and the products they buy. Print circulars used to be the predominant way to entice customers into visiting stores, but with declining distribution and circulation, that channel isn't as effective anymore.

"Our buyer has really moved fast in digital over the last two years, that's where they're spending their time," says Grimur Fjeldsted, digital innovation manager at Innovation Lab ECCO. **"Their time with magazines and newspapers has decreased dramatically."**

If brands and retailers can realign their marketing strategies with how people actually shop – and leverage technology to deliver local, shopper-specific, actionable content – they will see a higher return on ad spend and increased in-store sales.

With the advent of mobile screens and social media, brands have an incredible opportunity to

reach their customers wherever they are, at any point in the day. However, that sort of access comes with a great responsibility, which is to respect the customer's time by delivering only the most relevant content, at exactly the right moment in the day.

In the last few years, brands have become very good at targeting people of a specific demographic or geographical location. However, to create really compelling content for a customer, they must be targeted according to what they do, not just what they look like, or where they live. Today, brands can access data about each individual customer's buying behavior, and use it to craft uniquely relevant content, that provides utility, and real value to a customer. This type of personalized content is far more effective in getting customers to take real revenue generating actions, rather than simply registering the name of a brand.

Digital marketing investments can and must build more than brand awareness. They should be local, personal and contextually aware to engage omnichannel consumers. "Local" must be redefined to include more than mere location. It now encompasses context and connectivity: Who, What, and When, in addition to Where.

¹<http://www.atkearney.com/documents/10192/4683364/On+Solid+Ground.pdf/f96d82ce-e40c-450d-97bb-884b017f4cd7>

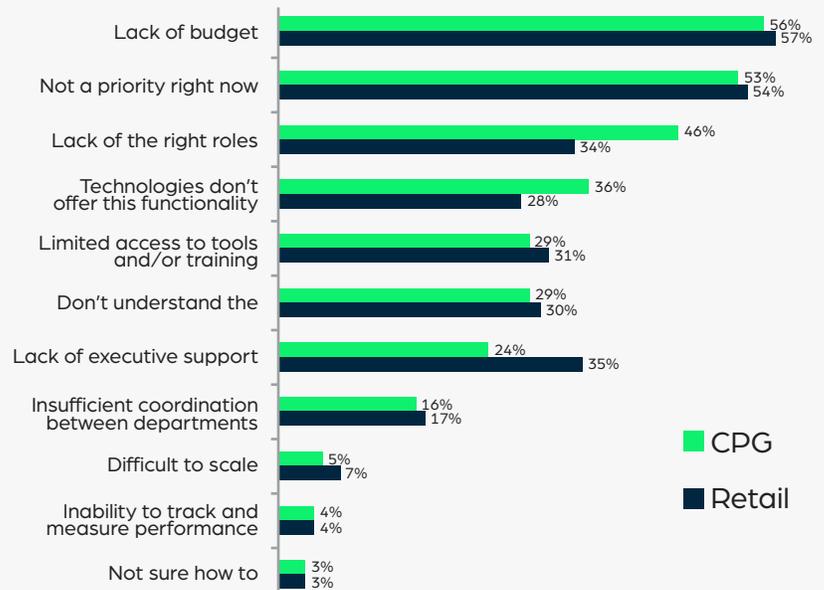
Challenges That Impede Investment in Digital Targeting

Despite the wealth of customer demographic and behavioral data now available at any advertisers fingertips, brands still experience considerable challenges in effectively utilizing this type of information. In Altimeter Group's 2015 Digital Strategist Survey, we asked 500 CPG brands and retailers what their biggest challenges were when it came to using this type of information for digital advertising campaigns. The chart below illustrates the results:

BIGGEST CHALLENGES TO USING DIGITAL ADVERTISING CAMPAIGNS

Q5. Thinking of your answers to the last question, what are the biggest challenges to using these types of information in your digital advertising campaigns?

Source: Altimeter Digital Strategist Survey, 2015



BRANDS RESTRICT DIGITAL MARKETING TO “BRAND BUILDING”

Although it would be hard to find a brand that doesn't make use of digital channels today, most of them believe digital marketing is best deployed as a brand-building tool. That's why the social media presence of a lot of CPGs and retailers is limited to being entertaining, and announcing upcoming promotions. While online display ads are usually no different than what a customer might see in a magazine or a billboard, containing much of the same taglines and visual content.

By focusing only on awareness, brands end up not taking the entirety of the offline/online customer journey into account when planning advertising experiences. Today's digitally empowered shopper doesn't just need a brand message, or generic

item and price; they need/expect/demand more robust and relevant information to make decisions. "We're not even scratching the surface as it relates to being specific in shopper targeted messaging," says Janelle Anderson, VP of shopper marketing at PepsiCo.

Digital channels such as social media, mobile and online display are well suited for delivering a consistent brand message to a lot of eyeballs at once, but they also present opportunities for reaching individual customers with unique messages that are relevant only to them. This allows digital channels to act not just as brand-building vehicles, but as a place where customers can be convinced to take action that translates into actual revenue.

MOST MARKETING EFFORTS LACK AN INTEGRATED APPROACH

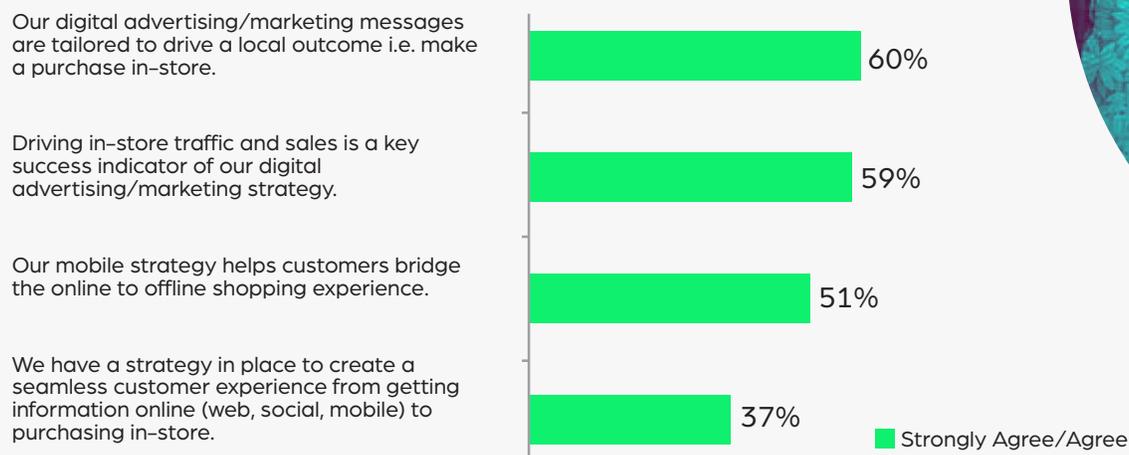
Although “digital” is an all-encompassing term for all digital channels, in practice, most companies take a siloed, channel-specific approach to customer engagement. The social, web, mobile and e-commerce teams all operate on their own terms, with their own creative content, budgets and strategies. However, customers want to be recognized as unique individuals across all touchpoints with a brand, and the only way to fulfill that demand is to coordinate the efforts of all channel silos with a single, unified strategy.

“In general, companies don’t do a great job bridging online with offline experiences, primarily based on how they’ve been historically structured on the client side and how they are being incentivized,” says Ron Blevins, VP of digital strategy at Novus Media. “For example, the e-commerce group has a primary focus on driving sales revenue in that specific channel, which is sometimes at odds with the customer journey, since a lot of customers shop by using the website to do research before they purchase in-store.”

While brands have been crafting messages with the goal of driving people into stores, they often lack a clear strategy for doing it effectively, especially when it comes to coordinating all the channels of communication at their disposal. According to Altimeter’s 2015 Digital Strategist Survey, 60% of CPG and retail companies said they created digital messages to drive in-store purchases. However, only 37% of those companies said they had a strategy in place to provide a unified customer experience in the path from online information to in-store purchase (Fig. below)

MATURITY OF DIGITAL ADVERTISING/MARKETING STRATEGY

Q1. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with these statements
Source: Altimeter Digital Strategist Survey, 2015



IMPRESSIONS DON'T MEAN CONVERSIONS

When it comes to digital advertising, the most commonly used metric for success is number of impressions. While this may serve as a good indicator of how much reach a brand has on any given channel, it's not necessarily a measure of engagement, and its link to sales is tenuous at best. Focusing on impressions usually means the goals at the top of the funnel and the bottom of the funnel aren't aligned. It's only when digital ads are coupled with targeting and action-driven messaging that they start truly contributing value.

MARKETERS HAVE A LIMITED DEFINITION OF "LOCAL"

The term "local" immediately brings to mind "location," and indeed there is great value in being able to target customers based on their geo-location. However, "local" can mean so much more than a zip code. There is a tangible value in expanding "local" to include Who, What and When in addition to Where. While proximity to a store can make a customer walk into it, messages that target customers based on who they are, and the previous actions they have taken are far more effective in getting them to spend money once they enter.

The latest advertising and data tools now offer advertisers a remarkable degree of granular insight into an individual customer. Imagine how much more likely a customer is to spend money in a store when they've been sent a message about their favorite product being in stock, or given a discount coupon for an item they repeatedly stock up on. The true potential of "local" is the great opportunity that most brands are currently missing.

COMPANIES FACE ORGANIZATIONAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL CHALLENGES

Coordinating a marketing strategy across multiple channels is difficult as it is, and it's even more challenging when the organization isn't set up to support that type of approach. To execute a dynamic advertising/content strategy across channels requires a tremendous amount of coordination between multiple teams, such as the social team, point-of-sales team and the mobile team.

"If you want to do a project like this and do dynamic advertising – there has to be someone who coordinates with all these teams, to make sure everyone is happy, and all the data is connecting,"

says Anya Cheng, senior director, global digital product at McDonald's (and formerly general manager, tablet product at Target.)

"This effort involves a lot of politics, the marketing team isn't going to spend one month coordinating with all these teams, and don't really understand how to view and analyze consolidated data."

Managing data remains a major technological challenge. Multiple teams cannot execute a unified cross-channel advertising strategy without having a single repository of customer data, gathered through all available sources. The backend CRM systems are difficult to integrate and the complexity increases exponentially as more digital channels are utilized.

BUDGETS ARE LIMITED AND AREAS OF INVESTMENT AREN'T OBVIOUS

Budgets are always going to be a constraint, especially when it comes to pursuing a new, untested initiative, such as targeted messaging or dynamic messaging. A lot of companies are still investing the bulk of their marketing budgets in direct mail and printed circulars, which might be old methods, but are still expensive.

Even if the majority of the budget does go towards digital (which is becoming more common,) deciding the areas of allocation can be tricky. "Maybe it'll work, maybe it won't, this is the innovator's dilemma," says Cheng. "I could spend ten on print circulars, or I could spend five on circulars and the other five on mobile and online. But you don't know which combination has the reward, you just have to believe in it."

SKILLED PERSONNEL ARE SCARCE RESOURCES

Even if all the customer data could be unified and viewed on a single platform, there's still the matter of making sense of it all. Data scientists are a scarce, expensive resource and utilizing them to make smart marketing decisions is still mostly a trial-and-error process. "Not a lot of people know how to do this right from end-to-end," says Siping Roussin, head of analytics and optimization, eServices at Lenovo. "Finding the right talent and the right partners is difficult."

In addition to internal data management, large brands often rely heavily on local agencies or teams who are well-versed in that geography, when it comes to running hyperlocal campaigns or promotions. However, this requires a lot of coordination and information sharing to make sure all the teams are on the same page. "The level of knowledge is not the same across different geo-location teams, often times our efforts go into aligning subject matter experts with geo-locations –and bridging the understanding across teams," says Roussin. "Not everyone has the same comprehension of technology that's available, so constant education is crucial."

LACK OF CONTENT PLANNING FUNCTION

Creating the right type of content and delivering it in the right context is 'no mean feat,' especially when it needs to be done at scale. Most companies lack a dedicated creative and content planning function that can achieve this high level of personalization. If the content is produced in-house, it's often unclear who owns this function and if it is outsourced, it lacks the quick coordination for item pricing, promotions and real-time decision making that is crucial for delivering relevant material.

The Risks of Not Investing In a Unified Digital Strategy

In a world where the rate of innovation is moving at breakneck speed, brands and retailers can't afford to be stagnant. The risks of not embracing digital to be a primary driver of all types of sales are far greater than the risks they incur of wading into new territory. Here are the major risks outlined:



Not fulfilling local customers' wants:

When customers demand to be treated as unique, recognizable individuals across all company touchpoints, it becomes risky to not deliver that experience to them. This becomes a ripe opportunity for competitors to capture those customers.



Frustrating loyal customers:

Most successful companies are built on the support of their existing customers, not the addition of new ones. By not delivering content to customers that makes them feel recognized, or that they have a personal relationship with a brand, it could alienate longtime supporters, who only need one bad experience to take their business elsewhere. Imagine a grocery store continuously sending discount coupons for meat to a longtime shopper who is a vegetarian. Or a department store sending an in-store promotion for children to a childless couple. Customers no longer want to be part of a faceless mass. They demand to be recognized as individuals, and are very much aware that the ability for brands to do this exists.



Less foot traffic: While print and other traditional marketing methods are not going to completely disappear, their influence and reach is diminishing each year as customers add other channels to their daily content consumption mix. Continuing to invest in these traditional channels at the expense of digital will result in diminishing relevance, and correspondingly, less people coming in to stores.



Inability to track, measure and report on local marketing:

By far, the biggest advantage digital has been able to offer is the ability to track and measure the advertising efforts put in place. This leads to more efficient budgetary allocation, more knowledge of the customer and more concrete decision making, when it comes to serving the right content to the right audience. These capabilities simply don't exist in a non-digital realm, which still relies mostly on second hand, sample sized knowledge provided by publications and networks.

The Opportunities

Despite the many challenges, and risks involved, the rewards in digital advertising are exponential once the many cogs start clicking into place. Here are the major opportunities we've identified:

ADVERTISING BECOMES ONE-TO-ONE, INSTEAD OF ONE-TO-MANY

Retailers and brands have an opportunity to connect with their customers on a far more meaningful level than simply advertising at them. Through targeting, they can create solutions for a customer that solve problems that are specific to those individuals and their lifestyles. Knowing a customer's likes and dislikes, what time of the month they are most likely to buy, or what type of promotion they are most likely to take advantage of is crucial information, for personalizing content.

Once a customer realizes they are being treated as an individual rather than a demographic segment, there's a greater chance of them remaining loyal to that brand, and even advocating on their behalf. In essence, digital advertising now allows B2C marketers to bring the intimacy, and long term engagement of a B2B customer relationship to its audiences.



ENGAGE CUSTOMERS WHEREVER THEY ARE

Until a customer walked into a store and bought an item, it was difficult to know who they were, not just in terms of demographics, but in terms of their interests, habits and responsiveness to content. All of that can now be measured by reaching customers at all the digital locations they visit before coming to the store. This includes the company website, search results, mobile, social media and email. Instead of building the store and waiting for them to come, marketers can engage customers where they already are.

"It's critically clear that digital advertising drives in-store traffic, whether we do it through retargeting, paid search for services, or mobile advertising," says Alison Corcoran, SVP marketing of North American stores and online at Staples. "Display does a good job for in-store and online, Search does drive some in-store, but more online. Retargeting depends on audience - Social drives in-store but not too much online and affiliate marketing drives more to our site."

Mobile is an especially potent addition to this mix, since it is a gateway to the customer at all times. There is a delicate balance to be implemented, which avoids bombarding a customer with constant messaging, and instead sending them a meaningful message at the moment when they are most likely to take action.

"There's a lot of opportunity for retailers to message people while they're at that moment of truth, while they're in store," says Novus Media's Blevins. **"We've done testing with beacons and in-app messaging, which runs the gamut from pushing content to providing a unique customer experience."** He adds, **"If mobile is not the first thing when they're thinking about how to engage with customers, it should be."**

Digital also solves a scalability problem that traditional messaging can't. Erik Rosenstrauch, president and CEO of the marketing agency Fuel Partnerships recently found success with this omni-channel approach when launching the new Sbyke scooter at Walmart during the holiday season. "How do you market to 500 stores across the country? You can't use any traditional methods because they'll be highly inefficient," says Rosenstrauch. "We came up with a digital campaign that was both mobile, and web, and highly targeted, advertising only to people within a five-mile radius of each store." By leveraging a variety of databases to get to the correct IP addresses and mobile numbers, Fuel was able to track the people who responded to the ads, and service them with additional content, such as video demos and visual information. These efforts resulted in a 700% lift in sales.



KNOW WHAT'S WORKING

Attribution has always been a problem when it comes to traditional advertising. Most companies lacked the concrete evidence that proved their messages in print, TV and radio were actually what was driving customers into stores. With basic digital display advertising, much of the same problem remains, it's difficult to link an ad impression, or even a click to a person showing up in store. However, if there is strategy in place that links online customer activities with offline behavior, this attribution becomes far easier to see, and leverage.

To achieve this, it's necessary for both the offline teams and online teams to be able to see the same customer information, in real-time. More important, digital messages must function beyond brand awareness. Messaging might include information about product availability, specific promotions that can only be availed in-store, or knowledge of local events/conditions that make the message more compelling, and relevant to each customer. Different combinations of messages, content and delivery times can be tracked to see what's working, leading to even more optimization of the advertising efforts.

STRENGTH IN LOCAL

Local is the secret weapon for retailers/brands to push competitors (and Amazon) off their turf and bring shoppers back into their storefronts. Specific knowledge of local events, conditions, culture and people can be powerful in the hands of a skilled digital marketing team, that can program ads to serve up dynamic content based on who will view them.

"We're doing more and more creative based on location," says Sarah Baehr, executive vice president of Carat Agency. **"We are taking ShopLocal feeds and creating localized e-circular content and have seen a connection - when someone has viewed an e-circular ad, their propensity to take meaningful action from the next ad view is materially higher."**

Paolo Mottola, content marketing manager at the outdoor gear and clothing company REI says his team found success by leveraging local knowledge of weather. "We created dynamic content by developing relevant creative and messaging, and partnering through weather services to serve those ads dynamically as the weather changes," says Mottola

Local targeting doesn't even have to be very complex to work. Through a partnership with the Waze app, Target was able to get customers into its store simply by messaging them when they were in close proximity to a store location.

Requirements to Begin Implementing this Vision

MARKETING MUST BE CHANNEL AGNOSTIC

The channels might change but the customer remains the same. It only makes sense then to have a marketing strategy that is not specific to the channel, but specific to the customer. To truly have a chance of engaging a customer where they are most likely to respond, a brand must adopt a mindset where it can create equally engaging touchpoints across mobile, social, the web, email or a point-of-sale. The end goal must not be an engagement metric for that specific channel, it must be to get the customer into the store.

"The consumer doesn't really care which channel they buy the products on. Organizationally, it's very challenging because there are different owners of distribution channels, and of the markets," says ECCO Lab's Fjeldsted. "Back in the day, many retailers were afraid of online, they feared it was taking sales away from the retail business. And what we've learned now is that the two have to go hand in hand."

CONTENT MUST BE CUSTOMER CENTRIC

In an omni-channel digital approach, content plays a key role in influencing the actions of a customer. To be truly effective, the content needs to solve a problem, or provoke some sort of interest in the audience, rather than having a purely commerce aspect to it. This is why it's important to have a content strategy that is centered around the customer, and not the brand's efforts to sell to them.

"Don't sell to them, let them experience it," says Matthias Wirkner, global digital marketing manager at Adidas. **"With changing media preferences, it's more about finding content that drives conversion."**

That said, the content created must be modular enough to be used and re-used across multiple channels and media, while at the same time having enough elements of personalization to make each customer feel unique.

"When it comes to creative, it's important that we're not trying to message just a product, and we think about the scale of how much creative we need to develop to achieve that level of personalization," says REI's Mottola. "Even with good data on who the customer is or where they are, if you're not nailing the message, it's not going to appear personalized."

To produce and utilize content at the scale Mottola talks about, it's crucial that companies understand the optimal mix of paid, earned and owned media they need to deploy. While paid media does most of the heavy lifting when it comes to customer engagement, there's no reason why owned and earned content can't perform much of the same function (at a fraction of the cost) of provoking interactions, solving consumers' problems, and convincing them to get into the store.

TECHNOLOGY AND PARTNERSHIPS MUST SUPPORT A UNIFIED STRATEGY

Once a unified, sustainable strategy is put in place that extends through all departments of the organization, it must be executed with the help of the right technology platform. These platforms should enable cross-departmental teams to have a single, up-to-date view of the customer that allows for real-time engagement on whatever channel they are present on. The capabilities of these platforms must go beyond boilerplate CRM systems, and allow for plenty of integrations that enable data influx from varied sources, and predictive intelligence and marketing automation.

In addition to a data platform, content management is key, and a dedicated digital asset management platform can enable brands to create an infinite number of personalized versions of ads, using the same basic creative elements. To truly deploy dynamic content, or versioning at scale, a high-functioning DAM platform that connects to a personalization engine, or website optimization solution is a must-have.

While the tools are important, they cannot be solely relied upon, especially when brands get into local targeting. In these instances, agencies and other service providers can be valuable partners.

THE RIGHT PERSONNEL TO PUT IT ALL IN PRACTICE

Plans and technologies are only as good as the people putting them to use, and in when it comes to digital marketing, the right personnel can make all the difference. In addition to cross-departmental leaders to supervise the strategy through all the different channels, a brand needs data scientists to make sense of all the information, content experts that can create vast amounts of creative that can be customized automatically, and finally it needs leadership that has the belief (and the budget) to see it all way through.

However, this doesn't mean that every organizational aspect of these efforts need to be put in place before a company starts executing on the plan. This is more of a continuous journey of innovation, with plenty of the data already at hand for an organization to start connecting the dots. All it needs is a few motivated individuals.

“When it comes to marrying online with offline efforts, technology is not a driver, but it is critical in making it happen,” says Staples' Alison Corcoran, SVP marketing North American stores and online. **“What is essential are people who are focused on customer experience, and are strong advocates for making it happen across all areas, whether it's in-store, e-commerce or digital marketing.”**

Recommendations

To conclude, we've provided a list of recommendations gleaned from conversations with our digital marketing expert sources, as well as our research.

- **Incentivize visits to retail locations**, with features such as order online, pick-up in store, store returns. These can be used in addition to sales, coupons and other promotional activity designed to attract foot traffic.
- **Be mobile first**, or at least primary, when it comes to formulating a content engagement strategy. When it comes to reach, and an opportunities for right-time and location targeting, few channels are better than mobile.
- **Leverage the mix of paid, earned and owned** media to maximize value from your budget, and engage customers outside the usual realms.
- **Think online-to-offline** when mapping the customer journey.
- **Rethink the print circular**. While it can't be discounted just yet, it can provide more value when used in conjunction with other modes of communication. Circular content can be amplified across online channels to reach customers where they are actually gathering information to make a decision, rather than remaining static in one medium.
- **Plan for online cross channel content** with similar teams and processes that are in place for delivering offline content. This enables a coordinated strategy across paid, earned and owned channels, without having to start completely from scratch.
- **Eliminate silos**. Biggest challenge is to break down silos between departments, and channels. This makes it easier to get a unified effort for the best customer experience.
- **Reconsider budget allocation** to devote more towards digital spending, as well as identify the digital marketing tactics that give the most return on investment.
- **Implement a measurement plan** to track the effectiveness of local multi-channel campaigns. Discard vanity metrics like impressions to focus more on customer actions.
- **Leverage loyalty data** to personalize/contextualize offers.
- **Define local** at every stage. Does it refer to a region, city, state or zip code? This can vary by the business, but also on a campaign level. More importantly, is "local" restricted only in the geographical sense, or can it be applied to Who, What and When, in addition to Where.
- **Remain sensitive to customer privacy** by not bombarding them with overly personalized messages. It's important to balance relevance against creepiness.

Methodology

This report is a result of primary research conducted by the Altimeter Group team, which interviewed individuals from 20 CPG and retail brands, as well as agencies that are responsible for or influence advertising or content strategy within their organization. This research was supplemented by the results of an Altimeter Group Digital Marketing Survey polling 500 CPG and retail brands in the areas of digital advertising strategy, maturity, and challenges.

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