

Marketers should treat disruption as an opportunity rather than a threat

 By [Cindy Diamond](#)

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Disruption, more specifically digital disruption is the buzzword on everyone's lips, with new competitors in a range of industries and sectors using technology to challenge long-established business models and entrenched players in their markets.

For example, Uber has upset the applecart in the personal transport sector and Airbnb is rapidly reshaping the hospitality industry. This process of disruption started nearly two decades ago with Amazon pioneering ecommerce and Napster shaking the foundations of the music industry, but it is picking up pace as broadband and mobile devices become ever more affordable and accessible.



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Now, marketers at traditional brands in South Africa are sitting up and taking notice of how digital technologies are disrupting business-as-usual for their organisations and demanding that they rethink how they engage with customers. Disruption for marketers comes at three levels: content, complexity, and connected and empowered consumers.

Three kinds of marketing disruption

The US's Association of National Advertisers call these the "three C's of disruption". Here's my take on the implications of each of them:

1. Content - We're living in a world of content clutter and it's becoming harder than ever to stand out with a brand message. Importantly, it's not just brands and professional media that create content today, but customers, too. Newer channels - for example, online radio or YouTube - demand new approaches to how we create and distribute marketing content.

While big brand campaigns still have an important role to play in the marketing mix, we believe that it needs to be underpinned by a sound content strategy that spans multiple channels. Executions need to be creative to capture the consumers' attention.

2. Complexity - The landscape is becoming more complex to navigate. Consumers no longer get information only

from traditional broadcast, print and online media - social media is also an important part of the mix and it gives them a voice. Their attention is split across a range of different media and channels, and the way they consume information on each is different. As marketing becomes more data and technology-driven, marketers also confront the challenge of learning new skills and mastering new channels.

3. Connected and empowered consumers - With consumers empowered by mobile devices and on-the-go Internet, their attention is fragmented and they have unprecedented access to information. The mobile device is rapidly changing consumer behaviour around accessing and sharing information, and marketers are struggling to keep up.

The new consumer landscape

Add these together and, as marketers, we face the difficult task of engaging consumers who routinely multitask across a number of devices, media and channels during the course of any given day. Their multichannel, multitasking behaviour might mean switching between devices and media over the course of a session, or using two or more at the same time.

They might use Facebook on a tablet while watching a TV series. Or they could fire up a mobile browser as soon as they get out of the car to find out more after hearing an interesting snippet on the radio. Some consumers might cue up YouTube music videos and play them while they're banking online.

As consumers are exposed to information, they also act quickly on it by discussing and sharing it on social media, conducting research, or shopping online. As such, the Web and mobile channels can no longer be treated as add-ons to a marketing or advertising strategy - they should be integrated into the strategy at a deep level.

Businesses need to adapt - or be left behind

As marketers, this means we need to think about customers rather than channels as we build our campaigns. The question isn't just how to get the best reach and frequency (though this remains important), but how to use a combination of touch points to engage with consumers effectively.

At Mediemark, we have found that some traditional channels such as regional radio have retained much of their appeal for consumers and advertisers because they're community-focused, intimate, and interactive. In some respects, this makes them similar to the digital world.

However, their power can be vastly amplified by supplementing them with digital channels. In campaigns we have run for brands such as [Gumtree](#), we have found that powerful synergies can be unleashed by combining channels such as social media, digital display advertising, regional radio, and real-world event activations.

Closing words

It is true that we face channel complexity, consumers with high demands and short attention spans, and other challenges as a result of digital disruption. But brands can also turn this into a massive opportunity. By creating integrated campaigns, we can deliver executions where channels and media add up to more than the sum of the parts. Innovative brands that get this right can get a significant competitive advantage and superior return on investment from their campaigns.

ABOUT CINDY DIAMOND

With almost 20 years of experience in media, Mediamark Group Sales Director Cindy Diamond leads top sales teams tasked to craft multichannel advertising solutions for brands. Cindy is one of the founders of Mediamark and has been instrumental in its transformation from a radio sales house to a media results company drawing on the benefits of radio, digital, tv, content and events, including activations.

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