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Media Alert

APAC marketers more likely to view social media engagement as a top priority

Global research released by Econsultancy in partnership with Adobe reveals that a compelling customer experience and the content to support it continues to be a leading priority for marketers

Hong Kong — February 28, 2017 — The Econsultancy report, [Digital Trends 2017](#), published in association with Adobe, shows that companies regard customer experience as the primary way to differentiate themselves from competitors in 2017. The study surveyed more than 14,000 digital marketers and ecommerce professionals across Europe and the Middle East, North American and Asia Pacific (APAC) markets. It also highlights that a design-driven and collaborative organizational culture is crucial in delivering differentiated customer experiences.

The study showed that almost one third (31%) of APAC marketers view social media engagement as their top priority, compared to 28% of North American and 27% of European respondents. In addition, 14% of marketers in APAC consider mobile app engagement as their priority, higher than North American (12%) and European counterparts (9%). The above results may be due to the prevalence of the mobile internet and the presence of WeChat and other advanced mobile apps in the APAC region.

The difference between APAC marketers and those in other parts of the world also lies in their interest in consumer behaviour on mobile devices. 56% of APAC marketers think understanding how mobile users research and buy products is 'very important', and only 48% of marketers in Europe and 46% in North America feel the same way. Also, 50% of APAC executives are curious about when and where customers use their devices, but only 42% of their counterparts in North America and Europe think similarly.

According to the study, over one fifth (22%) of client-side respondents ranked 'optimising the customer experience' as the single most exciting opportunity in 2017, ahead of other areas, such as "creating compelling content for digital experiences' (16%) and 'data-driven marketing' (12%). Moreover, 71% of marketers said 'optimising the customer journey across multiple touchpoints' would be very important for their digital marketing over the next few years. Despite the continued focus on the customer experience, organisations may not be building their data and analytics capabilities fast enough with analytics featuring further down marketers' lists of priorities for 2017: social media analytics (10%) and joining up online and offline data (9%) are identified as priorities by barely one in ten respondents respectively. The report emphasizes that there is a risk that marketers may fail to understand their customers without strong data analytics and this can hinder their ability to optimise the all-important customer experience.

The report also reveals that design is considered the next level on the path of digital transformation, with 86% of respondents agreeing that design-driven companies outperform other businesses, 82% claiming creativity is highly valued within their organizations and 77% of them are investing in design to help differentiate their brand. However, about 41% say they lack the processes to achieve a design advantage – in fact, 36% of respondents say well-designed user journeys that enable clear communication and a seamless transaction are difficult to master.

The report suggests that a collaborative and experience-focused organizational culture is vital for businesses to deliver differentiated customer experiences. Over half (53%) of the respondents consider 'optimizing internal collaboration between creative and marketing teams' to be 'very important' in delivering a great customer experience. Yet this year's survey reveals a surprisingly clear split: 12% of respondents said building a culture of cross-team approach that keeps the customer at the heart of all initiatives was their toughest task, while 13% said it was the easiest. This split suggests a gulf between how organisations master this element of customer experience delivery. Companies that are smaller and nimbler and/or those born digital have the customer-centric approach embedded in their DNA, while more traditional organisations may struggle.

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