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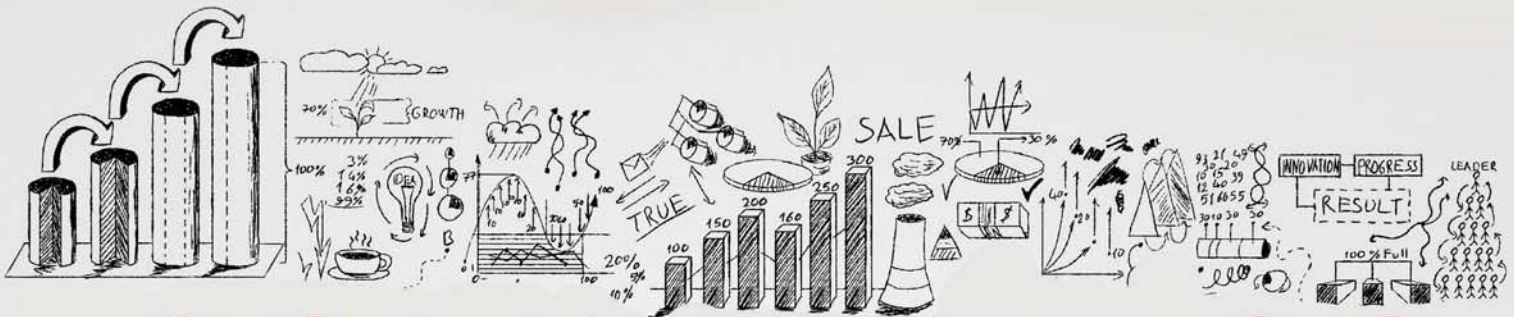
## Gulf Marketing Review

Issue 273 - October 2017

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Why location matters

**14 EVENT**  
MENA Effie judges speak out

**56 ADTECH**  
How AI is changing online advertising



# 40 UNDER 40

MEET 40 OF THE BRIGHTEST UNDER-40 MARKETERS IN MENA REGION



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## Gulf Marketing Review

Issue 273 - October 2017



PAUL KELLY, CREATIVE DIRECTOR,  
DIGITAL APE

“Once you have the data,  
be brave. Take the next  
step and be rewarded”

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25%

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**MANAGING EDITOR** Sunil Kumar Singh  
**SENIOR SUB EDITOR** Karthik Subramanian  
**ART DIRECTOR** Sandy Farah, Jean-Christophe Nys  
**ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR – PD**

Grace Maroun, grace@mediaquestcorp.com  
 Tel: +971 55 607 8161

**BUSINESS DEVELOPER**

Bahij Saridar, b.saridar@mediaquestcorp.com  
 Tel: +971 55 102 1778

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Europe: S.C.C Arabies, 27-29 rue Raffet  
 75016 Paris, France, Tel: +(33) 1 40 50 54 16  
 Fax: +(33) 1 40 50 54 54

GCC: Dubai Media City, Zee Tower Building,  
 2nd floor, 206 United Arab Emirates

Tel: +(971) 4 369 7573 - Fax: +(971) 4 390 8737

Lebanon: 7th floor, bldg 273, Afrah Plaza Center (Pain  
 d'Or bldg), Fouad Chehab Boulevard, Dekwaneh,  
 Beirut, Lebanon

Tel: +(961) 1 492 801/2 - Fax: +(961) 1 492 801  
 www.mediaquestcorp.com

**FOUNDER** Yasser Hawari **Co-CEO** Alexandre Hawari  
**Co-CEO** Julien Hawari **EDITORIAL DIRECTOR** Elizabeth  
 McGlynn **VP OPERATIONAL & CREATIVE DIRECTOR**  
 Aziz Kamel **FINANCE AND ACCOUNTS DIRECTOR**  
 Girish Kumar **GM DOTMENA** Rosy Kachouh **HEAD**  
**OF CIRCULATION** Harish Raghavan - h.raghavan@  
 mediaquestcorp.com

**KSA GM** Walid Ramadan - walid@mediaquestcorp.  
 com - Tel: +966 1 419 4061

**LEBANON GM** Peggy El-Zyr - peggy@mediaquestcorp.  
 com - Tel: +961 1 492 801

**NORTH AFRICA GM** Manuel Dias - dias@arabies.com -  
 Tel: +33 1 4766 46 00

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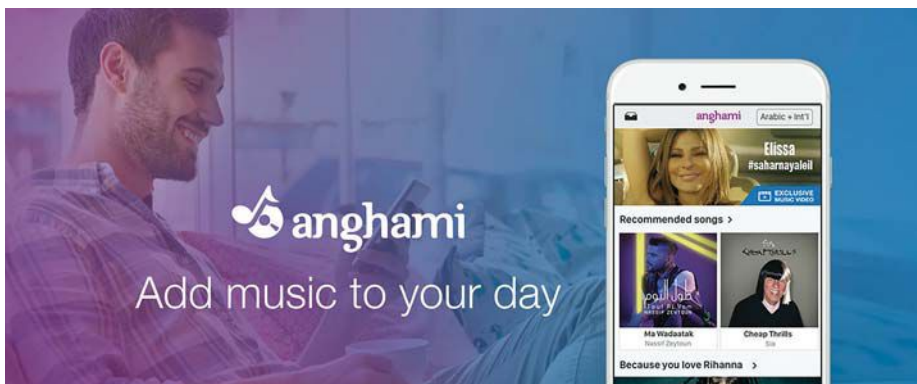
## FOX LAUNCHES 3 CHANNELS ON ELIFE



**DUBAI.** Fox Networks Group (FNG), the multi-media business of 21st Century FOX, and eLife, the region's one of the largest IPTV platforms, last month announced the launch of three brand new channels made for the region, Fox Rewayat, Fox Life and Fox Crime, offering "specially curated global content and locally produced content" for Middle East audiences.

Speaking at the event, Sanjay Raina, General Manager and Senior Vice-President of FNG said, "The Middle East continues to be very important to FNG. With today's announcement, we are proud to offer 15 channels of pure entertainment, the largest and most diverse portfolio on Pay TV across the region."

## NEW AUDIO AD TECHNOLOGY LAUNCHED



**DUBAI.** Anghami, the music streaming company in the MENA region, has introduced new global technology for the first time in the region, bringing tools that it claims will revolutionise listeners' experience from an ad-supported music streaming.

"Anghami is the first regional platform to lead the change through its 'Dynamic Creative Audio Ads' and 'Programmatic Audio Ads' along with 'Research-Enabled

Audio offerings," said a statement. The new technology will assist brands and creative agencies better connect with consumers through relevant messages and tailor them in real-time, the statement added. The technology will help brands target consumers in real-time with personalised messages based on weather, time of day, location, device and, of course, the music they're listening to, the statement added.

## IN BRIEF

### MEC-MAXUS TO BECOME WAVEMAKER

**LONDON AND NEW YORK:** The new billion-dollar revenue, media, content and technology agency to be created from the merger of MEC and Maxus will be named 'WAVEMAKER'. The brand mark WAVEMAKER reflects the agency's heritage, born from WPP and GroupM. The brand, along with a new visual identity, will go live locally as the merger completes in each country, to be finalised by January 2018.

### MCN APPOINTS NEW MD FOR UM MENA

**DUBAI:** MCN has announced the appointment of Joe Nicolas as Regional Managing Director of UM MENA. "Joe Nicolas has been with UM for over eight years, and has been an integral part of leading UM towards becoming the largest and number one media agency in the region," said a statement.

### NEW MD FOR ASDA'A BURSON-MARSTELLER

**DUBAI:** Regional PR agency ASDA'A Burson-Marsteller has appointed Hassan Fattah, the former editor-in-chief of The National newspaper and a senior executive with Brunswick Group, as the Managing Director. "He will provide senior counsel to regional corporate and government clients, as well as drive the firm's new business and organic growth in the GCC and wider Middle East," said a statement.

### SASAN SAEIDI JOINS J. WALTER THOMPSON AS CEO GULF

**DUBAI:** J. Walter Thompson has appointed Sasan Saeidi as CEO for the agency's Gulf operations. Saeidi will lead the Dubai, Kuwait and Qatar teams. Saeidi joins J. Walter Thompson from FP7 where he held the post of Managing Director, McCann Group, in the UAE since 2011.

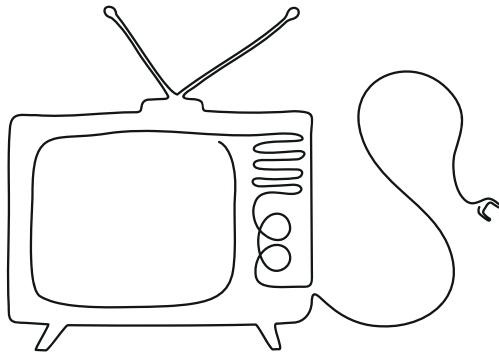


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— FRENCH RIVIERA —





## TV SET STILL RULES GLOBALLY DESPITE RISE OF INTERNET USERS

**LONDON.** Despite the rapid rise of Internet users globally through PCs, laptops, mobiles or tablets, TV still remains the most popular device for watching various forms of TV (such as live broadcasts, catch-up and subscriptions services) globally.

According to the data by GlobalWebIndex, one in four Internet users globally choose to watch all of their chosen content on their TV screen. In contrast, only 13 per cent of Internet users globally report using PCs/laptops, mobiles or tablets, without devoting any time to TV sets.

Europe (39 per cent) and North America (38 per cent) lead globally in terms of the highest percentage of Internet users between 16 and 64 who watch TV (in any form) on TV, while those who watch TV on devices other than TV (such as PC, laptop, mobile and tablet) stand at 7 per cent and 6 per cent respectively.

In the Middle East, the percentage of users watching only on TV stand a bit lower at 26 per cent, while those who watch TV on other devices (such as PC, laptop, mobile and tablet) stand at 8 per cent.

## TRADITIONAL MEDIA TRUMPS FAKE NEWS THREAT



**NEW YORK.** Results released from part two of Ogilvy Media Influence's annual global survey of more than 250 reporters and producers found that the rise in reports of "fake news" has elevated trust in traditional media, contrary to the prevailing sentiment that the recent deluge of misinformation has eroded trust in legacy media sources.

According to PRNewswire, the survey found that journalists worldwide agree that better reporting – such as comprehensive fact-checking and citing credible sources – is necessary to combat fake news. The results, which identify social media as a key catalyst of the fake news phenomenon, further illuminate the findings of the first half of the Ogilvy Media Influence survey.

FOR MORE NEWS LOG ON TO [GULFMARKETINGREVIEW.COM](http://GULFMARKETINGREVIEW.COM)

## IN BRIEF

### WUNDERMAN TAKES MAJORITY STAKE IN PIERRY

**SAN FRANCISCO:** WPP has announced that its wholly owned global digital agency Wunderman had acquired a majority stake in Pierry, Inc. ("Pierry"), a marketing software integration and solutions company specializing in optimizing campaigns on the Salesforce Marketing Cloud. The investment continues WPP's strategy of focusing on three key areas that differentiate the Group's offering to clients: technology, data and content.



### THE UK AND US MARTECH INDUSTRY SIZE AT \$34.3 BILLION

**LONDON:** New research assessing the current and future state of the martech industry, has found that the size of the martech industry for the combined UK and US markets is estimated at \$34.3 billion. The survey released by Moore Stephens, a global accountancy firm, and WARC, the global marketing intelligence service, questioned more than 500 UK and North American brands and agencies.

### SOCIAL MEDIA IN-FEED ADS LEADING GLOBAL AD GROWTH

**LONDON:** Social media in-feed ads, online video and other digital formats, such as paid content and native advertising, are leading a global growth in advertising. Between 2016 and 2019, these factors will drive 14 per cent annual growth in total display advertising – a category that includes these formats as well as traditional banners – according to Zenith's new report, Advertising Expenditure Forecasts.





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# FINDING MADE EASY

**Puja Pannum**, MD MENA, Blis, on how to make **location-inspired marketing** a move in the right direction.

The affluent and exciting MENA market is full of marketing potential, but still biased towards traditional channels such as print and outdoor. These old favourites may have stood the test of time, but Gulf consumers are embracing smartphone technology and local marketers must do the same.

MENA has one of the highest smartphone penetration rates on the planet. A recent report, titled Media Industries in the Middle East, by Northwestern University in Qatar found that nine in ten or more have a smartphone, while an estimated 70 per cent of ads are viewed on smartphones. But despite enthusiastic

adoption on the part of consumers, only six per cent of ad dollars in the region go towards mobile. Marketers, it seems, are yet to follow in the footsteps of consumers.

Following in the footsteps of consumers, however, is quite literally one of the most exciting opportunities that mobile brings. Crucially, while desktop shows what audiences do and where they go online, smartphone location data reveals their favourite hangouts and frequent journeys in the real world. These insights are invaluable in what they bring to light and impossible to obtain elsewhere.

The good news is, mobile is so much more than online browsing data and audience demographics. That said, mobile-wary marketers

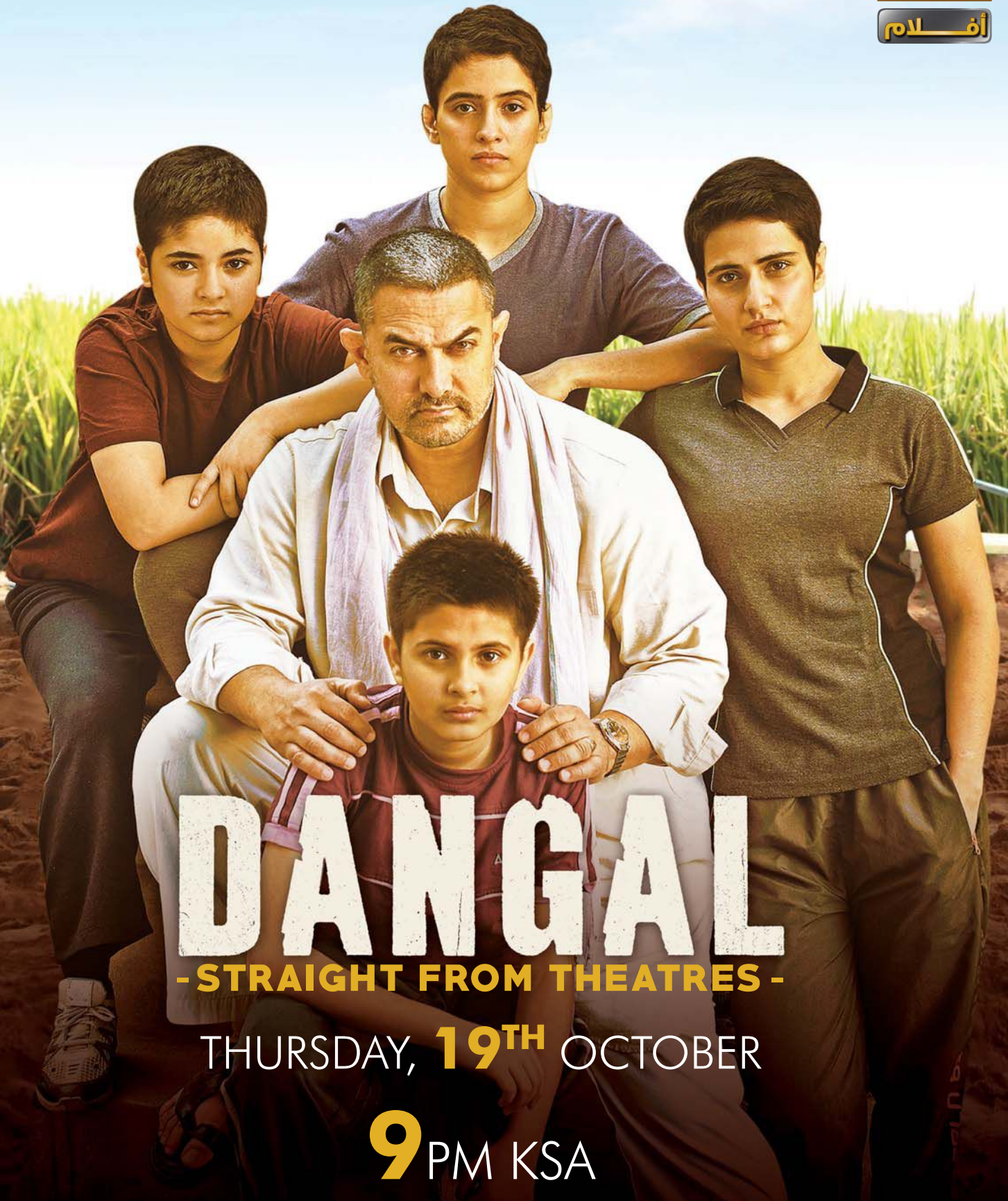
**PUJA PANNUM, MD MENA, BLIS**

“Location data can be used to create new audience segments that would be impossible to reach without it”





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impossible to reach without it. A luxury retailer in Dubai, for example, could discover that it has already reached most of the affluent locals and, therefore, decide to use location data to segment professionals on business trips by delivering ads to guests at nearby five-star hotels.

**What gets measured gets improved.** One famous management thinker once said: “What gets measured gets improved”, but the saying applies perfectly to marketing too. At the planning stage, before a campaign has even begun, it’s important to pick the right metric for it, whether that’s CTR, footfall or video completion. Thinking of the campaign goal – is it increased sales, or increased store visits? – is an easy way to find the right metric to measure it by.

Once marketers have tailored their campaign to one goal or the other, they can bring in the expertise of providers such as IRI Worldwide, who provide big data analysis and intelligence, to provide store sales data and measure the effect of the campaign on brand perceptions. Ultimately, choosing the right metric will give a better idea of the effectiveness of the campaign against its goal and reveal exactly how to do even better in the future.

In MENA, Northwestern University’s Report shows mobile’s day is finally coming: 95 percent of marketers in the region plan to increase spend on mobile and, over the next year, 59 percent state the same thing about location data. This burgeoning technology, which has been adopted with such enthusiasm by marketers worldwide, is finally being demanded in the lucrative Gulf market.

At last, marketers will be able to follow in the footsteps of their target audience and build a holistic view of them. And by ensuring they use the cleanest location data layered with other data sources and then measuring the campaign results well, they will be primed and ready to execute precise and effective location-powered targeting – which is, unarguably, a move in the right direction for MENA marketers. ■

would do well to consider the potential pitfalls of location-powered marketing ahead of executing their first campaigns. That means ensuring the accuracy of any location data used – because repeatedly targeting audiences in Europe rather than MENA is a sure-fire way to waste media budgets and turn off consumers.

In light of this, we’ve put together 3 steps to guarantee data accuracy, so marketers can unlock the possibilities of location-powered campaigns.

**Zero in on the best quality data.** With floods of cash flowing into marketing budgets every year, criminal activity unfortunately follows, so there’s a lot of data that is fraudulently traded. Another risk, albeit an accidental one, is data corruption. Overall, marketers can never exercise too much caution when it comes to the quality of the data they use and, often, that means using a smaller data set that is, however, of higher quality. It’s better than using

a bigger quantity of data that hasn’t been thoroughly checked.

Those marketers who want to zero in on higher-quality data can do so by choosing tech partners that check data thoroughly ahead of its use in campaigns and commit to using multiple data points to avoid sample bias.

**Don’t skimp on data sources.** Location data doesn’t tell you the whole story. While valuable in and of itself, when combined with other data sources, it becomes totally invaluable. Consider a consumer that is repeatedly visiting car dealerships in Beirut. It would be hard for a marketer to know what he was after, unless they layer this information with his browsing history to show that he’s clearly in the market for a convertible – and then they are able to deliver relevant ads showcasing their brand’s range of super-slick sports cars.

In other instances, location data can be used to create new audience segments that would be



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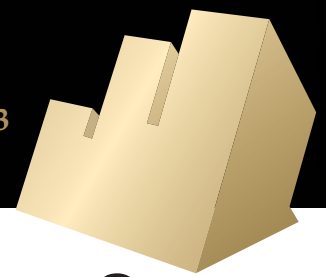
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# THE JURY IS IN

The MENA Effie Awards 2017 expert panel of judges has been announced. *GMR* speaks to jury members to find out what they expect from a potential winner

The ninth edition of the MENA Effie Awards (Effies) has announced its expert panel of judges, which includes 147 sector leaders who will be judging thousands of entries to select the most effective marketing efforts in the region. The results will be announced on November 15, 2017, at a ceremony that is expected to attract more than 2,000 attendees, including the best marketing and advertising professionals in the Middle East.

*GMR* spoke to a few of the judges on what's the key to standing out at MENA Effies versus other awards, and is it difficult to remain objective when qualifying creativity? What do you think are the core criteria of a good campaign?

And here's what they had to say:



**Peter DeBenedictis,**  
**CMO, Middle East & Africa, Microsoft**

For me, there needs to be the combination of a great creative concept coupled with significant commercial impact. 'Arts for arts sake' at the MENA Effies I do not think will cut it.

As marketers, we have to try to reach many audiences, whose point of view, perspective, what type of content they will respond to – is likely different from our own. So when looking at a creative piece of work, I would say that of course there is some personal bias that comes into play, but

understanding how that campaign would appeal to the target audience they were trying to reach and then understanding the effectiveness of it, is part of the work we do as marketers every day.

Key criteria for campaigns in today's world of Modern Marketing requires delivering the right message, at the right time, to the right audience, via the right channel, and delivering the right kind of commercial outcome both for the advertiser and the buyer.

Getting all of this right is not easy, but that is why I am looking forward to reviewing the great work at the Effies, which no doubt will have many examples of brands which were successful in creating memorable and impactful campaigns.





**Nurgul Marts,  
Media Manager,  
Bulgari Middle East**

The key to standing out at MENA Effies versus other awards is to make sure that the campaign is relevant for the selected market and serving company's objective. It is not enough to achieve high reach or produce impactful campaign only – combination of all components is crucial.

As long as the objective of campaign is clear and strategy explained very well, judging should be smooth and fair. Good campaign is the effective campaign. The one that achieves set goals, be it new product awareness or gain of market share.



**Wasim Basir, IMC  
Director, Coca-Cola**

Effies reward creativity + results. For a brand that is the complete picture. Therefore, the reward is comprehensive and

more satisfying. It is also a great testament that there is no result without creativity and vice versa. Any good campaign is a good solution for a problem well defined.

In my opinion it is the articulation of the problem that we must spend more time on. Judging creativity of that then becomes a very easy and objective process.



**Hashem Alhashmi,  
Marketing Head MENA,  
Citibank**

I love the Effies as it resonates more with clients than other awards such as Cannes Lions that are more focused

on creativity and originality. The Effies by contrast recognizes and rewards works that have answered a business a problem.

Clearly stated objectives and metrics for the work – the whole point is to reward a work that works so to speak.



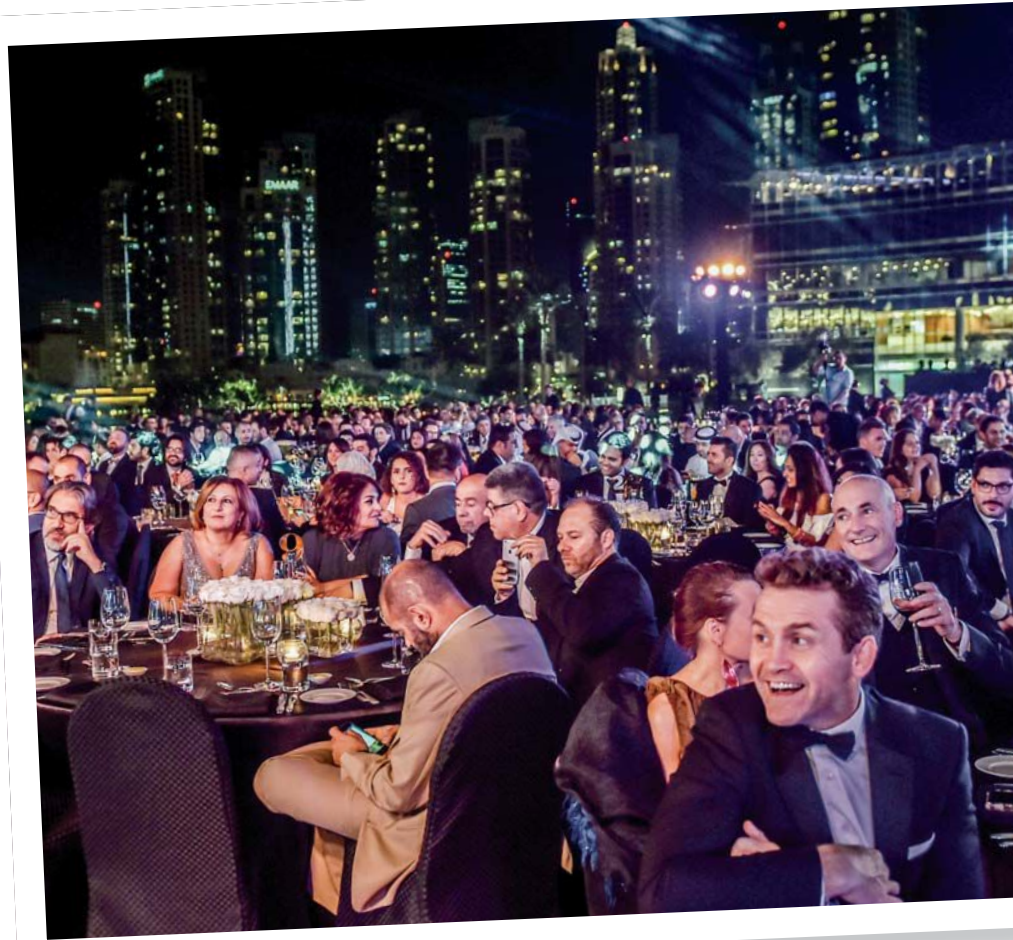
**Mina Tahajody,  
Marketing  
Communications  
Manager, Passenger  
Cars, Mercedes-Benz  
Cars Middle East**

The focus should be on the data and the story that this data can tell about how the initial problem or objective was catered for. The passion that has been put into the work should show.

I think as marketing professionals we are trained to be objective as we tend to try and look at things from the view point of others.

A good campaign:

- How it addresses the objective it set out to do.
- Staying true to the brand while achieving set objectives
- A big idea that can be expanded on and built on rather than a flash in the pan
- Also a plus if other feel good / positive sentiments are generated by the campaign



While traditional forms of advertising still have a role to play, that's often in support of digital marketing campaigns

The key to standing out at MENA Effies versus other awards is demonstrating how true insight into the target audience drove the marketing communications strategy, and achieved outstanding results.

What differentiates Effies is that the entries are evaluated against the insight, strategy and results more than the actual creative idea itself. A brand could develop a brilliant creative execution that is worthy of recognition from a creative perspective, however if it did not resonate with the target audience, or drove any true results, then there was no true effect on business results.

Yes I believe it is always a bit difficult to remain objective – especially as marketers,



- To address its main target in an impactful way through an appropriate choice of communication channels
- To engage the intended target and leave a lasting impression
- To achieve results by reaching its intended goals and inject more trust in the brand
- And ultimately as a cherry on top, to set new trends in the field and change human behaviors to the best



**Jihad Al Houwayek,**  
Head of marketing,  
Damas, UAE

The Effies stand out versus other awards with the weight and emphasis they put on

results. Any communication despite how creative or beautiful it can be, will be useless for brands and marketers if they are not effective and don't drive results and meet the set objectives.

Besides, it is also the objectivity in submitting the effectiveness of a specific campaign and the audited results that make the Effies so credible and trustworthy.

I wouldn't call it difficult, it's rather challenging. Yet from my previous experiences with the Effies, the jury is formed from a group of highly experienced professionals who can take a distance to objectively judge an entry.

On the other side, the jury are also humans and consumers and if they are moved by a certain campaign, it means that the work is engaging and that's absolutely fine, that's the objective after all from creating the work. The core criteria is how much engaging the work was versus the target audience.

How did it influence their behavior, their feelings and how did it impact their decisions. The level of engagement drives the results and results are proof of effectiveness which is not always only related to financial gains, it is evaluated separately for each category and most importantly versus the initial set objective and the nature of the challenge faced.

our ideas and our perspective are always affected by our own previous experience.

I believe that insight lies at the core of a good campaign – a true insight into the target audience, should be the foundation of a marketing communications strategy and campaign. That, together with well-executed creative, is what defines a good campaign.



**Aline Karam, Chief Communication Affairs Officer, Alfa Telecom, Lebanon**

The key to stand out at MENA Effies is to bring the human dimension

and mix it with innovation and outside the box ideas. The mainstream does not have its place on the podium. All marketers can look at the awarded campaigns as the new trend in the domain. Bottom line, MENA Effies awards are the trend setters.

Any judge can rely on a set of criteria to evaluate to the best of their capacity in an objective way the nominated campaigns. However, when we have to decide between two amazing campaigns that are equal on objective criteria, relying on our emotions and intuition becomes an important asset to break a tie in a creative domain.

We have to acknowledge that we are judging work of arts that talk to each person differently. In this case, objectivity is important but we need to leave a part to our emotional side to reveal itself. As for the criteria of a good campaign:



**Merhan El Massry, Area Director of Marketing, KSA & Bahrain, Marriott International, Middle East & Africa**

MENA Effies awards is guided by international standards in

the judging and award processes to ensure only the best work is recognized. So it gives it a big weight over the other awards.

It is difficult [to remain objective] sometime as you have plenty of creative campaigns that raise the bar for marketing excellence and this urge you to be so strict in your selection and choose the best of the best. The core criteria of a good campaign is creativity, clear message, measurable results and ROI.





**Basel Anabtawi,**  
**Digital Manager**  
**MEA, Red Bull**

I find many award shows to be self-congratulatory in many ways, however, the Effies stands out

for its focus on the effectiveness of creative campaigns and the results they drives. It's very important in today's marketing climate to give an importance to real work, rather than award-only submissions.

Not only does this showcase the true nature of the work that we're capable of as an industry, but also raises the morale of marketers and creative professionals as a whole.

There will always be unconscious biases when it comes to determining good work – it involves your affinity for a brand and what that brand represents. However we can become much more objective when we understand which audiences the brand in question is trying to reach.

If the audience is well defined, then objectivity becomes an easier area to settle in. I think it's very important to determine 3 things prior to embarking on any campaign:

1. Define who your audience is
2. Define the 'behavioral insights' and 'topics of interest' for your audience
3. Where does your audience consume these topics of interest? (define the platforms).

If we have these three pillars to guide us throughout our planning process, then more often than not we will be onto something great.



**Ann-Camilla Kjaempe, Regional Category Director, Arla Foods**

What I like about the MENA Effies, is that it is all about the effectiveness of campaigns and initiatives. There are many awards celebrating creativity, but



you can be very creative without means to an end.

At the end of the day, it is all about driving business growth, by doing good, consumer relevant and behaviour changing initiatives in a creative way.

It can be difficult to be objective when judging creativity, and that is why focusing on the objectives, goals and effectiveness makes a lot of sense.

I believe that the core criteria of a good campaign is its ability to change consumer behaviour and its business effectiveness.



**Nayla Mouawad**  
**Group Marketing & Communications Manager, Boecker International**

A big idea that shows concrete measurable results.

MENA Effie stands for effectiveness that stems specifically from result oriented campaigns relying on measurable data and experts' validation.

Yes, I do believe that creativity strikes different chords in different people, although there are

key humanitarian / CSR topics that appeal to many of us. I do believe that judging creativity cannot dissociate itself from a degree of bias as it does speak to our emotions. However, real, compelling and striking creativity will stand out from the clutter and leave its mark.

Today, most Big Ideas are inspired by either technology or human insights and the magic lies within the materialization / packaging of these idea.



**Julian Redman, Head of Digital, Aldar Properties**

The key is performance. A good campaign is there to increase awareness, create interest and build desire for the product

but ultimately the Effie Jury is looking for Action! How does the campaign perform against a clear, defined, set of KPI's.

Creativity will certainly help, but the nominations have to ensure that a return of marketing investment is recorded and achieved, for it is these that truly stand out as award winning campaigns.



For me, creativity is originality combined with clear communication to the correct target audience. For the Effie's the barometer for a good campaign is one that has "worked" – a campaign which has set out a clear set of SMART objectives where the results are measured and the KPI's have been met or exceeded.

The winners from 2016, where I was a Judge for the first time, demonstrated not only a good set of results against KPI's, but showed qualities of tackling a specific need in an imaginative way; for me The Good Note was a great example of understanding a need and finding a solution to it which engaged the target audience and created additional PR due to its human touch.



**Ahmed A. Alsahhaf,**  
**GM, Marketing**  
**Communication,**  
**Saudi Telecom**  
**Company (STC)**

It can be different every year, as the themes or trends that appear in the work can often determine what you need to stand out- however, the nature of the MENA Effie awards is different from other award shows.

While some awards focus only on one component of a great campaign, such as the strength of the creative idea or the media approach, the scope of the Effie Awards is more comprehensive, so the work needs to go beyond just a great idea, but also demonstrate that the campaign is one built around a detailed understanding of the problem to be solved and objectives to be met.

Work that has impact beyond its initial objectives or that creates a category shift, is what really stands out.

It's important to take the time to really understand the objective, the context and the impact of the campaign to be able to judge it on its own merits. A good campaign will have an idea large enough to be able to travel broadly yet still touch consumers by building off real consumer insights and ultimately solving a problem.

However, great campaigns are also about breaking new ground and doing something no one has done before, changing behavior or even creating a shift. When a creative first is combined with big results then that is the ideal win.



**Nadine Touma,**  
**Consultant**

To the risk of sounding lame, Effie stands for ... 1) effectiveness... 2) efficiency... 3) efficacy...

Three notions that are similar, share the same root and yet represent different aspect of performance.

1. Do the right things
2. Do these things well
3. So that they 'work out' for you, eg achieve the objective you have established for yourself

For sure... Creativity is all but objective. It talks to the right side of our brain, a side that is usually very under developed. Our education teaches us to use the left side of our brain mainly: rationality, logic, measurement, weighing, counting. It is all about order. And

order can be quantified: better, worse, good bad, first, last.

Creativity is all about disorder, ie disrupting the established order through inspiration, creation, imagination. In that world there is no 'good' or 'bad' it is all a matter of perspective.



**Emre Karaer,**  
**General Manager**  
**- Volvo Car MENA**  
**& CIS**

Effies are now spread to several markets; MENA being one of them, and

it sure is raising the bar for creativity and expectations from marketeers in the region.

Effies and jury members are objectively evaluating the creativity, however the main credit is for the Regional relevance and of course effectiveness.

Creativity is objective in its essence as our taste and perceptions are often the base of judgement. However, setting some criteria can help gain common ground for subjectivity. A good campaign should be founded on a deep physiological insight and stand for values that are above and beyond the brand itself. It should resonate with the public using a meaningful and memorable message while enhancing their lives and adding value to them.

A very dynamic region, MENA houses a wide variety of backgrounds, which can render campaign targeting complicated. However, insight creation, targeting and reaching consumers at the right moment and channel with a strong multi-platform strategy will ensure all different consumers get the full story. ■





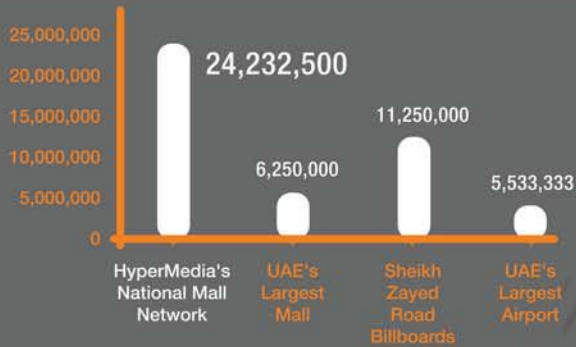
# HYPERMEDIA RIDING THE WAVE OF INNOVATION



WITH THE DATA TO BACK IT UP

HYPERMEDIA

## MONTHLY REACH OF COMPARABLE OOH



## HYPERMEDIA TOTAL NUMBER OF SCREENS



## MOST EYE CATCHING

Of all the media, Digital Signage was designated the most eye catching.



- 58% Billboards
- 57% Magazines
- 56% TV



## EXPOSURE TO DIGITAL OUT-OF-HOME ADVERTISING

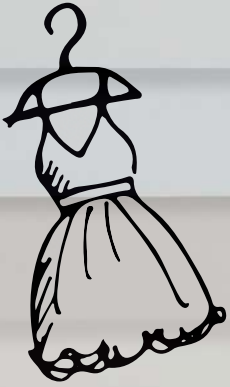
Exposure to DOOH is expected to increase to 56 minutes per week in 2017, a rise from 14 minutes in 2013\*. This makes it the second fastest-growing advertising channel worldwide (after mobile):



\*PO Media's Digital Out-Of-Home Exposure Index.

**H**yperMedia, a leading out-of-home (OOH) media specialist in the Middle East, has made the dynamic shift from static branding to digital media. As digital advertising is proving to be more affordable and better targeted for advertisers, HyperMedia is investing heavily in converting its network of nationwide in-store and in-mall static branding to a world-class digital signage network.

HyperMedia is embracing this advertising shift and will continue to expand and adopt various innovations that will keep the company at the lead of the OOH media industry in the region.



# 40 UNDER 40

GMR's list of the brightest 40 under 40 marketing professionals in the Middle East. By **Sunil Kumar Singh**

GMR's list of 40 honorees brings to the limelight professionals from the marketing communications sphere that are change-agents across different sectors—from IT and telecom to retail, FMCG, food and beverages, oil and gas, automobiles, to media and entertainment and banking and finance. Marketing, today, has evolved much beyond Philip Kotler's 4Ps to increasingly focus on data and technology. That's why this list looks not only at clients, but

also technology professionals who are marketing whizzes in their own right as they enable clients to channel their marketing efforts into business results. We compiled this list by first inviting entries through various media channels including social media and peer-to-peer networking. We then pored over the 100+ entries taking into account several factors, including the company size, the individual's team size (minimum 2), their work experience (minimum

5 years) and any significant achievements with a solid business outcome. We also utilized our team's expertise and industry knowledge to ultimately determine 40 under 40 professionals that grabbed our attention the most. Undoubtedly, it has been a difficult task, and we hope that this list serves not only as a recognition of the brilliant work out there, but also as an inspiration. We hope you have as great a time reading this as we did compiling it.



## CATEGORY BANKING &amp; FINANCE

## ZEINA KAWAS

HEAD OF CORPORATE & INSTITUTIONAL, COMMERCIAL & PRIVATE BANKING MARKETING, STANDARD CHARTERED BANK, 37

Zeina has over 10 years of experience in the financial services industry and has worked with the major institutions in the region from American Express to Emirates NBD. She's currently at Standard Chartered Bank. Zeina is a commercially minded enthusiast that works closely with the business segments to deliver on objectives.

**Major achievements so far** One of the latest achievements was building a unique campaign that merged Africa and the Middle East into a campaign highlighting the vast network the bank operates in and the award-winning capabilities. **key highlights of the campaign:** In total the campaign reached over 52 million unique users and garnered more than 108 million impressions. Awareness was up, on average, by 5 per cent in the key markets: UAE, Pakistan, Nigeria and Kenya.

**The key marketing mantra she believes in** "Always deliver more than expected" Larry page.

**Years in career so far** 11.

**Largest team size handled** 2.

**If you were to change one marketing mistake you might have made in your career so far, what would that be?**

I would not change a thing; I believe the mistakes and flaws are what create a better understanding of where you are going with your messaging and will help you to get it right the next time, as it allows you to understand your clients more.



## RETAIL



## ADITI VYAS KUMAR

HEAD OF MARKETING UAE, BABYSHOP, 33

Aditi Vyas Kumar is a computer engineer by degree and a marketer by passion. The marketing bug bit her when she chose marketing as an elective in her final trimester at BITS Pilani, while pursuing her computer engineering degree. She went on to formalize her passion with an MBA in marketing at S P Jain and was on the Dean's List. As a firm believer in 'Always on, Always learning', she is currently pursuing her CIM from the UK and is an associate chartered marketer.

During her 12 years in marketing, she has worked across verticals from real estate to optics. However, her forte is FMCG and retail, which has contributed to almost half of her career duration so far. Over the past five years she has been leading the marketing team at Babyshop for the UAE. She was at the helm of revving up the digital and e-commerce landscape of Babyshop, which has grown into a main stream advertising channel for the brand in the past five years.

**Major achievements so far** The personal shopper assist as a program increased our ATV (Average Transaction Value) almost five times that of a regular shopper. The other big highlights could be the events and partnership successes with brands such as Disney, Mattel and Sanrio.

**The key marketing mantra she believes in** Always be relevant – to the consumer/customer, to the technology trends, to the business.

**Years in career so far** 12.

**Largest team size handled** 11.

**If you were to change one marketing mistake you might have made in your career so far, what would that be?** Invest in customer insight.

It is simply irreplaceable to the business and function. I would invest on a yearly customer insight to better understand brand positioning in a customers' mind, so we can serve them better.

## CATEGORY BANKING &amp; FINANCE

## AAMIR AJAZ

ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT, BUSINESS MARKETING, EMIRATES NBD, 35

Aamir joined Emirates Bank in 2006 as a marketing officer and climbed his way to his current position. He is currently responsible for developing and managing marketing strategies to drive business growth of all retail banking products with the personal banking segment which constitutes approximately 90 per cent of the bank's retail customer base. He started his career in marketing at the Nikai Group of companies. He holds an MBA in marketing from the European University College Brussels and has a bachelor's degree from the National American University.

**Major achievements so far** Some of Aamir's efforts have contributed in helping Emirates NBD become one of the top 100 financial brands in the world with a brand value of \$3.14 billion.

Several campaigns developed by Aamir have gone on to win big at various awards programmes, including the Mena Effie Awards, Dubai Lynx and Midas Awards.

**The key marketing mantra he believes in** Marketing should always be relevant and measurable. Every piece of communication can always be perfected, but one must be wary of the lost opportunity and time in doing so. Aamir firmly believes that time should never be wasted on procrastination and if there is a great idea then it should be done. Now.

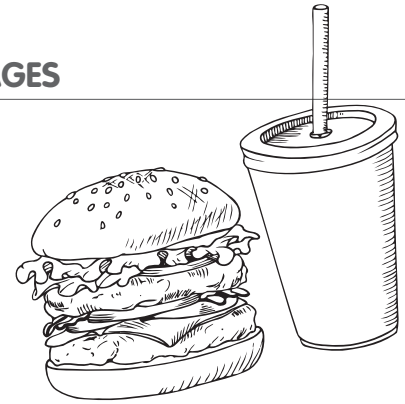
**Years in career so far** 13.

**Largest team size handled** 8.

**If you were to change one marketing mistake you might have made in your career so far, what would that be?** I enjoy what I do at Emirates NBD immensely; the only regret is not doing it earlier enough.



## FOOD &amp; BEVERAGES



## MAZEN SOUS

DIRECTOR OF MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS, McDONALD'S MEA, 39

Mazen started his career in 2001 in Bahrain as a reporter and editor for Bahrain English TV channel 55. He moved in 2002 to Jeddah to work with ad agency FP7 as an account manager. In 2005 he moved to Dubai with the same agency to take on a regional assignment as regional account director. In 2010 he moved to Weber Shandwick as regional business director. In 2012 he moved to McDonald's UAE as head of marketing until his move in 2014 to McDonald's MEA. Since then he has been director of marketing and communications.

**The key marketing mantra he believes in** Think like a customer.

**Years in career so far** 16.

**Largest team size handled** 25.

**If you were to change one marketing mistake you might have made in your career so far, what would that be?** Mistakes are crucial for a career in marketing, but the opportunity always to challenge status quo.







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## CATEGORY RETAIL

## INAAYAH ABDUL AZIZ

MEDIA AND MARKETING MANAGER UAE & INDIA, TABLEZ FOOD COMPANY, 33

Inaayah Abdul Aziz is a passionate millennial who began her career in her early 20s, immediately after graduating from Vellore Institute of Technology & Science in Tamil Nadu, India, with a major in marketing and finance. Her energetic and ambitious attitude drove her to join Tablez Food Company in 2010. While she started as an executive, she climbed up the ladder rapidly and within a year she was the mastermind behind the marketing-related plans under guidance from the marketing head.

**Major achievements so far** Inaayah is single handedly responsible for developing and implementing marketing for all seven brands (food concepts) at Table with equal importance. She is responsible for the success of all 38 stores currently in the UAE, as well as India. Being with the company since its inception, she is a core member.

**Key marketing mantra she believes in** If you have more money than brains then focus on outbound marketing and If you have more brains than money then focus on inbound marketing - GUY KAWASAKI

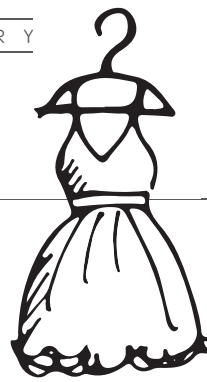
**Years in career so far** 7.

**Largest team size handled** 15.

**If you were to change one marketing mistake you might have made in your career so far, what would that be?** Mistakes are meant for learning and not repenting. I strongly believe that every mistake you make is progress and you don't learn anything by doing everything right.



## RETAIL



## RUPAL PANJANI

SENIOR MARKETING MANAGER CENTREPOINT, 36

A marketer by passion, Rupal's journey that led her to choose this calling was an adventure in many ways. While on the outside it may seem like the 'run-of-the-mill' story of serendipity and happenstance, over the years she has explored and learnt a lot. She began her career as a hotel operations trainee with the Marriott Renaissance & Convention Center, Mumbai, in 2003. "The role sharpened my instincts and taught me the importance of grueling planning and careful execution to the success of every endeavor," she says. In 2012 she joined Centrepoint as an assistant marketing manager – GCC and has gradually grown over an exciting five years to assume the role of senior marketing manager.

**Major achievements so far** "Achievements can be small and big in nature," she continues. To name a few:

- She was an integral member of an award-winning team that has stacked up over 35 trophies in under five years, becoming one of the most celebrated retailers in the fast fashion category. The awards especially recognizing the brand's marketing achievements include recognition by Dubai Lynx, ICSC, Retail ME, MENA Digital, MENA Cristal and MEPR.
- She was part of the Centrepoint strategy team responsible for launching the new face of the brand in 2014 through a region-wide campaign and continuing the perception 'til date.
- She was an integral part of the launch of the biggest Canadian coffee brand in the region "Tim Hortons" and growing the network to 19 stores across the UAE.

**The key marketing mantra she believes in** Make it simple but significant.

**Years in career so far** 14 years overall and 11 years focused on marketing, starting in 2006 with Shoppers Stop.

**Largest team size handled** She currently manages a team of four people in her current role in Centrepoint. In addition to this, she handles the media and creative agencies.

**If you were to change one marketing mistake you might have made in your career so far, what would that be?** The only one I remember is in my early career years, wherein I missed getting into the finer details in a campaign catalogue. That resulted in wrong communication being printed. This experience was really embarrassing because, as a person, I always put myself as a perfectionist at whatever jobs I take up. Very confidently I stand for perfection now.



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## CATEGORY AUTOMOBILE

## NADIM GHRAYEB

REGIONAL MARKETING MANAGER, CADILLAC MIDDLE EAST, 37

Nadim is responsible for driving all strategies relating to marketing operations across the region and the communication of the brand, including the implementation of the brand's renewed global vision here in the Middle East. His previous position as the regional brand manager for Cadillac Middle East saw him focusing exclusively on achieving long-term marketing objectives and delivering sustainable brand growth solutions. Ghrayeb holds a Bachelor of Science from Beirut's Lebanese American University.

**Major achievements so far** Launch of the Cadillac ATS: "Researching our target audience of 35 year olds and younger, we created a unique experience that allowed us to interact with and communicate with them in the platforms they use. From these key insights we created the 'crossing horizons' activation, with two ATS vehicles traveling from Germany to Abu Dhabi (12 countries, 11,000Kms in a 26-day period)," he says. GMC Yukon led by example: "Utilizing our GMC Yukon 'Lead by Example' TVC we gave people the opportunity to 'take control' of the journey by navigating through these sections.. Yukon YouTube TVC "Lead by Example" achieved 1,403,223 views in English and 1,841,118 in Arabic," he adds.

**The key marketing mantra he believes in** Data is king in the information age we live in.

**Years in career so far** 14.

**Largest team size handled** 6.

**If you were to change one marketing mistake you might have made in your career so far, what would that be?** When you are in marketing, listening to your instincts and taking risks are paramount if you want to deliver successful and creative campaigns. When I started my career, I didn't take as many risks in trusting my instinct as I wish I did now, but as with everything, it is a life lesson that I have grown from and my career tells that story.

## AUTOMOBILE



## ALEX SCHAEFFER

DIRECTOR LINCOLN MIDDLE EAST, 34



Alex Schaeffer is the director of Lincoln Middle East, a position he has held since his 2015 return to the region, after 18 months as Lincoln Black Label Brand Manager in Dearborn, Michigan. Portland Oregon native Schaeffer holds two degrees – a Bachelor of Arts in business administration and a Bachelor of Science in Japanese linguistics, both from the University of Washington – and lives in Dubai with his wife Sandra and their two young children, Valentina and Stephan.

Alex is currently a Director of Lincoln Middle East, a position he has held since 2015, 18 months as Lincoln Black Label Brand Manager in Dearborn, Michigan. He is responsible for following and executing brand and marketing strategies to deliver brand promise to the discerning luxury clientele of the Middle East.

**Major achievements so far**

- Drove all-time high brand favorable opinion in top two markets for Lincoln (UAE and Saudi Arabia)
- Orchestrated the successful launch of the Lincoln Black Label in the US – delivered a halo product to drive new demographics for the Lincoln Owner Base
- As a zone manager in Saudi Arabia, doubled company sales volumes by over 35,000 units, and more importantly tripled company's revenue in 2013.

**The key marketing mantra he believes in** "If I had asked people what they wanted, they would have said faster horses." — Henry Ford.

**Years in career so far** 12.

**Largest team size handled** 6.

**If you were to change one marketing mistake you might have made in your career so far, what would that be?** Don't try to be above average to everyone, strive to be best in class to the target audience.







Ipsos Connect offers a new monitoring tool, Statex-Online, that measures all online advertising activities covering websites and social platforms. The digital advertising intelligence delivers gross estimated Ad impressions and gross estimated Ad spends, and provides more than 20 KPIs and metrics in the MENA region. Statex users benefit from a comprehensive analysis by covering offline and online media in one competitive report.

## CATEGORY IT &amp; TELECOM

## PUI-CHI LI

HEAD OF MARKETING, XEROX MIDDLE EAST AND AFRICA, 37

Chi entered marketing as a product executive for NRG Group, a part of the Ricoh Family Group, responsible for managing a small segment of products for the EMEA market, before moving to Xerox. Chi was promoted to full product manager with an extended range of products, mentoring new members of the marketing department. **Major achievements so far** One of her earliest achievements was being tasked with growing the Single Function Printer Category for NRG Group in the EMEA market. Through successful implementation of targeted programmes, customer engagements and communications strategy, the annual installs for this category doubled within two years, she says. During her tenure in MEA as business manager, she worked closely with local partners to sustainably grow the business to achieve targeted market share levels to 10 per cent.

**Key marketing mantra she believes in** Achieving a balanced approach in marketing is more crucial than ever, using the latest technology to compliment what we are saying to our audience.

**Years in career so far** 13.

**Largest team size handled** 13.

**If you were to change one marketing mistake you might have made in your career so far, what would that be?** Not reviewing the campaigns and programmes I have been involved with over the years; one of the major lessons learnt is the importance of engagement of the right people. A brilliant campaign is only half effective if it does not have the right people supporting it to fruition. Now, I always include a mandatory step to engage key stakeholders as part of any program roll out to ensure maximum impact.



## FMCG

## ANSHU PARAS BHAGCHANDANI

HEAD OF MARKETING MENA &amp; BRAND MANAGEMENT, ALLIANZ INTERNATIONAL HOLDINGS LTD &amp; DARLIE GLOBAL FZC, 27

Anshu's professional career started off when she interned as a graphic designer at the age of 16. She has been working ever since, rising from intern to marketing head of an international company in the MENA region. In total, she has 11 years of professional work experience.

**Major achievements so far**

- Oversaw the marketing activities of Allianz International Holdings of over 128 countries.
- Successfully organized launch party for the brands - Dr. Neem and Mr. Darlie.
- Won the 2015 award for Best Young Marketing Leader from MEA.
- As a former brand marketing manager of JP<sup>2</sup> Events and Marketing, Anshu achieved best practices for managing JP brand and activation for over 50 retail clients.
- Achieved the best sales track record for being a brand representative for Lenovo.

**The key marketing mantra she believes in**

- Understand your customer well, especially their preferences.
- Match products to customers' needs.
- Depending on target audience, generate brand awareness digitally or via word-of-mouth.
- Ensure constant product visibility to retain customers' loyalty and trust

**Years in career so far** 11.

**Largest team size handled** 42.

**If you were to change one marketing mistake you might have made in your career so far, what would that be?** The world of marketing and sales are irrevocably entwined and circumstances can be unpredictable at best. I had lost a significant sales target during a major seasonal event in which an unforeseen event took place to delay my sales production by several days. I have since learnt to always have a backup plan for every activity that I undertake, in preparation for whatever obstacles that may come.





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## CATEGORY IT &amp; TELECOM

## SHURJIL HUSAIN

HEAD OF MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS,  
ACCENTURE SAUDI ARABIA, 36

Shurjil is a senior marketing and communications executive based in the Middle East with diverse management experience in the FMCG, Engineering, IT and Consulting industries – all in leading multinational organizations. He has held marketing leadership roles in Unilever, Siemens, IBM and Accenture.

He holds an undergraduate degree in computer science from the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) and attended Boston University (BU) School of Management for a full-time MBA program in marketing and strategy.

**Major achievements so far** Worked in brand management in Unilever's largest division (Lipton) in Saudi Arabia with over \$120 million in annual sales.

Managed Siemens Saudi Arabia's corporate communications and marketing across all sectors. Most notable achievement was managing the launch of the Siemens Energy Hub in Dammam, Saudi Arabia.

Headed marketing and communications for the IBM-Mobily Alliance (a joint five go-to-market partnership valued at \$280 million). This included implementing the marketing management model and establishing the day-to-day running of the Alliance. Subsequently, also led marketing and communications for IBM in Saudi Arabia.

**The key marketing mantra he believes in** Marketing has and is always evolving. It is a science, so it is crucial to always have a student's mindset and proactively engage with the latest trends and methods.

**Years in career so far** 14.

**Largest team size handled** Up to 6.

**If you were to change one marketing mistake you might have made in your career so far, what would that be?** Always maintain focus on the big objective and the means to take you there. Don't let smaller, less relevant things distract you from that goal. Instead view and treat them as mere hurdles.

## BANKING &amp; INSURANCE

## GASSER RAYHAN

DIGITAL MARKETING SPECIALIST AND STRATEGIST - STRATEGY & CORPORATE  
PLANNING AL RAJHI TAKAFUL, RIYADH, 31

Gasser's journey as a marketer is quite different from other marketers in the region, as he says, he sought to understand the true definition of "marketing" from both online and offline perspective. "Hence, I have come across different industries throughout my 10-year journey. I started in small local agencies, mid-size, all the way to global agencies, and also working in the media sector, hospitality, banking and currently in the insurance industry, which is strongly booming in the GCC market, especially in Saudi Arabia," he adds.

"Throughout this 10 year-journey, I have grasped a strong understanding of marketing and how important it is to reflect the corporate/business image to the public, which has evolved strongly through new technologies. Even the public's demands to receive their marketing information has changed drastically throughout the years," he says.

**Major achievements so far**

- (a) +20 websites published online
- (b) 5 international certifications, including Lean Six Sigma and Google AdWords
- (c) 10 per cent GWP (Gross Written Premium) achieved in the digital platform and web sales for 2016 at Al Rajhi Takaful (Al Rajhi Company for Cooperative Insurance)
- (d) Around \$10,000 cost savings through Lean Six Sigma Automation Project at HSBC Bank plc.

**The key marketing philosophy he believes in** "Always deliver more than expected" - Larry Page (Google Co-founder). This marketing mantra always gave me the push to do more and more. Especially in the marketing world, competition is at a very high pace – everyday – as the sky has no limit.

**Years in career so far** 10.

**Largest team size handled** 45.

**If you were to change one marketing mistake you might have made in your career so far, what would that be?**

Throughout my career journey, even though we stumble upon several mistakes, I don't think that there is anything to change as I consider every mistake is a challenge and something new is learnt along the way. Some might consider shifting careers through the journey is a big mistake, although in the current generation we live in, it is the right thing to do till you seek the career you are most passionate about, and that is understanding the whole concept of "marketing" when it comes to me.





## CATEGORY SOCIAL MEDIA

## CARLA EL MAALLOULI

TWITTER'S HEAD OF MARKETING MENA REGION, 30

Carla El Maalouli (@Cmaalouli) is Twitter's Head of Marketing for the MENA region. Since recently joining Twitter in May, her primary role has been to leverage Twitter's client and industry expertise to communicate its value to the marketers and agencies that the platform serves, and to establish Twitter as an indispensable partner to its clients' business success.

Prior to joining Twitter, Carla has held both brand and agency positions across MENA in companies such as Choueiri Group, Chalhoub Group and digital advertising solutions provider Connect Ads. Carla holds a bachelor's degree in Marketing and Advertising from Universite Saint Joseph, Lebanon.

**Major achievements so far** Carla's achievements include successfully managing media strategies that range from planning, ATL & BTL advertising, PR, events, product development and research. More specifically, she's managed clients' digital marketing strategies to drive online traffic by optimizing their campaigns, which led to an increase in revenue of one of the leading news websites in the region by 98 per cent in less than a year.

Moreover, she worked with a prominent European retail brand to leverage its online presence in MENA by running its first-time digital campaign across all social media platforms, with impressive results that led to the brand's shift in ad spend from print to online.

**The key marketing mantra she believes in** "You can do what I cannot do. I can do what you cannot do. Together we can do great things" Mother Theresa .

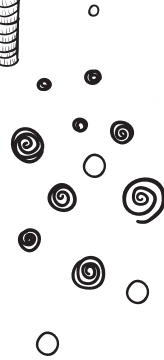
**Largest team size handled** 12.

**If you were to change one marketing mistake you might have made in your career so far, what would that be?**

I love to take risks and turn things around regardless of limited timeframes. I wouldn't change any professional decision that I have made so far, as I have learnt from these experiences and they have helped me grow both professionally and personally.



## RETAIL



## MUSTAFA DADA

HEAD OF MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS AW ROSTAMANI, 38

Mustafa is a marketing and communications professional with over 16 years of expertise working with multinationals in the luxury and lifestyle industries. He is currently heading the corporate marketing and communications department at AW Rostamani Group, developing programs and building strategies that help in the growth of its real estate, lifestyle and automotive business.

**Major achievements so far**

He was part of an exceptional global marketing team at Vertu, during the company's golden years, and led the regional marketing team in 2011 to achieve two milestones in the history of the brand: 1) The highest value of sales ever achieved in the ME, and 2) Confirming The Dubai Mall boutique as the second biggest selling boutique globally.

**The key marketing mantra he believes in:**

The customer is the hero of your story, and in that story, the hero always wins.

**Years in career so far** 16.

**Largest team size handled** 7.

Managed different types of teams since 2008, but the largest was a team of 7.

**If you were to change one marketing mistake you might have made in your career so far, what would that be?**

Failing to market my business with a clear and unique selling proposition – USP. When I started my retail marketing business in 2014, I did not take into consideration the importance of communicating a unique proposition that stands out against competition and attracts customers and clients. Lesson learnt.

## CATEGORY IT &amp; TELECOM

## DIEGO MICHELETTI

HEAD OF INTEGRATED COMMERCIAL MARKETING, MICROSOFT  
MIDDLE EAST & AFRICA, 37



Diego is 37 years old and has over 17 years of experience in communications and marketing, spreading across four continents (Asia, Africa, South and North America).

After that he also spent a few months in the United States – Microsoft Latam HQ office, before he moved on to Middle East and Africa. In Dubai, he started leading the Small and Medium Business, as well as the consumer GTM teams for two years and then took over the SMB Marketing lead role for three years. In MEA, he helped Microsoft drive consistent double-digit growth for the SMB segment, developed and executed scalable marketing engines that became worldwide best practices and has built a world class sales and marketing connection and partnership. He graduated in business administration from the University of Sao Paulo, holds an MBA in marketing and also a Master's Degree in management from the Paris Sorbonne University.

**Major achievements so far** Diego re-designed the commercial marketing plan for Microsoft MEA, leading a multicultural virtual team with more than 50 people and re-aligned the marketing investments and activities towards new business. The plan and approach have been both recognized by Microsoft Worldwide as best practice and adopted by other Microsoft areas in Europe and North America. He also led Microsoft MEA to double the impact of marketing as influencing revenue and sales in the region, from 50 per cent to near 105 per cent of the target set in less than nine months.

**The key marketing mantra he believes in** "We are here to always provide a solution for any type of problem".

**Years in career so far** 17.

**Largest team size handled;** 8 direct report managers + 8 indirect reports/dotted Line.

**If you were to change one marketing mistake you might have made in your career so far, what would that be?** When working in the FMCG in my early careers stages, I didn't give my full commitment and energy to the company at the time, and missed a brilliant opportunity to acquire deeper knowledge of such an amazing industry and business.



## BANKING &amp; FINANCE

## GEORGE BAAKLINI

MARKETING DIRECTOR, AMERICAN  
EXPRESS SAUDI ARABIA, 37



After finishing the Bachelor business administration degree in Lebanon in 2003 (Holy Spirit University), George received in 2005 his Masters Degree in Marketing from the "Universite de liege" – the Belgium affiliate of the French renowned business School (HEC). He started his career in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, where he assumed the role of assistant marketing manager at a General Motors dealer. Adding a "D" to his career, George moved from the cars business into the cards business, and in January 2008 George joined American Express Saudi Arabia and climbed the ladder to reach his current position of marketing director, handling product management, brand strategy and communication.

**Major achievements so far**

**Move to Sharia, done in 2016. The challenge:** Move all the portfolio from conventional interest-based module to Sharia fixed-fee module. **Solution and results:** "This was one of the biggest challenges faced so far in my career where we had to move all the portfolio to the Sharia fixed-fee module," he says. With this major shift in product offering also came the risk of losing the cardmember, but through comprehensive planning, insightful customer communication and strong retention program, the customer attrition and negative publicity was kept to practically zero.

**The blue card – From 1 per cent cashback to membership rewards program in 2015**

**The Challenge:** The blue card value proposition of 1 per cent cash back became costly and uncompetitive with other issuers having stronger cash back proposition in market, which was drastically affecting the cardmember engagement. **Solution:** Move the full portfolio from the 1 per cent cashback to the membership rewards program. By doing so we created a benefit differentiator for this product in the market, adding more value to both existing and potential cardmembers. The campaign was very successful with very few attritions (seven cases in total) out of the full blue base, engagement increased by around 35 per cent within the target base.

**The key marketing mantra he believes in** "It is not what you say, it is how you say it".

**Years in career so far** 12.

**Largest team size handled** 5.

**If you were to change one marketing mistake you might have made in your career so far what would it be?**

Life is a learning curve, I learn everyday something new... mistakes happen I learn from them and keep going.





## CATEGORY RETAIL

## KERIM OZBAKIRCI

SENIOR MARKETING DIRECTOR, ADIDAS MENA, 38

Kerim started at the MSN division of Microsoft in Australia as a software engineer back in 2000, but shortly after moved into product marketing. He has led the initiatives around the acquisition and growth of some of the world renowned brands, such as MSN, XBOX, Internet explorer across APAC, CEE and MEA. More recently he took on leading the brand and product team for adidas in MENA. "I pride myself on being a consumer-obsessed marketer who also doesn't lose sight on commercial outcomes," he says.

**Major achievements so far** "During my time we have doubled the market share, revenue and profitability of Xbox (can't disclose country numbers)," he adds.

- Built the consumer marketing engine in MENA and launched some of the biggest consumer campaigns in the region that was awarded as worldwide best practices.

- Has won a numerous internal and industry awards in Australia, Turkey and Dubai for planning and executing world-class campaigns. One of my campaigns was featured in *Forbes*.

**The key marketing mantra he believes in** We have to be bold on letting go of practices that might have worked brilliantly, but are totally irrelevant for the new generation.

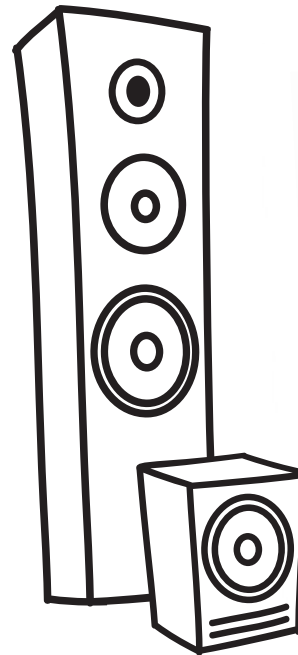
**Years in career so far:** 17.

**Largest team size handled** 65.

**If you were to change one marketing mistake you might have made in your career so far, what would that be?** Traditionally we used to assign too many KPIs and expect multiple objectives as an outcome for a campaign. As I gained experience in my career, I became more conscious of prioritizing our outcomes in the order of customer and business value.



## IT &amp; TELECOM



## CLAUDIA SCHMIDT

HEAD OF BRAND &amp; DIGITAL MARKETING, VIRGIN MOBILE UAE, 35

Claudia has over 10 years' experience in brand and marketing communications across consumer, business, regional and local area marketing.

**Major achievements so far** Magme – Vancouver, Canada: Achieved a 15 per cent product uptake within the key target audience in the first quarter, exceeding the initial targets; Virgin Mobile – Dubai, UAE: Launched the first ever digital app based mobile service in the UAE.

**Years in career** 12.

**The key marketing mantra she believes in** Marketing is no longer about saying stuff, it is now all about doing stuff.

**Largest team size handled** 7.

**If you were to change one marketing mistake you might have made in your career so far, what would that be?** The key learning for me is to listen to the voice of the customer and identify the customers' challenges quickly.

## CATEGORY RETAIL

## HOUSAM M. JOUMAA

HEAD OF DIGITAL MARKETING AND CUSTOMER LOYALTY PROGRAMME AT ALHOKAIR FASHION RETAIL, KSA

Housam has more than 12 years of intensive experience in Saudi Arabia through leading and launching major retail chains. He led B2B negotiations and business exhibitions in Lebanon, KSA, Qatar, China, Indonesia, Turkey, Spain, France, Holland and the UK. He led key initiatives and formulated strategies to meet changing customer needs and expectations, resulting into a high level of customer satisfaction with an increase in market share, sales volume and added bottom-lines.

**Major achievements so far** "As the head of digital marketing and customer loyalty programme at Alhokair Fashion Retail, I've been directly involved in the bellow matrices," he says. He drove the development and implementation of Alhokair Loyalty Programme that includes more than 75 international brands. As the director, brand development and merchandising, at RPM sports marketing, he successfully led negotiations with the Paris Saint German Football Club and with the merchandise licensee of FC Barcelona, Bayern Munich and Borussia Dortmund.

**The key marketing mantra he believes in** 'ONE' Customer endorsement is 100 times more effective than a sales or marketing pitch.

**Years in career so far** 15.

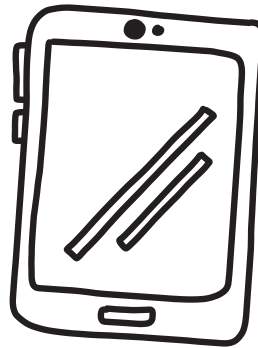
**Largest team size handled** 17.

**If you were to change one marketing mistake you might have made in your career so far, what would that be?** To

me it was always about business priorities, but how many times we align our business priority with our customer's priority? Organizations define its priorities and employees are expected to drive organizations' priority. Slowly this approach becomes the way of doing business and we all start forcing our priorities on customers and that was one of the biggest mistakes that anyone could do.



## IT &amp; TELECOM



## IBRAHIM S. AL-BAWALIZ

DIGITAL MARKETING MANAGER, JAWWY STC, KSA

Ibrahim is a digital marketing consultant and trainer, with eight years of experience in digital media, four of them with the top telecom companies in KSA. (Mobily, STC).

Digital marketing expert with comprehensive digital marketing capabilities from e-commerce, media planning, digital performance, social media advertising, Google Adwords, PPC, SEO, SEM, to other online trends.

**Major achievements so far** In April 2015 Mobily wanted to leverage FIFA World Cup passion among Saudi youth to strengthen brand preference. He was managing the Mobily world cup campaign using very advance and complicated targeting techniques.

**The results:** The campaign generated 24 million views and over 113 years of watch time. "Mobily became the global leader among telcos in YouTube subscriber base," he says. Launched and managed the digital marketing department for the first digital telecom company in MENA, Jawwy from STC.

**The key marketing mantra he believes in** Don't trust a digital marketer who didn't experience managing the campaigns with his own hands. Digital marketing spend in MENA will exceed traditional in the coming years, start now and become a leader instead of a follower.

**Years in career so far** 8.

**Largest team size handled** 6.

**If you were to change one marketing mistake you might have made in your career so far, what would that be?** We live in a very dynamic and competitive world and when it comes to online marketing, it is even faster and harder. I regret that I didn't start learning and working in online marketing while I was studying, as the earlier you begin the better results you will get. I advise all students to start now and become the winners in the real life, and remember that experience is not about the quantity, but the quality, so make sure to be very selective in learning and implementation.



## CATEGORY CONSULTING

## DIGITAL



## HASSAN ALREDHA

**DIRECTOR - HEAD OF MARKETING, KPMG, SAUDI ARABIA, 37**

Hassan started his career back in 2004 with the National Commercial Bank in Saudi. In 2015 he started a new position with KPMG as a director and head of marketing at KPMG Al Fozan and Partners. Hassan has a B.S. Degree in marketing from King Fahad University of Petroleum and Minerals, Global MBA from Manchester Business School - The University of Manchester, and a number of training and programs in business and leadership from highly recognized education institutions, such as Harvard Business School, IHM Business School, Duke Corporate Education and others.

**Major achievements so far** "I am a professional who is driven by delivering impactful results, and I believe that a successful marketing function is the backbone for the company's growth," Hassan says, adding, "Over the last three years we have seen high double-digit growth rates and our presence in the market has increased significantly.

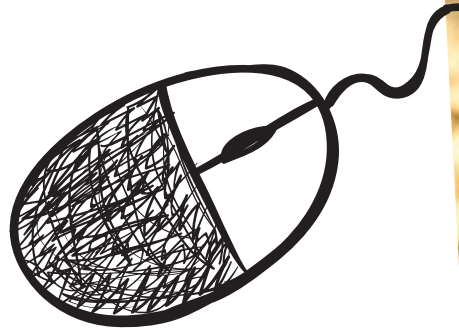
Hassan says he has developed marketing plans and strategies that have contributed handsomely to the gross turnover of all his employers. "I managed to deliver successful campaigns, which resulted in doubling and trebling the sales of the products I managed," he adds.

**The key marketing mantra he believes in** Bet on your strengths. Your business exists and will continue to exist because of the strengths that you, your team, your product/service are having.

**Years in career so far** 14.

**Largest team size handled** Above 20 to 30.

**If you were to change one marketing mistake you might have made in your career so far, what would that be?** It is not a mistake, but more like a wish that I started utilizing the power of social media in an early stage. It took us a while to adopt social media as part of our strategy.



## SARAH AZIZ

**HEAD OF MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS, SPACE IMAGING MIDDLE EAST, 37**

Sarah currently oversees marketing and communications for the region, helping the business to achieve its financial objectives through the delivery and execution of an end-to-end marketing and communications strategy. One of the 50 Best Marketers in the GCC as awarded by the CMO Asia & World Brand Congress, she was selected as lead spokesperson and was panelist for many conferences, including Arab Luxury Forum, Gitex Conference, etc

**Major achievements so far** Managed and planned tradeshows and client events. An example was one event that involved high-networth clients, which generated over \$400 million in new assets. Handled the media and the rebranding of the Middle East side of one of the largest acquisitions in Wall Street when Bank of America acquired Merrill Lynch in 2008.

**Years in career so far** 15.

**Largest team size handled** 3.

**If you were to change one marketing mistake you might have made in your career so far, what would that be?** I will not change any mistake because I look at mistakes from a different perspective. I focus on what I have learned from my mistakes and the important thing is never to make the mistake again.

## CATEGORY RETAIL



## VINEETH VIPIN

MARKETING MANAGER, BAHRAIN OPERATIONS, LULU HYPERMARKET, 34

Vineeth joined Lulu Hypermarkets in Bahrain in 2009 and handles everything related to marketing for the Bahrain operations. Before he joined the Lulu Group, he began his career in marketing in India as the assistant manager of business development in HDFC Limited, one of the leading home loan providers in India. A Master of Business Administration (MBA) from the School of Communication and Management Studies, Cochin, he made the shift from finance marketing to retail marketing of a famous brand

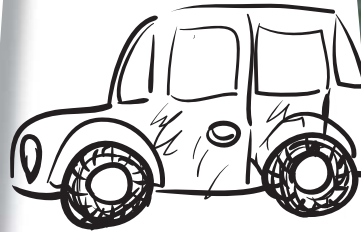
**Major achievements so far** "When working in a huge organisation like Lulu with so much retail space, I have also learnt space marketing and brand positioning through partnerships," he says. Specifically, he has been instrumental in: Developing and launching integrated, multi-channel print, catalogue, web and direct marketing campaigns that propelled sales by more than 20 per cent by 2016 year-end. Identified the revenue generation opportunities through space selling, partnerships and associations with other brands which resulted in 50 per cent increase in other income by 2016. Through cost-effective marketing management and proper vendor negotiations, the team achieved an average of 15 per cent savings in their marketing budget expenses, without compromising business growth goals.

**The key marketing mantra he believes in** "Change The Game". Be ahead of the curve by analysing where the market is going and leading the sector there.

**Largest team size handled** 9.

**If you were to change one marketing mistake you might have made in your career so far, what would that be?** Going forward, I would probably pay more attention in the future to the short courses on my specialist area and on leadership. These are great additions to one's professional skills, but in the rush of the working life, I tend to skip such opportunities when they are presented to me.

## OIL &amp; PETROCHEMICALS



## BASSAM ZAWADI

BRAND REPUTATION SPECIALIST - GLOBAL BRAND MANAGEMENT AND MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS, SABIC, 31

Bassam's marketing experience is unique, in that it comprises a balanced combination of experience in marketing research, communication and branding. "I have a strong passion for all things marketing and don't simply define and equate marketing with communications," he says. He began his full-time industry experience with the The Nielsen Company (formerly known as ACNielsen). After spending six years at Nielsen he joined ARASCO (Arabian Agricultural Services Company) in their food division. The main brand was "Entaj", a poultry product. He worked in the branding and communication department. After ARASCO, he moved on to work at SABIC, the world's 4th largest petrochemical company. **Major achievements so far** At Nielsen, one success story, he said, worth mentioning was how Coca-Cola credited his team for their 2.5 per cent volume share hike in a single month's period. At ARASCO, his team and he totally transformed the "Entaj" brand and established its platform, guidelines and identity. "We successfully supported several product launches via ATL and BLT communications and attained continuous increased levels of brand awareness as verified by TNS's Brand Tracker Study," he adds. The team's communication initiatives also played a direct role in increasing sales by 30 per cent vs. the previous quarter.

**The key marketing mantra he believes in** No brand, no marketing.

**Years in career so far** 11.

**If you were to change one marketing mistake you might have made in your career so far, what would that be?**

As I reflect on the past, I have most definitely come to realize that I've committed mistakes and I strive to continuously improve. If there's one marketing mistake that I've learned to avoid, it is failure to develop a strong brand platform before communicating to one's stakeholders.



## CATEGORY FOOD &amp; BEVERAGES



## ALI SHAIKH

COMMERCIAL DIRECTOR, GENERAL MILLS MENAT, 39

Ali began his career at Unilever where he developed the popular tea brand Lipton in Pakistan. In 2007 he moved to Mondelez, where he was responsible for rapidly developing Oreo and Tang in MEA, and positioning both brands as category leaders.

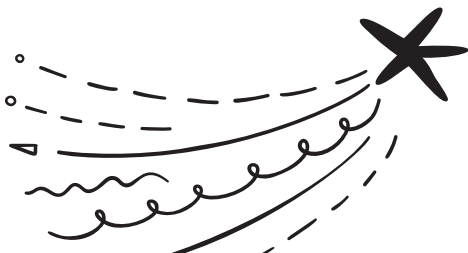
**Major achievements** Ali is behind the launch of the region's favorite kid's snack brands Prince and Barni, both of which are key players in the kids snacking market.

**The key marketing mantra he believes in** A quote by John Augustus Shedd, "A ship in harbor is safe, but that is not what ships are made for".

**Years in career so far** 17.

**Largest team size handled** "Currently he has the largest team he has managed so far at General Mills, which comprises 20 people and an extended responsibility of the Dubai, Saudi Arabia and South Africa offices which is around 47 people.

**If you were to change one marketing mistake you might have made in your career so far, what would that be?** Overall if there is one thing that I have learnt it is synchronizing the efforts of marketing, sales, and distribution. This is perhaps more important than anything else. Timing is also an important factor – only when you have the right promotional and visibility mix can advertising be effective. Picking that right moment is important and perhaps in the past I have missed that timing. Often the pieces of the puzzle are ready during the presentation stage, but not in the consumer space. But that is the joy of marketing; we dream big and aim tall always, and in the end hope that our consumers respond to us and help us win.



## CONSULTING



## JEHAN ABDULKARIM

DIRECTOR - MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS, ACCENTURE, 36

Jehan's career started 17 years back as a software engineer at a government entity in her home country, Bahrain. She was the first female editor-in-chief for a specialized publication in Saudi Arabia. Jehan soon built a strong network in the region and Cisco Systems invited her to head the PR and executive communications for Saudi. Following Cisco, Jehan transitioned to a regional marketing role in Oracle Corporation, where she headed up the marketing function for the Middle East and North Africa.

**Major achievements so far**

- She launched the first "virtual" press conference in the region back in 2007.
- She created the largest qualified leads pipeline for Oracle in MENA for three years running.
- She was awarded 75 performance points by the CEO of Accenture with a personal message for role in strengthening client relationships in Saudi Arabia.

**The key marketing mantra she believes in** *Acta Non Verba* (translated from Latin: Actions, not words).

**Years in career so far** 17.

**Largest team size handled** 13.

**If you were to change one marketing mistake you might have made in your career so far, what would that be?** Expecting more from my leadership, and fighting harder for it.

## CATEGORY CONSULTING

## DARIA SHEVCHENKO

MARKETING CAMPAIGNS LEAD FOR COMMUNICATIONS, MEDIA & TECHNOLOGY PRACTICE AT A.T. KEARNEY MIDDLE EAST, 32

Daria is passionate about marketing of professional services and thrives on the challenges associated with optimizing the unique marketing mix available when positioning firms' expertise, knowledge and relationships versus a physical product. To further develop her marketing skills, she obtained her second master's degree in marketing from the London Business School. "I spent most of my marketing career in the legal sector by working for renowned international law firms. Recently, I made a career move to develop my experience in the consulting sector, and was thrilled to accept an offer to join the marketing department at A.T. Kearney," she adds.

**Major achievements so far** Daria is particularly proud of a recent launch of a thought leadership white paper produced by their experts in the telecom industry. "It was a great example of collaboration with a region's premier industry association of telecom operators which allowed this campaign to be a great success and reach key policy makers, regulators, hundreds of relevant contacts in public and private sectors, as well as received major media coverage," she adds. A significant part of her role in business development was producing responses to RFPs, which can become an intensive exercise, but, at the same time, it is an exhilarating process.

**The key marketing mantra she believes in** The more informed you are the better decisions you can make on how to adapt your marketing campaign to attract new business and better service current clients.

**Years in career so far** 5.

**Largest team size handled** On average 5 to 10.

**If you were to change one marketing mistake you might have made in your career so far, what would that be?** Fewer well-timed

and planned campaigns, done better, will always produce superior results. It is essential to get as many stakeholders on board initially ensuring alignment and that our message is consistent and clear.



## FMCG



## AHMED KABIL

SENIOR CATEGORY BRAND MANAGER – ORAL CARE (ARABIAN PENINSULA & PAKISTAN), P&G, 30

Ahmed has been heading the current role since January 2016. Prior to that he was associate brand manager – oral care (Arabian Peninsula, Jan'12 – Dec'15), and before that associate brand manager – Hugo Boss & Baldessarini Fragrances (MEIS followed by MEAT Region in Oct'09 – Dec'11).

**Major achievements so far** During his time at Oral Care, his key achievements are:

- Regained share leadership on Toothbrush business (2012)
  - Extended share leadership by achieving reached record share on Whitening Toothpaste business (2017)
  - Led Oral Care to be the fastest growing category in the Arabian Peninsula across all P&G brands (2017)
  - Led Oral Care to be the fastest growing Oral Care Business across Europe/IMEA region (2017)
  - Awarded P&G CEO Award (2015)
  - Awarded IMEA President Award (2017)
  - Awarded Oral Care E/IMEA Champion Award (2013)
- During his time on the fragrance business:
- Led Hugo Boss to be the fastest growing share gainer for P&G (2011)
  - Led Hugo Boss MEAT to be the fastest growing Hugo Boss Business globally (2011).

**The key marketing mantra he believes in** The future of marketing relies on the ability of brands and brand builders to be consistently simple.

**Years in career so far** 8.

**Largest team size handled** 3 direct reportees; 8 direct/indirect reportees

**If you were to change one marketing mistake you might have made in your career so far, what would that be?**

Believing that my thoughts or ideas reflect the consumers' we serve. I had taken a call to air a TVC that really stood out of the clutter; that me and my colleagues felt was really fun and different. We didn't pay attention to some simple consumer-related barriers. We spent LOTS of money to air this new copy for several months only to get back results post the TVC airing that showed it had 1 per cent brand attribution - the lowest I have seen across any category in my career.





## CATEGORY MARKETING &amp; BRANDING

## ARADHITA BASU

MARKETING MANAGER, PICO MENA, 32

Aradhita is a digital-focused marketing manager with a passion for the ever-evolving social media landscape. A former software developer, she has built brand marketing strategies for SMEs and corporates in the human resources, financial services and events services sectors. She matches communications with business objectives, while making the best use of available platforms and technologies. Aradhita holds a BE in Information Technology from Manipal Institute of Technology and an MBA in Contemporary Marketing Management from SP Jain School of Global Management.

**Major achievements so far**

- She launched four sub-brands and five departments to diversify service portfolios
- She revived dormant client relationships to broaden sales pipeline by 32 per cent
- She implemented training and development programmes that boosted project success ratio by 54 per cent
- She set up and sustained healthy engagement on 16 social media accounts

**The key marketing mantra she believes in** Listen to the numbers.

**Years in career so far** 9.

**Largest team size handled** 15.

**If you were to change one marketing mistake you might have made in your career so far, what would that be?** I would establish a strong brand management policy before implementing adhoc programmes.



## HR



## ROBA AL-ASSI

REGIONAL COMMUNICATIONS &amp; BRAND DIRECTOR, BAYT.COM, 32

Roba has over 13 years of experience in marketing. Her marketing career background is very diverse: she has worked as a designer, UX Architect, Product Manager, journalist, community manager, and even blogger. She also owns one of the oldest blogs in the Middle East, andfaraway.com, started in 2004.

**Major achievements** "There are always achievements when working for Bayt.com, one of the biggest brands in the Middle East, with over 28 million members," she says, such as:

- Reaching millions of people on social media with millions of fans and followers, and the number constantly increases;
- She ran successful ad campaigns which generated millions of views. Besides. "We produce over 20 papers each year that are used by the media, NGOs, professionals and companies," she says.

**The key marketing mantra she believes in** Experiment, measure, then iterate. Also, fail fast.

**Years in career so far** 13.

**Largest team size handled** 12.

**If you were to change one marketing mistake you might have made in your career so far, what would that be?**

Not advertising more aggressively on Facebook when their self-serve ads were new and their reach and CPC was so cheap.

## CATEGORY FMCG

## JESSY ABDULNOOR

MARKETING MANAGER – MAGGI, NESTLÉ MIDDLE EAST, 34

Jessy started her studies in Columbia University and continued at the American University of Beirut, graduating with a degree in business and economics. She worked in sales for a short time before moving to Nestlé, where she built most of her career over the past 11 years.

**Major achievements so far** She is overseeing the marketing of Maggi's transformation journey to only include 100 per cent natural ingredients that people know and love, through an initiative simply dubbed "Kitchen Cupboard."

**The key marketing mantra she believes in** "Be bold, be persistent, be patient and no big idea is impossible to achieve".

**Years in career so far** 11.

**Largest team size handled** Jessy is part of the leadership team of the Maggi brand for the Middle East region, which includes close to 20 people including the marketing and trade marketing teams and brand activations.

**If you were to change one marketing mistake you might have made in your career so far, what would that be?**

A key learning throughout Jessy's career is to always put the consumer preference and insight at the core of all marketing campaigns and product expansions.

## IT &amp; TELECOM



## TAREK ABDALLA

HEAD OF MARKETING, MIDDLE EAST &amp; NORTH AFRICA, GOOGLE, 38

Tarek is responsible for all Google and YouTube products across 19 Arabic-speaking countries, leading B2C, B2B and brand/reputation marketing teams. He is also responsible for building usage and, where relevant, commercialization for consumers, business and partners across the Arab world. He has been with Google since 2012 and was previously at Mars Incorporated for 13 years in Dubai, Jeddah and New York.

**Major achievements so far** Launched YouTube in MENA in 2012; today the platform enjoys some of the highest per capita usage rates globally, growing at 60 per cent per year with unique content such as YouTube Aflam, a collection of 3,400 Arabic movies and YouTube Musalsalat, a collection of 500 Arabic TV shows. He also brought Google Street View to the region, starting with Burj Khalifa and the Pyramids of Giza. He amplified the voices of women creators on YouTube showcasing their diversity, from fashion and beauty experts to movie and tech reviewers. "A few years ago you could count the number of female YouTube creators on one hand; today we have a vibrant community of thousands of women creators in various diverse topics, most of them showcased on YouTube Batala hub," he says. He also ran ecosystem partnerships such as Mobile App Launcher, with Udacity and the Egyptian government, which trained over 1,000 developers to create apps for Android.

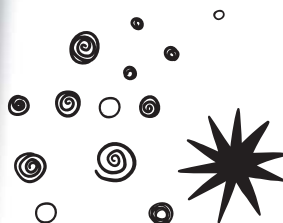
**The key marketing philosophy he believes in** "No minute gone comes ever back again; take heed and see you nothing do in vain" I saw this inscribed on the Liberty Clock on Great Marlborough Street in London and I love this mantra because I believe in the value of time and efficiency.

**Years in career so far** 18.

**Largest team size handled** 45 (Ad Operations Team at Yahoo! Inc. - German Market).

**If you were to change one marketing mistake you might have made in your career so far, what would that be?**

I think patience is a virtue I learnt a bit too late.





## CATEGORY AUTOMOBILES



## HUSSEIN M. DAJANI

GENERAL MANAGER - DIGITAL MARKETING,  
AFRICA, MIDDLE EAST, AND INDIA, NISSAN MOTOR CO, 38

As a finance and economics graduate, Hussein started his career, while studying in University, working in Banque Audi in Lebanon (started in a branch then moved to HQ working in the credit department). After that, he moved to Merrill Lynch in Lebanon until the call for duty came (military service). Rejecting to spend a year in the army, he opted to leave the country for a period of five years and move to the Gulf. "I still remember my first interview in the advertising industry. I was with the managing director of JWT in Dubai, Nagib Badreddine, who gave me an opportunity to join the agency in Saudi Arabia. I messed up badly in the interview as I knew nothing about the advertising industry," he recalls. "I spent the next 11 years working for long, yet rewarding hours (the most rewarding was the young high potential leaders award from WPP) in agencies like JWT, Leo Burnett, and TBWA\ in the MENA region (six years in KSA, four years in UAE, and one year in Bahrain)," he adds.

**Major achievements so far** The most interesting achievement for him was what he was able to achieve when he was at hug digital (which just got acquired by WPP). He joined the agency and there were about 50 team members in Dubai, Cairo, and Trivandrum offices. When he left the agency there were 127 team members. Moreover, when he joined, they had about 25 clients. When he I left the agency they had about 60+ clients.

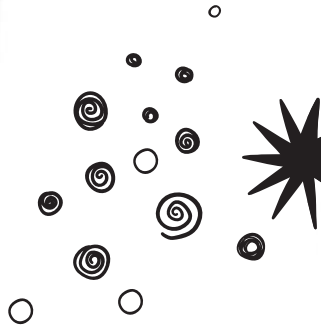
**The key marketing mantra he believes in** The most important thing that my father taught me is, whether you're an office boy or a CEO, whether you are rich or poor, there is one thing in life money can never buy, your name and reputation. No matter what you do, if your name and / or reputation is corrupted, nothing will change that, so treat it as your most sacred and precious asset.

**Years in career so far** 17.

**Largest team size handled** At hug digital, being the COO of the company, he was in charge of about 127 people. At JWT, when he was handling the STC business, he was in charge of a team of 35 people.

**If you were to change one marketing mistake you might have made in your career so far, what would that be?** Even though I love the communication industry, I had a passion for the consultancy industry and wanted to try it as a personal challenge to see if I can make it there or not. I was always told that I am an emotional person and a free soul, and hence consultancy wouldn't be a right fit at all for me.

## FMCG



## JOUMANA HADDAD

BRAND MANAGER - LIPTON, UNILEVER GULF, 30

Joumana started her career in sales in a media company selling advertising space. "In my last six years with Unilever, I have gained experience in a variety of functions such as field sales, shopper marketing and brand building, which has enabled me to strengthen my overall marketing skills," she says.

**Major achievements so far**

One of her biggest achievements in marketing is the Lipton Fit Cart campaign. This campaign was innovative because it was not traditional marketing that focused solely on the product communication. Rather, as she says, it was more focused on the lifestyle of our consumers in the community acting as an eye opener for them on how to integrate a healthy lifestyle into their busy day to day life.

**The key marketing mantra she believes in** I live by two mantras: "Make the consumer the hero of your story" by Ann Handley and "Buyers care about their own lives not our products; content should reflect this dynamic" by Tobey Murdock.

**Years in career so far** 10.

**Largest team size handled** 3.

**If you were to change one marketing mistake you might have made in your career so far, what would that be?** Early in my marketing career, when I was first starting out, I had a very innovative idea. I was still new and shy so I didn't voice my idea out. A few months later another company ended up launching the same idea and that's how I missed out on the opportunity. Since then I have become more vocal and participative and take every opportunity to bring a new idea for discussion - which is very much in line with the company's approach towards the empowerment of employees. I also encourage any new talent which joins the workforce to do the same.

## CATEGORY IT &amp; TELECOM

## HEBA SAYED

PORTFOLIO MARKETING LEADER, IBM WATSON CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT, MIDDLE EAST AND AFRICA, 33

Heba has been branding, marketing and developing strategies for leading companies in the information and communications industry across the Middle East and Africa for over 12 years, out of which she spent nine at IBM based in Egypt and UAE. Heba started her IBM career as a channel marketing leader for IBM Egypt in 2009. Her responsibilities then expanded to include the rest of MEA, where she deployed a new agency model and managed agency activities with hundreds of business partners. Heba then went on to lead marketing for IBM server solutions where she led three widely-successful product launches during her tenure and gained market share for IBM.

**Major achievements so far**

During Heba's tenure at IBM, she has demonstrated strong contribution to the units/products she managed and also won awards for IBM's participation in key marketing venues in the Middle East and Africa:

- In 2015 Heba led IBM z13 launch with ROI of 20,000 per cent, making this the best performing campaign in IBM across MEA for that year
- In 2016 Heba led IBM's participation in a key technology trade show where she achieved an impressive marketing ROI of 25,000 per cent. IBM's presence was awarded as the best presence among 300+ exhibitors by independent ratings

**The key marketing mantra she believes in** Time is the most valuable thing a man can spend.

**Years in career so far** 12.

**Largest team size handled** 10.

**If you were to change one marketing mistake you might have made in your career so far, what would that be?** Trying to

be a perfectionist. I remember spending nights perfecting a business case for more marketing investments before sending it for approval, re-drafting messaging for a digital campaign prior to launch or re-arranging the slides in 10 different ways for my monthly business review. I have learnt over time that this is not only impractical, but it makes the process more about my view of how things should be as opposed to what my clients or colleagues think.

## CONSUMER ELECTRONICS



## SELDA PAYAT

CONSUMER MARKETING MANAGER, MEA, LENOVO MIDDLE EAST, 33

Selda started her career at the age of 22. After eight years with Hewlett Packard across Turkey and the Middle East sales operations and marketing she moved to Lenovo in 2015 as Middle East and Africa Consumer Marketing Manager.

**Major achievements so far**

- Increased unaided brand awareness by seven per cent within the first six months at Lenovo among target audience in Middle East with the integrated marketing communications approach under the global Goodweird umbrella campaign for Yoga brand.
- Doubled the sellout year over year for gaming notebooks in the UAE and KSA with targeted awareness campaigns on social and digital media, as well as strong coordination with sales teams on the ground.
- Achieved #2 position within Lenovo WW with the phablet sellout as part of the MEA region with the successful launch of this niche product category.

**Key marketing mantra she believes in** "People do not buy goods and services. They buy relations, stories and magic," By Seth Godin.

**Years in career so far** 10.

**Largest team size handled** 8.

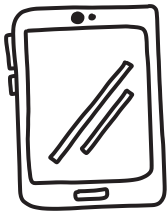
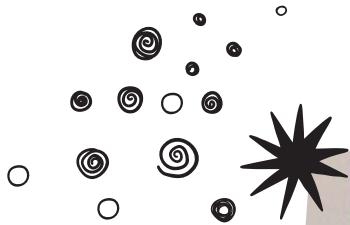
**If you were to change one marketing mistake you might have made in your career so far, what would that be?**

The most challenging part has been working with influencers so far, as it is very tricky to make it right and not making the end user think this is paid advertising.





## CATEGORY IT &amp; TELECOM



## ADEL AL RAIS

SENIOR DIRECTOR, MARKETING COMMUNICATION -  
ENTERPRISE FOR EITC, DU, 36

Adel is responsible for all Enterprise marketing functions, including Du's brand image, vertical marketing, advertising and enterprise channel enablement via Enterprise communication strategies of different verticals of enterprise business unit (large enterprise, SME, manage services). In prior roles, Adel developed vast experience in commercial communications. Adel started his telecom career in 2004, he has consistently grown in the organization within the communications segments for both consumer and enterprise.

**Major achievements so far** Adel has won several awards, such as: Advertiser of the year in MENA crystal 2017

October, 2008 | Shukran Award "best employee of the month at Brand & Communication".

December, 2008 | Shukran Award "best employee of the month at Brand & Communication".

February, 2009 | Champion Award "best employee of the year at Brand & Communication".

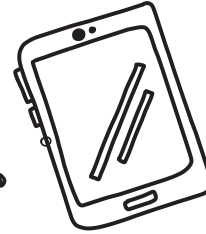
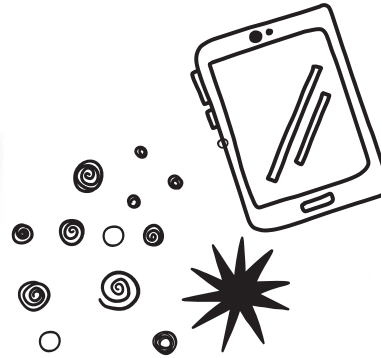
**The key marketing mantra he believes in** Most innovation is key. Think like a customer.

**Years in career so far** 13.

**Largest team size handled** 10.

**If you were to change one marketing mistake you might have made in your career so far, what would that be?** I believe mistakes are meant to be corrected. No matter how many you make it's all about passion and dedication.

## SOCIAL MEDIA



## NADA ENAN

SENIOR MANAGER FOR MARKETING & PR, LINKEDIN MENA, 31

Nada says she has been incredibly lucky to be doing exactly what she loves – managing communications and marketing in different markets and companies.

"I have worked in dynamic markets such as Stockholm, Rome, Cairo, Dubai, handled local as well as global roles, handled communications in tough times such as the The Arabic Spring in 2011 and exciting times – launching new products and expanding businesses, all which have given me an edge, a unique experience and deeply rooted my love for communications, for all the power it beholds," she says.

After moving to LinkedIn, she added Brand & Member Marketing to her responsibilities – an area that she believes is really exciting after undergoing a massive shift in the past few years.

**Major achievements so far**

- Earlier in 2017, her team launched the first ever "LinkedIn Power Profiles" list – a list of the most viewed profiles on LinkedIn in UAE

- The campaign was very successful on all fronts and, most importantly, she says, it managed to raise awareness on the concept of professional branding, and the fact that you don't need to be an active job seeker to have an active presence on LinkedIn

**The key marketing mantra she believes in** "Data Tells, Story Sells" – One of my all-time favorite quotes as I really believe that while we can depend on data to show us trends, you can only reach people and impact their hearts through crafted stories.

**Largest team size handled** 6.

**If you were to change one marketing mistake you might have made in your career so far, what would that be?**

As clichéd as this may sound, I do believe there are no mistakes in a career; there are only lessons and those who know how to learn and move forward are the ones who succeed.

## CATEGORY HOSPITALITY

## MUSTAPHA ELKHANSA

MARKETING MANAGER, LE MERIDIEN, AL KHOBAR, KSA, 32

Mustapha graduated in 2006 from the American University in Dubai and did his BBA (marketing major) in the year 2007. He had to choose between a junior position at a leading branding agency in Dubai or a sales advisor position at an automotive organization. He says, "Considering my father's advice I took the sales position in order for me to understand promotion methods, sales processes, developing negotiation skills etc." Ford Motors in Dubai was the first step in his professional career, while Dubizzle.com (known as OLX in rest of the MENA) was the next step. Mobile marketing manager at Boost Communications was the third step in his career and the second in the digital marketing world. In 2014 he moved back to KSA and joined Le Meridien Al Khobar to lead the marketing department and utilize the marketing experience he had gained and developed to implement and plan the marketing strategies for the property.

**Major achievements so far**

- He managed cost-effective marketing management and vendor negotiations to end each year on an average of 15% under-budget
- He initiated sponsorships for particular events that played a big role in increasing revenues for the company
- He used google ad-words campaign that helped a client increase sales by 60 per cent within a period of six months
- He increased the number of covers sold for the restaurant by 30 per cent by launching a snapchat account and taking reservations through that channel

**Key marketing mantra he believes in:** The best marketing does not feel like marketing. Don't find customers for your product, find products for your customers.

**Years in career:** 11.

**Largest team size handled:** 9.

**If you were to change one marketing mistake you might have made in your career so far, what would that be?** The marketing we have learned in school was about promoting on newspapers and radios. Throughout the past 10 years many new marketing channels have changed. I was lucky enough to work with the right organizations and the right people to always be up to date and avoid making mistakes.



## SOCIAL MEDIA



## CHRISTINE HARB

HEAD OF MARKETING,  
FACEBOOK MENAP, 36

Christine oversees Facebook Inc.'s marketing strategy in the Middle East, North Africa and Pakistan. She has 15 years of strategy, innovation and marketing experience across retail and consumer product industries. She has worked with top-class marketing brands such as Nike and Red Bull across Europe, Middle East and Africa. Christine holds an MBA from IE Business School and a masters in marketing from Panthéon-Sorbonne Paris. A strong believer in education, she is part of a career advisory board and regularly supports students with their professional and business decisions. She is a regular speaker and jury member at major regional marketing events.

**Major achievements so far** Christine has worked on many regional and global projects, elevating the brands she has worked on across Europe, Middle East and Africa. To list a few:

- She launched the first Nike Women store in the Middle East, generating +17 per cent overall sales vs. previous year
- She organized a Nike Human Race in Beirut that has gathered more than 1,200 runners
- She launched the Red Bull Editions in MENA reaching 65 per cent awareness in six months and has recently developed a Ramadan 360 campaign that generated more than 18 per cent revenue vs. 2016

**The key marketing mantra she believes in** "Done is Better than perfect", one of Facebook's mottos, is the mantra I believe in and live by both personally and professionally. This quote reminds us that perfection can be an enemy of progress and can often slow us down. Being perfect is not important, but getting the job done, while always striving for the highest quality we can, matters.

**Years in career so far** 15.

**Largest team size handled** 12.

**If you were to change one marketing mistake you might have made in your career so far, what would that be?** Faster shift towards mobile and digital transformation. Despite being a strong digital advocate since the early days and working closely with my agency to ensure a balanced media plan, investing heavily in digital and getting involved in technicalities that allow me to have a better understanding of this medium is what I would have changed.



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## GIANT STEPS

**Ruban Shanmugarajah**, Chief Operating Officer - Babyshop, speaks on the brand evolution and the way forward

**Can you give us some background about brand Babyshop? How did it evolve and what is the new brand positioning? Is it in any way different from what it was a few years back?**

Since its humble beginnings in 1973 in Bahrain until today, Babyshop as a brand has grown to become a household name across the GCC with more than 230 stores, spanning 16 countries of the GCC and MENA regions and beyond, as far afield as Thailand and Pakistan.

Throughout the brand's evolution, one thing remained common: it kept pace with the changing consumption behaviours and tastes of consumers.

A year and a half ago, we went back to understand where the consumers are: where they are in their lives, where they are in terms of their expectations of the brand.

We did a detailed consumer research, where we sat with our consumers right across the UAE and KSA, to try and understand their perceptions

and their expectations of the brand and, more importantly, where our consumers are today. While they said Babyshop was a great brand – they love shopping in Babyshop, they love the product and the value-for-money proposition – we sensed somewhere that we weren't always connecting and we weren't always as relevant as we should be or as we needed to be, as we moved forward with the consumers of today.

So we wanted to work on creating a greater emotional connect with the mothers, as opposed to a transactional connect, which is based on the product, the price, the value for money, the assortment and the convenience.

The mothers of today are very different to how mothers were when we set off on our journey. They are far more fashion-conscious, they are far more travelled and their expectations of a brand have evolved and changed.

So, we were not looking to do a 180-degree shift of our brand position; we wanted to change with the changing millennial mothers.

**Did this major change take place in any particular point of time?**

In our effort to keep pace with the changing consumer expectations, a lot of our communication and a lot of our look and feel are around being fun, being authentic and having that greater connect with the millennial mothers of today. We spent a good three to six months to go out and find partners who can support us in this repositioning. Once we had done that, we selected Mamac Ogilvy as our preferred partner, who came up with the best solution to what we were looking for.

From this year, especially in February, we refreshed our brand platform to stay relevant to the consumers of today. Our marketing and communication focus has since shifted more towards understanding the consumers' feedback. Our new positioning is a true reflection of the present day parenting; with no 'right' or 'wrong' ways of doing it; it's one's own unique parenting style.



### What are the major focus areas of Babyshop's new communication strategy?

We didn't want to be a brand that is imported. We are a home-grown brand and pertain to this part of the world. We understand the consumers, we understand the Middle East mothers of today. And while we are a genuine and an authentic brand, we also wanted to be considered as a fun brand.

That's why our customers can now notice the changed tone of voice, the look and the feel of the brand. Unlike earlier, the photographs are now not very staid with 'posed shots'; instead, they capture kids in their best moments, giving a genuine, authentic and natural feel. So, if you look at all our communications, it is all about letting kids be kids and capturing them in their best moment. Another noticeable change has been the focus on digital first. Earlier, as part of our older communication strategy, we would always think how a billboard and a print ad would look like first. Everything else would be an adaptation of that. Today, we look at what a digital ad would look like first and then adapt everything else around it.

### How did your personal shoppers programme or your omni-channel strategy come into the picture?

Babyshop has a wonderful legacy and we want to build on that. We have embraced repositioning, but, we haven't let go off what we have always been proud of; our core proposition that comprises of innovating products remain what they are as well as the value-for-money proposition remains true to what it has been.

To further strengthen this proposition, we came up with a service called Personal Shopper Assist, which is a personalised shopping adviser. Today, a lot of mothers are working mothers, so they don't have the time to look around for their product of choice. The personalised shopping adviser addresses this issue by taking the customer around the store for the full end-to-end journey. Overall, the



brand experience is moving forward. It is a journey that we had commenced in February of 2017 and it is a journey that we will continue to work hard on, year on year.

### Since there is no marked difference between online and offline, do you believe a change in mindset is required among marketers?

Absolutely. And I do believe that is going to be the biggest test of success for many brands. Today, the consumer wants to experience the brand or consume a product the way he/she wants – and a brand cannot dictate that. Today, we don't look at our business as online or offline. Rather, our omni-channel business model ensures we have presence in the stores as well as online. It's up to the consumer to decide the way they would like to shop.

Furthermore, some of our services online like 'click and collect' is a perfect blend of both worlds, 'same day delivery' which takes away the hassle from the consumers on the go who shop online due to paucity of time and much more that we offer to our customers in addition to our core proposition. As a brand, we have continuously evolved and make sure we are providing the best for our customers.

As a brand, we have continuously evolved and made sure we are providing the best for our customers

### What are the key marketing strategies you have adopted to set yourself apart from your competitors in the region?

Babyshop enjoys an iconic status amongst consumers. With a lion's share of the children's retail market in the GCC for the past 44 years, it has paved the path for organised retail and has witnessed the genesis and entry of home-grown as well as international retail brands in the region.

Today, as the market is undergoing challenging times, a lot of players have moved down the road of discounting and driving footfall through price reduction. We are not going to follow suit that way. Rather, we are emphasising on product innovation and we have got to differentiate through customer experience. This omni-channel experience is the key strategy that we are working on. We are one of the few retail-brands in the region today which offer click-and-collect. The customer can order an item online and can



**ANY MARKETER TODAY HAS TO CONSTANTLY BE ON HIS FEET, THINKING OF NEW WAYS TO BRING IN THE CONSUMER**

choose to pick it up at the nearest store. In the same way, she can buy online and return the product offline. We want to be a brand that the customer associates with him/herself by giving that holistic service proposition. So even if there is not a discount or a sale, they still want to buy from brand Babyshop.

To make itself more relevant to its new generation of millennial consumers, the brand now reinvents itself with a bold, fresh new look and focuses on three broad parameters of being authentic, open and playful encouraging increased relevance and admiration towards modern parenting styles and children of today amongst the wider consumer segment.

#### **Do you also analyse your online customer profiles while making your digital strategy?**

Absolutely – and this is not only for the digital strategy, but for the entire business operations as well. We have one of the largest loyalty programmes in the region – Shukran – and a significant proportion of our business comes via customers who are part of that. This also

enables us to analyse their data on an almost weekly basis and gives insights, such as what our consumers are buying and what their preferences are. Based on these insights, we make sure the communication that goes back to them is relevant and targeted. For example, say we know that a customer has children who love Disney. When the latest Disney merchandise arrives in our stores, we target that specific customer through a variety of e-mediums about the latest Disney collection. As a result, the response rate from customers is likely to be far greater, because this is a relevant piece of information for him/her; this enhances the customer-brand connection.

#### **Have your customer retention strategies increased ROI and brought down the cost of doing business?**

We're working on a multi-pronged strategy on how to reduce customer attrition and increase customer retention. In terms of ROI, this has definitely paid off for us. This is mainly because we have changed the marketing mix from

what it was to what it is now. To be honest, we have not gone completely digital, as we don't believe it is fair to put all your eggs into the digital basket. Having said that, we are migrating, slowly but surely, to be a digital-first brand – but not a digital-only brand. This move toward digital has enabled us to measure the ROI in a more certain terms than that of traditional media. As a result, we're clearly seeing better utilization of our funds and we see that continuing, going forward. While we have not increased our marketing spend, we are kind of getting a better return on them and channeling them in the right way.

#### **What are the major challenges you face in implementing your strategies?**

The biggest challenge is obviously the difficult environments we are trading in, as the market is going through challenging times. As a result, there are a lot of cost pressures in the business and one of them obviously is going to be on the marketing spend.

When a brand is going through a repositioning strategy, the ability to get the reach that it wants has to be tapered down. And this is exactly what we are doing. The second biggest challenge we are facing is customer retention and that challenge is getting harder by the day. So, therefore, any marketer today has to constantly be on his feet, thinking of new ways to bring in the consumer.

#### **What is the next level of growth for Babyshop? Which new markets will you be exploring?**

Today, we have a fairly strong presence right across the GCC and in the MENA region. For us, the foreseeable future is to continue to consolidate our business and focus on our customers. We will continue to look at opportunities in our core markets of KSA and the UAE. Thailand is performing well for us and we are looking at opportunities to expand there. The focus will be on the core markets that we have and how we can make sure that we continue to be relevant to the consumers. ■

#### **RUBAN SHANMUGARAJAH, CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER - BABYSHOP**

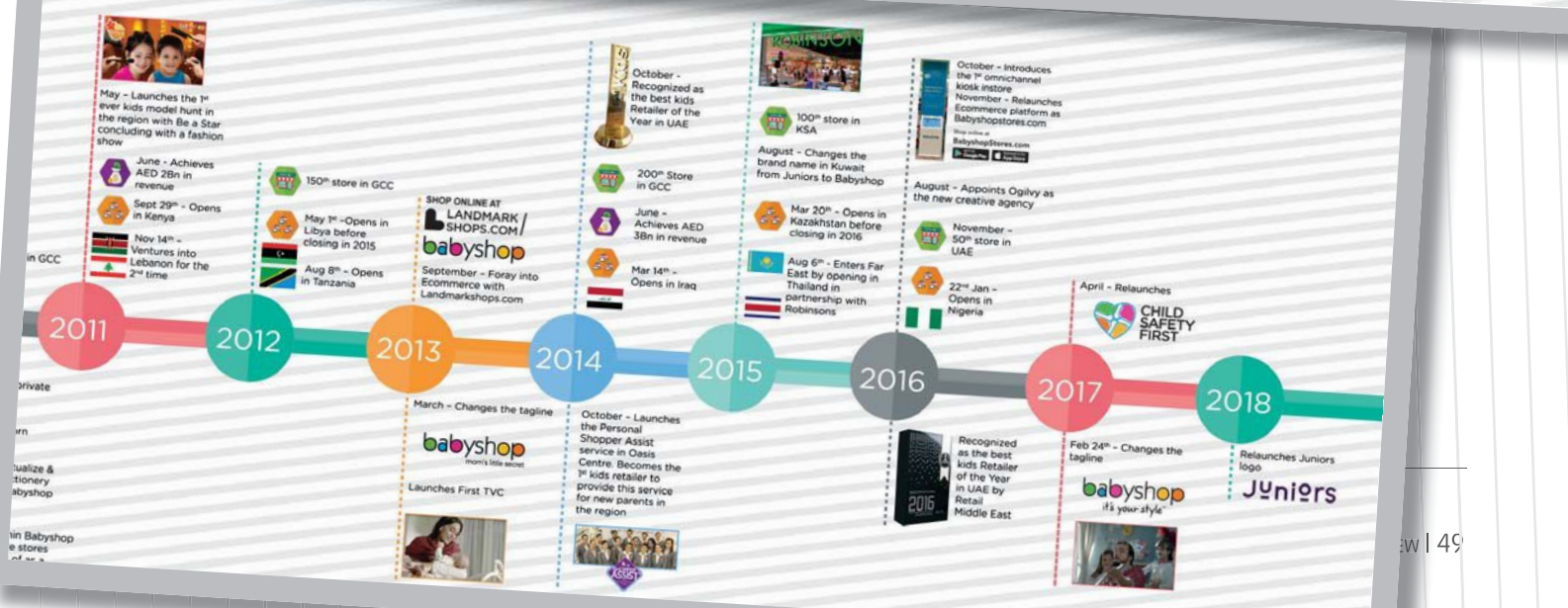
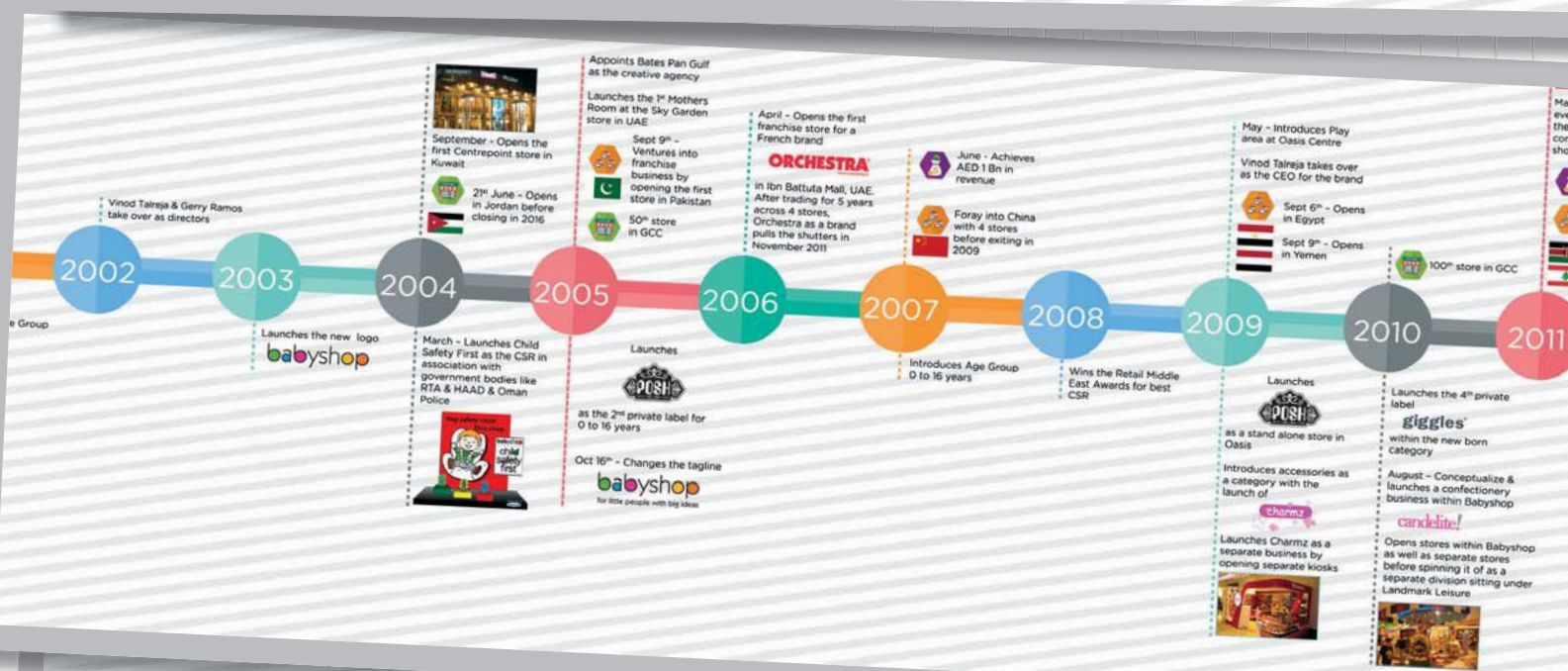
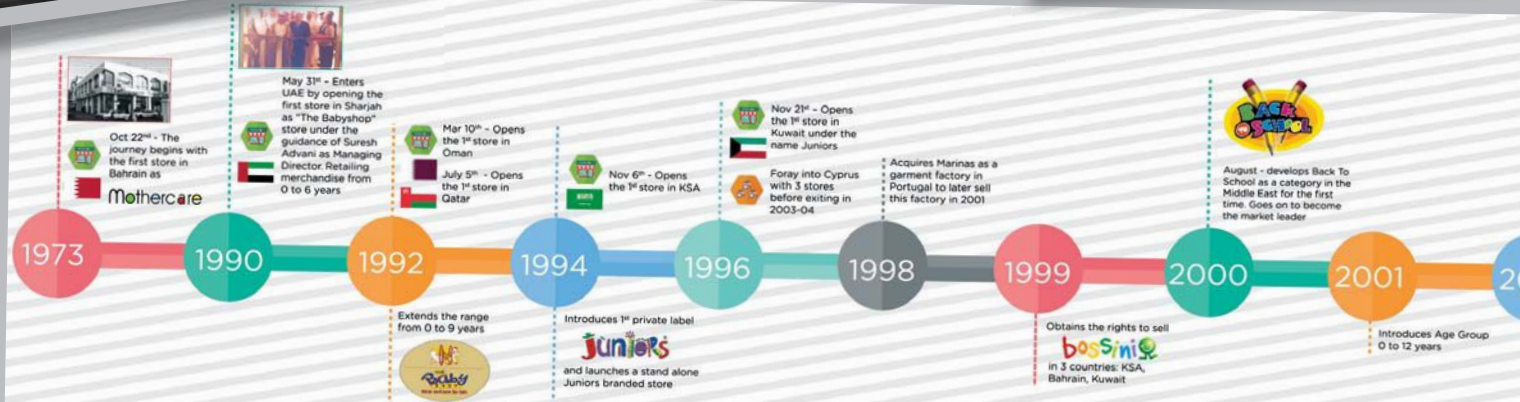
“While we have not increased our marketing spend, we are getting a better return on them and channeling them in the right way.”







BABYSHOP TIMELINE





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Head of Marketing

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**JODY CHILTON**  
CMO

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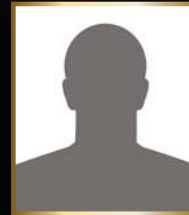
**JOHN THEKANADY**  
VP Media

Emirates



**JULIAN REDMAN**  
Head of Digital

Aldar Properties



**JYOTHI VERMA**  
Head - Product & Marketing

Dubai First



**KARIM MERHI**  
Marketing Manager MENA

Lavazza



**KHALED ISMAIL**  
Vice President  
Communications MEA

Tetra Pak



**LAURA CHAIBI**  
Head of Digital  
Research

MBC



**LENNART MUELLER-TEUT**  
Head of Marketing & Communications  
Mercedes-Benz Cars  
Middle East



**MARIA GEDEON**  
Marketing Director

Majid Al Futtaim  
Cinemas - Vox Cinemas



**MARIAM RAAFAT**  
IMC Manager

Coca-Cola



**MARIAN MAKARY**  
Former Head of  
Communications

Independent



**MARWAN MNEIMNEH**  
Marketing Manager

Ali Bin Ali



**MATTHEW HOROBIN**  
Director, Brand  
Engagement

Dubai Airports



**MELISSA WINGFIELD**  
Regional General  
Manager Marketing

Al Futtaim Group



**MERHAN EL MASSRY**  
Area Director of  
Marketing, KSA &  
Bahrain

Marriott International  
Middle East and Africa



**MICHEL EL HACHEM**  
Head of Retail

Mazrui International LLC



**MICHELE KARAA**  
Marketing Manager  
Middle East & Africa

Essity



**MICHELLE LEE**  
Vice President  
Marketing and  
Customer Experience  
Al Tayer

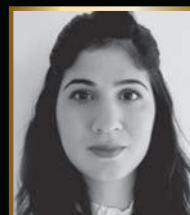


**MIKE FAIRBURN**  
General Manager

Sony Music  
Entertainment ME



**MINA TAHAJODY**  
Marketing Communications  
Manager  
Mercedes-Benz Cars  
Middle East



**MIRA CHLALA**  
Head of Digital for  
Consumer Beauty

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**NADINE TOUMA  
GAMMAGE**  
Consultant

Independent



**NAYLA MOUAWAD**  
Group Marketing &  
Communications  
Manager  
Boecker



**NILANJANA GHOSH**  
Regional Head of  
Marketing  
Bupa Global Africa,  
India and Middle East



**NOREEN NASRALLA**  
General Manager  
Marketing  
Al Futtaim Real Estate  
Group



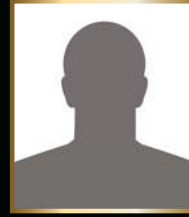
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**RAHUL SAXENA**  
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Oasis Mall & Home Box

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Marketing, Advertising  
and Events  
TECOM Group



**SAAD YUSUF**  
Marketing Director

Dubai Design District



**SAMER GABR**  
Consumer Market  
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P&G



**SARAH MESSER**  
Director Media MENAP

Nielsen



**SHYAM SUNDER**  
Head of Marketing -  
Centerpoint

Landmark Group



**SUHA HAROON**  
Regional Director

Bayt



**TARIQ JUDEH**  
Marketing Director

Visa



**WAHIB MIGHAEL NAISSI**  
Brand Manager Moët  
Hennessy

Maritime & Mercantile Intl



**WALID YARED**  
Chief Marketing Officer

CHOUEIRI GROUP



**WASIM BASIR**  
IMC Director

Coca-Cola



**YAUWANAGUHAN  
WIGNESWARAN**  
Head of Marketing

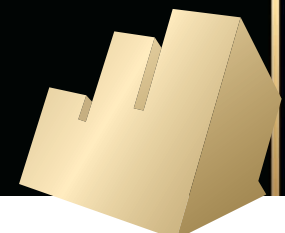
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**YAZID BITAR**  
Head Of Corporate  
Communication

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# IG BUSINESS

It's important to figure out what really matters and decide a course of action when it comes to **Big Data**, says **Jeremy Shayler**, Business Development Director at LexisNexis Business Insight Solutions – Middle East.

Evolution has 'programmed' us humans to look for and identify signals amidst the noise in our environment. Now that this environment is made up less of sabre-tooth tigers and velociraptors, and more of petabytes and zettabytes of data, we face a new challenge: how to quickly and efficiently work out what matters and then decide on a course of action.

We continuously create an abundance of data in our day-to-day lives and governments, businesses and other institutions are getting ever more sophisticated at collecting and analysing that data – to learn more about us, to anticipate and predict behaviour, to influence us to make certain decisions to buy, to vote, etc.

In many ways, the phrase Big Data itself is no longer the main topic of conversation. It is now more about application and business focus. How do you manage, measure and monetise your data and information assets? How does Big Data translate into better, more accurate and timelier business decisions? The more the Big Data space matures, the more

its focus will be on the distribution and availability of small data, wherever, whenever and in whichever context it is required.

In marketing, for example, the problem has always been to reach the right audience with the right messages through the right channels at the right time for maximum impact. It has never been more difficult and, at the same time, more straightforward, to solve this problem with data.

It is a 'delightful paradox', starting with asking the right questions, applying the right filters, picking the right tools from the hundreds available and understanding how to harmonise, blend and weight discrete and diverse data sets appropriately.

#### **To do this right, we need the right answers to these questions:**

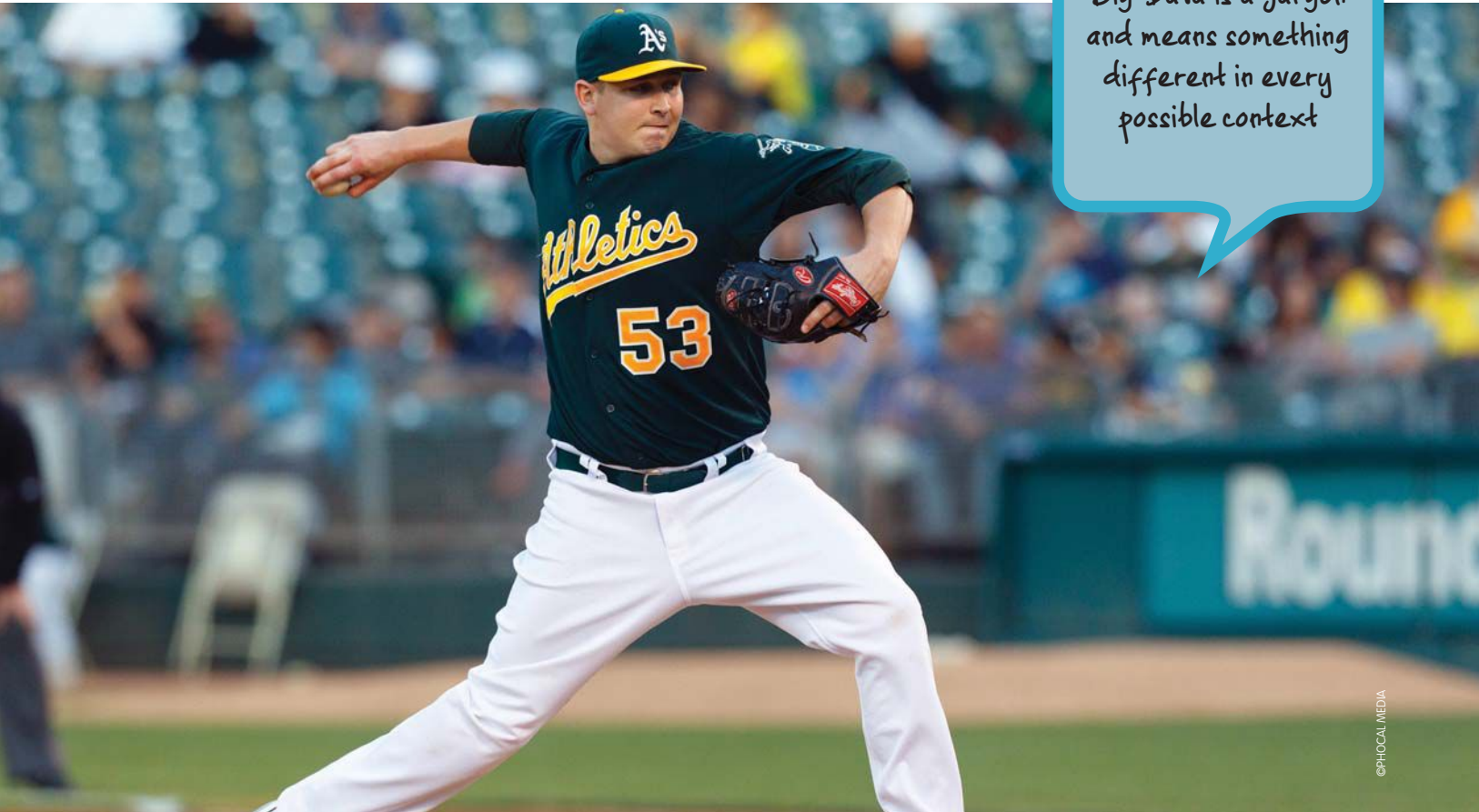
- How do we make data valuable?
- How do we make it understandable and turn it into insights that lead to better business decisions?

- How do we 'crack the nut' with an intelligent nutcracker, instead of a dumb sledgehammer?
- And how, ultimately, we achieve that effective symbiosis between the best of machines (doing the grunt work of data processing) and humans (adding the cognitive reasoning that turns Big Data into small, relevant, business-critical insights).

The human factor. Data alone will not bring better answers to ever more complex questions. The future belongs to 'strategists with algorithms': let the machines do the math and humans add meaning and understanding. Tools and data are essential, but ultimately it is still humans who think, make, market and sell.

Most people present data as if it was an insight, but it may just be casual observations rather than the holy grail of genuine, data-driven insights. It starts with being smart about finding the bits that matter: first, be really good at finding stuff (Boolean) from available

Big Data is a jargon and means something different in every possible context



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The key is making it all understandable – understanding what can it do for you and splitting Big Data into chunks of small data

content; interrogate data sets; search and find, then analyse.

The key is making it all understandable – understanding what can it do for you in business and splitting Big Data into chunks of

relevant small data. Big Data is a jargon and means something different in every possible context. It needs adequate definitions. The process is always the same: get immersed in data; filter what's important and what isn't; analyse (machine and human); and 'glean actionable insight'.

Consider measuring social media impact, for example: only automated tools can do the grunt work of data processing. Tools help make decisions about relationships between data sets, but it takes humans

understanding to add the reasoning and interpretation element.

**The challenge for PR.** For marketing, the focus is increasingly on customer experience. The lines between owned, earned and paid media are blurred, and expectations of marketing outcomes from public relations activities are higher than ever. It is no longer sufficient to earn media placements, to distribute press releases and to manage the social media profiles of brands. Companies increasingly expect PR to perform with tangible and measurable marketing impact.

**Big Data in sport – the Moneyball principle.**

A good example is the Moneyball approach, in reference to Michael Lewis's bestselling 2003 book about the success of the Major League Baseball team, the Oakland Athletics (aka the Oakland A's), and how their manager Billy Beane and his coaching staff

**JEREMY SHAYLER, BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR AT LEXISNEXIS BUSINESS INSIGHT SOLUTIONS – MIDDLE EAST**

"It is no longer sufficient to earn media placements, distribute press releases and manage the social media profiles of brands"





brought a rigorous, data-driven approach to a sport where recruitment was done by gut feeling and rules of thumb that were informed by the most salient data points: such as who can smash the ball out of the park most regularly.

The story of the Oakland A's is proof that data analytics and evidence-based decision making can beat the collective wisdom of experts (and even be the topic of a Hollywood movie, released in 2011, with Brad Pitt as Billy Beane). In 2002 and 2003, the team had one of the lowest salary bills in Major League Baseball. And yet, they managed to recruit players with skills that took them to the play-offs in 2002 and 2003. But as other teams catch up, the principle gets copied. Everybody can potentially benefit from the democratisation of data.

**The 3, 4, 5 Vs.** Back in the early 2000s, Meta Group (now part of Gartner) defined Big Data initially by three main characteristics, the 3 Vs: volume, variety and velocity of data. IBM and others added a fourth and then a fifth V: value and veracity. In our age of fake news and alternative facts, it is easy to see why and how these two are now inextricably linked. Without veracity, data has no value. Therefore, the success of global fact-checking initiatives, championed by the big social media networks as well as traditional media companies and other organisations, will be critical for the continued business success of Big Data.

**PR and uncertainty.** *PR Week's 2017 Power Book* has the movers and shakers of the PR and Comms industry commenting on the big opportunities for PR this year – and the top result was The Era of Uncertainty and thus the opportunity to help clients grow amid the chaos and uncertainty that we are witnessing, day in and day out. Other key themes discussed included opportunities in content creation, influencer marketing, the fast-changing media landscape and challenging 'fake news', as well as measuring the impact of PR and the desire to grow more boardroom influence.



The challenges around fake news and alternative facts have created a sense that we are faced with more uncertainty than ever

**Data and decisions under uncertainty.** So Big Data is driving ever more elaborate decision-making algorithms and processes, fuelled by exponential growth of data volumes.

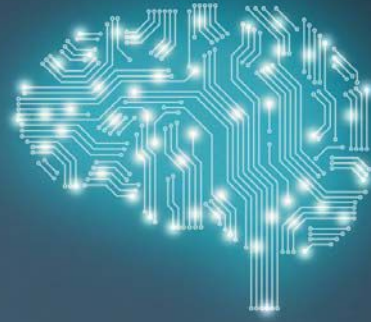
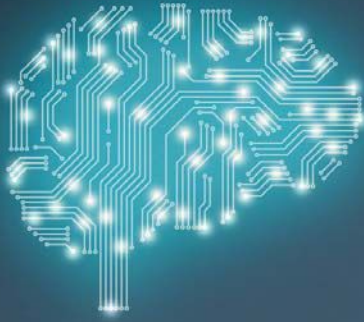
At the same time, the challenges around fake news and alternative facts have created a sense that we are faced with more uncertainty than ever. A source of practical answers is the discipline of behavioural economics and, in particular, the foundational work of Daniel Kahnemann and Amos Tversky (see *The Undoing Project* by Michael Lewis, the author of *Moneyball*).

As we learned from the work of Kahnemann / Tversky and many others since,

we humans are not good at all at making judgements under uncertainty. We seek (and then overrate) opinions that are aligned with our own and we 'auto-filter' dissonant views. That goes a long way in explaining how pollsters have been struggling with recent events (Brexit, Trump).

When we start looking a little more closely and we consider the dynamics between the mainstream media and social media, partisan channels and platforms – the likely repercussions of an echo chamber effect – then, of course, we are looking at the psychology of processing and selecting information, of forming and confirming beliefs. And of behaviour based on those beliefs.

According to *Information Week*, the Big Data analytics market alone will have exceeded \$200 billion by 2020. A more profound understanding of the very human side of Big Data will be the key to unlocking this enormous potential. ■



## GET REAL

**Moustafa Mahmoud**, Founder and CEO, Cognitev, sheds light on how AI is changing the face of online advertising

Advertising is the engine that fuels the growth of any business, whether it be offline or online. As brands start to shift their advertising dollars from offline mediums to online channels, there is a larger need for speed, data-driven decision making, and continuous testing. It sounds very altruistic, right? Not so. Over many years of online ad practice, advertisers used to rely on clicks as a broad measurement of campaign performance. With time, clicks have dwindled due to a variety of reasons, leading to a drop in measurable interaction between web users and online advertisements.

All of these were not possible in the offline world, but to do them well online requires

significant data-crunching capabilities and resources to act on that data. The biggest bottleneck to truly unleash the true power of the online advertising medium is the number of people you have working on your online advertising, whether it's in-house or outsourced, the number of people (and their skills) is directly related to how efficient you can be.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is revolutionising industries across the board, bringing automation and machine intelligence to remove such bottlenecks. It is paving a new wave of future innovation in every sphere, and it is changing the face of online advertising forever.

So, why do digital marketers need AI? The short answer: To make their lives easier. Marketers

have depended on tools and technology to automate their work and reduce manual effort for a while. Yet, there has always been a gap in terms of effort and quantifiable results. Intuition about the right audience and time to send messages isn't enough to answer a digital marketer's basic questions: Who should I reach out to? What should I send? When should I send the message? Over what channel?

The answer to these questions is the key to creating engagement and growth, fostering sales and building a brand. As these questions remain unanswered for marketers across the spectrum, they must harness the power of data.

Data is everywhere. Every customer in the digital space brings with them an amalgamation



of data and is constantly creating new data for marketers to understand, process and act on. The problem is this: big chunks of data don't necessarily make things any easier. In fact, they can make things so complicated that the first instinct is to abandon the data and go by intuition alone – but this won't give you the right results.

AI and machine learning can understand human behaviour to the extent where big data sets are not only analysed, segmented and filtered, but meaning is also derived from them.

- Which customers hate receiving your emails and delete them as they hit your inbox?
- How can I make sense of all of this data I have from our campaigns?
- Which customer would like a particular product?
- How can I personalise the user experience and make it "sticky"?

Using AI in online advertising can not only help answer marketers these questions – in some cases, it already is. This gives back marketers time to innovate and grow their brand, rather than worry about how to automate emails to millions of customers at a time.

### Here's how AI is leading the evolution of online advertising:

**1. AI provides efficiency.** AI is being adopted by many technology companies to improve the efficiency and relevancy of online advertising campaigns, resulting in better performance, which is the ultimate goal of every marketer. Machine-learning algorithms used to drive efficiency across real-time bidding networks will generate \$42 billion in annual ad spend by 2021, up from \$3.5 billion in 2016. Machine-learning algorithms do the heavy lifting, intelligently identifying consumers and serving relevant ads, but there are still pieces that can only be recognised and managed by a human, of course. These include accounting for sales and promotions, the integrity of brand assets and other issues that arise and can be accounted for only by humans.



**2. AI provides personalisation.** Personalisation has been a buzzword and a big focus in online advertising for some time, yet consumers are worried of their information being used for advertising purposes and the resulting influence it may have on their purchase decisions. More than 78 per cent of US Internet users said personally relevant content from brands increases their purchase intent. Ultimately, it comes down to the quality and relevancy of the personalised message, whether consumers realise it or not.

Personalisation technology has evolved to become a standard in advertising for many brands, but the technology must continue to evolve for brands to deliver powerful experiences amidst changing consumer behaviours, platforms and media. Going beyond products, this personalisation

AI is being adopted by many technology companies to improve the efficiency and relevancy of online advertising basic questions

includes the messaging or offer within the ad and even the placements and timing of the ads. For new customer acquisition, algorithms can take top-performing products from retargeting campaigns and find similar products in a feed to serve to high-value lookalike audiences. Even consumers who have never been to your site can have a relevant ad experience.

**3. AI provides performance.** Retargeting campaign performance used to just be a matter of having the right creative. If a



campaign wasn't performing well, it was probably because the creative needed to be refreshed.

Humans are inefficient in this, since this kind of testing process makes it nearly impossible to test or analyse the performance of multiple factors at once. Sad, but true – we simply aren't intelligent enough to understand or predict human behaviour across multivariate ad testing.

Dynamic creative optimisation, also known as DCO, is an important application of AI in online advertising. Using behavior and purchase data, machine-learning algorithms create a wide variety of ads using simple templates and test them among consumers to find the most effective ads that lead to conversion, and DCO can do it all without any human bias mixed in.

**4. AI predicts the future.** When AI is applied to any commercial product

### Self-learning algorithms help to achieve super-accurate user analysis and as a result make advertising approximately 40 per cent more efficient

or service distribution, it becomes a unique extension of who we are. It works phenomenally in e-commerce recommendation systems. Amazon, as an example, trusts its self-learning algorithms. The company's patented algorithm-based "anticipatory shipping" system can ultra-precisely define customer purchase patterns and predicts brands, price ranges and products that will be bought. Based on that, Amazon ships products to distribution centers before an order is even placed – revolutionising the e-commerce industry.

**5. AI, especially deep learning,** is the perfect tool to predict a user's desires

in the advertising industry. The technology is simplifying our everyday user experience by bringing deeply targeted ads that contain not only products we are more likely to buy, but also those we haven't seen or haven't even thought about.

Advertiser deep-learning tools will lead to changes in the way we recommend products, carefully weighing the value of a potential buyer, predicting conversion probability and, most importantly – learning about their desires. Self-learning algorithms help to achieve super-accurate user analysis and as a result make advertising approximately 40 per cent more efficient.

In the near future, advertisers and users will experience the evolution of advertising. While it may seem a little bit sci-fi, it's more likely a natural progression to make online activities more efficient than ever before. ■





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### CONTACT

**SARA NAJA**

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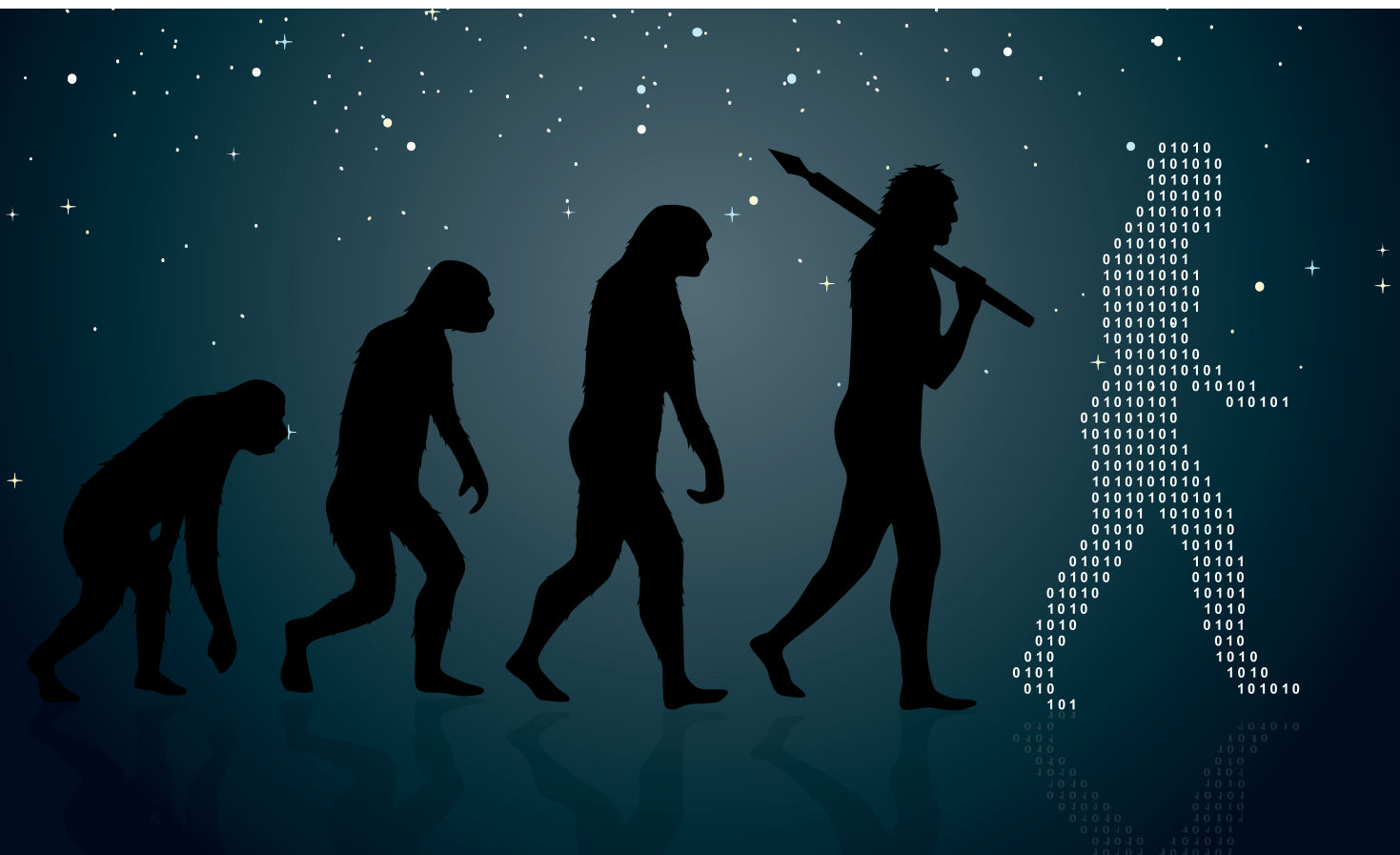
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# SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST

Are GCC marketers ready for marketing in the age of digital Darwinism? **David Parkinson**, ex-head of Digital for Africa, Middle East and India for Nissan, and co-founder of Brave & Heart, investigates.

Some of us remember the old days. The days before email and PowerPoint. You spent the first hour of the day reading memos and physical, in-the-post type mail, then it was meetings, with a notepad and pen, sometimes an OHP (overhead projector) and getting on with the core work of getting things done. When was this heady time? Approximately 1995. Just a little more than 20 years ago.

At home, you would see an advert on TV, the ones with catchy tunes you would sing at school, and the next time you were at the shops, you would beg your parents to buy the product because it had a free plastic toy inside. That's about complex as marketing got. TV. Posters. Print.

Showrooming was a word that wasn't invented, "the web" something resigned to cyberpunk novellas and the IT department moved code around in wooden boxes full of punch cards.

The good old days, the days before digital Darwinism.

Let's back up slightly – digital Darwinism? What is it? Does it matter? Should I care?

The official definition is: "Digital Darwinism is the phenomenon when technology AND society evolve faster than an organisation can adapt."

How long would it have taken me to find that out in the past? I would have likely had to phone a very knowledgeable friend, or

go to a library. It could have taken me quite some time. Maybe half a day, possibly a full day. Today? Just 30 seconds on Wikipedia.

**Brave new world.** The speed of information retrieval has changed exponentially. As has the way we retrieve it.

Let's move that ethos and phenomenon to the business world – to the simplest of tasks, such as completing expenses. And what happens? First, you get a form from HR to approve travel. Fill in form. Get form approved and signed. Go to cash office. Get money out. Another form. Travel. Collect paper receipts. Use online system to manually enter all receipts. Maybe. Wait for approval.



It's a nightmare and a mixture of online, offline and legacy.

Ok – what about shopping? The second most expensive purchase for most people is a car. For the online and social-savvy people (and let's be honest, that's a LOT of the GCC region) the car buying work starts online. Nearly 90 per cent of these people start online and, for this category, showroom visits to browse have reduced six-fold before purchase – from 12 visits to below two. When they arrive in a showroom, they knew more about the car than the salesman.

Adverts leading to videos, leading to web-sites, leading to spec sheets, leading to review sites, leading to forums, leading to a short list that leads you, eventually, to... A PHYSICAL SHOWROOM. Do they know who you are and the work you have done to get there? No. Do they know your favourite colour and specification of the car you want? No. Have they personalised your experience to ensure the process from online to offline is streamlined and uses all of this always on instantaneous technology available to them? No. Do they have a fancy screen in their showroom? Yes. Do you care? No.

Repeat this in retail, electronics, fashion, etc. – and it's no wonder Amazon is doing so well and that experience is coming to GCC soon with the purchase of Souk.com. How will retail fare when this happens? Will the Mall of the Emirates become a ghost town?

**The starting point for business.** So, what's going wrong? What can we do to help the GCC do better and how does this link to digital transformation? Is this even a new issue, or an old one renamed?

As more and more business transactions move online and more and more customers become hyper connected, the race to digitally transform is real – if you're not catering to all your channels, online and offline in the right way, that is the difference between profit and going out of business, sometimes very quickly.



As with any digital 'problem', there are three categories to explore – people, process and technology – and while some consultants will tell you it's mainly one of the three – technology – and sell you A LOT of services to fix this, many that you don't need, the reality, as always, is in the middle and a combination of all three.

Let's go through them one by one quickly – starting with the most important – people. You can put as much new tech in place as you like, but if your people have not bought into the change, things will go downhill quickly. Not only do you need the right people in your organisation, people who are flexible and embrace change, but they also have to be part of your journey. They know the business and your customers as well as you do – sometimes better if they are closer to them. They have to be fully involved not only in the decision-making process, but also the ongoing ownership of the solution – a solution they help scope and build with you.

There is a saying in the fitness world – you can't out-train a bad diet. It's the same

The speed of information retrieval has changed exponentially. As has the way we retrieve it.

for your business process. Replacing a bad process with a system that enforces a 'good' process is as likely to fail as having the wrong people. A system should follow your business process – it needs to be tuned to your needs and your customers. This doesn't mean you buy a system and highly customise it – you will end up locked into a series of inflexible business processes when the world changes again. Choose your software carefully and ensure it is as flexible and as agile as your business needs to be.

Finally, always last but never least is technology. Do you think Careem and Uber are taking the local taxi business because they have an app that technologically advanced? No. They are winning because they have customer-focused solutions that help solve people's problems – a taxi that comes direct



the right people, drive and ability to grab the bull by the horns to tackle your problems head on, rather than head-in-the-sand, here are my top 5 tips to avoid “digital Darwinism”.

**1. Stay in the cloud.** Where possible, use cloud-based services and systems – loosely coupled systems respond better to change than tightly coupled ones. Use services and systems that, as a strategy, allow themselves to talk to and from ANY other services. I'm not a fan of big, tightly coupled ERP systems – they are the root cause of many digital Darwinism issues today, due to decades-old expensive legacy investments that are hard to untangle. Avoid them where you can.

**2. Stay agile.** That's not a buzzword for your coding team – that's your whole business. Hire, retain and train people to embrace change where it's needed and be part of the solution, not the problem. Have a flexible outlook and organisation.

**3. Stay realistic.** Don't expect a new 'IT system' to solve your problems. It won't. Especially if those problems are people and process. Be realistic about what you expect to achieve and in what time.

**4. Stay focused.** The old saying is you can't eat an elephant in one bite. If you have legacy systems and processes, find out which need updating first and focus on them first. Prioritise the 20 per cent that will change your business and help streamlining your customers' experience. Always remember: the more elephants you have in the room that you try and eat at once, the harder it will be to get anything done.

**5. Stay customer-focused.** Put yourselves in the shoes of your customer and adopt a customer-first mindset. Even go out and – gasp – talk to them (yes, focus groups still work). What do they need, what do they expect, how can you achieve it? Then do it. Move heaven and earth to make it happen.

Good luck. ■

In order to create a flexible business, you must have technology that helps you solve customer problems when they arise

to you anywhere, anytime, that doesn't need cash. It's that simple. Have you ever tried getting a taxi from the queue at the mall that takes credit cards? I gave up.

Technology is the enabler – but it's not the driver. The driver was the customer need. In order to create a flexible business, you must

have technology that helps you solve customer problems when they arise, solutions that help you win business, but are then able to quickly change shape and help solve new problems. They need to do this without you needing to overturn your whole back-end systems at a cost of hundreds of thousands of dollars. Or more. It's a tricky balance and why your partners in digital transformation must both understand your business but how to build future-proof solutions for you.

#### 5 steps on the road to digital Darwinism

Ok. While it all sounds very complicated, with

**DAVID PARKINSON, EX-HEAD OF DIGITAL FOR AFRICA, MIDDLE EAST AND INDIA, NISSAN & CO-FOUNDER, BRAVE & HEART**

“The speed of information retrieval has changed exponentially. As has the way we retrieve it.”







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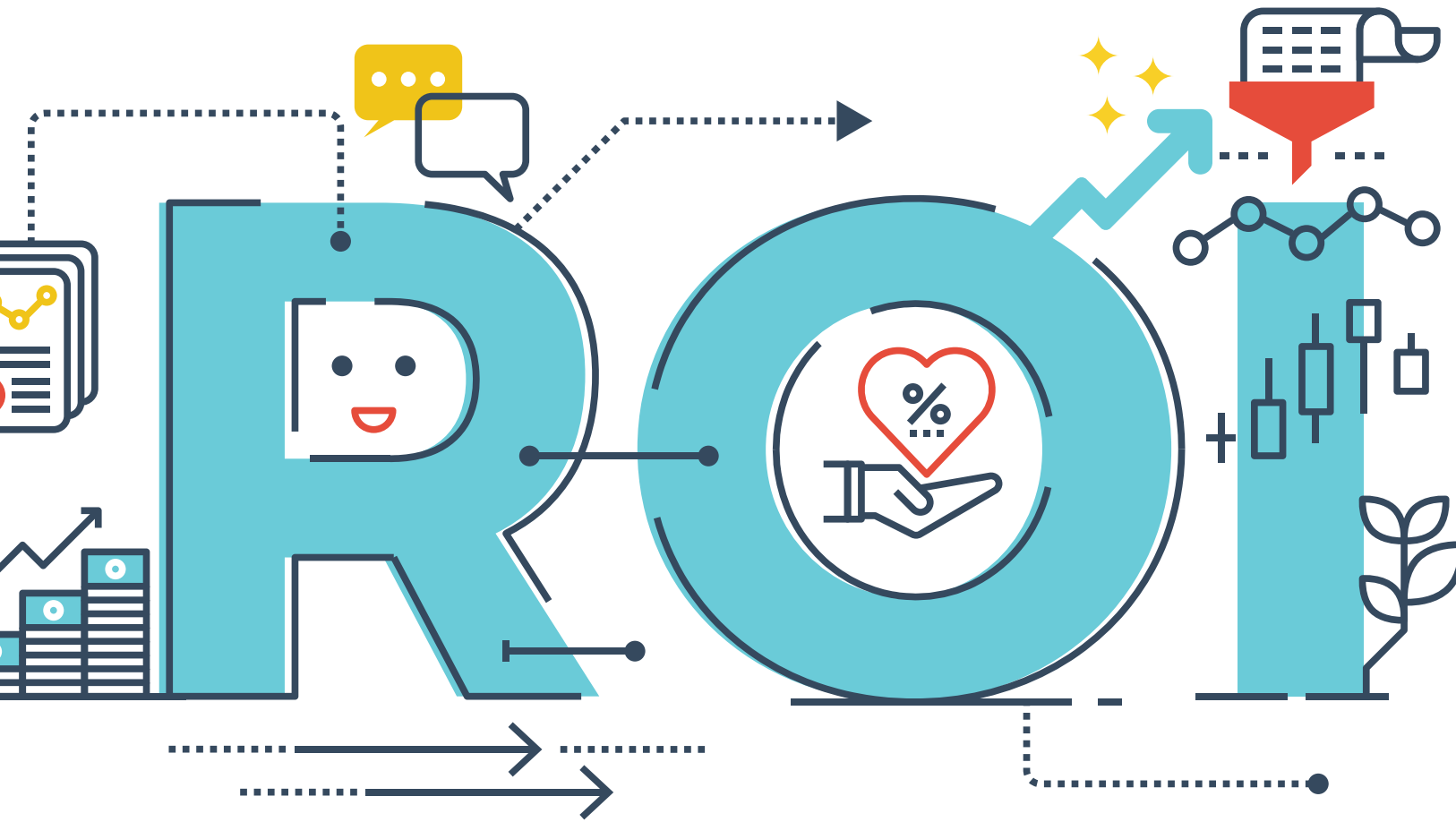
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## HARD TARGET

**Paul Kelly**, Creative Director, Digital Ape, on how analysing consumers' digital behaviour or habits helps a brand reach out to them more effectively.

For some reason, here in 2017, we're still faced with the same problem that our marketing leaders faced in 2007 - the digital world is a veritable minefield for advertisers, consumers and publishers alike.

And, it seems, we're not alone - recent statements from Unilever, the world's biggest advertiser by spend, related that as much as 25 per cent of its digital ad spend is completely ineffective. Such statements may have any CMO or number-cruncher in accounts concerned about where the money is going. Unilever isn't alone in this, either. Most Fortune 500 companies are questioning who actually sees their ads and are also questioning current methods of ROI measurement.

Against that backdrop, you could be forgiven for thinking that digital, the off-promised harbinger

of elusive direct ROI, is just as scattergun as its predecessors. Through that fog though, reassuringly, it's not all doom and gloom.

Indeed, far from it for those willing to play the long game in using consumer data intelligently to increase effectiveness and ROI. And with everything, it's often those willing to be nimble who catch the early worm too.

**From start-ups to billion-dollar exits.** As an example, let's look at Dollar Shave Club, one of Unilever's recent acquisitions. As a plucky start-up, they famously created one of the most successful launch content pieces of all time, with the CEO starring in a hilarious, direct and, most importantly, targeted way, utilising video content and

banner re-targeting (where an ad is shown to a visitor of a website to reconsider finalising their purchase).

How did Dollar Shave Club go from start-up, then, to a \$1 billion exit from the world's biggest FMCG company? Simply, they understood their consumer and where they were online, and made such a sticky customer base that word-of-mouth took it from there. They did their homework and were single-minded in how they were going to connect to a new generation of consumer online.

In finding their niche target, they analysed the old-fashioned who, what, when, why and how, and found an audience that would carry them forward from obscurity to the mainstream of the online space.



David Ogilvy wrote in *Confessions of an Advertising Man*: "Advertisers who ignore research are as dangerous as generals who ignore the signs of the enemy." That, written around the same time a computer took up an entire wall and could only perform calculations, is as true today as in the 1960s when the book was penned.

What then would Ogilvy make of the scattergun 'put it up on Facebook and boost the post' strategy that today's advertisers do without thought about who, how, what, when and why?

We don't know what, but the principles, in fact, are the same.

**How to leverage your consumers' digital habits.** The step to taking back control of your effectiveness (or starting from the right spot) is to understand your consumer better than they do.

This might seem a difficult task but, with the amount tools around, you can either formulate a killer brief for your agency or implement your own strategy in-house.

**Everyone leaves a footprint.** Assuming you've embarked on this path with a digital strategy in mind and objectives set, be reassured that, just like in life, your audience has a footprint and it's usually not too hard to find. Starting to understand them in the right places is the first step to drive the true insights that can unlock the digital potential.

#### Unlock those footprints by:

**Assessing existing channels.** From websites to social media and everything in-between, analyse the data you have and, if you don't understand it, a good point to start with an agency is an audit of your existing properties. Ask questions such as: Where are the key interactions taking place? Where are we losing people? How are we connecting to our consumer? Are we understanding the consumer? Are their habits clear? If you can answer those questions, great, we're on the way and you



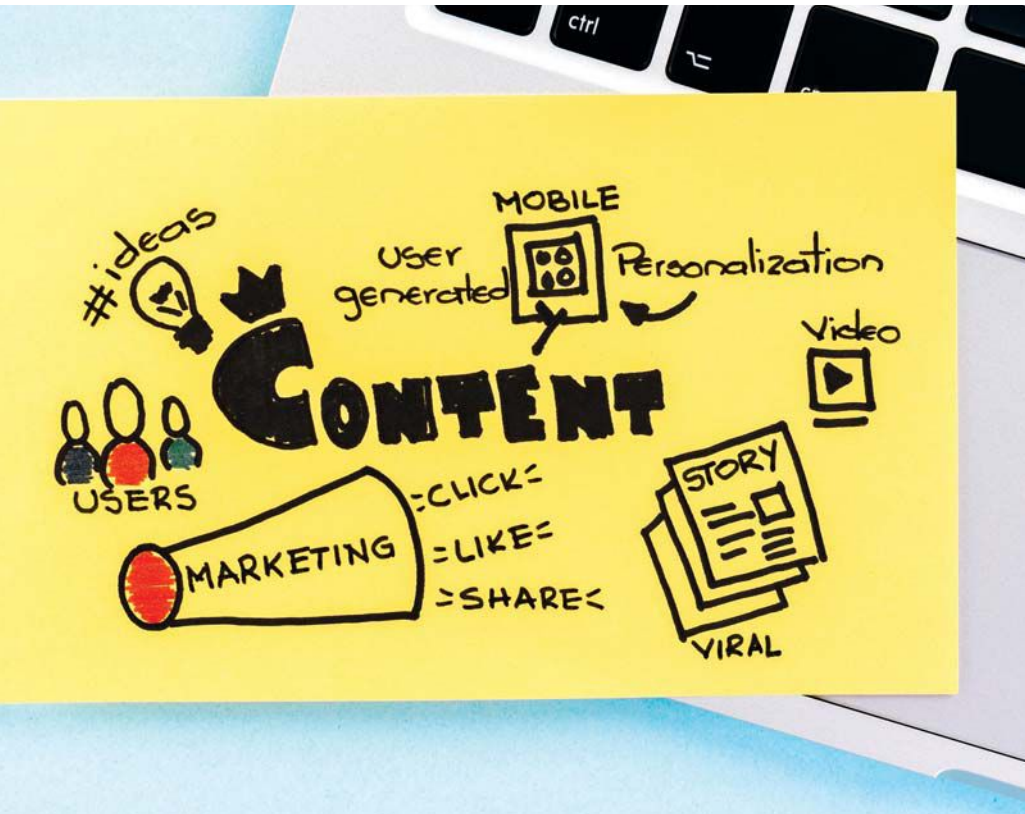
probably have a good handle on what your consumer wants. But, likely, those questions and your existing properties are creating even more of a headache... which is why:

- Define who you want to talk with. The best brands online that understand their audience and connect with them, talk with their audience, not to them. That's a big leap to make and the first critical one in any digital consumer understanding. Then define them. Who is our target audience and what do we want to talk with them about? Once we know that, don't be afraid to get granular by creating personas and using those to either test that you're talking to the right people, or adjusting them as your journey continues.
- Cast a research net. Utilise what you can afford to get the insights - start with free tools, such as Google Consumer Barometer, Google Trends and YouTube Trends, and start to understand the 'what' in the equation of your customer. Conduct social

Most Fortune 500 companies are questioning who actually sees their ads and are also questioning current methods of ROI measurement

listening (utilising keywords, key accounts and monitoring competitors) about what the audience is saying about the brand and others in your space, to better understand what, if anything, is a pain point. Look for avenues you can win easily and set aside the big challenges to chip away at. For example, is a competitor not doing content well, but has a share of voice exceeding your own?

**Track your visitors.** Have a web property or other property that allows tracking (like an app)? Place tracking pixels on them to see where your consumers footprints are going and utilise those to put content back in their



You can't win a consumer unless you understand them and in no world is this truer than digital

feeds when you have it. Understand where they are going and how they're getting there.

- Gather the research. The last step, after doing all of the above, is relevant if you're still at a loss with what you have. Maybe you don't have a clear picture of what the consumer and audience is looking for. Maybe you don't have a consumer because it's a new product. Then, simply, learn what the consumer does. Commission some

simple research (there are tools such as Pollfish that can do it at a fraction of the traditional market research rates) to better understand their habits by asking them. Ask where they look for content. When they look for it. What they're looking for.

**Take the next step.** Armed with that information, it's easier to then start looking at consumer behaviour more specifically and try and help your consumer in the moment of need, truth or simply desire.

And while you may think it's extraordinary to dig into so much detail about your consumer, I've seen it work. Unlocking some desktop research, mixing it with a small bit of research

**PAUL KELLY, CREATIVE DIRECTOR, DIGITAL APE**

"Once you have the data, be brave. Take the next step and be rewarded"



that cost almost nothing to undertake and matching that with listening enabled us at Digital Ape to achieve a 56 per cent growth in volumes month-on-month for a F&B brand in KSA. All by just understanding the what and how of the consumer.

Once you have the data, be brave. Take the next and be rewarded.

**Launch it.** Finally, there are two ways to then reach the audience with a campaign:

- Hyper-targeted campaign via profiling and campaign construction - this is where you're able to deep-dive into your audience profiling and really hit the fans of the products or services your selling. The example in the previous section of the more than 50 per cent growth came from this - we looked word of mouth squarely in the face and made it move for us.
- A wider campaign that encourages engagement - the critical part of measuring how successful a campaign was is often not just a 'tale of the till'. It's also about how many people remember you. This is our dark horse of awareness. However, in digital, we can make it work for us by adding in engagement
- getting people involved who love what we're talking with them about. They love our content so much they become advocates, driving ultimately more effectiveness.

Both these strategies can provide good, quick and effective wins when the content of your advertising is being driven by an innate understanding of your consumer.

If you take one thing away from this piece, it's the classic word 'insights'. You can't win a war without knowing your enemy. You can't win a consumer unless you understand them and in no world is this truer than digital.

When you unlock this, you unlock untold growth to your digital plans, but, more importantly, you'll deliver quantifiable ROI on your efforts and, in turn, set your agenda for innovation moving forward. ■



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