



How to Become a Winning Digital-First Brand

Description

The scale and impact of technology on businesses and our daily lives are more apparent than ever. Between January 2020 to April 2020 alone, the Straits Times has reported over 3,500 companies digitalising their businesses in Singapore. And for the first time in history, a majority of the consumer market is made up digital natives – millennials and Gen Zs who have never known life without the internet.

In Singapore alone, 88% of the population uses the internet, and the average time spent online per day is almost 7 hours^[1]. This means that brands that do not have a digital presence will have little chance of engaging current customers and finding new ones.

This shift online is likely to be permanent, evident from the record-breaking sales performances on local e-commerce sites, Lazada and Shopee, during this year's Singles' Day 11.11 sales despite Covid-19 and recession. Following the generational shift in consumer mindset and behaviour, is the rise of expectations when it comes to digital experiences.

As more and more businesses start switching to digital, it will be a race to the top.

What Digital Transformation Means for Brands

Digital Transformation is the process of using digital technologies to create or modify existing business processes, culture, and customer experiences to deliver value to customers.

Adopting a digital-first approach means tailoring your business processes to the strengths of the digital environment. For brands, this means creating a brand identity and its subsequent touchpoints with the digital environment in mind.

Online, it is important to consider readability and responsive layouts for different devices. On top of visual design, it is also crucial to ensure that functionality is not compromised by aesthetic choices. When you have a design that is both visually pleasing and user-friendly, you will stand out from the crowd.

Next, having digital brand also involves cultivating an online presence on all your audience's preferred platforms. This can include social media, e-mail, website, mobile applications, instant messaging platforms, and more. One key difference between this digital approach and traditional marketing is the brand's level of involvement. In the digital space, things move fast. Brands that can respond to changes in real-time will have an advantage. At the same time, brands can create meaningful relationships with their customers through active engagement and personalisation. Of course, it is also possible to integrate traditional and digital marketing strategies. The use of QR codes in print to direct customers online is one example.

The digital space has a wealth of opportunities brands can leverage on. In our Digital Branding survey^[2] conducted with over 300 industry-wide SMEs, the top three digital priorities for 2020 are e-commerce, social media marketing, and content marketing.

Stand Out from the Crowd: Brand Positioning

With more time spent at home in light of Covid-19, a digital-first brand allows brands to connect with customers despite physical constraints. Likewise, the digital world bridges geographical gaps, allowing brands to engage customers abroad as well.

To create a compelling digital-first brand with a visually impactful identity and a tone of voice that resonates with your audience, it is important to establish your Brand Position first. Digital or physical, your brand should convey a seamless and unified experience on all platforms, channels, and mediums.

The concept of Brand Positioning is not new. The Golden Age of Advertising in the 1960s was

characterised by big ideas and larger-than-life brand ambassadors. Audiences were bombarded with ads, and Brand Positioning provided clarity and helped brands stand out from the crowd. Today, an even greater onslaught of products, services, and information brought about by the internet, coupled with the chaos from Covid-19 make Brand Positioning even more crucial. Blatant advertising no longer works in our ad-blocker age. Instead, a strong brand position helps brands cut through the noise.

In Brand Positioning, standing out is not simply about being different. If everyone is different, no one is. What matters is how well your advantages relate to your customers' needs and desires, and how they are different from your competitors.

Ask yourself: What are you good at? What are you *not* good at? What are your dreams and aspirations? Who are you and why should anyone care?

Conduct SWOT analyses, and take some time to understand your customers as well as your competitors. After gaining a comprehensive understanding your company, your customers, and your competitors, you will be able to position yourself in a unique way that differentiates you from your competitors.

Thereafter, your Brand Position will serve as a foundation for your brand's essence, values, personality, and statement. Your brand essence is the single intangible attribute that differentiates your brand and is only true to your company. Your brand values explain how you deliver your brand essence. Your brand personality reflects the tone and way you communicate your brand. Finally, your brand positioning statement is a single paragraph or statement summing up your essence, values, and personality.

With a strong Brand Position, you will be able to build a unified and memorable brand experience for your customers.

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[1] DataReportal. (2020). *Digital 2020: Singapore*. Retrieved from <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2020-singapore>

[2] <https://www.creativeans.com/resources/singapore-digital-branding-industry-report-says-customer-experience-ranked-1st/>