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INNOVATION

Global Marketers Catering to Digital Consumers

RUHULLAH RAIHAN ALHUSAIN

This is the 3rd instalment of my series on "ensuring excellence in the era of consumers through innovation". Do you know how the great marketers are using innovative strategy to ensure their customers are "more empowered" and "more connected" while also providing "more convenient" and "more human" like services for customers? Let's go over how they're doing this.

More Empowered:

Do you use Foursquare? This great digital business app provides information to their clients on the restaurants to visit in the neighbourhoods they are traveling to. You need to install the app and turn on your location service. The app will find your exact location and pull recommendations from their server on the restaurants around. It's been created by consumers like you. You visit a restaurant. Like it? Add a review to this app. It's a great example of crowdsourcing and digital marketing that ensures customers/users are more empowered.

More Convenient:

When I was in the U.S., I used to be amazed by the fact that one could easily settle utility bills at the neighbourhood grocery store. I moved back to Bangladesh in 2006 and launched utility BillPay with one of the telecom operators here. It was an amazing experience. At one point of time, I realised that we were able to ensure even more convenience for the customers. Since 2006 they have been settling their electricity, gas, and water bills through mobile banking/BillPay, sitting at home, any time of the day. With the rise of telephony network, the great MNO marketers, including Airtel Bangladesh, are constantly working to ensure excellence for the customers.



More Connected:

That was 2006. Let's discuss 2015. We have seen that Bangladesh MFS has come a long way since then. As of November 2015, we had app. 23.31 million customers transacting US \$1.2 billion every single month. We have ensured that our consumers are more connected than ever before.

More Human:

When I was a kid, I used to love playing "Prince of Persia". It was all about a world that didn't exist. All the excitement and magic were awesome but missed that human touch. Fast-forward to more recent times when kids played "FarmVille", "Airport City" etc. These are examples of "more human" games that are able to engage the players even more. The great marketers know how to ensure customer engagement through more content that presents more real-life like situations.

Stay Tuned for the 4th instalment of this series in which I'll discuss the war of the social media giants to acquire the internet space.

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Making the Show Go On Pains of Organising in Bangladesh

RAYAAN IBTESHAM CHOWDHURY

With all the event requests you get on Facebook every day, it's easy to assume that organising events is easy. I mean, if everyone and anyone can organise, it must be easy, right? You'd be surprised at just how wrong that assumption is. Organising events has the normal hassles of gathering resources and planning but here in Bangladesh a few more unique issues add to that list.

There are different types of events but something that almost all of them have in common is the need for funds. And know that whatever you're organising, whether on a large scale or small, you will have a hard time gathering sponsors and funds. Abu Yousuf Md. Abdullah, convenor for Dhaka University Debating Society, recalls how hard it is to get sponsors. "Naturally whether someone wants to support us should depend on the merit and quality of our plan. But here it depends more on personal connections. You might have a ground-breaking project and not get support but also have a generic idea but get a lot of support". Nur-E-Elahi Shonchoy, co-founder of MazeCity, one of Bangladesh's biggest Anime Communities who organised MazeCon 1 and 2, adds another angle to the sponsorship dilemma. "It's very difficult to explain to sponsors what anime or Japanese culture is about. These concepts are totally alien to them." Of course, not getting sponsors means you'll have less funds, which will drastically decrease the quality of your event. "If you want to book a place like BICC, which costs nearly Tk 8 lakhs for 2 days, you do need a lot of sponsors. Otherwise the event is going to have space constraints", Shonchoy laments.

But suppose sponsorships are something you deal with somehow. A big budget won't really solve all the problems. You will then have to deal with some of the realities of Bangladesh. For example, outdoor events require police permission and while the process of application is simple enough, the typical Bangladeshi system means it might take weeks or even months for your application to be processed.

But those problems are just for events organised by students, right? Wrong. Having its fair share of youth, LiveSquare is one of the country's biggest entertainment companies and is the mastermind behind concert franchises like RockNation and ABC. Afrida Mahbub, Director of LiveSquare, recalls the various problems. "Venues are a big problem. Sometimes they're big but the acoustics are really bad for a concert and if a venue has everything, it is almost sure to be far beyond our reach financially. And if you're organising a concert, the mainstream sounds systems are generally out-dated. So you have to go out of your way to get special arrangements. And then of course you have to bargain with artists too. If you're looking to get a big name artist, the negotiations can take a while". Mahbub also points out how events like concerts have become a pretty large part of the economy of many countries but remain neglected from state level in Bangladesh. "We are missing out pretty badly," she says. The fact that strikes and blockades can appear literally out of nowhere and throw your plans into chaos can't be overlooked either.

Like most things in Bangladesh, this sector also has plenty of problems. But the sector is growing so there's no reason to be disheartened. "Once you grit your teeth through it and just get on with it," Mahbub says, "It becomes rewarding".



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