



DIGITAL MARKETING: THE MISSING LINK BETWEEN YOU AND YOUR CUSTOMERS

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It's no hidden fact. Despite all efforts, the retail industry constantly struggles to keep pace with what exactly it is that their consumers want. Expectations are temperamental and becoming increasingly difficult to live up to.

One conceivable way that can help retailers bridge the gap is by being in a constant state of dialogue with consumers. Fortunately, we live in a world where technology can bring the impossible to life. The world of digital has created conversations between retailers, mall managers and consumers. While traditional media like print and television may still dominate the media landscape, digital marketing is now beginning to bite off a significant piece of the annual budget. Younger audiences seeking more value, engagement and entertainment from their shopping experience are ensuring that retailers run at their pace of digital adoption. If that weren't enough, digital marketing is



Indian retailers are leveraging this space for multiple objectives; from creating awareness of new collections, to creating engagement via contests, to generating customer testimonials.

Neha Shah, Head-Marketing, Pepe Jeans, says, “We create style guides to show visitors across social media platforms how to incorporate items into their everyday life. This helps in creating awareness of collections season on season.”

It comes as no surprise that Facebook is the preferred choice. Whether it is to create constant engagement through contests, or to ensure that consumers can locate stores (especially for a predominant offline retailer like Toons Retail), or build preference through testimonials, retailers are leveraging the popularity of Facebook to their advantage.

Crocs India leverages Facebook to research prospective buyers and improve targeting the right consumers. Continuous analytics helps fine tune target audiences, resulting in more relevant communication rather than carpet bombing.

an endless evolving discipline. Not only should retailers learn how to engage their audiences, they also need to better the engagement and keep bettering it, every time.

DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGIES: The 5 Proven Ones

We asked 13 Marketing Heads across retail brands and malls to give us their Top 5 digital marketing strategies. The answers were varied. Each brand devises its own strategy basis the category, the consumer, and their own objectives. Yet, some factors remain common. Each of the Marketing Heads is looking for ways and means to stay relevant and engaged. Here are some of the key strategies they employ to stay connected, educate, inform and influence choice.

1. SOCIAL MEDIA:

Every retailer has a social media presence whether with an active strategy or without. Consumers constantly communicate to brands through social media. They review and recommend products, advising for or against them, or even complain about them.



Contests seem to have emerged as a strong hook to engage consumers. Whether it is through region-specific contests done by Crocs India, or by creating content and contests around trending topics, or for creating relevant events for consumers like the World Shorts Day from the Future Group.

Effectively using Google Search and optimizing marketing plans using analytics is also becoming key to finding, connecting and engaging with existing and new users. Pawan Sarma, Group Head-Digital, Future Group, says “We use Google search very effectively for our brands and formats. Use of digital to increase convenience for our customers is very important.”

2. E-MAIL MARKETING:

New age analytics have helped e-mail marketing evolve from a one-way communication tool to an interactive and impactful one.

Varun Arora, Head of Business - E-Commerce, Orna Fine Jewellery Pvt. Ltd., explains how e-mail marketing has shed its fuddy-duddy imagery in the last few years. “Email marketing has evolved from a static imagery to interactive information with



analytics involved. This means that we can decide our next line of email communication to the customer depending on how consumers respond to the emailer. It has become an essential sharing tool with in-depth pre-and post-sharing analysis.”

3. INFLUENCER MARKETING:

Influencer marketing is starting to resonate with retailers, be it for targeting online or in-store shoppers. In some ways, influencer marketing is nothing but a natural extension of traditional word-of-mouth marketing, with the friend at work or person next door being amplified by online voices that have become trusted sources for recommendations. The key difference is that retailers can now exercise some control over what is being said, influencing increase in sales.

By combining paid influencer content with unpaid user-generated content (UGC), retailers have twice the opportunity to create a powerful platform to close sales.

Bhavna Tewari, E-commerce and Digital Marketing Head, Crocs India, believes this is a key emerging trend. To quote, “Instagram led UGC campaigns to break the stereotype of clogs as the main product of Crocs. Our product portfolio has

Effectively using Google Search and optimizing marketing plans using analytics is also becoming key to finding, connecting and engaging with existing and new users. Also, new age analytics have helped e-mail marketing evolve from a one-way communication tool to an interactive and impactful one.



expanded since the days of just clogs. We have a stylish and trendy range that is relevant to a certain kind of customer. Digital media via strong creative and targeted reach is helping us change the way the brand is perceived, and is helping gain acceptance for our complete range of products.”

Smita Murarka, Head-Marketing, Amante, MAS Brands, believes, “Effective use of influencer marketing helps build high SOV.” Abhishek Shetty, Head-Marketing, PR & Loyalty, Celio Future Fashion, too endorses the fact that influencer marketing is gaining importance in the Digital Marketing mix. He says, “We are also in the process of identifying digital influencers and building high quality native content to get more brand conversations going.”

Neha Shah, Head-Marketing, Pepe Jeans, believes that working with influencers provides the brand access to a new audience and gives consumers unique content. She further emphasises that in today’s day and age, “social media influencers are at the pinnacle of the digital realm. Curating content specific to influencers who have great following, helps in not only retaining existing customer base but also in acquiring new audiences.”

4. SHAREABLE CONTENT AND GAMIFICATION OF CONTENT:

Shareable content is the benchmark of success in content marketing and what every retailer aspires for. Every marketing head acknowledges the fact that good quality and shareable content helps deliver value to consumers. To get it right, the industry is witnessing extensive experimentation with formats from blogs to video content, from listicles and infographics to even gamification of content.



5. DATA ANALYTICS:

Industry reports suggest that the online customers are going to cross the 100 mn mark by the end of this year. With so many consumers online, data analytics will become critical to predict consumer behaviour. Says Puneet Varma, Associate Vice President - Marketing and Corporate Communication, Inorbit Malls (India) Pvt. Ltd., "We rack conversations around retail brands to understand perception and feedback."

Jermina Menon, Head Marketing, Reliance Vision Express Pvt. Ltd, speaks of the efficacy of blogs in educating prospective customers about the latest trends in eye wear technology, and conveying their benefits to convince them to buy. On the other hand, Celio Future Fashion has been working with the gamification trend to deliver a unique experience to its digital savvy consumers.

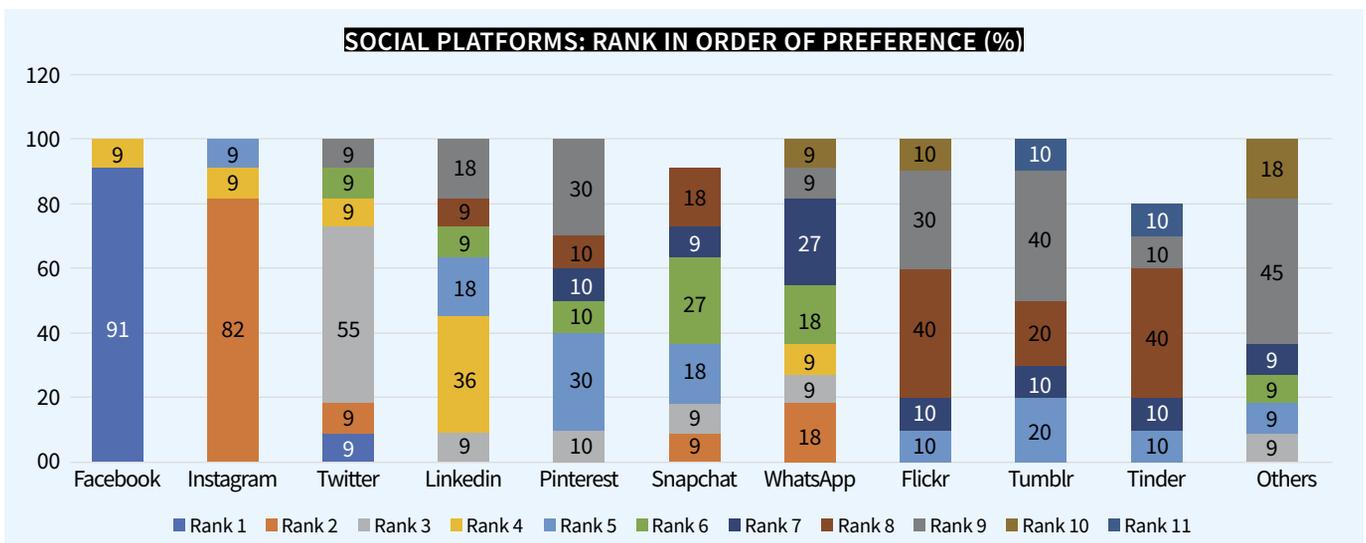
BEYOND THE OBVIOUS

Within the realm of digital and social, are there preferences amongst the platforms used?

Does anyone venture beyond Facebook and Twitter to create connections?

The Marketing Heads responses indicate that while Facebook is the most dominant and preferred social media platform, other platforms are gaining acceptance and momentum. Instagram comes in at a clear No. 2 with Twitter coming in at No.3. LinkedIn, Snapchat, WhatsApp and Pinterest are still

amongst the next rung of platforms with no clear preference for the retailers - ranked between 4-9 by different Marketing Heads. What is interesting to note is that platforms such as Flickr, Tumblr and Tinder, though lower on the chain, have also started gaining traction.



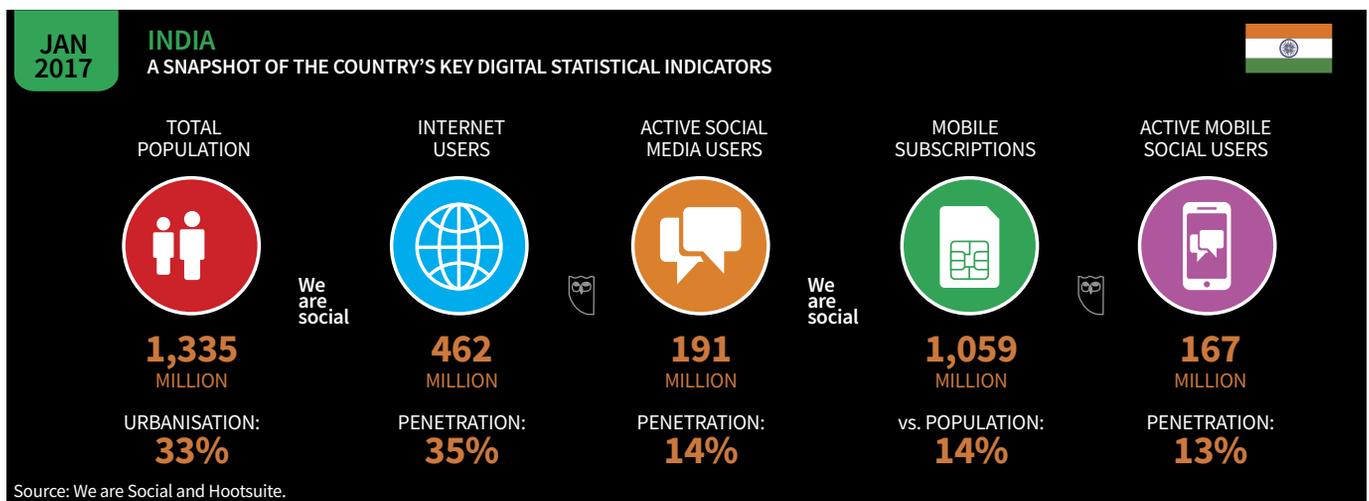
New technologies as well as constantly changing consumer choices and behaviours are keeping retailers on their toes with evolving trends, and helping them align their strategies to walk with the times.

Let's look at the 5 key trends in Digital Marketing that Marketing Heads have a watchdog on.

Retail Digital Marketing: The Top 5 Trends

These are not predictions but trends that one must incorporate in their digital marketing strategies to stay in tune and a little ahead of the curve.

The number of mobile users in this country has been on the rise for more than a decade now. There is no stopping this juggernaut from impacting every aspect of every business, including retail. Internet usage from mobile devices (51.26 percent) overtook usage from desktop devices (48.74 percent) for the first time in October 2016.



1. MOBILE WILL CONTINUE TO DOMINATE:

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Internet usage from mobile devices (51.26 percent) overtook usage from desktop devices (48.74 percent) for the first time in October 2016, according to data from StatCounter. The same study also indicated that 78.82 percent of web traffic in India came from mobile devices.



According to Kaushik Tanna, Head-Marketing, Toonz Retail Pvt. Ltd., "In kids apparel and products, our audience (parents) spends considerable time on mobile for searches, content, products and entertainment. Location based marketing allows retailers to drive traffic through relevant, contextual mobile marketing."

Abhishek Shetty, Head-Marketing, PR and Loyalty, Celio Future Fashion, also believes that mobile is the new way of consuming content.

2. CONTENT IS, AND WILL CONTINUE TO REMAIN, KING:

'Content is King!' is a phrase that makes digital marketers cringe – considered hackneyed and overdone everywhere. And yet, the statement continues to reign true, even today. Retail's marketing experts believe that content and its marketing will continue to remain relevant for a long time, from building loyalty to building brand.

Says Neha Shah, Head-Marketing, Pepe Jeans, "Content marketing is king. Along with increased focus on upping the customer experience, brands today must also focus on building content that will help maintain customer relationships. This in the long run, will help in providing value to customers. The only challenge in this context is rising above the noise created by other brands. One will have to tailor and create a unique strategy that doesn't get lost in the chaos."



Varun Arora, Head of Business-E-Commerce, Orra Fine Jewellery Pvt. Ltd., corroborates Neha's view. He believes, "Content marketing has been in the top 3 trends for the last 3 years. More businesses are now using a strategic approach (40 percent) toward content, so this is a trend we can expect to see continuing in 2017. We can also expect that there will be more focus on Measuring Content Marketing ROI as the cost and competition within content marketing increases. As we see a growing assimilation of online and offline platforms, content has become a crucial need of the hour. Further, SEO optimization has helped users gain information and insights at a faster rate while being better suited to their search queries."

Ritesh Ghosal, CMO, Infiniti Retail Limited (Croma), on the other hand, speaks of short content marketing as an emerging trend. Long or short, video or written, entertaining or informative or both, content will continue to remain an integral part of all retail digital marketers' strategies.

3. MANAGING AND LEVERAGING THE OMNICHANNEL EXPERIENCE:

Everyone agrees that Omnichannel rightly provides a consistent experience whether customers are shopping online or in a store. The main upshot for most retailers adopting this approach is that it allows them to maximise both digital and physical assets. Nishank Joshi, CMO, Nexus Malls, believes that there is a clear trend towards "offline and online buying synchronisations. Shopping can be started at one place and completed somewhere else, and the use of new tech like Magic Mirrors and VR will make shopping fun, exciting and more convenient"

According to Varun Arora, Head of Business - E-Commerce, Orra Fine Jewellery Pvt. Ltd., "Today, the consumer is already present across different mediums as well as social media



channels and therefore Omnichannel marketing has become a very important aspect for growing and improving one's business."

Orra's success with Omnichannel marketing – not just for improving customer acquisition and retention but also in up selling and reduction in stock - is only proof that this trend is getting larger and more dominant.

Neha Shah, Head-Marketing, Pepe Jeans, also believes that Omnichannel marketing connects all touch points to get closer to the customer, location based marketing and on site personalisation.

Puneet Verma, Inorbit Malls, talks about Inorbit's foray into the Omnichannel space. "Inorbit is the first shopping centre in the country to offer an Omnichannel experience to its customers on their website and mobile app - the Shop Online feature. With multiple benefits like 'Shop/Reserve online and Pickup/Buy from Store at the mall' or the reverse option of 'Buy at Store at the mall & get home delivery'.

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4. VIRTUAL REALITY, ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND AUGMENTED REALITY: NO LONGER JUST JARGON BUT A CERTAINTY

The research firm, Tractica, predicts that by 2020, over 200 million virtual reality head-mounted displays (HMDs) for consumers will be sold worldwide. Whether India will follow the world and adopt AR/VR at a personal level is debatable, but staring us in the face is the imminent need to start implementing AR/VR if we want to better our experience offering. Some retailers are already ahead of the curve and have begun experimenting with virtual trial rooms and augmented mirrors, which have given them positive outcomes.



Gaurav Balani, Senior Manager Marketing, Unique Estates Development Co. Ltd, says, "All tech giants are telling us virtual/augmented reality is the future of marketing. With interactive ads, 3D product demos and more personalised messages, users can almost reach out and touch the products, while sitting at their home. Virtual retail is still at its early age but will significantly impact the retail industry in the coming year."

Jermina Menon emphasises that AI will impact retail the most. From the use of chatbots to improve the post sales and service experience, to customers using their smartphone to navigate stores, listen to information about products and availability, and pay, AI will be instrumental in completely changing the customer experience both online and offline.

AR, VR and AI will all be critical to bring alive the concept of retail theatre. Rima Pradhan, Sr. Vice President, Marketing, Viviana Mall is confident that VR and AR will merge with the real world and retail will see lot of new innovations in the future."

5. INCREASING IMPULSE BUYS ON DIGITAL: SOCIAL PLATFORMS WILL COMPETE WITH ECOMMERCE

Consumers love to research and shop on their mobile phones. They would have done a lot of homework before they step into the store.

Social Shopping will be the way to go as large companies like Google and Snapchat are adding the "buy" button and simplifying the transition from mobile shopping to mobile transactions. "Social media already influences consumer

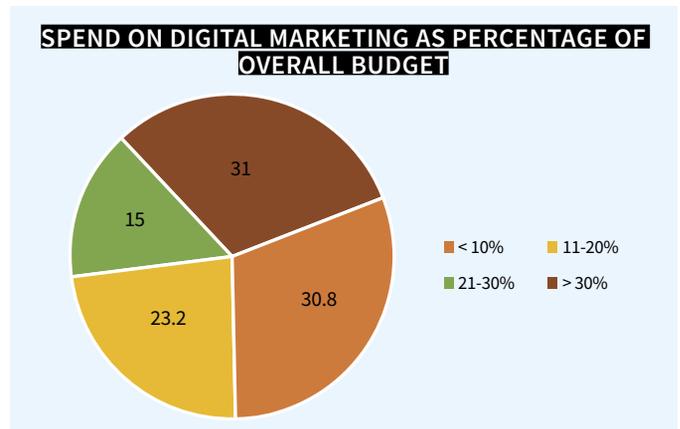
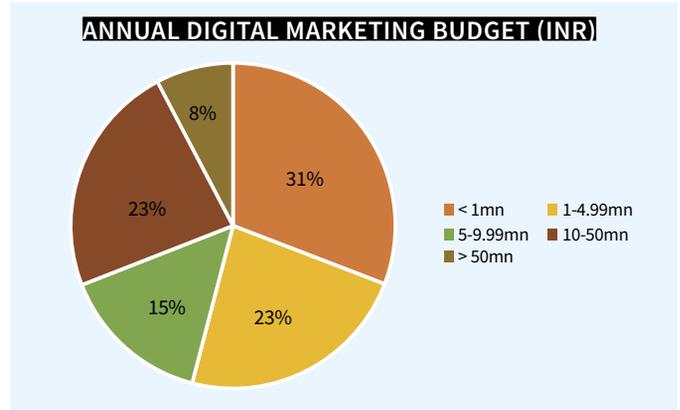


behaviour, but in 2017 it will become a bigger driver of direct transactions," predicts Bart Mroz, Co-founder & CEO, SUMO Heavy. To quote Gaurav Balani, Senior Manager Marketing, Unique Estates Development Co. Ltd., "Instagram recently rolled out a feature that enables brands to tag products; once clicked users can go to the brand's website and initiate a purchase. Facebook introduced the Shop-tab in 2015 and since then, they have revealed features that will boost ecommerce on their platform, for instance, the product price and merchant name visible below your daily posts. In 2017, social media platforms will give a tough competition to ecommerce websites."

The shift towards digital marketing is strong. More and more retailers are investing money in this space. Here's a quick

snapshot of the spends in digital and the percentage of overall spends that they represent.

We find that retail marketers are spending more in the digital space. We also see that while a third of the companies are spending less than 10 percent of their overall budgets on digital, a good 15 percent are spending a third of their budget on digital marketing, indicating a growing belief in this format.



Go digital: Get closer to consumers

In a world where footfalls determine how your day goes, a strong digital strategy could build the bridge to your customers. It is encouraging to see more retailers and malls warming up to the idea and experimenting with new technologies. These may be little steps to start with but as the landscape evolves, so will consumers and retailers will be left with no option but to continually invest in new ways of customer delight.

MEET THE MARKETING HEADS WHO PARTICIPATED IN THIS STUDY



PUNEET VARMA

Associate Vice President - Marketing and Corporate Communication, Inorbit Malls (India) Pvt. Ltd.

➔ As Head of Corporate Communication at Inorbit Malls, Puneet is responsible for spearheading marketing strategy, brand communication and campaigns for Inorbit malls. Apart from strategizing, he is actively involved in implementing innovative marketing ideas to create memorable shopping experiences for shoppers, not just through brick and mortar but also through social and digital mediums. In this position, he leads the communication and brand management teams at all locations (Malad, Vashi, Bangalore, Hyderabad and Vadodara).



KAUSHIK TANNA

Head Marketing, Toonz Retail Pvt. Ltd.

➔ Marketing and Branding professional with 15+ years of experience with diversified hands on experience in Entrepreneurship, Retail Marketing and Branding, ATL & BTL planning - execution, Digital - Social media, E-commerce, Omni-Commerce, Digital- Social Media, Corporate & Enterprise Business Solutions. Avid new technology explorer and learner.



NISHANK JOSHI

CMO, Nexus Malls

➔ With over a decade of experience working in retail and mall marketing, Nishank has had the privilege of having launched 7 malls across India and having relaunched 3 others across India. He believes digital is the next bastion for Media marketers in the world and aims to serve as a catalyst to echo these sentiments across platforms, by promoting new trends.



SMITA MURARKA

Head-Marketing, Amante, MAS Brands India

➔ A Retail Professional and Image Consultant with over a decade of work experience across international brands like Lifestyle, Splash, Bossini, Louis Philippe, Allen Solly, Kappa and many more. Having worked across portfolios of Buying, Sales, operations and Marketing, Smita has a deep understanding of the consumer and their fashion needs. Currently, she heads marketing at Amanté, an international lingerie brand.



JERMINA MENON

Head Marketing, Reliance Vision Express Pvt. Ltd.

➔ With over 2 decades of marketing experience, Jermina currently heads Marketing for Reliance Retail Ltd. (Vision Express), one of India's leading optical chains, with a network of over 160 stores across 30 cities. Her primary responsibility is to drive footfalls to the stores and thus drive sales for the organisation.

NEHA SHAH

Head-Marketing, Pepe Jeans India Limited

➔ Neha has over 12 years of rich industry experience in the marketing and PR domain. In her current role at Pepe Jeans, Neha is responsible for developing and implementing season-wise brand strategies that support the overall business growth plan. Neha also works closely with the sales team helping them meet their commercial objectives by providing appropriate materials include working closely with the respective teams to develop and execute various promotions at national/ regional level to increase sales and generate footfalls at the stores. Additionally, she also engages in an ongoing analysis of market and consumer trends.



RIMA PRADHAN

Sr. Vice President, Marketing, Viviana Mall

➔ Rima took on this role in 2011 with the responsibility of overseeing all aspects of Marketing, B2B & B2C Communication, PR Strategies, Feasibility Study for Properties, Exhibitions, Social Media Networking and Website Management. Rima in her current capacity has successfully led Viviana Mall to emerge as an iconic destination that constantly surprises and stimulates visitors with a vibrant mix of unique retail and entertainment options.



PAWAN SARDA

Group Head-Digital, Future Group

➔ Pawan has spent 17 years in the space of housing and retail. He was part of the Big Bazaar start up team which allowed him to witness the retail revolution in India. He also has experience in real estate. At TATA Housing, he was responsible for selling homes through Google and Facebook. His current mandate at Future Group is to create a digital revolution for all formats and brands along with running Ecommerce initiatives.



GAURAV BALANI

Senior Manager Marketing, Unique Estates Development Co Ltd (Infiniti Malls)

➔ As the Marketing Head for Infiniti Malls, Gaurav is responsible for Marketing Communication and SOH Income for both the Infiniti Malls. An MBA with rich experience of over 11 years in Advertising & Marketing, he has worked with renowned Ad Agencies and Media houses like Group M, Percept/H, OAP India. IN 2010, Gaurav entered the Entertainment retail business, i.e., INOX Leisure Ltd and then shifted to Infiniti Malls last year to head its Marketing Department.



VARUN ARORA

Head of Business - E-Commerce, Orra Fine Jewellery Pvt. Ltd.

➔ With over twenty-seven years of experience in the jewellery industry, Varun has managed diverse portfolios from handling retail operations and marketing to playing a pivotal role in designing a new identity for the brand from an export-oriented enterprise, 'InterGold' to a retail jewellery brand 'ORRA', which is India's most trusted brand in diamond jewellery. Leading the brand into the digital space by setting up the e-commerce business, Varun has been instrumental in defining the contemporary sales processes and systems to generate demand at a fast pace over the years.



BHAVNA TEWARI

Ecommerce & Digital Marketing Head, Crocs India

➔ Bhavna has 8+ years of experience in Marketing Communications, a strong visual sense, excellent writing skills and the ability to translate marketing ideas and design concepts across all organisational levels. She is an award-winning Marketing Communications Specialist and has won an award for Crocs India in the Global Marketing Summit 2016 for best use of Social Media Marketing. Bhavna started her career with Ogilvy & Mather and then worked on creative and marketing roles at Wizcraft International and Cinopolis India. Before joining Crocs India, she was working with a leading fashion e-commerce company, Fashion & You, as the Brand and Communications Head.



RITESH GHOSAL

CMO, Infiniti Retail Limited, Croma

➔ Ritesh Ghosal has over 20 years of experience and expertise in creating new brands and re-invigorating existing brands. He enjoys the challenge of building businesses around consumer insight and translating consumer and category opportunities and organizational assets into unbeatable consumer propositions. Ghosal is an alumni of IIM Bengaluru.



ABHISHEK SHETTY

Head Marketing, PR & Loyalty, Celio Future Fashion

➔ An alumnus of the Indian School of Business, Hyderabad & BITS Pilani, Abhishek has 9+ years of experience in Brand Management, Corporate Strategy and Marketing Strategy in Retail, Media and Advertising Industries. He is currently in-charge of the Marketing, PR and Loyalty function for the French men's fashion label, Celio, encompassing strategic planning, advertising, creative & content development, media planning & buying, public relations, sales promotion, CRM program and customer experience.

