



China marketers demand more digital capabilities from PR

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Source: Marketing

The “digital transformation” spreading throughout the marketing world has made its way down to the relationships between marketers and their PR agencies in China, according to a new study by consulting firm R3.

The biennial PR Agency Scope study from R3 surveyed more than 150 marketers and corporate communications decision-makers and reported that 59% of marketers now rate ‘digital capabilities’ as a very important factor when selecting a PR agency, up a staggering 55.5% from just 3.5% in the 2015 wave of the study.

In addition, the top two biggest changes in the PR industry were “focusing more on digital/social communications,” and the “transition from traditional PR to digital PR,” according to the survey respondents. Despite this obvious industry-wide shift to digital, 43% of marketers still believe that the best approach is to work with a separate PR and digital agency to benefit from the core competencies of each, while 62.6% of marketers think that PR agencies should be focused on increasing their digital capabilities going forward.

According to the marketers who participated in the study, the digitisation of all information has significantly changed the relationships between brands and their target audience. The diffusion of brand information has accelerated, and business and communication strategies have had to be altered to keep up. 20% of marketers agreed that one negative impact of digitisation on PR has been the challenge of controlling crisis communications, while 14% assert that it is harder to evaluate the effectiveness of brand promotions when everything is in real-time.

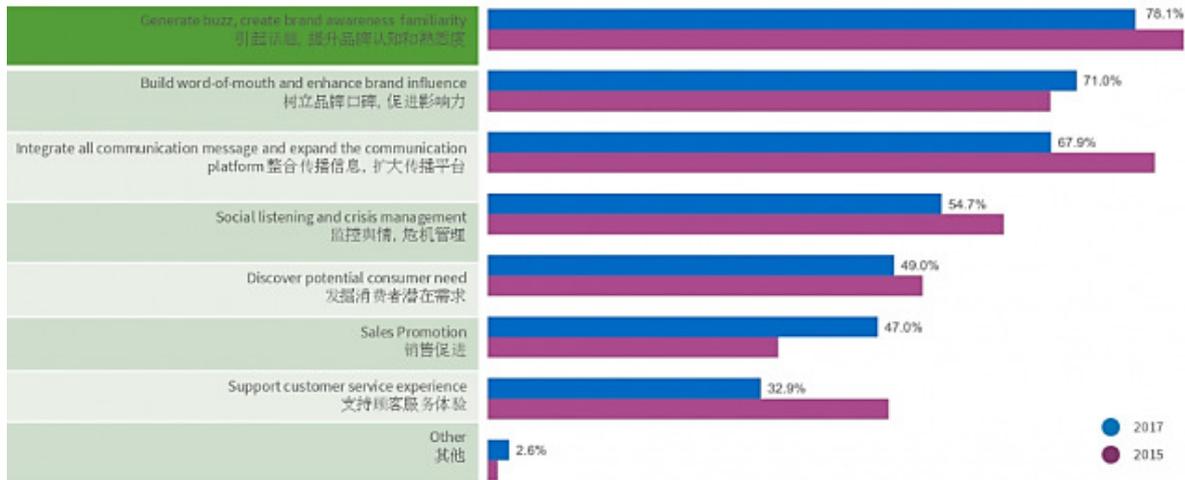
In this wave of the study, creativity remained a key factor for marketers when shortlisting agencies during the pitch process. “22% of marketers selected ‘innovative ideas and effective creative’ as very important in agency selection,” said Sabrina Lee, managing director of R3 China. “Marketers believe that the more advanced a PR agency is in breakthrough creativity and providing the right content to the target audience, the more competitive they are during the agency selection.”

The study also found that while 72% of marketers are satisfied with their current PR agency, 33% would consider a pitch, citing a lack of creativity as their main reason.

For most of China’s marketers (78%), social media is used to generate buzz and brand familiarity, ahead of building word-of-mouth and influence, and communications integration. There is a marked increase, however, in those using social media for sales promotion (47%), reflecting perhaps the ability to connect content to commerce on China’s social media platforms.

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