

Discussing the digital adspend/audience disconnect



By [Herman Manson](#): [@marklives](#)

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At the Microsoft Advertising [Imagine Istanbul 2011](#) conference that took place last week in Istanbul, Turkey, a panel discussion tried to find reasons behind the % adspend vs online audience (little money/big audience) disconnect in the MEA region. Overall, digital adspend lags more developed markets dramatically, even as digital audiences have grown and use of social media has familiarised people with digital environments.

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The panel, moderated by [Nazeer Suliman](#) ([@NazeerSuliman](#)), advertising and online lead at Microsoft - South Africa, included fellow South African [Wayne Naidoo](#) ([@WNaidoo](#)), group CEO at Lowe Bull, as well as Ilkay Gurpinar, ECD and VP at TBWA\ISTANBUL, Rayan Karaky, GM digital operations at Starcom Dubai, and Demet Ikiler, CEO of GroupM, Turkey.

Large clients shown little interest in digital

Naidoo threw the proverbial cat amongst the pigeons early on by saying that large clients have shown little interest in digital campaigns. Naidoo argued that what his creative directors want to do - and what clients allow them to do - in terms of digital makes for a disconnected experience.



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A reason for this might be the lack of strong digital FMCG case studies in emerging markets, according to Gurpinar, while Karaky added (quite correctly) that often publishers in the MEA region spent more on their sales teams than on their content. Karaky added that the industry love of techie jargon does it a disservice and doesn't prick the interest of marketing executives (also a pet peeve of [Gloo's Pete Case](#)).

Naidoo said media plans continue to have detailed lists of ad requirements and flight times, while 'digital' gets tagged as a one-liner at the end. Naidoo also admitted that creative directors at many ad agencies still default to TV, as this is traditionally the easiest way to tell a story, and then see how other media fits into a campaign.

"A big idea only lasts 48 hours"

Karaky argued that ad land's love affair with the 'big idea' is becoming irrelevant - "a big idea only lasts 48 hours," he said, while micro-trends and tactical work are becoming increasingly important. The lack of collaboration and the territorial stance agencies take when it comes to 'their' ideas confuses clients, while the failure of media planners to include publishers in the conversation also had a negative effect on digital spend, Karaky added.

Ikiler echoed this message by saying that agencies should focus less on "big ideas" and more on understanding consumers. Naidoo also concurred that media planners remain intimidated by digital media.

Gurpinar added that agencies should move away from the confrontational 'my idea' to a more collaborative 'our idea' approach, if true potential is to be realised.

Publishers far ahead of media planners

Ikiler, meanwhile, called for better relations with media suppliers and said her group is looking for advanced relationships with publishers, as they are ahead of media planners in terms of technology, measurement, development and value creation. A siloed approach no longer works in the media planning and media planners need to be literate in digital, said Ikiler.

Gurpinar concluded that brands need a more natural approach to social media, brands still act like brands when they go online and use social media, and it's not doing them any favours among an increasingly digital-savvy population.

It seems that digital agencies, larger 'traditional' agencies, media planners and clients all play a role in under-spending on digital as a percentage of advertising budgets. Our inability as an industry to break out of our little niches and collaborate on finding solutions to some of the issues raised by the panel is a slap in the face for consumers, who expect to engage with brand representatives through multiple platforms but continue to be bombarded with the one-way communication strategies of old.

This story is one of several filed from Imagine Istanbul 2011 that Bizcommunity.com will be running this week. Microsoft Advertising sponsored the flights, accommodation, meals and transport during the duration of the conference.

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