

5 steps to using design thinking in creating multi-channel marketing strategy

 By [Craig Hannabus](#), issued by [Rogerwilco](#)

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Our fourth annual South African Digital Customer Experience Report, released last quarter, showed that local websites and retailer apps are still where most people do their shopping, coming in at 67% and 63% respectively. However, 48% - effectively half - of the people we surveyed said they buy directly through Facebook and Instagram.



Craig Hannabus, strategy director at Rogerwilco

Even instant messaging apps are getting in on the act, with 31% of our respondents having used WhatsApp to make purchases. Add to this the recent announcement that Meta is soon to offer a digital wallet on its platforms and multi-channel social shopping is set for even more substantial growth.

With so many people already shopping on so many channels, how do you create an effective multi-channel marketing strategy? At Rogerwilco we increasingly rely on design thinking.

As one of its early adopters, it's no secret that I'm a fan of design thinking. I find it a very effective discipline, and I choose that word deliberately. While design thinking is not new, it warrants an explanation. Here's how I think of it:

“ Design thinking is the structuring of the obvious, a method of solving problems that puts the needs of the customer above everything else. It gives you a logical process to follow and is especially useful when you know little or nothing about the customer. It requires you to be hands-on and collaborative. ”

Step 1 – Identify the customer Who is the ideal customer? The answer to this question is not a demographic, it's a name, an actual person. Now you need to find the content they're consuming – and this is where the very channels we're talking about become your friends. For B2B, LinkedIn is often your most useful resource. For B2C, Facebook is useful for millennials and baby boomers, Instagram and TikTok for Gen Z and Gen Alpha.

Their posts and re-posts will help you build a template of what they, and others like them, value. Drill down to see where

they consume content, rather than deciding on where you want to place content. It's an important distinction.

Step 2 – Define their challenges. What problems do your customers need to solve and what problems stand between you and them? You need to take a hands-on approach and look at both internal and external factors. Internal includes what's happening inside their lifestyle, business or industry. This could be new fashion trends, seasonal wants or needs, innovation changing their business models, a new competitor, anything that will affect buying decisions.

External factors require a broader look at issues such as the economy and how it affects your market, socio-economic factors, and political factors. Viewing the customer in isolation from these factors will lead you down the wrong path.

Step 3 – Make your plan. Once you've been through the process of understanding who your customer is and what they need, you can start putting together your strategic plan. Be aware of the three different entities at play: 1) the business itself, which almost always means the bottom line; 2) marketing and their objectives; 3) the customer and their expectations.

Collaboration between them is important. Their detailed view of the customer should be aligned. Your plan needs to include the KPIs for each entity. Things like reach and engagement don't qualify as KPIs. You want real objectives here, usually, sales related.

Step 4 – Apply creative. Now is the time to determine the style of your approach. Multi-channel marketing doesn't mean multiple approaches. The key here is that customers want a seamless experience, so you need to offer the same thing in the same consistent way across the channels you've identified.

Ideally they want to purchase from the platform they're already using and they want their online experience to be on a par, if not better than the experience they would have in store, so this needs to be considered in the creative

Step 5 – Don't walk away. You may have pushed play but a good strategist will stay engaged beyond their area of expertise because there is so much to learn from what happens next, whether success or failure. What worked and why, what didn't and why? Finding the insights in each campaign, whether mainstream or online, is an essential part of the job and the surest way to improve.

Finally, a word to the wise. Our research revealed that South African spend on international websites almost trebled from 13% in 2021 to 33% in 2022. This means that your digital sales offerings are being benchmarked against global brands, giving you every reason to present your brand in the best possible light.

You have to be on the right platform at the right time with the right message presented in the right way – if you're not, a competitor will be, and it is as easy to shop on international sites as on local.

ABOUT CRAIG HANNABUS

Craig is the strategy director at Rogerwilco. His most recent career history, which spans more than 15 years, is dominated by digital - before that he worked in logistics. [View my profile and articles...](#)

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