

The Big Ideas. The Real Conversations.

The Digital Day 2025 Recap

Top 10 Takeaways from The Digital Day 2025

What's next in marketing is already happening. Here's a snapshot of the ideas, insights, and innovations that matter now. Not trends, but shifts shaping the future.

1. **Balance Brand and Performance Marketing:** Don't rely solely on performance marketing. Aim for a 40-60% mix that includes brand building, which can increase ROI by up to 90%.
2. **Authenticity Matters:** Brands must create genuine, culturally relevant content that resonates with audiences, especially in gaming and digital partnerships.
3. **AI is Transforming Marketing:** Marketers need to adapt to AI-driven consumer behaviours, including zero-click searches and AI-powered shopping experiences.
4. **First-Party Data is Crucial:** Develop a robust first-party data strategy for personalisation and optimisation, but don't completely abandon third-party data.
5. **Emotional Intelligence Trumps Technical Skills:** 90% of top-performing CMOs believe emotional intelligence is more critical than analytical skills.
6. **Cultural Insights Drive Successful Campaigns:** Deep consumer research and understanding cultural nuances are key to creating impactful marketing strategies.
7. **Storytelling Remains Paramount:** Regardless of channel, compelling storytelling is essential for engaging audiences and building brand loyalty.
8. **Embrace Risk and Innovation:** Create an environment that encourages teams to take calculated risks and follow their creative convictions.
9. **Prepare for AI-Driven Marketing:** Optimise content for AI search, develop more differentiated product lines, and think beyond traditional marketing approaches.
10. **Measure Beyond Clicks:** Focus on holistic measurement that considers brand building, customer lifetime value, and long-term strategic impact.

Session-wise Key Takeaways from The Digital Day 2025

SESSION 1: FRAME THE CHALLENGE: Breaking the Performance Addiction

Presented by: Nikki Taylor, Marketing & Communications Director, APAC, Analytic Partners

Summary: The numbers are in — and have been for years. Long-term ROI is driven by brand, yet most marketers still over-index on performance. Nikki dismantled the myth of last-click attribution and showed how it distorts true effectiveness.

1. **Last-Click Attribution Is Misleading:** Last-click attribution oversimplifies the customer journey by ignoring earlier brand interactions and attributing success to the final touchpoint.
2. **You're Missing Over Half the Story:** With over half of users blocking ads or tracking, nearly 59% of marketing interactions go unmeasured, leaving major data gaps.
3. **Brand + Performance = Power Duo:** When combined strategically, brand and performance marketing can boost ROI by up to 90%, proving they work better together than apart.
4. **Most Marketing Ignores 97% of Buyers:** Most marketing targets the 3% ready to buy now, missing the 97% who represent future demand and long-term growth.
5. **Brand Messaging Wins Every Time:** Brand messaging is 80% more effective than tactical content and can increase performance ROI by 35% when used in conversion-focused channels.
6. **Build Brand Now, Win Later:** An ideal marketing mix includes 30-60% brand-building to drive long-term growth and reduce reliance on short-term performance spikes.
7. **Stick with What Works:** Consistent creative outperforms frequent changes, as stable messaging builds brand recognition and improves multi-channel performance.

Bottom line: 30–60% of your media spend should build brand. Anything less is short-termism masquerading as efficiency.

SESSION 2: CREATIVITY UNPACKED: The Science of Stickiness - The APAC Playbook for Brand Impact & Winning the Feed

Presented by: **Rivesh Misra**, Human Insights Director, The Coca-Cola Company + **Gayatri Srikant**, Regional Managing Director, Toluna

Summary: Being noticed isn't the same as being remembered. Coca-Cola's use of distinctive assets, emotional clarity, and ruthless consistency proves that mental availability doesn't happen by accident — it's engineered.

1. **Attention is Everything:** In a world of 4,000 daily ad exposures, attention is the ultimate currency, and brands must create scroll-stopping, platform-specific content to win it.
2. **Speak to the Heart:** Emotionally resonant campaigns stem from universal human insights, allowing brands to connect deeply across cultures through meaningful storytelling.
3. **Consistency > Constant Creativity:** Consistent brand messaging outperforms constant reinvention, as shown by long-term campaigns like Dove's 20-year core message.
4. **Right Story, Right Place:** Each platform demands tailored creative, since a format that works on TV won't necessarily succeed in the fast-paced world of social media.
5. **Going Viral Is No Accident:** Viral content requires deliberate storytelling with the right mix of humor, intrigue, and timing to spark shareability.
6. **Real > Big:** Authenticity drives engagement more than broad reach, making micro-influencers and niche narratives more effective than mass campaigns.
7. **Win the First 3 Seconds:** With shrinking attention spans, brands must hook viewers within the first three seconds using precise, impactful short-form content.

Bottom line: If your brand assets change quarterly, you're erasing equity, not building it.

SESSION 3: CULTURE REDEFINED: Cracking the Culture Code

Presented By: Quark Henaras, Co-founder, SAYA + Grace Astari, Creative & Culture Director for Innovation, Diageo + Alexander de Leon, Group VP, PropertyGuru

Summary: This panel showed what happens when brands stop chasing impressions and start embedding themselves in culture. Diageo's JW Blue *Ice Chalet* and PropertyGuru's *Home Run* weren't stunts — they were smart, long-term moves that built relevance and drove real results.

1. **Creativity Meets Commerciality:** Marketing leaders must blend creative ideas with commercial acumen to drive impactful outcomes.
2. **Strategic Use of AI:** AI should be used as a tool to enhance efficiency and creativity, not replace human insight.
3. **Internal Influence Matters:** CMOs must gain internal buy-in by educating stakeholders and aligning marketing with business growth.
4. **Long-Term Thinking Wins:** Marketers should balance short-term performance with long-term brand building for sustainable success.
5. **Cross-Functional Collaboration:** Effective marketing requires close collaboration with sales, finance, and product teams.
6. **Measurement with Purpose:** Focus on metrics that truly reflect marketing's business impact, not just vanity KPIs.
7. **Courage in Leadership:** Modern CMOs must be brave, championing bold ideas and standing firm in their convictions.

Bottom line: If your brand disappears when media spend stops, you never had equity — just reach.

SESSION 4: MEDIA REALITY CHECK: The Digital Advertising Debate - Big Questions. Straight Answers. Your turn to weigh in.

Presented by: Laura Quigley, SVP APAC, Integral Ad Science (IAS) + Zoheb Gafoor, Head of Operations, Hearts & Science, APAC + Asha Gourinath, Head of Growth, Performance Marketing & Paid Media for South East Asia, Grab

Summary: Everyone claims data is their edge, but few have real strategies for a cookie-less world. The panel agreed: without ownership of your audience signals, you're dependent on platforms that already outspend you in tech, talent, and tools.

1. **First-party data remains essential:** The panellists emphasised that despite the delay in cookie deprecation, first-party data is critical for personalisation, retargeting, and optimising campaigns.
2. **Data strategy must align with business needs:** Brands should begin with clear problem statements and business goals before developing segmentation and creative strategies tied to data.
3. **Balance between first- and third-party data is key:** While first-party data is vital for active or lapsed users, third-party data still plays a role at the top and mid-funnel stages for user acquisition and awareness.
4. **Collecting data isn't a strategy, actionability is:** Simply amassing data without defined use cases or activation plans doesn't constitute a meaningful data strategy.
5. **Scalability determines data value:** Data segments must be large and robust enough to be useful, especially for applications like lookalike modelling or personalisation at scale.
6. **Segmentation quality drives success:** Without thoughtful segmentation, even well-collected data across tools like CDPs or CRM systems will have limited impact.
7. **Strategic testing beats scattergun experimentation:** Brands should distinguish between one-off experiments and scalable strategic initiatives to ensure long-term impact from data efforts.

Bottom line: If your first-party data strategy isn't already active and owned, you're handing leverage to someone else.

SESSION 5: PLAY TO WIN: Gaming Matters

Presented by: **Jasper Donat**, Co-Founder and CEO, Branded + **Iciri Rai**, APAC Sponsorship Director, Mastercard + **Jasmine Loh**, Partnerships Manager, South Asia, Activision Blizzard

Summary: Gaming now generates more revenue than music and film combined. But most brand activations treat it like a side project. The brands winning in this space treat it as a core media channel — with value-driven, long-term engagement, not one-off ads.

1. **Gaming's Scale:** Gaming is now larger than the music and film industries combined, making it a critical space for brand engagement.
2. **Activision Blizzard's Reach:** The company publishes major titles like Call of Duty, Diablo, Candy Crush, and is now part of Microsoft's Xbox Game Studios, offering global partnership opportunities.
3. **Driving Fandom:** For Activision Blizzard, success in brand partnerships is defined by creating genuine excitement and fandom among players.
4. **Mastercard's Strategy:** Mastercard focuses on long-term brand equity and leverages gaming sponsorships (e.g., with League of Legends and Valorant) to increase loyalty, card usage, and transaction volume.
5. **Creative Collaborations Work:** Unique brand activations like the Deadpool Xbox controller showcase the power of memorable, culture-driven engagement.
6. **KPIs Matter:** For Mastercard, success is measured through tangible metrics like increased campaign demand, engagement, and partner participation via pass-through rights.
7. **Regional Strengths:** Both panellists highlighted the Asia-Pacific region as a key growth area for gaming and brand partnerships, with custom activations tailored to local audiences.

Bottom line: If you're still "experimenting" with gaming, you're not early. You're late.

SESSION 6: GUT VS. GROWTH: The Art and Science of Data

Presented by: Genelle Hung, Country Manager, Southeast Asia, PubMatic

Summary: Retail media is booming, and exposing how many teams still lead with instinct over insight. Genelle pointed out the uncomfortable truth: when data challenges your assumptions, do you adapt or double down?

1. **Emotion Still Rules in a Data-Driven World:** Even in 2025, decisions are often driven by gut instinct, fear, and emotion, despite access to sophisticated data and AI models.
2. **The Power of One Bad Feeling:** A single personal reaction can derail an entire data-backed campaign, as shown in the real-life story of a brand pulling ads after one emotional response.
3. **Fear of Risk Trumps Innovation:** Marketers hesitate to act boldly, not because of lack of data, but due to fear of being wrong, being first, or facing reputational damage.
4. **CMOs Admit to Overriding Data:** 67% of CMOs say gut feeling still influences decisions, and 72% admit to delaying or cancelling campaigns despite positive data, due to fear of backlash.
5. **Retail & Gaming Ads Offer Clear Signals:** Consumers respond positively to ads in high-emotion, high-engagement spaces like mobile gaming and retail media, showing higher brand recall and intent to buy.
6. **The Audience Is Ready, But Are You?:** Consumers are already in buying mode, with saved credit cards and high intent, yet brands delay action, waiting for others to go first.
7. **Data Confidence Is Still Low:** Only 27% of CMOs feel confident making decisions based solely on data, meaning 3 out of 4 still second-guess their dashboards.

Bottom line: Data is only as good as your willingness to be wrong.

SESSION 7: AI AMPLIFIED: Your Future Customer isn't Human

Presented by: Dominique Rose Van-Winther, Chief AI Evangelist, CEO, Final Upgrade

Summary: AI agents like ChatGPT are already shaping how products are searched, recommended, and purchased. Dominique introduced *AI-Optimised Optimisation (AIO)*: a playbook for making your content readable and rankable by machines, not just humans.

1. **The Fear of Falling Behind Is Real:** Marketers feel overwhelmed by the speed of tech evolution, especially in AI, and are terrified of becoming obsolete.
2. **Marketing Has Entered a New Era:** We've moved from street shouting to newspapers, radio, TV, and now to intelligent digital assistants - each stage increasing in complexity and scale.
3. **Your Future Consumer Isn't Human:** AI agents are already making purchasing decisions on behalf of users. Marketers must now target the AI before they target the human.
4. **You're No Longer Marketing to People, You're Marketing to Machines:** Tools like Chatgpt, Perplexity, and AI agents like Manus are changing the discovery and buying journey. The next customer is an algorithm.
5. **Prompting Is the New Copywriting:** People who still "write prompts" are already slow. Tomorrow's marketers must integrate seamlessly with AI flows to stay relevant.
6. **AI Agents Are the New Personal Shoppers:** With agents like Manus doing complex tasks, like booking train tickets or buying tech gear, consumer expectations for ease and personalisation are skyrocketing.
7. **To Survive, Become an AI Evangelist:** If you're not mastering AI tools, someone else will and your company will replace you with them. Evangelise or risk extinction.

Bottom line: If you're not indexed by Bing, you're invisible to AI-powered buyers. SEO as you know it won't cut it.

Ready to start the conversation?

→ Use this recap to pressure test your 2025 strategy. Or forward it to your peers and network to make sure we're getting ahead!