Content usage in an omni-channel marketing world

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Abstract To optimise content usage in an omni-channel marketing world, organisations must prioritise brand consistency and create a customer-centric approach through the introduction of an outside-in view from the buyer's perspective. A balance is required to achieve the ultimate goal of delivering content and messaging across all channels, devices and territories that provides for a truly integrated experience — and do so without impacting corporate risk of copyright infringement. This paper drills into a real-world example to examine how omni-channel marketing affected the content strategy at Banana Republic/Gap, Inc. The paper also provides next-step advice on centralising content and content rights, process governance, automation and leveraging data insights. Examples and best practices will be shared on taxonomies, role-based permissions, key organisational roles, rights management and rights-based workflow and automation.

KEYWORDS: omni-channel, digital rights management, DRM, content rights, taxonomy, copyright infringement

WHAT IS OMNI-CHANNEL MARKETING?

Omni–channel marketing is approaching companies with an eye toward how and what consumers experience and what their daily behaviours are. The goal is to create a unique, consistent and integrated brand experience for them, especially at the point of sale. With the dizzying volume of different distribution channels and devices, marketers have many ways to reach the consumer and they are doing just that. Channels may range from

print to in-store to digital outlets to social media to direct marketing to e-commerce trading partners. Devices may range from laptops and desktops to pervasive devices such as smartphones and tablets to in-store kiosks.

With omni-channel marketing, however, there is a shift toward making the outreach more holistic to provide greater consistency and continuity across channels. If one moves from one channel to another, the journey should be seamless.

Multi-channel is the first step and one more tactical and operational in nature. It looks at each channel and the experience within it. Omni-channel is more strategic and ties the channels together in order to create a single unified experience, designed to turn that consumer into a buyer.

This paper takes a real-world example from Banana Republic/Gap, Inc. and examines how omni-channel marketing evolved the nature of the group's marketing teams and the alignment that they had internally.

As with most major brands, traditional (eg print advertising) and digital marketing had been separated for over a decade, and their roles had evolved quite independently. Since adopting an omni-channel marketing strategy, however, Banana Republic has created new 'omni jobs' that are designed for e-mail, site, social and more, ensuring that assets and content are used for multiple purposes.

Marketers, producers and project managers collaborate on managing omni jobs. Each omni job is launched from the Banana Republic project management tool, which teams use to track jobs from start to finish. Designers are assigned to work on the job. The entire team works collaboratively to route the omni job through the approval journey. Once the file is ready for hand-off, the designer uploads the finished files to the digital asset management (DAM) system. The components of the omni jobs are separated out into the appropriate channel

folder (ie e-mail, site, etc). A unique job number that is initially assigned to the job by the project management software is also assigned to each marketing file and becomes part of the file's searchable metadata. This allows end users some flexibility in how they search for and find files. The unique job number can be plugged into the search box to find all the assets for a specific omni job across all channels (Figure 1). Alternatively, end users can browse folders to see all the jobs created for a specific channel (Figure 2).

THE IMPACT OF OMNI-CHANNEL ON CONTENT STRATEGY

With omni-channel marketing, the goal is to make the experience integrated. To deliver a content experience that feels continuous it is therefore essential to understand where the customer is in their journey. Various marketing automation and technology tools have been designed to help track a user's journey and deliver content selectively. By pairing such tools with data analysis and recommendation engines, it is possible to know what content to serve based on the buyer's behaviour and their place in the cycle.

With both multi-channel marketing and omni-channel marketing, it is important to create a content strategy that communicates the same or similar message and design across all channels and devices as well as partner or third-party websites. The content should be consistent and cohesive. This can be achieved with a well-designed content strategy that is communicated across the creative and production teams both in-house and externally, as well as branding guidelines that are executed properly across departments, brands and agencies.

An effective content strategy also needs to consider and address brand transparency. Global brands are seeking to inject transparency into their media buying and distribution workflows and chief marketing
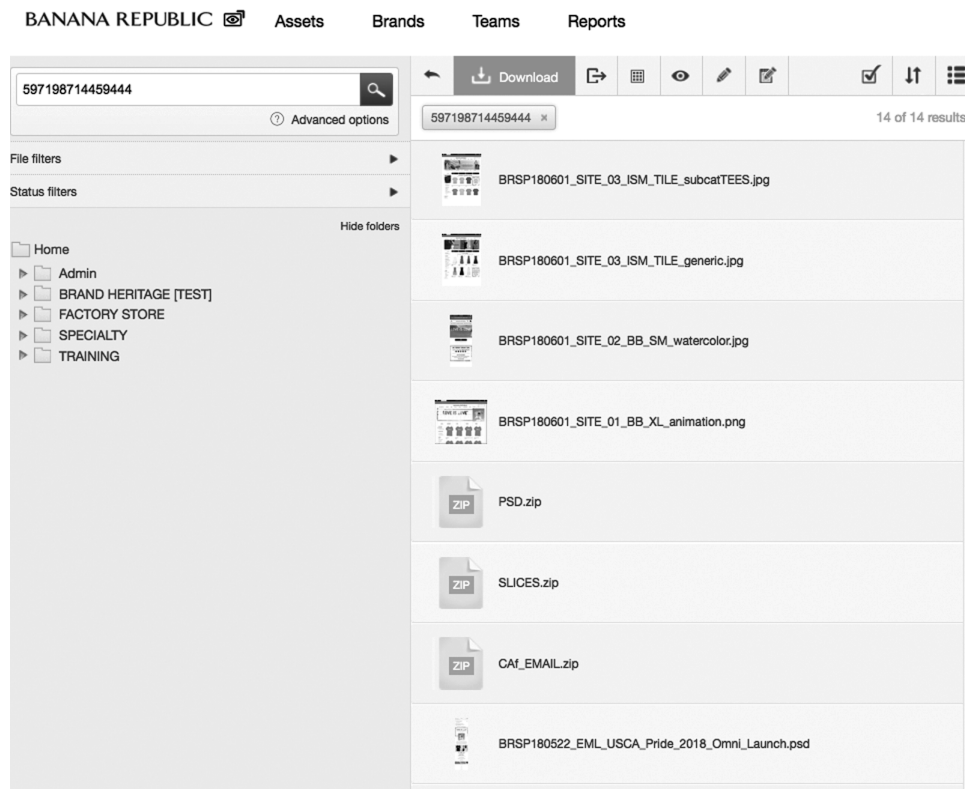
Figure 1: Example of a Banana Republic job number search where search results contain omni assets (e-mail and site)
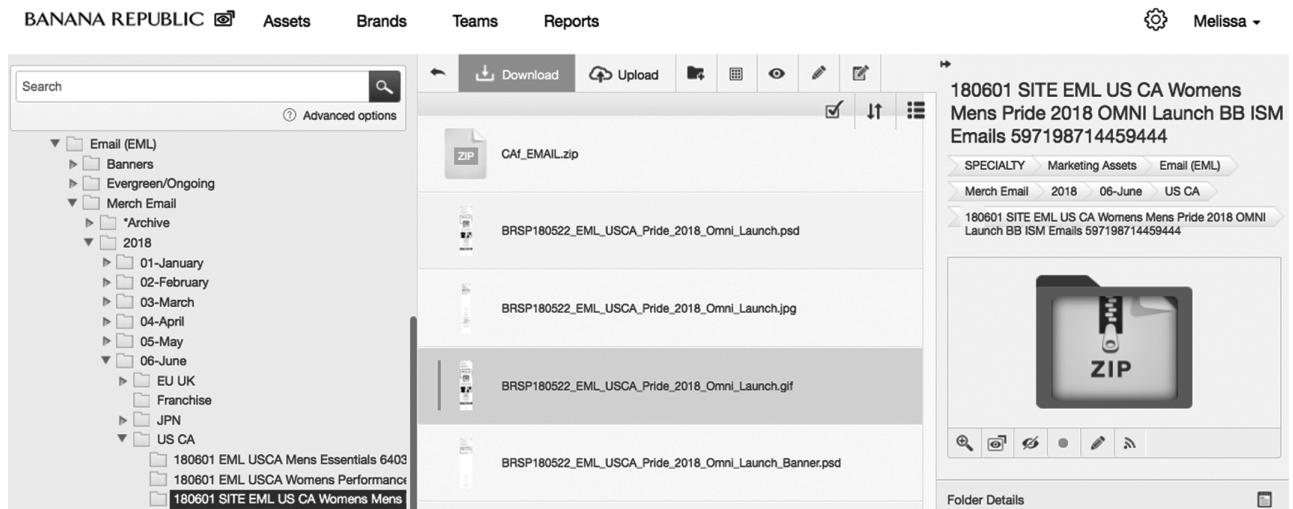
Figure 2: Browsing the e-mail category in the Banana Republic folder hierarchy

officers are looking for ways to gain ownership of their data and protect their brands, while continuing to work with outside agencies.

To achieve brand consistency and transparency, an organisation's content should ultimately be shared across the company's marketing teams and its affiliated agencies; it should be indexed and easily searchable; and finally, it should be presented in such a way that a content consumer will know if they can reuse or repurpose it, and exactly how, when and where. To do this effectively and gain return on investment (ROI) requires a robust process for planning, estimating and licensing content to balance the organisation's financial and brand priorities.

This paper will now drill further into the Banana Republic's content strategy, starting with a discussion of the company's digital asset landscape — where the assets and content are being generated and where they are going to be used.

The rise of social media advertising has resulted in a huge increase in assets for the company. Banana Republic has gone from three or four photo shoots a year to ten or more per season. The brand produces or sources more than 40,000 assets each year from multiple talent/modelling agencies, internal marketing design teams, advertising agencies, the internal photography studio, and stock photography and video.

The content consumers that will leverage the assets cut across several teams from internal marketing design teams to Banana Republic teams responsible for communications, education and public relations. Content users also extend to franchise partners, Gap Inc. (parent company) partners and corporate archives.

This paper will explore taxonomy further in due course. Before that, however, Figures 3–5 show some of Banana Republic's omni-channel assets that were placed across different marketing channels such as print (advertisements, billboards, direct mail, in-store), SITE, social media and paid media. These assets were leveraged in the company's Love Is Love launch
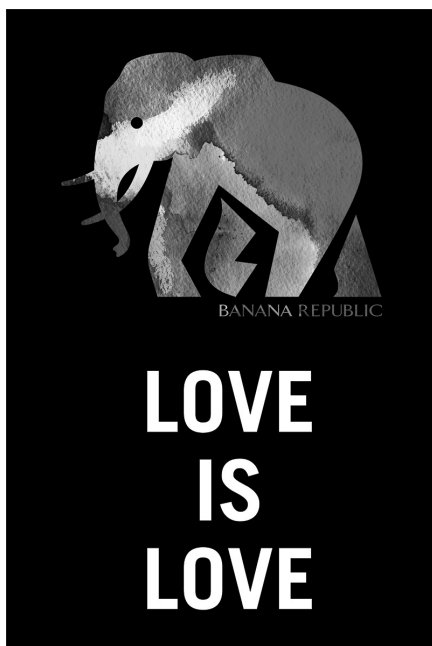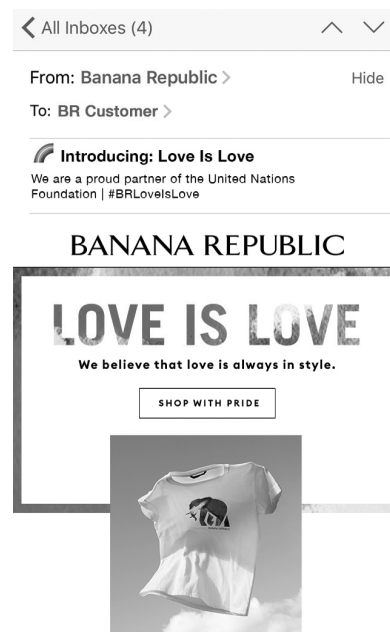

Figure 3: Love is Love campaign poster
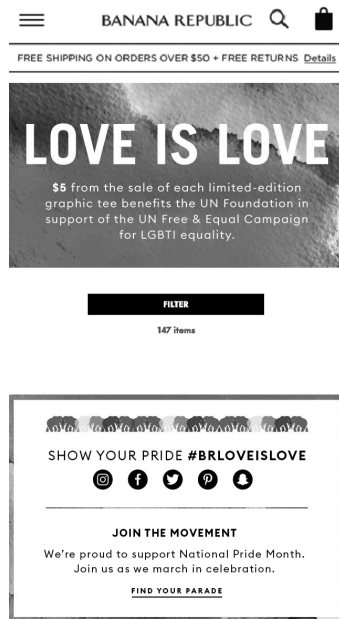

Figure 4: Love is Love e-mail

Figure 5: Love is Love site

(#BRLoveIsLove) in celebration of love, equality and inclusion.

DIGITAL ASSET MANAGEMENT AND DIGITAL RIGHTS MANAGEMENT

For an effective content repurposing strategy, it is not enough to consolidate content into a centralised repository. DAM systems provide a central location for assets and make it easy to find them. This is the first step in providing visibility into what content is available and provisioning access to it both internally and externally. However, a DAM system is more than just an asset repository. It should help manage assets through the life cycle from ingestion to distribution, optimising storage and retrieval while cataloguing all aspects.

Also important is the ability to assess all creative inventory for optimum content reuse, which requires visibility into the associated agreements and rights. Most DAM systems are not designed to store complex rights or licence contract data — information that is essential to know what

may be done with the assets, from rights to restrictions. Only with digital rights management (DRM) — a single source of truth for rights — it is possible to determine how far the original use of the content can be extended to apply across new territories, channels, devices and campaigns.

Many organisations fall into the category of having risk takers who will use an asset without knowing if they have the rights to do so. Right infringement can result in increased cost to an organisation and a tarnished brand reputation. It is important to establish clear policies against infringement in order to change behaviour.

The hard costs are reported in the news every day. Notable examples include a California woman who filed a lawsuit against Chipotle Mexican Grill for more than US$2bn for unauthorised use of her image in their advertising;[1] Michael Jordan being awarded US$8.9m for the unauthorised use of his image in advertisements for Dominick's supermarket chain;[2] and Grumpy Cat being awarded over US$700,000 for image use in product advertising that went beyond the scope of the original agreement.[3] However, the potential damage extends beyond the litigation fees. During pre-production, last-minute rework costs can cause companies to exceed budgets. Post-production, brands that miss expiration dates find they are paying tens of thousands to models for images not taken down on time.

IMPORTANT STEPS IN THE PROCESS

To optimise content usage in an omni-channel marketing world, one must ensure brand consistency as well as a consumer-centric approach across all customer touch points, whether online, in-store, print or broadcast. Marketers and advertisers must deliver content and messaging across all channels, devices and territories required for a truly integrated experience — and without risking copyright infringement.

In what follows, the paper provides advice on centralising content and content rights, process governance, automation and leveraging data insights.

Perform data analysis

It is essential not just to 'know the audience' but know how the audience is engaging with the brand. What are they interacting with, where are they leaving off, when are they coming back, what is capturing their attention? These are some of the questions to be asking when finding ways to capture, measure and analyse.

Companies commonly invest in marketing automation, website content management and e-commerce tools that can track the user's interactions and engagement and retain their history with the company in order to provide an 'intelligent' customer experience as well as higher conversion rates.

Formulate, document and communicate the strategy

The aim is to fully define, understand and communicate the brand and marketing objectives and messaging, as well as how these tie into the content strategy. This will be the only way to empower consistent and cohesive branding across all outlets.

Design a well-structured taxonomy

When working with assets and content, taxonomy plays an essential role in properly classifying and cataloguing. To acquire and track rights properly, be sure to consider all points of sale as well as how an asset might be leveraged across products and brands. Without a well-structured rights taxonomy, determining rights can be difficult. Licensing agreements are often bounded with exclusions, restrictions, timeframes, geographic limitations and more. At the same time, assets too are becoming more complex — an asset is no longer just a singular item, but instead a

'composite asset' comprised of multiple items forming one new asset. It is important to employ a flexible and extensible model that makes it possible to track different types of assets (text, images, video, music, brands, etc) in different ways (formats, territories, usage types, components, exclusivity, date windows, etc).

Many organisations have different departments, divisions or subsidiaries that manage their own assets and therefore are defining their own unique taxonomies. To

Table 1: Standardised rights definitions

Direct marketing	E-mail
	Mail
Digital	Display ads
	Brand website
	Mobile/tablet
	Digital media
	Podcasts
	SEO/SEM
	PPC
Print	Magazine — print
	Magazine — digital
	Newspaper
	Trade publication
	Other
Social Media	Facebook
	Instagram
	Snapchat
	Twitter
	LinkedIn
	Other
Broadcast	Radio
	Television
	Video on demand
	Other
Retail	In-store
	POP
OOH	Billboard
	Transit
	Airport
	Other

eliminate duplicate costs and efforts, and improve overall efficiency, it is prudent to adopt a common standard rights taxonomy across the organisation, and centralise its maintenance.

Table 1 provides a general example of standardised rights definitions.

Banana Republic's taxonomy encompasses both of the brand's divisions: Factory Store and Specialty. In addition to the core brand, there is also a substantial Factory Store division with its own set of assets. After breaking the organisation out by division, the assets are then further sub-categorised into two broad categories: creative and marketing. Channel sub-categories come next in the hierarchy and are mirrored wherever possible for both divisions (Figure 6).

Final creative assets, such as logos, photography, stock and videos, are made available for teams to use in marketing assets. Once the final marketing assets are approved, they are uploaded to the DAM system into the appropriate sub-category.

Plan for role-based permissions

It is important to understand the different types of roles, departments, users and how they need to interact with the content. Permissions may vary for different actions,

Figure 6: Banana Republic creative and marketing asset folder hierarchy

such as who can upload, download or see assets, for example.

At Banana Republic, access to the DAM system is set up using a role-based permission system. Appropriate access is maintained by users assigned to single or multiple groups, with these groups then assigned to folders.

The default group is a portal access. This allows users who are consumers of assets to view, download and share files. From there, it is possible to further restrict access in line with the folder taxonomy. Franchise portal users, for example, have access to the top-level Specialty folder only. Factory Story folder access is suppressed to ensure users cannot use these assets accidentally, as usage is not negotiated for this team.

Users who are also contributors to the tool are assigned to an additional group, which is further broken out by role (eg design, studio, project manager, etc), as shown in Figure 7.

Banana Republic's social team is piloting a process to add user-generated content assets to the DAM system that are visible only to specific teams, depending on the sensitivity of the contracts. In this model, as shown in Figure 8, permissions granted to the social team allow them to upload these third-party assets to the DAM system for archiving and sharing, as needed.

This approach allows the social team to see the folder of assets in the folder taxonomy (Figure 9a), while the same folder is suppressed from all portal end users (Figure 9b).

Utilising a folder taxonomy to manage permissions can be extremely helpful whenever it is necessary to limit access at a granular level. In any instance where assets may be visible to a user, even though the ability to download has been disabled, a watermark is added to alert the user that the asset has restricted access, as shown in Figure 10.
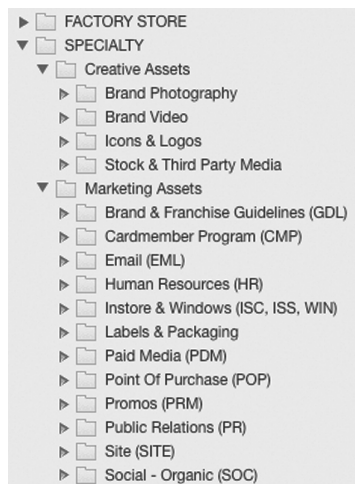
Carve out the asset manager and librarian roles

In today's digital age, any large brand needs a librarian and an asset manager. In some

Figure 7: Banana Republic folder permissions

Figure 8: Banana Republic social team permissions

companies, these roles may be combined, while others will be better served by separate roles. With digital content being created at a speed and quantity exponentially higher than non-digital content, new concerns and responsibilities make these roles essential. The key responsibility is to maintain the content, its integrity and manage rights to ensure compliance and promote the efficient use and reuse of existing investments.

Ideally, the asset management function (as well as business affairs or librarian function) should be covered by brands or across brands. The person or persons will manage the

a.

b.
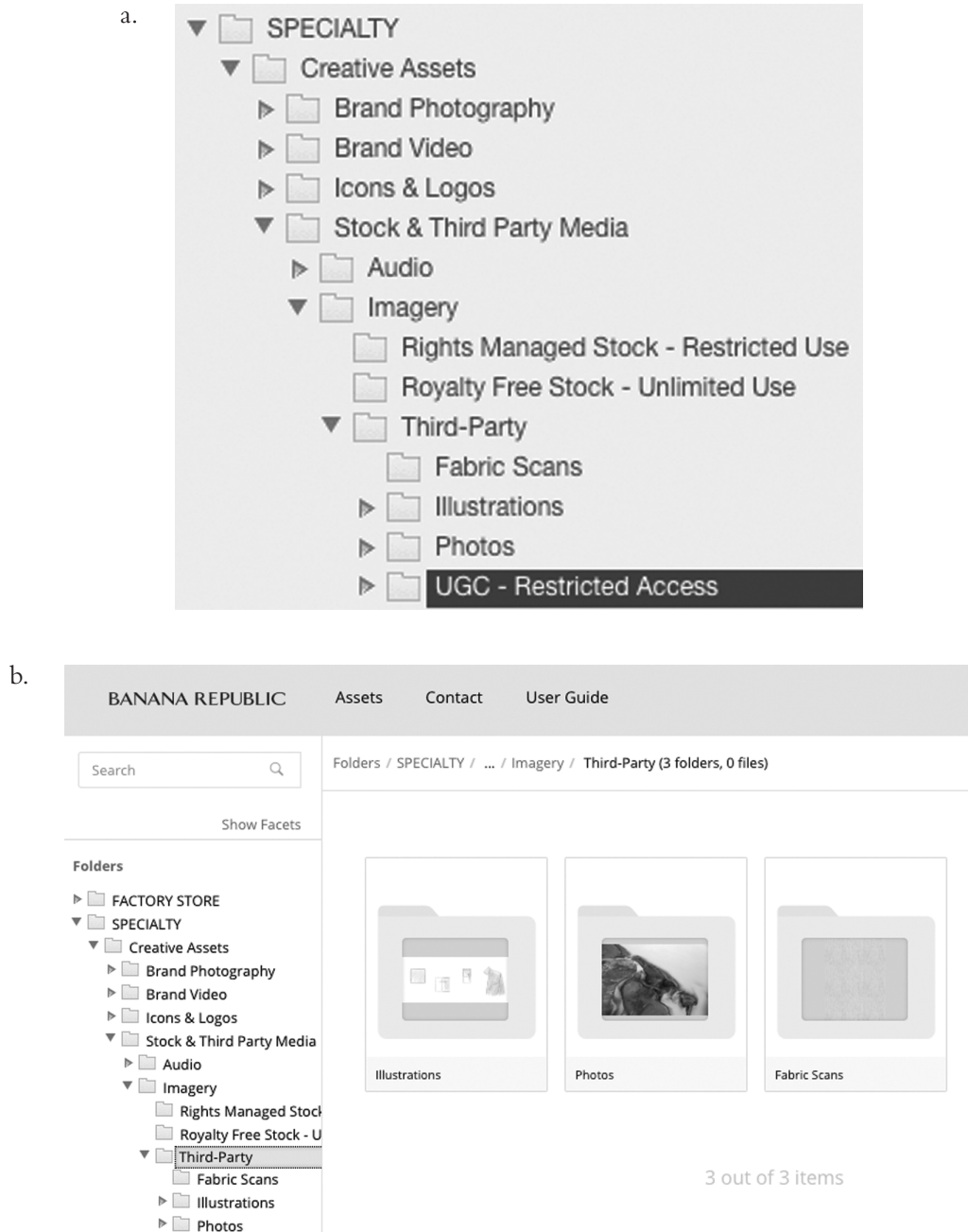
Figure 9: Social team's 'UGC — Restricted Access' folder (a) as seen by social team; (b) hidden from end users

metadata and taxonomy of assets as well as require in-depth knowledge of copyright regulations and can mine the 'rights' information from contracts, agreements and releases. They will associate assets to agreements and ensure that all of those associations are made properly. With the multi-dimensional nature of rights and the multitude of contracts that can be associated with one or more content pieces, this association is often complex but critical. It will drive the decisions of whether the reuse and repurposing of content is within the licensing terms and new rights can be acquired as necessary.
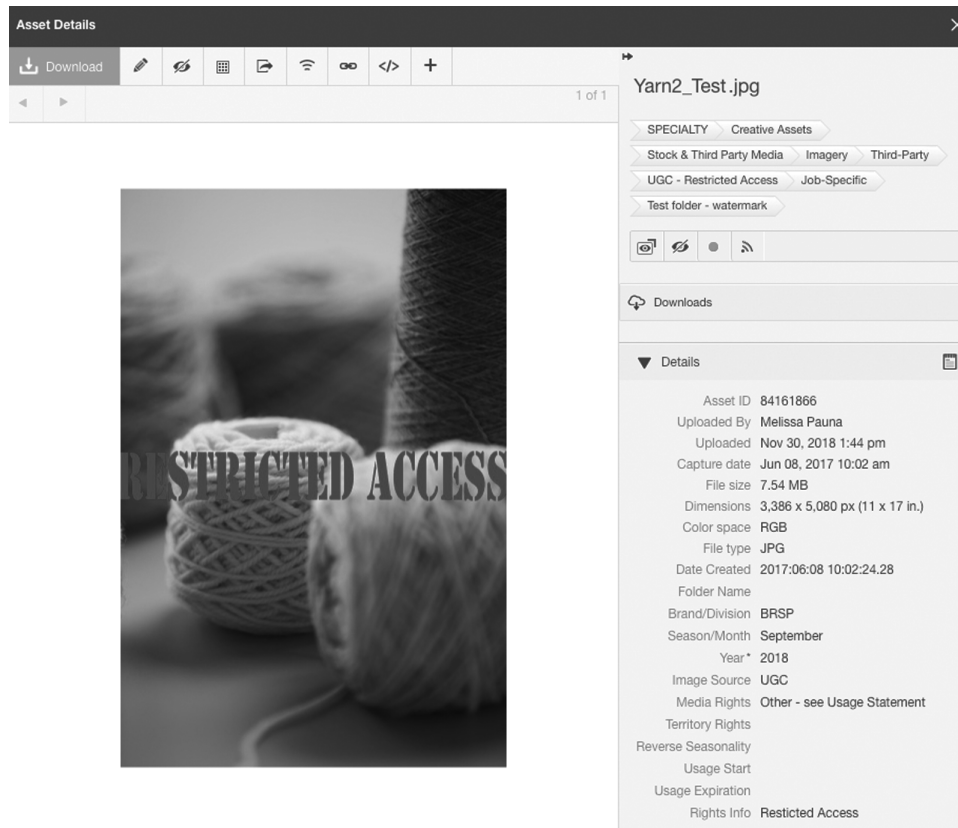
Figure 10: Watermark preview on image

Content selection and planning to the greater vision

As discussed previously, the content strategy and display decision is strategic and is directly tied to the organisation's multi-channel and omni-channel goals and objectives. After completing the necessary data analysis and fully understanding the buyer's journey and defining brand objectives, it is time to create a content strategy that maps accordingly.

This ideally starts at the time of acquisition, so that content is selected or produced to meet the immediate requirements, while keeping an eye toward to the vision of potential points-of-sale, distribution channels and target devices, as well as growth across geographical markets.

Where it is possible to increase the visibility into usage terms for the content already invested in and provide that at-a-glance information in real time, it is also possible to identify where terms may need to be amended. This could present huge cost-savings compared with producing new content from scratch. In addition, by gathering up trending business intelligence, such as how often the content is being used and when, where and how, it may be possible to negotiate for more favourable terms.

Banana Republic's design team in Japan provided a great example of how teams can increase ROI on assets when usage visibility is made available. This team usually leverages Specialty photography for its marketing. However, it noticed that the Factory division had photography that was ideal for an in-store promotion. The associated usage for these images noted that the images were for online use only. When the asset manager reached out to the

producer for guidance, it was discovered that while the photos were originally intended for online usage, there were no restrictions on other channels. In addition, the assets had no expiration date or restrictions on where they could be used.

Take centralisation further

The solution for centralisation is a DAM system that supports the repurposing of content for multi-channel marketing distribution. However, it is important to take centralisation further and centralise the contracts and rights for that content, otherwise the system solves only half the problem. A consolidation effort allows for easy searchability and sharing; however, it is important not to facilitate the misuse of content by doing so — just because something is in the DAM system, does not mean it can be used.

By ensuring that rights are centralised and accessible, teams are empowered to make informed decisions, while legal teams are armed to defend the usage, and protect the reputation of the brand and company. Additionally, the knowledge of where there are exceptions is highly useful. The team can amend and extend agreements rather than produce and acquire from scratch.

During the centralisation effort, it is important to inventory the type of content that is rights-managed, understand what dictates its rights (such as one or more associated contracts) and know where that content and the associated rights are stored so that the proper connections are made.

Build on governance processes

Any large organisation or brand will have a multi-faceted governance process. Look at how the plan and process cut across rights management to ensure content is used within regulation. The aim is to be able to manage content globally, across all potential users, brands, channels and territories. Adding

in a rights verification step can empower the business user while offering a system for checks and balances to ensure compliance. Ensure each agency is following the same set of steps to ensure checks are in place and information is easy to find.

Some companies use a manual approach involving spreadsheets, file folders or attaching PDF contracts. As assets proliferate and agreements become more granular, however, such an approach can soon become too complex to manage and maintain. For this reason, it is advisable to automate the rights clearance step so that users become knowledgeable and accountable and brands are protected. Otherwise there is a risk of encountering a variety of functional limitations; for example:

- an asset is often associated with multiple talent(s) or other agreements that may have different rights that need to be accounted for;
- a contract or asset with one talent may have different expiration dates for different distribution channels;
- each time a contract is updated, affected assets need to be identified and metadata must be updated manually; and
- there is no guarantee that users will check the usage rights metadata field and interpret it correctly.

A common pitfall is the failure to catalogue rights for an asset at acquisition, which then increases both risk and future maintenance. Account for the asset ingestion process and capture as much data as possible at the beginning of the process — it is much harder to come back later and get the rights data necessary to clear the asset in future.

Assets are proliferating at rapid speeds while at the same time becoming more complex with numerous attributes, multiple restrictions and multipart structures. A common consideration is to store complex rights data in the DAM system; however, while they can

handle asset metadata well, in most cases they cannot store dynamic, granular and hierarchical rights data.

When looking at the process governance, it is important to clearly define and allocate roles and make sure those roles are used to provide role-based, brand-based and permission-based data. Consider triggering behaviour based on rights results. For instance, if a content piece cannot be used according to the bounds of a particular campaign, then prevent it from being downloaded, throw up a disclaimer or stamp it with a watermark. This can only be done properly if the content and associated rights are tied together during the production process, at the point of selection for use.

Introducing a rights-based workflow is a very interesting concept that typically suits organisations that are further along in their DAM maturity models. This can drive ways to protect content, as discussed previously, but also introduce process efficiencies with workflow tasks and business process management, such as requesting additional rights for a content piece in order to meet content and brand objectives. Additionally, one can look to drive notification and alerts based on content intelligence, such as when content or agreements expire, where one might be in violation, and when a buyer enters the last stage of their experience.

Increase visibility to stakeholders

Visibility is power. With any effective omni-channel marketing strategy it comes down to providing visibility on many levels and across all stakeholders — marketers, brand managers, creatives, business affairs, agencies.

To understand fully how the consumer experience is navigated, business intelligence around content delivery and receptiveness is essential. This will help create the right strategy and make more effective business decisions. When armed with the right information, it is possible to negotiate better terms.

Visibility is also critical during the production process, internally and externally. Not just understanding what is available but also understanding the digital rights associated with the content. By adding in this visibility during the creative and production process, the result is greater transparency and compliance.

Finally, visibility post-production can greatly improve the company's processes. For instance, reporting on asset and contract expirations makes it possible to proactively handle impending expirations and negotiate for extensions.

Plan the post-production strategy carefully

In an omni-channel marketing world, post-production plans are vital. It is essential to be able to track how and where content is being delivered and ensure that it is consistent with brand messaging and design. Managing and maintaining those exit points should not be overlooked.

As mentioned earlier, with the help of marketing technology, it is possible to follow consumers' behaviour in order to see where they are and how they are interacting with the company. This, paired with metrics and data analysis, will make it possible to deliver the appropriate content at the appropriate place for the buyer so that they continue their experience.

SUMMARY

To optimise content usage in an omni-channel marketing world, it is essential to prioritise brand consistency while introducing an outside-in view from the buyer's perspective to create a customer-centric approach. Delivering content and messaging across all channels, devices and territories for a truly integrated experience — and doing so without impacting corporate risk of copyright

infringement — requires a balanced approach between strategy and content. The advice given in this paper will help to achieve that balance.

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