eMarketer: How would you describe the challenges that your clients are facing given such a dynamic media landscape?

Claire Bishop: It’s not a comfortable place for those who are not pretty comfortable in a fluid and changing environment. I know some of our clients fall into that category. They feel the ground shifting beneath their feet, and they’re not necessarily comfortable with all the decisions they have to make as a result.

“...one of the big challenges is that the landscape on the digital media side is so cluttered.”

The biggest challenges are determining where to put often limited resources in what seems like an infinite number of possible venues and understanding where those resources are going to make an impact. I also think one of the big challenges is that the landscape on the digital media side is so cluttered. In so many ways it seems like banner ads have become a commodity.

Travel marketers are often heavily focused on direct-response/performance-based marketing. How do you steer them into more brand-centric digital strategies?

Bishop: It’s a world where we’re going to have to look further beyond direct-response-focused goals for digital travel. We’re in such a great position because we’re able to measure most of what we do. We’re able to employ digital media to affect very specific periods for our destinations and our hotels. But I think that we’re doing our clients a disservice if that’s the only thing we’re looking at. Consumers really do appreciate other kinds of messages.
We’ve been saddled by the fact that there’s always been an ROI [return on investment] associated for what we’re doing on the digital side. And while that’s a great thing and certainly allows us to justify investment, it can also be a crutch and something that holds us back from really being able to explore the impactful ways that we can create messaging that resonates with our consumers on the brand level and on an emotional level.

“There is no doubt in my mind that we are really at a critical stage with regard to technology adaptation.”

We’re not selling dog food. We’re selling an experience that our consumers want to have. So we need to work together to figure out the most impactful ways to speak to people on an emotional level through digital executions. Digital advertising isn’t all banner ads and links; it’s more than that.

How do you see the digital media planning and buying process evolving?

Bishop: There is no doubt in my mind that we are really at a critical stage with regard to technology adaptation. We’re really in a test-and-learn environment. The way consumers prefer to see messages is shifting, and there are inherent challenges in adapting. Everyone wants to know is it going to be on a smartphone? Is it going to be through a mobile banner? Is it going to be on a tablet or a minitablet? There’s so many different options now. The web and digital channels are ubiquitous.

I don’t know how that affects how we plan and buy media, but it’s the stuff that we have to think about and try to be ahead of the curve on. What is the shape of the digital media experience going to be? That’s what everyone wants to know.

How does eMarketer help make it easier for you to navigate the cluttered media landscape and make informed recommendations to your clients?

Bishop: eMarketer helps us guide the strategy for our clients by helping us to set the stage at the outset. Intelligence from eMarketer makes it easier for me to stay on top of quickly evolving technologies, track trends and inform the underpinnings of media strategies. eMarketer reports provide critical insight along with key data and forecasts to support resource allocation.

I love the fact that it’s so diverse. I know when I’m going to eMarketer I’m not finding one perspective there—I’m finding an amalgamation of leading industry perspectives, and I can break that down by channel, which is extraordinarily helpful. It helps us to create context in a world where that’s often difficult to find. In such a frenetic media landscape, it’s nice to have a place to be able to put some definition to the structure of what we’re trying to build for our clients.