Tata Consultancy Services Marks a November Without a NYC Marathon



Key Insights

- Without many traditional marathons this year, TCS is highlighting its tools that allow runners to participate virtually.
- TCS took a more global approach this year, with a campaign that could be tweaked to be used throughout its major markets.

Many New Yorkers look forward to the first Sunday in November, the day of the annual TCS New York City Marathon, in a similar fashion to how children anticipate Christmas morning. From Staten Island to the Bronx, swaths of street are shuttered and crowds collect on the sidewalks to cheer on friends, family members and strangers as they run 26.2 miles across the city.

This year, of course, that first Sunday will look a little different. The marathon, at least in its official capacity, is canceled. While a virtual option will keep some of the spirit of the race alive, it’ll be difficult to capture its full

magic without the crowds and communal energy of the runners.

With that in mind, a new campaign from Tata Consultancy Services, the Mumbai-headquartered information technology services and consulting company that sponsors the marathon in New York City, as well as others around the globe including London, Amsterdam, Chicago and Boston, looks to commemorate that energy.

“The spirit of running is still very relevant, especially in today’s time,” said Rajashree R, CMO of TCS. “We felt this had to be a campaign that brings the entire spirit of running together.”

Dubbed #ThisRun, the campaign celebrates the resiliency of runners, as well as highlight TCS’s tech tools to help runners track their progress on their virtual races. Those apps, in particular, allow runners to recreate some of the race day atmosphere by playing sounds such as the cannon start or cheering crowds, as well as an augmented reality medal ceremony. It also allows for a community experience to be replicated across the apps, to connect runners across the world, while still providing a more localized experience in each individual app.

“We used to treat all of these as you know, separate events,” she added. “We felt that there was a unifying community and a unifying spirit that needed to bring all of these runners and marathon properties together. We can take a very global stand. But at the same time, we can make it look very personal to a specific marathon property anywhere in the world.”

It’s a fitting campaign for a brand that’s made a major push to align itself with not only the world’s top marathons, but with the culture of running entirely. So much of what’s associated with running marathons—the hope, the excitement, the perseverance—are the values that TCS wanted people to see mirrored in itself.

“Running marathons, it’s really human potential at its best,” she said. “We really love that idea and the association that it gave our brand.”

TCS’s marathon sponsorship looks very different in 2020. Still, the amount of ad and marketing spend is “somewhat comparable” to what company allocated to last year’s marathon activations, said Michelle Taylor, head, global sports sponsorships at TCS. The idea behind creating an all-digital global campaign this year “really helped TCS strengthen our brand messaging and also create financial efficiencies,” as opposed to local campaigns, designed for each race and market, she added.

In this year’s campaign, the same base video was used in promotional materials for the TCS New York City Marathon, TCS Amsterdam and Virgin Money London Marathon, with slight tweaks to each video to feature each city. Because individual teams didn’t have to spend on creating separate campaigns, more dollars were able to go towards promoting the campaign in their markets, or making additional materials.

Even after people are able to take to the streets on the first Sunday in November once again, Taylor said that tech tools, like TCS’s apps, will continue to play an important role, not just for athletes, but for corporate sponsors, too.

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Pages: 1 2

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