

Digital Marketing: A New Era of Marketing

RITIKA CHAUDHARY

Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce, Shaheed Bhagat Singh Evening College

Abstract

The evolution of the internet has made the consumers aware, independent and cautious. With a smart phone in every hand and internet connectivity on the go, the consumers are now well exposed to global trends and are always looking out for more. The combination of smartphones and internet provided consumers with extensive options to choose and compare from. This creates a huge opportunity for businesses of all scales as reaching out to people have become approachable and providing customized solutions is now easier. With the evolution of the internet, opportunities in the field of digital marketing for the brands have enhanced exponentially. But with greater opportunities, come greater threats! Businesses are building personal digital assets like Blogs, Websites etc and investing time and effort (and money of course) in building strong presence on communal platforms like Social Media and Google. A combined effort on all these channels helps businesses reach out to the maximum audience and provide them with products and services they shall be interested in. What sets digital marketing apart from other traditional marketing efforts is that you know exactly what kind of consumers you are reaching out to. Extensive search and browsing patterns are taken into consideration and businesses leverage this information to identify the right set of audience. Businesses using the online model of marketing are able to measure the results through tangible metrics. A campaign can be judged on the number of people it reached, the impressions generated, the engagement it garnered, the website traffic that the campaign generated, etc. This helps businesses to understand the kind of communication that their right target audience is responding to.

Keywords- Digital marketing, traditional marketing, Online Reputation Management, building brand

Introduction

Since the evolution of businesses, marketing has been an integral part of operations to ensure the consumer is aware of the product/service. It's important to create the demand by educating the consumer about the product. As the famous saying goes 'Out of sight, out of mind', marketing professionals are always on a lookout to engage with the consumers on various levels to ensure the product is always on the mind of the consumer and try to enhance the continuous demand.

The evolution of the internet has made the consumers aware, independent and cautious. With a smart phone in every hand and internet connectivity on the go, the consumers are now well exposed to global trends and are always looking out for more. The combination of smartphones and internet provided consumers with extensive options to choose and compare from. This creates a huge opportunity for businesses of all scales as reaching out to people have become approachable and providing customized solutions is now easier. With the evolution of the internet, opportunities in the field of digital marketing for the brands have enhanced exponentially. But with greater opportunities, come greater threats!

While almost every business house, big or small is exploring the digital space, there lie apprehensions about the sphere as a whole. Traditional marketers in still in a fix as to how they can make the best out of this 'magical' marketing technique that the world is going gaga over. For any marketer, it's very important to understand the nuances of the technique before delving into it. While a large part of Digital marketing still lies in the grey zone, it's important for the stakeholders to understand and employ the right mediums and activations under the digital umbrella. In this research, we try to understand what digital marketing is and how it can be beneficial for the business.

What is Digital Marketing?

Digital Marketing can be defined as marketing efforts that use electronic devices and the internet. With a constant increase in time spent on smart devices, it's a great opportunity for businesses to touch base with consumers by employing targeted strategies with measurable returns. Businesses are building personal digital assets like Blogs, Websites etc and investing time and effort (and money of course) in building strong presence on communal platforms like Social Media and Google. A combined effort on all these channels helps businesses reach out to the maximum audience and provide them with products and services they shall be interested

in. What sets digital marketing apart from other traditional marketing efforts is that you know exactly what kind of consumers you are reaching out to. Extensive search and browsing patterns are taken into consideration and businesses leverage this information to identify the right set of audience.

In the competitive market, it's very tough for smaller businesses to stand out and create an impression through traditional marketing, especially keeping in mind the high costs involved. But with digital marketing, small brands have also got an opportunity to reach out to the specific audience they wish to reach out to, without getting lost.

Difference between Traditional Marketing and Digital Marketing

Before we delve into the details of Digital marketing, an important touch base is that how is Digital Marketing different from Traditional marketing. Here is a quick comparison between the two forms of marketing:

S. No	Traditional Marketing	Digital Marketing
1.	The communication is unidirectional. Only the business can communicate to the consumer with no direct method for the consumer to communicate back to the brand.	The communication is bidirectional. The brand is directly approachable for the consumers for first hand reactions and feedbacks. This helps businesses to create and communicate the way consumers like it.
2.	The execution is time consuming and costly.	The execution is quick and cost effective
3.	The audience size is limited to the medium and location targeted.	Multiple audience groups and locations can be targeted at the same time.
4.	Specific audience cannot be targeted.	The brands can target the audience as per locations, interests, demographics, etc.
5.	It's more effective at hyper local level.	It's effective at global level
6.	Difficult to measure effectiveness of the campaigns.	Easier to measure the effectiveness of the campaign through analytics.

In last one decade, the gradual shift from traditional to digital can be noticed. More and more consumers are exposed to the digital platforms hence the brands are shifting their focus on the same. Let's have a quick look at some of the benefits of digital marketing:

1. Growth opportunities for all

Digital marketing help businesses of all sizes by providing equal opportunities and visibility. Any business, small or big can reach out to the audience that they feel is right for the brand through extensive research and catering to the right behavioral patterns. The techniques are customizable as per the needs and goals of the business, hence providing more growth opportunities at a cost effective price.

2. Measurable and Higher conversion rate

Businesses using the online model of marketing are able to measure the results through tangible metrics. A campaign can be judged on the number of people it reached, the impressions generated, the engagement it garnered, the website traffic that the campaign generated, etc. This helps businesses to understand the kind of communication that their right target audience is responding to. Hence allows the brands to be in a space that's consumer focused and caters to their demands. This further helps in higher conversions as the consumers are getting what they want from the brands.

3. Strengthened relationship with the consumer

One of the most important benefit of digital marketing for the brand is that it allows bilateral communication. The ultimate aim of any business is to ensure its end customers are happy and this can be ensured if the brand gets their direct feedback. With digital platforms to create a connect, businesses and brands have become highly approachable and consumers can now share their thoughts directly. This has also worked against the brands at times as consumers can share negative feedback on public platforms like Twitter which can hamper the brand image to a large extent. But more positive than negative, social media has certainly strengthened the relationship of the businesses with brands.

4. **Mobile connectivity, on the go!**

Smartphones are no more an option, it's a necessity! For our every need, smartphone has a solution. From shopping to navigation to staying connected, our mobile phones are not just to dial a call anymore. If some of the researches are to be believed, an average adult ends up spending 5-6 hours a day on their smartphone. That's almost 1/4th of the entire day! Here lies a huge opportunity for the businesses. They can reach out to their potential consumers at any time of the day and influence their shopping decisions. And since the time spent on mobile devices is much higher than any other traditional media like TV, Newspaper, Radio, Magazine etc, the businesses have a higher chance of getting noticed on digital platforms.

5. **Building Brand Credibility**

Like discussed in point 3, the brands have become approachable and communication channels have strengthened. This has given a huge opportunity to the brands to enhance credibility. To ensure a smooth communication and satisfactory consumer experience, businesses are investing time, efforts and money in Online Reputation Management (ORM). A sought after ORM strategy can help a brand create positive image and hence influence the consumer decisions in their favour. It has been noticed that reviews and ratings have a huge impact on the consumers to make a buying decision. If you're ordering food online from a restaurant and you find a negative review, you'll surely reconsider ordering food from that restaurant. Whereas if you find a few positive reviews for a restaurant, you're more likely to order from that. Hence building brand credibility becomes an important aspect of online marketing.

6. **Better Budgets and ROI**

One challenge that has been taxing for marketers since long has been to ensure that the marketing budgets allotted give satisfactory ROIs. With traditional marketing, the challenge has been to measure the tangible results. A print ad or a hoarding may have reached a million potential consumers but how many of them actually got influenced and connected with the brand? Well this has always been a challenge with massy mediums. But digital marketing has catered to this problem by providing tangible metrics. The stakeholders can now understand the results better, track the consumer's journey, tap into the patterns through web analytics and ensure that they drive the consumer in the right direction. This has helped the marketers to plan the budgets better and drive more consolidated ROIs. Consumer queries on social media, higher engagements in terms of likes and comments, traffic diverted to websites, time spent on website, open rate of emailers, etc., are all positive metrics that suggests positive growth for the brand.

7. **Cost effective with higher revenues**

Over the last few years, digital methods have proven to be cost effective and generated higher revenues for brands of all sizes. Reaching out to the audience is much cheaper through digital mediums. Another major aspect that makes it cost effective is the choice of target audience. In traditional methods, a brand cannot choose to reach out to a niche audience because the mediums are massy. For example, a clothing brand might be for a specific segment of audience (based on the disposable income, availability of the brand in geographical areas, taste and preference of the audience) but when they advertise in newspapers or on TV, it is reaching audiences of all kinds who may or may not be interested in the brand. And these promotions are pretty costly. On the other hand, digital platforms allow you to choose the audience you'd like to reach out to. The same clothing brand can choose the audience it wishes to be advertised to based on income levels, geographical locations, preferences, shopping behavior etc, at a much lower cost. Now that the brand is reaching out to a set of audience that would be interested in buying the products, the conversion rates get higher, hence generating more revenues.

In the above points we have established that defining the right set of target audience can do the trick for the marketers. If you are reaching the right audience with the right communication, you're highly likely to have conversions. But before reaching out to them, how does one understand what the right target audience is?

Defining your target market is one of the most important and formative step for successful campaign. One should consider the target audience even before thinking of the nomenclature of the brand/product. And the golden rule is: not 'everyone' can be your target audience. It's highly critical and very crucial to identify and understand your niche that you can dominate it. The better you understand your audience, the better your strategies shall perform.

Here are some of the quick tips to conduct your audience research and how to engage them:

1. *Know your current consumers*

Starting with the basics, it is very important to understand the current consumer who is already engaging with the business. Studying the characteristics and behavior of the existing consumer can play a vital role in reaching out to the new audience. Understanding the consumer along with the study of trends and averages can help create an effective and high return audience. Some data points that one should consider while understanding the audience are:

- **Age:** The age bracket of the audience is a huge deciding factor. You may not go very specific with close ranging brackets of 2-3 years but having an age bracket for the audience group certainly helps as the people of the same age group tend to have similar shopping trends.
- **Location:** Geographical location matters. No matter if your e-commerce business can deliver in any part of the world, it is important to understand that if the consumer would need that product/service in that location. A product that's doing pretty well tier 1 city may not do the same in a tier 2 city even if the age and interest of the audience is similar. Hence, it's very important to understand the location of the consumer.
- **Spending power and patterns:** Understanding the disposable income of the consumer can help understand the audience to a great extent. How much money the consumer is willing to spend? How is the consumer approaching to the products in the similar category? Is the product/service a necessity, a comfort or a luxury and are you reaching out to the corresponding audience? A few such questions need to be answered while developing marketing strategies.
- **Interests:** Well for a lot of marketers, it is a grey zone. But this aspect is crucial when you are trying to create a connect with the consumer. What are their hobbies? What other brands do they interact with? What shows they watch? All this can not only help in targeting the right audience but also creating an effective communication.
- **Occupation:** This might be a little specific but certainly helps. Are your consumers likely to be college students? Is the product/ service for a business owner or for someone who has just started working? This again shall help in establishing communication and catering to the nuances of your business.

2. *Look out for analytics*

Social media and digital analytics are a great source of information for you to understand your audience behavior. Once you have established the target audience, it is also very important to ensure that you're reaching out to them. These analytics help you understand that who actually the brand is interacting with. A brand for women cosmetic products might create a lot of engagement on social media platforms in terms of likes and comments but if that's generated by a lot of men, then that engagement is of no use. Hence the marketing efforts, targeting and communication, in this case should be channelized towards women of specific age groups and interests. All major digital platforms like Google, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube provides with audience insights and enables you to target your content towards the desired audience.

3. *Competitor Analysis*

Studying the competition has always been salient part of the marketing strategies. This study helps significantly when it comes to digital marketing. How are your competitors reaching out to the audience? Are they focusing on a segment that you haven't explored yet? How are they positioning themselves? Are they generating more engagement? If so, what are they focusing on in their communications? While there are suggested tools to analyze competitors on digital platforms, even a thorough study of their communications and positioning along with targeted audience can give a generic sense of the approach they're taking, further helping you strengthen your approach.

4. *Highlighting the value of the product*

There are numerous products in the market in every category. Until and unless it's a revolution, there are products available to take away the audience from your offerings. So then how can one ensure that the product stands out? Well, here comes the role of a right marketing strategy. What is the X-factor of your product that makes it different from its competitors or substitutes? How is it making the consumer's life easier, better or more interesting? Highlighting such key factors and building the communications on the same is what makes a product stand out and influence consumer decisions.

5. *Define your target market statement*

Before creating a campaign for a set target audience, it's pivotal to establish what's the statement that the business wishes to create. Or what's the reaction that it should generate amongst the audience. This can help significantly in creating a

lasting impression of the brand. Established brands nowadays are all trying to build on the emotions or fun aspect in order to create a lasting impression. Considering the audience and what they relate to, businesses are not trying to personalize the communication and establish a market statement that generates a reaction in the minds of the consumer and creates a two way communication.

6. *Pilot Testing never hurts*

Now that you have a fair knowledge of the audience, what's the harm in testing it? Digital is certainly a massive space hence there are multiple overlaps that may not be favorable to the business. Hence it's always suggested to test your audience before investing heavily in it. And the best part is that digital platforms actually facilitate a micro level testing where you can start an ad campaign with a couple of hundred rupees! So why not be sure?

7. *Optimizing matters!*

The work doesn't end at starting the ad campaign on digital media. Rather that's where the real execution starts. All the work prior to that is to ensure the efforts are reaching out to a relevant and engaging audience. But the research never guarantees that. With optimization options on digital mediums, one can always keep an eye on the results and monitor the same closely. Unlike traditional marketing which is more like an arrow from the bow, digital marketing is more controlled. If an add is not performing well or reaching out to the right audience, you can always rework on the audience and optimize to ensure better results.

Understanding the Digital Platforms

We are surrounded with digital platforms. From apps, websites and social media to our problem solver 'Google'. Everything we need is well supported by these digital platforms. Shopping? Ordering food? Entertainment? Connecting with a friend in a different continent? You name it and there's a digital solution to it. In this scenario, vast opportunities lie for the business to ensure they connect with the audience through the right platform and leave a mark. Let's briefly understand the various platforms available and how they can be used for marketing:

1. **Social Media**

The world is here! Social media, initially a medium created to connect with people, has eventually become a giant! Social media accounts to almost 65-70% of the time spent on smartphones. With multiple platforms to cater to various needs of the audience, social media is one of the most sought after and rewarding digital platform to connect with the consumer. Here are some of the main social media channels that are known to strengthen the brand's presence:

- **Facebook:** The most widely used social media platform, Facebook is the first choice of marketers as this social media platform has revolutionized digital marketing. A pioneer in the field, Facebook has set the base of all sorts of social media marketing strategies and audience profiling. With almost all sorts of users on the platform, Facebook is a choice for any kind of business to connect with the consumers.
- **Instagram:** A new world revolution, Instagram has taken the world by storm in the past 3-4 years. Essentially a photo sharing app, Instagram is a major hit amongst the millennials which apparently are the most tech savvy segment out there. Since the platform is visual forward, it proves to be a massive opportunity for lifestyle industries like Fashion, Sports, Food, Hospitality etc. Having said that, it may favour these industries more than others but a strong communication on Instagram can prove fruitful for any industry as the audience is evolved, aware and understands the brands.
- **Twitter:** A platform for a niche audience, Twitter proves to be a platform that can be used to communicate with the audience. It's a platform more used by established brands and individuals (celebrities, industrialists, sportspersons, politicians etc) to give out a message directly to their following. But some of the brands have driven successful campaigns that have stirred conversations with a lasting impact.
- **YouTube:** The most popular video platform, YouTube has established a fact that the videos are the most engaging visual mediums. With almost all genres flourishing on YouTube, it's a great platform for brands to connect with the audience through videos and over the last few years, it certainly has been doing really well!
- **LinkedIn:** The most niche of them all, LinkedIn is now emerging as a corporate social media hub where people from various professions come together and share their thoughts. Initially a platform to connect with people of similar professions for searching jobs, LinkedIn has come a long way and established itself as not just a job searching platform but a space where thoughts, insights and ideas can be shared pertaining to the various industries.

2. Search Engines

Don't know something? Let's 'Google' it. Google has become an indispensable part of our lives and made it easier in multiple ways. Everything, literally everything that legitimately exists in this world, exists on Google. As per Google, it receives over 63,000 searches every second! While you're reading this very line, more than a million searches have been conducted on Google. That's the power of this platform. So how can Google leverage this? Google tracks every search an individual makes, understand the patterns and show the relevant products to enhance the consumer search experience. The businesses can tap into these searches and bid on the keywords the users are searching for to show their ads. This is one of the most relevant form of advertising as the consumer is already searching for the product and they see results from the brand in similar categories.

3. Websites and Blogs

Not essentially an advertising platform but certainly an important digital property, a business's website is the most relevant and informative property online. Redirecting audience from other digital platforms to the website is one of the most successful digital metrics. Once the traffic lands on the website, it can be analyzed and utilized in multiple ways to understand the audience better and drive sales.

Similarly, blogs are a great way to educate and interact with the consumers. A long form way of passing on information about the brand and the products, it certainly helps the business in multiple ways.

4. Email Marketing

Emails are probably the oldest form of digital communication. It has been widely used as a medium for corporate communication but over the last few years, businesses have utilized this platform strategically to create personalized communications for the consumers. Emails have proved to be one of the highest converting mediums. In recent years, brands have come up with extensive and innovative email marketing strategies that has been highly appreciated by the consumers.

Conclusion

Even though digital marketing is a relatively new method of marketing and a lot of its aspects yet lie in the grey area for marketers, it still proves to be a major marketing platform and should be widely integrated in the strategies by businesses of every size and kind. With so many platforms to explore and controlled methodologies like audience optimizations, Digital marketing can certainly take your business to places!

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