

Digital Marketing; a glimpse of creativity

What is digital marketing?

What are the aspects of digital marketing?

New trends in digital marketing

The relevance of digital marketing to SMEs; a boon or a curse

What is Digital Marketing?

It is being mentioned that marketing is both an art and a science, it is filled with creativity and it will be tracked by scientific method that includes various types of analysis. While artistic perception of it attracts internal and external stake holders and to make it a sustainable strategy which would convince the top management the scientific perception blends in. This article is scribbled with the intention of raising your awareness on digital marketing and the number of aspects involved and eventually the discussion will be demonstrated regarding its relevance to SMEs.



By the inception of information era certain terminology started to accumulate, such as digital, digitized and many more but most importantly these are not just empty words but bearing a meaning of a new trend, a hint about the next level, next generation etc. Since this is about marketing no matter whether it is online or offline the idea is to convey your message regarding the product/service you possess to attract the customer then engage him/her with the product or service and make him/her delighted by the product/service. (Cohan, M., 2014) The strategy seems to be crystal clear and with digital marketing only difference is that it uses digital tactics and channels to attract, engage and delight the customer in other words it uses internet to market your product or service.

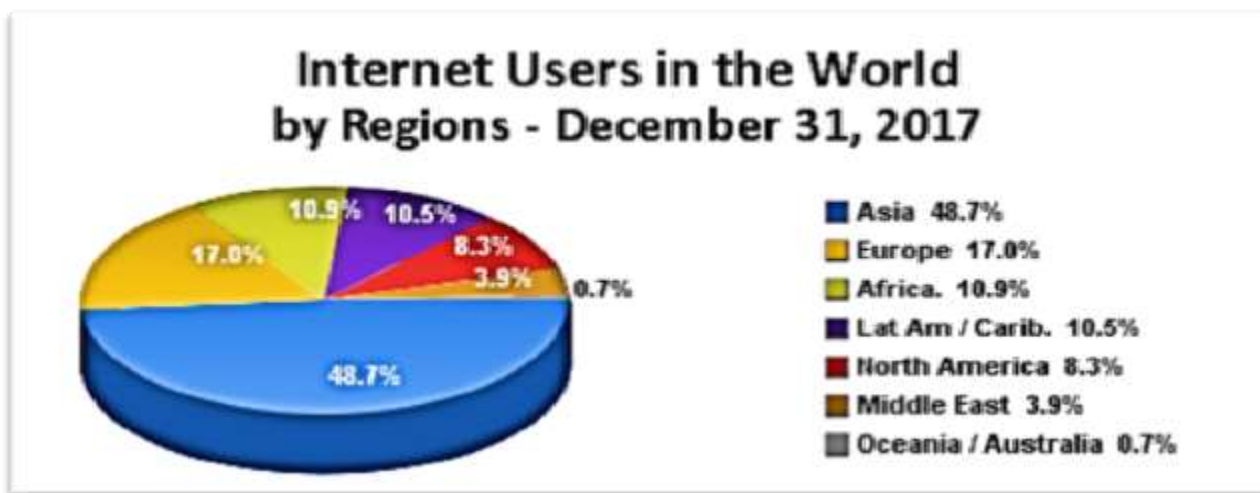


Figure 1.0 – Internet users in the world by regions

According to both local and international statistics as shown above the tendency of people using internet grow by leaps and bounds disregarding the gender, education level, nationality, age etc. Therefore this ever increasing internet using

crowd is the client base for digital marketing and by exceeding the boundaries, borders and all limitations, through digital marketing, one could attract customers in anywhere in the world in a split second.

Different aspects of Digital Marketing

Social Media Websites

Today the society would have been a much different place without social media, its connectivity and ability to populate within seconds, high volume of applications made people occupied and connected. Marketing through social media has become one of the most sumptuous ways of digital marketing and the literature says that 30% of internet users are using social media to find new products and according to the smart insights global survey 2018, 10% of the community who does digital marketing use social media as their marketing strategy. The channels you can use in social media marketing include,

- ◆ Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, LinkedIn, Instagram, Snapchat, Google+, Yelp, Foursquare, Level Up

Among the above channels the most common approach with Facebook would be to create Facebook business fan page by paying careful attention to layout and visual components and since Facebook is mostly belong to youth and it is a light and friendly place visual interaction with simplicity would attract more clients. (Punithavathi K, Dr. H Vasudevan, 2018) A person could promote his/her fan page considering a cost-effective Facebook ad strategy, by joining into groups with large amount of members, going Facebook live you could simply promote your products and services and gain due publicity to your business. Using Twitter as a social media marketing tool revolves around dialog and communication, therefore interaction is essential to nurture and build the following. Pinterest allows businesses to showcase their product offerings while also developing brand personality with eye-catching, unique pin boards and literature affirms that Pinterest primary audience is female and your marketing strategy should be amended accordingly. LinkedIn is one of the more professional social media marketing sites. LinkedIn Groups is a great venue for entering into a professional dialog with people in similar industries and provides a place to share content with like-minded individuals. On **Google+** you can upload and share photos, videos, links, and view all your +1s. Also take advantage of Google+ circles, which allow you to segment your followers into smaller groups, enabling you to share information with some followers.

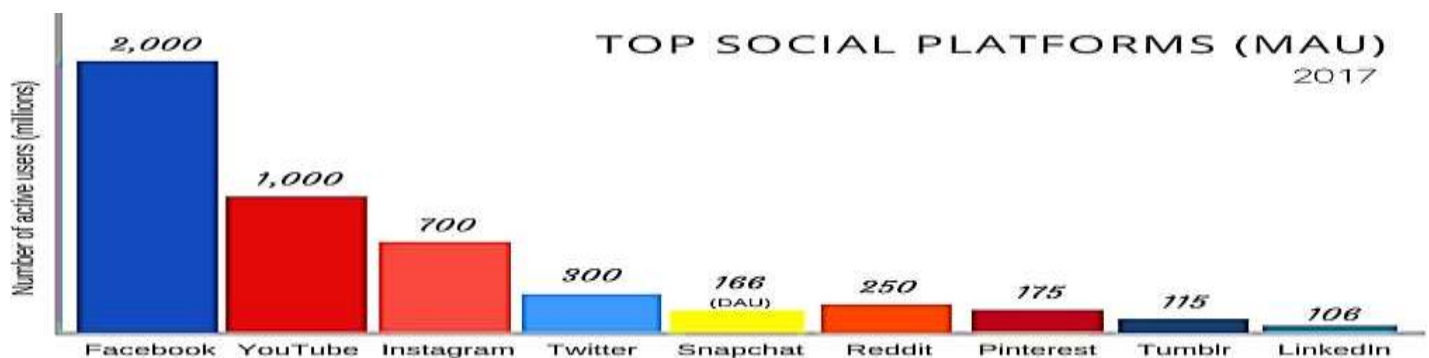


Figure 2.0 – Internet users in the world by regions

Today social media has become the voice of the society and its impact to the life is getting increased day by day, according to research study at Hubspot, 92% of marketers in 2014 claimed that social media marketing was important for their business, with 80% indicating their efforts increased traffic to their websites. And according to Social Media Examiner, 97% of marketers are currently participating in social media—but 85% of participants aren't sure what social media tools are the best to use; but since there is abundance sometimes users might get confused with the choice.

Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

This refers to optimizing websites to reach higher in search engine result pages, this will drive organic traffic to websites through search engines by achieving good keyword rankings, and once SEO brings in the traffic the next step is to streamline the shopping process to a possible purchase by converting visitors into buyers. When designing a website with the purpose of search engine optimization there are few things to be taken into consideration. (1) Key words in domain name, domain name is simply the address of your website and it helps others to look for your site in cyber space and here the website developer should be careful to choose a name with brevity and to use familiar key words. (2) Keywords in post URL, the importance of these keywords are that in the cyberspace it gives your website, blog a uniformity to identify among millions of sites. (3) Title, Tag, Headings & Body, in each of these it is advisable to use keywords to bring uniqueness and finally (4) Optimize images, pixelate the images on your site with correct measurement by following the above facts you could SEO your website and blog to market your products and services gaining competitive advantage. (Pinterest, pool of images, 2018)

Pay Per Click (PPC)

This marketing strategy allows advertisers to pay a fee each time one of their advertisements get clicked and rather attempting to earn visitors to your website organically this way will buy visitors to your site. Search engine advertising is one of the most popular forms of PPC which allows advertisers to bid for ad placement in a search engine's sponsored links when someone searches on a keyword that is related to their business offering, every time the ad is clicked, sending a visitor to the website, and then it is required to pay the search engine a small fee. When PPC is working correctly, this fee is trivial, because the visit is worth more than what you pay for it. In other words, if you pay LKR 300 for a click this click might result you a LKR 30,000 sale, then this leads to a hefty profit. (Pinterest, pool of images, 2018) The best example visible would be Google Ad Words where a small banner with a simplified design is put up with maximum key words to attract and build desire the internet users to click and reach the website, web portal or Blog.

Content Marketing

This could be defined as a practice to plan, write, optimize for searching, make it sharable and finally to promote. (1) Planning and research your topic; you could use Google key word planner to find out the best possible and attractive key words and look them out in Google to see the other pages ranking for the selected key words and then got to create a framework or a sketch, mentioning the areas you are planning to cover in your post. (2) Writing content; the entire content should be concise and got to include an image every after three hundred words with a compelling headline, develop links to other important materials in your content and apply spell checker for the accuracy. (3) Optimizing content for search; it says that “**Google sweet spot**” for a blog post is thousand to thousand five hundred words and with proper SEO optimization and usage of key words to your headings and sub headings internet users would find your post easily. (4) Sharing the content; you could create custom graphics to show the title of the blog in an attractive manner and share it among Pinterest, Facebook, Twitter and the rest of the sharable media to gain popularity. (Pinterest, pool of images, 2018) In Content marketing channels such as blogs, eBooks, whitepapers, newsletter, online brochures play a major role and with proper manipulation this could be effective strategy as well.

Email Marketing

Email marketing is considered the best channel for Business to Business (B2B) marketers, with its affordability, simplicity, speed and for being measurable. According to the annual report of direct market association (DMA) in 2011 the average Return on Investment (ROI) for every 1\$ spent was \$ 40.56 and in 2012 marketing channels and engagement benchmark survey found that 63% of respondents cited email as the channel offering the best ROI. (Pinterest, pool of images, 2018) When conducting email marketing campaigns got to keep the content brief and concise and literature affirms the content to be kept under fifty characters, use three font types and four font colours, entire email should not exceed six hundred pixels width and got to be vigilant to place the Logo of your company in the upper left corner. When the emails pacify the above requirements the campaigns would certainly help to build brand awareness, increase sales,

strengthen customer relationships etc. But in the meantime it should be sent without troubling your clients because due to modern day web extensions and blockers, emails from unknown senders goes to spam folder and it might not be as effective as you would have expected but this strategy could still be considered as an affordable digital marketing campaign.

Affiliate marketing

This is a performance based advertising strategy where you promote someone else's product or service in your website or blog and gain a fee or a commission. In the modern day website owners rent their web space for other companies to put on an advertisement and once it get clicked it will be directed towards their website, a weekly or monthly payment will be received by the website owner for putting up the web banner. This seems lucrative but first you should own a website with reasonable traffic therefore you could bargain your prices for the web space. Putting up a web banner on someone else website and getting huge traffic looks like too good to be true but in real with an attractive web banner that hits the nail would certainly increase the user's tendency of clicking. This should not only be a banner, could be a video advertisement through YouTube or else posting affiliated links from social media accounts.

“The above digital marketing aspects are not supposed to be in isolation because the solidarity among them would serve the marketing purpose and it will attract more and more people to products and services. Therefore a synergy has to be formulated among the above aspects. For an instance a person or a company who is developing a website should always bear the thought of SEO, then after purchasing the domain you always give a thought on the content, ratio of text vs. images, usage of headings and subheadings and so on. Therefore while developing a website which is an effective digital marketing tool your focus stays on SEO and content marketing and then as the site progresses need to publicize the site on social media to gain maximum likes and shares. Then put up pay per click ads on Google where it will direct traffic to the website, both these strategies involve with a mild cost but ROI is impressive. Then using an effective email server you could send your web newsletter conducting an email marketing campaign. Finally the company could rent their web space to external parties and allow them to put up web banners on the website. All these techniques could popularize the site among the netizens and bring more and more traffic to the site. More traffic means more customers to a product or service.”

Digital Marketing; latest Trends

Digital marketing like any other marketing campaign its prime objective is to attract, engage, and delight customers online with regard to the product or service. Unlike most offline marketing efforts, digital marketing allows marketers to see accurate results in real time. If you've ever put an advert in a newspaper, you'll know how difficult it is to estimate how many people actually flipped to that page and paid attention to your ad. There's no surefire way to know if that ad was responsible for any sales at all. On the other hand, with digital marketing, you can measure the ROI of pretty much any aspect of your marketing efforts.

Considering the latest trends of digital marketing literature keeps much weight on video content on social media. In the modern days stories are narrated and lessons are taught via videos and with an eye catching good video content the social engagement could increase by leaps and bounds. Literature further reveals that YouTube viewers watch a billion hours of video each day, Facebook users consume over 8 billion videos every day, 82% of Twitter's audience views video content on the platform. The next most accelerating technique is the usage of 'chatbots' and their articulacy with the clients and how accurately they assist to solve their issue. Chatbots have been around for years, but they've seen big-time with the AI improvements recently. More and more brands are working on using chatbots for customer support and perfecting their chatbots marketing strategy. Right now, chatbots are mostly used for customer service 61% of consumers, chatbots interactions are centered on customer service related questions. The future of bots is looking bright, too because literature mentions that with an estimated 85% of customer interactions managed by chatbots by 2020. FAQs in a website will be replaced by chatbots and by making it available 24/7 companies could provide more efficient service and much broader interaction with their customers. Then the next best trend in digital marketing is influencer marketing campaigns and literature define it as the process of identifying, researching, engaging and supporting the people who create the

conversations impacting your brand, products or service. (Digital Marketing Institute Limited, 2018) These influencers are normal people who are connected to key roles of consumer groups or industry associations who cannot be defined as marketing tools but social relationship assets. Influencer marketing is gaining a lot of popularity among the marketers, as the literature proves that according to Inc.com, **84%** of marketers planned on executing at least one influencer marketing campaign during 2017, and businesses generate \$6.50 for every \$1 invested in influencer marketing and nearly **95%** of marketers who currently use an influencer marketing strategy believe it is effective. The Starbucks “*White Cup Contest*” and “*Coca-Cola’s Share a Coke*” campaign not only that but also Amazon recently added a self-service tool for social media influencers to its Influencer program which gives influencers the opportunity to build a page on Amazon with a dedicated vanity URL to show their followers the products they recommend. This strategy has increased and improved its scope and level of efficiency from niche markets to broader level of marketing.

The relevance of digital marketing to Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs); a boon or a curse

Since the globalization concepts has touched and drenched every nook and corner of the world SMEs too need to face the music of transforming to the next stage of development while promoting their products and services. As per the report of Boston Consulting (BCG) and internet mobile association of India (IAMAI) 2015, the internet population increased 25 times in the last 12 years, which means the transportation mechanism of globalization essence among the world has increased drastically in the last 12 years, even though a reinvention of marketing strategy is required by SMEs research gap between digital marketing and its usage in SMEs has increased the reluctance among SMEs to adapt these digital marketing strategies (Lee, A.J.L., Lim, R.Y.G., Ma, B. & Xu, L.X.X. (2013)). Present age is considered to be the era of technology and innovation and this have brought immense changes in every field of life, entrepreneurs, business and marketing. Michael (2014) suggested that enterprises and industries must benefit from internet and E-Markets for more revenues, widening market base and advancing of their business. According to El-Gohary (2012) and Wang and Sharma (2012), the digital media and E-Marketing techniques can help a lot in growing of SME and their performance can rise significantly which will also contribute to the economy of the country and consequently enhance job opportunities for the unemployed youth. SMEs are in a better position presently in accessing to the global market and sharing relevant information to identify needs of specific customers and tailoring their products and services to match with the changing needs of customers. Therefore, SMEs performance can be highly impacted positively with the introduction of digital media into their business proceedings. Apenteng and Doe (2014) shared his observation that more and more people from SMEs are joining the social media forum on a personal level in order to thrash out the possibilities of digitizing their business proceedings for improving business performance, increasing customer base and strengthening communication. In the pre digital era awareness about a business or an industry was limited only to local boundaries or at the most spread within country. Mostly, print media supported by radio and TV was used for advertisements and creating acquaintance among communities and masses. However, at present any organised business can be globalized in a split second with the presence of digital media. The customer of any place can reach business and industry of his choice just with one click. Therefore business could be seen everywhere and at any time of the globe. The business activities remain alive and active 24/7. Internet has established very well in developed as well as developing countries and hardly any differentiation can be found in this regard, not only the accessibility but also conventional marketing methods such as advertisement through radio, television, promotional brochures, newspapers, journals and circulars can be very expensive and costly for SMEs whereas their reach could still be limited. Charlesworth (2009) described that digital media could assist local business to reach numerous customers through internet and save marketing costs simultaneously. It is convenient for the company's staff that they can initiate digital marketing activities when it suits to them and SMEs can also meet their technical and other staff requirements from any part of the world, which has been becoming an acute problem in the past. Even SMEs can hire online consultants for technical advice and guidance from where they find appropriate personnel. Even the faults, failures and problems of material, machinery and equipment can be shared within no time with their manufacturers and complaints can be placed with them immediately.

Based on the literature biggest fear among the SMEs specially dwelling in developing countries is the reluctance shown towards techno savvy environments and the fierce competition caused by the market exposure. SMEs regarding

technology reluctance need to be overcome by themselves by consulting and gaining proper training and building a technology savvy culture within the organisation. When it comes to facing extended competition by SMEs due to digital marketing techniques, SMEs with lesser competitive capabilities could suffer and their sales may reduce because customers can find more choices on internet. Even they can compare prices of various enterprises and organizations and can select the products of similar attributes with the lowest prices. Therefore in a scenario of price competition with other businesses the chances exist of losing customers to other companies (Hoffman & Novak, 2000)

Being comparative regarding the pros and cons digital marketing for SMEs could become a boon rather than a curse because they could save lot of money on conventional marketing and develop their brand, attract more customers, engage them throughout and delight them eventually by the quality of service.

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