

Impact of Digital Marketing on Public Relations in Emerging Market Scenario

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Abstract

With the digital universe growing at a scorching pace, many domains – from publishing, marketing and advertising to public relations, among others – are experiencing the impact of the consequent changes in consumer behaviour. Professionals in numerous domains are therefore confronted with novel challenges and unexpected opportunities, even as they come to grips with the changing dynamics of the digital era. The present paper brings together key findings from across the recent literature to enhance overall understanding of current and future challenges posed by digital marketing to public relations. It remains unclear whether current theoretical frameworks can fully accommodate field of public relations and evidence suggests that many public relations practitioners are struggling with the impact of digitalization, and especially the Internet, on their practice. Public relations educators may need to review the concept of digital marketing in light of new media developments and industry responses. Possible threats and opportunities presented by digitalization for public relations are explored and directions for further research in this area are suggested.

Keywords: Customers, Digital Marketing, Public relations,

INTRODUCTION

Over the past few years, the smart phone revolution has captured the minds of customers, especially the younger generation, who are now engaged online almost 24×7. Be it bookings, purchases, reviews or what-have-you, today's generation is willing to log on instantly and use the digital medium to get things done rather than step out into the open and expend extra energy on doing the same things (Samir Kapur, 2015). Whether it is Google, Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, Blogs and other digital channels, the virtual universe is giving a run for its money to the real world. Given the ever-rising online 'ground' reality, the best of brands have progressively begun to take serious note of the digital medium. Advertising, publishing and public relations professionals are gradually taking cognizance of this phenomenon and moving larger amounts of their budgets to the new medium. Against this backdrop, public relations professionals have little choice but to quickly understand the dynamics of the online universe and digital marketing. The digital medium has been gaining rising traction as companies find they can reach their target audience at much lower spends compared to conventional marketing mediums. What's more, digital marketing tools can evaluate the efficacy of specific marketing campaigns. Thereby, digital marketers can decide how to optimize marketing spends more effectively. None of these advantages exist in traditional marketing. Research has shown that practitioners are not fully embracing new media, are ill-equipped to do so and have a fear of the technology (Alfonso & de Valbuena Miguel, 2006). Although corporate websites, chat-rooms, email customer response facilities and electronic news release distribution are now viewed as

standard aspects of public relations practice (Galloway, 2005) many public relations practitioners are struggling with the impact of new media, and especially the Internet.

OBJECTIVES

1. To enhance overall understanding of current and future challenges and trends posed by digital marketing to public relations.
2. To describe the conceptual model of digital marketing communication to public relation and provide suggestions for future research.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology of this research includes a combination of descriptive and an analytical study of challenges and opportunities faced in the field of digital marketing. The paper is constructed as a theoretical framework whose basic foundation comes from various secondary sources like research articles in Journal, published and unpublished scholarly papers, and books, various international and local journals, speeches, newspapers and websites.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In the 21st century, the digital marketing has become the most discussed topic in business and in the public relations more generally. The speed of development of digital marketing has been extremely fast by any standards, and especially compared with the slow process of academic research and publication in marketing and other social sciences.

Hoffman (2000) described the digital marketing as “the most important innovation since the development of the printing press”, with the potential to “radically transform not just the way individuals go about conducting their business with each other, but also the very essence of what it means to be a human being in society”. Peppers and Rogers (1993; 1997) argued that digital marketing represents a complete transformation of the marketing paradigm from a predominantly one-way broadcast model to a model of totally interactive, totally personalized one-to-one relationships.

Deirdre Quinn-Allan (2007) states that the professional landscape in public relations is changing as new communication and social networking technologies are integrated into day-to-day professional practice. Whilst adoption of such technologies by public relations practitioners is certainly on the increase, their use can still be regarded as limited and application experimental to some degree. However, few could argue that these technologies will be increasingly important to public relations practice in coming years. In this context, public relations educators must strive to deliver a contemporary curriculum reflective of industry expectations and best practice principles but which also provides students with exposure to new communication contexts and technologies.

The digital marketing impacts all the parameters of management especially marketing strategy, channel management, pricing, marketing communications, customer service, decisions for support systems, database marketing, global marketing and business-to-business marketing. In this paper we focus on the main ways in which the digital marketing is impacting public relations. We, therefore define marketing as the process of exchange and concentrate on published research which looks at how the digital marketing is being used by a business concern to enhance their consumers to support the exchange process. We focus mainly on current and future challenges imposed by digital marketing on public media. We briefly address business-to-

business e-commerce to compete online, but do not cover the extensive literature on supply chain management, information management, organizational behavior, or the broader impact of the digital marketing on productivity, profitability, employment, and international trade. The paper is organized as follows.

The Section one briefly reviews some current and future challenges by digital marketing on public relations and section two deals with interactive conceptual model of digital marketing to enhance customer loyalty through public relations. Section three deals with suggestive measures for future research.

CURRENT AND FUTURE CHALLENGES AND TRENDS OF DIGITAL MARKETING ON PUBLIC RELATIONS SHIFT TO MOBILE AND BEYOND

The biggest current trend with the greatest immediate impact on communication is the shift to mobile. Global mobile traffic currently represents 17.4% of all internet traffic and is rapidly increasing. Mobile internet use is expected to surpass traditional desktop internet use in 2014. Mobile has become deeply embedded in our lives by offering convenience through immediacy, simplicity and context. Through mobile – and soon wearable – technology each of us can receive individualized content which also points to another major trend, that of personalization.

Social Media Impact on Communication

Public relations professionals need to keep pace with this fast-evolving environment. The challenge is dealing every day with two huge data explosions: the expanding universe of ‘digital influencers’ and the massive volume of social media conversations and real-time mentions that concern your brand, industry and competition. Digital influencers have grown 30-fold in less than two years. A crucial difference with traditional media is the need for engagement. The sheer volume of mentions requires brands to prioritize.

Brand Journalism

Social media broke the traditional media model in one fundamental way: media organizations are no longer gatekeepers of information & audiences. The very definition of "news" is changing, and this evolution creates the opportunity for PR & marketing content writers to create timely content that earns credibility, earns media and generates ongoing (and relevant) visibility for the brand.

Transparency is King

In our hyper-connected world, the trend is increasingly towards hyper-transparent communication. Consumers and other stakeholders have many more channels at their disposal for exposing and discrediting companies for any lack of honesty. As difficult a concept as that is for many, transparency is the only answer and any failures in this area are punished with alarming speed and efficiency. Brands that embrace this hyper-honesty trend will reap the benefits in consumer trust.

Evidence-Based

A major trend in public relations is that of measurement from the outset and throughout a campaign to measure impact and effectiveness. Digital campaigns are particularly easy to track as many social media channels like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube have their own analytics which make it possible to demonstrate the reach of these campaigns by the number of views, shares, retweets, likes, etc. But it’s pushing beyond simple measurement into actionable insight that will be the game- changer for communications.

Power of image

Studies have shown that people remember only 20% of what they read (are you still with me?) and that 83% of learning occurs visually. The massive popularity of visual social networks like Instagram, Pinterest and Tumblr, demonstrates the emotional power of images to tell stories in a way that is proven to be far more memorable than mere words. In the same way, viral videos tell more powerful stories and allow greater engagement with consumers. The rise of infographics also shows the capacity of visuals to break large chunks of data into digestible portions.

Power of Communicating Purpose

The world has fundamentally changed. Globalization, democratization of information, the rise of social media and the global financial crisis have forced corporate leaders to reassess the strategic path for their brands and organizations. They do so at a time when the central objectives of communication, reputation and trust, have shifted shape, perhaps irrevocably. In today’s hostile business environment, there is more need than ever for companies to explain why they are here, the rationale and the context.

An integrative model of the interaction between digital marketing communication and public relations to enhance customer loyalty

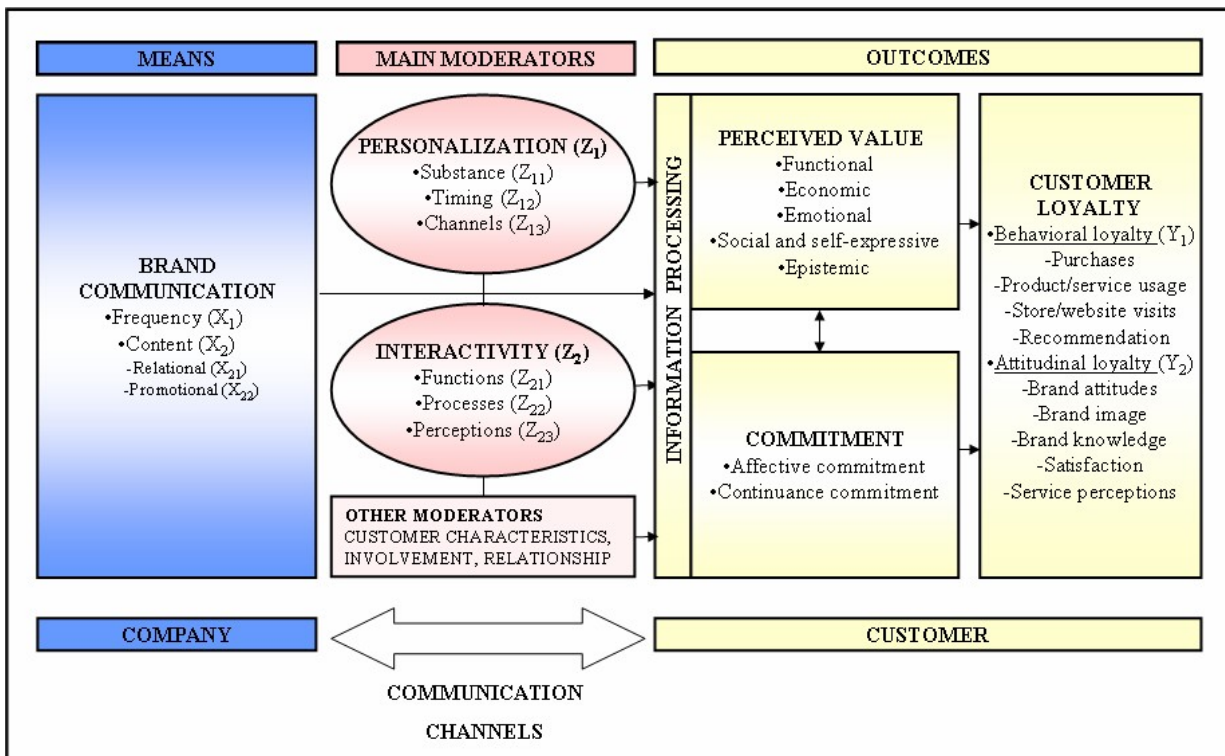


Figure-1

The model consists of means (brand communication), main moderators (personalization and interactivity), other moderators (customer characteristics, involvement, and relationship), and outcomes (perceived value, commitment, and customer loyalty). By “brand communication” we refer to communication between the company/brand and customers via different channels. This can include advertising, direct marketing, newsletters, or consumer’s activity in a brand community. This complies with the view that the process of building brands and customer relationships is much more than traditional media advertising (see e.g. Aaker and Joachimsthaler 2000, 42; Duncan and Moriarty 1998). The main focus in our model is on

how brand communication interacts with customer loyalty. Two main factors in brand communication that are expected to affect customer loyalty are frequency (e.g. how many messages in a given time period) and content (e.g. promotional or relational). The main outcome, customer loyalty is divided into behavioral (e.g. purchases) and attitudinal loyalty (e.g. brand attitudes). For true customer loyalty to exist, a pattern of repeat purchase must be accompanied by a positive attitude (see Jakoby and Chestnut 1978). This distinguishes it from spurious loyalty, where only behavioral loyalty is detected with low relative attitudes (Dick and Basu 1994). We acknowledge that different elements of DMC can influence both types of loyalty. The effects of brand communication are constructed in customers' minds through information processing, leading to perceived value and commitment. Finally, the effects of brand communication on customer loyalty can be detected from behavior and attitudes: e.g. purchases, website visits, brand attitudes, and satisfaction.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE GROWTH OF THE CONCEPT OF DIGITAL MARKETING IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

Public relations drive a substantial amount of content creation from developing messaging strategy to content for newsrooms. PR content that can be optimized, socialized and publicized include: blog posts, press releases, case studies, social media content, newsletters, contributed articles, white papers, events (online and off). Whether it's text, image, audio or video, most PRs are involved in content creation on a regular basis. Digital Marketing is tasked with demand creation and developing leads, and content plays an instrumental role in those and many other marketing objectives. From content marketing strategy to websites and micro sites, content is the basis for effective digital marketing. Understanding the role that content plays in reaching both brand awareness and customer acquisition goals, the opportunities for integration between digital marketing and PR becomes clear pretty fast.

An extension of aligning goals between marketing and PR is to find the win for those that you would partner with in your organization. Find out how can marketing assets be used to improve the ability for PR to gain media coverage. At the same time, dig into how PR can play a role in content marketing amplification to improve the reach and performance. Recruit volunteers to test cooperative efforts between digital marketing and PR.

Some of the common ground opportunities for digital marketing and public relations include:

- Messaging & Story
- Content Planning
- Coordinated Social and Media Relations with Amplification
- Social Listening for Buying Signals
- Content Placement
- Optimizing Messaging Based on Marketing Performance Data

Coordinating digital marketing and PR in content marketing efforts can find the common ground needed to execute on shared goals. That alignment of objectives can lead to the development of new ways of working together that create a win for everyone involved.

CONCLUSION

Despite the initial skepticism of many professionals, the digital world has made serious inroads into the everyday lives of consumers globally. Every year, empirical evidence indicates that

consumers are spending more time online, perusing different digital platforms. As clients impose cost-cutting measures in an increasingly competitive environment, PR practitioners have realized that they too can secure more bang for the buck through digital marketing means. These include Search Engine Marketing, Social Media Marketing, Search Engine Optimisation and Social Media Analytics, among others. But for brands and agencies to truly capitalize on the digital medium, it's imperative they first comprehend the complexities of the digital universe and the perils of using the medium without a thorough understanding. Proper understanding can ensure they strategize well and offer full value to their clients via digital marketing.

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