



Exploring The Level of Digital Alignment of Marketing Channels in Businesses of NCR and Rajasthan

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ABSTRACT : This paper presents the results of exploratory studies to explore the levels of digital orientation for present day marketing. It identifies a list of technology enabled digital marketing tools that marketers are employing today. The objective of this research effort is to check the level of deployment of digital applications to the marketing function of the business and identify successful marketing technique as per company perception. The study focuses on the entire process from targeting, lead generation, lead nurturing to conversion and analytics. The exploration focused on connected stages of STP and identification of right target group to knowing who is involved in the buying process, understanding their roles and responsibilities, and aligning marketing efforts with changing needs. The study also touches upon customer engagement, conversion, analytics and marketing technology usage level and possible means of reaching to the next level. A study questionnaire was administered to Marketing Employees of 30 businesses and in NCR and Rajasthan to identify the level of internet marketing orientation. As a general result the companies agreed that internet marketing improves the brand image of the company or products or both, internet marketing is a revenue earner. Companies agreed that they have to focus their internet marketing on analytics and segmented communications approach to enhance marketing revenue

Keywords: Marketing, Internet Marketing, Branding, digital targeting, Conversion marketing, Web Analytics, Digital Marketing.

I. INTRODUCTION

It is said that Internet marketing first began in the beginning of 1990 with just text-based websites which offered product information. With growth in internet, it is not just selling products alone, but in addition to this, information about products, advertising space, software programs, auctions, stock trading and matchmaking. A few companies have revolutionized the way internet can be used for marketing, such as Google.com, Yahoo.com, Amazon.com, and Youtube.com. Internet marketing has brought forth new strategies such as affiliate marketing which consists of pay per click, pay per view, pay per call, pay per click advertising. Affiliate marketing also includes banner advertisements and traffic delivery. In addition to this e-mail marketing, viral marketing, interactive advertising, blog or article based marketing are also popular. There are newer marketing techniques being invented all the time. Companies are inventing new techniques to find better ways to make revenue and establish their brand on the internet.

This research effort was conducted to discover the trends in internet marketing with a focus on company's perspective. The study was designed around the following key questions:

- What are the opportunities of internet marketing used today?
- Which of these opportunities is used by the businesses in NCR and Rajasthan (what is the current status)?

- What are the untapped opportunities in Internet Marketing?
- What are the levels of adoption of Internet marketing phenomenon and the growth path tracking?
- To what extent does internet marketing bring revenue for the companies and not just end up attracting junk traffic which does not generate any revenue for the company?
- Which is the most preferred internet marketing approach?
- Do the companies prefer internet marketing to traditional marketing?
- Where is the internet marketing trend heading to in the future?

The most important distinguishing fact of the modern Internet marketing is that the customer is in charge[3]. Internet Marketing should be a totally customer oriented platform used for providing a no-pressure sales environment and a thoughtful choice making / decision facilitating process. The key to the websites' success lies in the understanding of its customer and his or her preferences. Taking into consideration the fact that Internet users do not perceive open, touting advertisement positively and the effect of such advertisements is minimal. Marketing concept implies unobtrusive but understandable promotion, as a part of the content, design and overall idea of the website.

As a general belief the basic characteristics of good internet marketing websites are:

1. Easy to use

2. Meets visitor expectations
3. Communicates visually

II. SUCCESS FACTORS FOR IM ACTIVITIES

Website is the core of Internet Marketing strategy. A good website is an effective sequel of the overall company's marketing and PR policy that is evolving with the company's growth. Its success on the Internet is determined by careful planning and strong goal targeting, including the mechanisms of goals achievement.

Marketing concept is a philosophy that an organization should try to provide products that satisfy customers' needs through a coordinated set of activities that also allows the organization to achieve its goals[7]. Customer satisfaction is the major focus of the marketing concept. To implement the marketing concept, an organization strives to determine what buyers want and uses this information to develop satisfying products.

The technological progress of the recent years have changed the ways of conducting the business and facilitated the creation of the separate, online market. Internet has become the interactive channel of business intercommunication partially transferring sales online. This rapid development of the new sphere has become a basis for the new marketing direction development called internet marketing[1].

It does not mean that enterprises should drop the old way of thinking and rush for the implementation of the new technologies to their business, it is more about combining the best skills and practices of the past with the new ones. With Internet Marketing, comes:

- a globalization of the market,
- allows easier coverage of the target audience;
- easiness of using global network for the communication purposes
- it allows to significantly personalize the interaction with the customer
- brings a considerable cost reduction.

Advancements in communication and information technology is creating a totally new world of its own whose citizens will outnumber the largest nation in a very short period of time. The movement towards data-driven marketing makes creativity the most important asset[9]. Armed with product and pricing information, buyers are doing multiple comparisons before shopping. Companies face competitors at every turn and have no choice but to rethink the way they differentiate their offering.

The main research questions are "what is the perception about the internet marketing activities at company level" and "how to measure the success or the return on the invested money", specially if the website is not an e-commerce type and no transactions are conducted through the Internet. Nevertheless, it is possible to assess the success and estimate ROI by comparing the current outcome of the website and its ability to fulfill the set of goals at the requirement study level (SRSD).The same must be reflected in the design and development of internet marketing activities.

The company perspective was assessed for the following success factors related to Internet Marketing.

- What are the informational needs of the consumer for various stages of buying decision making journey?
- What is the process for engaging and educating a consumer
- What is the awareness level for Internet Marketing opportunities
- What is the Usage level of IM for the company
- What is the relative importance of ROI
- Is there a increase in sales as a result of internet marketing activities?
- Do the internet marketing efforts generate enough leads in the targeted segments?
- What is the level of engagement and feedback from visitors?
- What is the general customer experience and the customer delight factor
- What is the conversion rate
- What is the revenue per customer
- What inferences can we draw from the social media matrix and the analytics
- The level of internet marketing adoption
- Internet marketing adaptation blueprint

III. STRUCTURED APPROACH TO INTERNET MARKETING

The first prime job of marketing is creating a steady flow of leads for Sales. The new generation of technology is reinventing the methods by which internet marketing can help sales in increasing revenue and identify and manage deals in the sales pipeline through technologies. Marketing has long worked to support the sales teams it serves by providing them with a steady flow of qualified leads. Even with the right usage of segmenting targeting and positioning the there has been lot of unqualified and rejected leads[9]. Marketers need to recognize that segmentation and targeting are the first few steps to enable their sales teams. Internet Marketing is driving evolutionary changes in Marketing's relationship to Sales. Following set of areas are the prime stages in which marketers can employ internet based marketing to deepen their relationship with Sales and help Sales identify, manage, and close deals[11].

3.1 Better understanding of Prospects

Each click a prospect makes on company website or in response to the marketing campaigns provides insights into that person or organization as a buyer. Each e-mail that is opened or clicked and each Website visit, search on Google, or form submission tells a story through a stored set of cookies. The browsing information can be actively used as an insight. This information in the digital realm is much like each facial expression or body language in the physical realm, and can enables us to understand the needs and wants of the customer. Their awareness level, their interest level, what are they interested in, and what conversation topics will engage them and many other similar things are evident from cookie analysis. The web activity analysis is a big area and can be used for business promotion.

3.2 Social Media Activity Analysis for better insight

The current day buyers are more active in social media. Perspectives are gained through reading of blogs, ideas are shared on Twitter, topics are discussed on LinkedIn groups. This social media discussion lead prospects to frame a mindset

and understanding that mindset is critical. The social media discussion can facilitate the understanding as to why they visited the company website, from where, and what they were looking for. Trends in social media discussions about the product or service, spikes of interest, and renewed interest after a long period of inactivity are all indicators a sales team can work with to convert interest into desire and action.

3.3 Building Relationships through Content and Communication

As buyers progress through the journey stages of their buying process, they sometime like reading lots of information for self educating. Each time they do, there is an opportunity to build a small degree of relationship trust. Marketing can assist with this by automating campaigns to send educational information, evaluation guides, thought leadership reading material, and other materials to facilitate the decision making process. Over time, this personal approach builds familiarity and enables a relationship to grow. Internet Marketing can build knowledge relationships through appropriate content for individual prospect communications. This can be used by Sales as conversation starters, nurturing, or even niche marketing campaigns targeting a small group of prospects[5].

3.4 Ensuring Constant visibility for stable memory recall

Internet Marketing can identify the interest and can then keep the interest on and live by lead nurturing throughout the early stages of the buying processes. Buying processes are sometimes lengthy and complex. Internet Marketing is better positioned for consistently nurturing potential buyers throughout the early stages of their buying processes. Nurturing is with an intention of maintain top-of-mind presence and establish key buying criteria in the prospect's mind while providing education at various stages of the buying journey.

3.5 Right Targeting

In internet marketing, the customers deserve value across all points of engagement. Particularly because they have access to so many resources and tools via digital channels, they expect the brands and retailers they love to not only meet—but also exceed their expectations. That means having the most relevant content, offers, and inventory across all channels. To deliver data-driven accountability, data collection and analysis is critical to organization. Agility and scalability are imperative to delivering relevant, real-time messaging to customers[13]. The abilities to provide what a customer wants at a moment's notice and even predict future behaviors enable business to target the right consumers and build more meaningful relationships.

There's a lot of information beyond classic demographics that should be gathered and integrated to give you a more complete view of every consumer.

Effective targeting and segmentation no longer hinges on basic information or even demographics. Internet marketers are refining targeting strategies by building a more complete picture of potential prospects through their online behavior in terms of:

Website visits

- Browsing history
- Webpage clicks
- Social interactions
- Searches performed
- Awareness level
- Knowledge level

The research on customers is even more important now, because the general set of needs and wants are in flux. Everyone is undergoing a change and this change needs research. Companies using old, tried-and-true marketing messages may no longer resonate with the right set of target customers. Using this knowledge set we can have better answers to the questions such as:

- How can we spot and choose the right market segment(s)?
- How can we differentiate our offerings?
- What can help us in better understanding the target client base.

3.6 Connecting and Engaging with prospects

Connecting and engaging are very important parts of marketing value addition activities. Customers demand and deserve value-based interactions across all points of engagement. Investment in internet marketing enables marketers to more effectively leverage prospect information to create, nurture, achieve and converse with prospective buyers throughout their customer journey.

The Internet Marketing is fast becoming an essential element in business communication. When people want information, they surf the web to find what they need and so the business should have a good website that maximizes your exposure, be attractive, informative, and easy to navigate.

Engagement marketing, suggests 'giving prospects something valuable for free to help you close deals'. There are a number of free services can be provided to prospects through websites to build trust and nurture relationship before doing business together[4]. It could be an evaluation or assessment of their needs, give them some free knowledge support to facilitate their journey as a consumer.

The Modern Marketing era is driven by the self-educated consumer who marketers must engage to achieve a relevant, targeted, and value-based customer experience.

Consumers rely increasingly on web based connectivity, forums, review sites, and other social media when making purchase decisions. It is vital to prioritize the delivery of the right content through the right medium at the right time, using an appropriate mix of internet activities such as PR, web, social media/blogging, events, and demand generation marketing.

The key rules / parameters for engagement are :

- Data mining the actions and behaviors that are favorable to the progression of the buying journey.
- Communicate the right message at the right time across all phases of the purchase cycle.
- Movement across the buying journey by supporting recommendations and offers to product usage.

3.7 Conversion

The current era of changes demand mining of conversion data to gain insights into marketing efforts; every monetary unit needs a careful spending. Many a brands are doing really good things for their customers, providing insight on trends, stage conversion history, and other key metrics. Core competencies for good conversion strategies require the ability to compare multiple mediums at a glance to gauge overall performance against goals[12]. Companies need to uncover which marketing messages produce engagement and revenue. This kind of data mining can dramatically increase response rates for cross-sell and up-sell opportunities.

Multichannel consumer browsing and pre shopping before doing the actual buying is evolving rapidly. Consumers are now turning to a wider variety of digital channels to buy and this creates opportunities and challenges for retailers and brands. The ability to track shopping behaviors, preferences, and insights across multiple channels is an essential. Intelligently automating communication delivery and leveraging technology to understand propensity to buy, as well as adding a social layer to your customer relationship management (CRM)

3.8 Make the most of web analytics.

The step one of analytics often starts with tracking how many people land on companies' web page. The next question set is who visited the web page, do the company monitor unique arrivals and repeat visitors, is there a portal customization on the basis of individual visitor preference etc[3].

For an advanced case the analytical tools can be automated to set and monitor goals in terms of number of leads generated to leads converted and the revenue earned through the effort.

Campaign engagement reporting and website analytics reporting can help in identifying most critical elements of establishing a repeatable process for marketing success. More than ever, marketers are being held accountable for demonstrating how marketing investments directly translate into sales. The internet marketing achievement may be measured by intelligent data analysis and reporting. Implementing the proper analysis systems can help a company make critical decisions regarding which parts of your marketing efforts are working or not[2]. Integrated web analysis lets marketers track social media sites and relevant blogs that drive significant traffic to their website.

Marketers can align their content sharing efforts with the social channels most likely to drive higher traffic and engagement, maximizing the impact of each campaign and boosting marketing ROI[5].

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To discover the trends in internet marketing a research questionnaire was administered to a set of 30 marketing heads / company owners. The principal means of data collection for this research study was a self administered questionnaire survey with a structured direct design. The sampling method chosen was convenient judgment sampling of midsize business houses. Respondents represented a broad set of industries the majority being from the hospitality arena. The questionnaire was developed and refined on the basis of several procedures. The questionnaire was designed to discover the overview of the channels, tools, return on investment, success parameters, and barriers to success for digital marketing[11]. Structured interviews were conducted with managers/ proprietors whoseover was primarily handling the marketing phenomenon. The nature of the questionnaire was that of a structured-direct questionnaire with fixed response alternatives. This is to provide quantification of data and ease of data processing, analysis and interpretation.

The research if conducted on a larger set can provide valuable insights on change in trends with the change in variables such as "industry", "size of company" , "location of company" etc. For a future usage this data was also collected but was not used for analytical distinctions in the current study.

The factor analysis and insights are still rooted in primary industry of the company as was observed through websites associated with the company/brand.

This was taken as the primary means of data collection through observation and review. The respondents were requested to identify your primary website and also the prime motivators of website design.

To assess the orientation the respondents were questioned about the % amount of marketing budget used towards online marketing?

The questionnaire tool aimed at discovering the objectives of web based activities for comparative analysis and web savvy nature of internet marketing personnel. The key parameters used for the internet marketing trend analysis are:

- Web Presence
- Global / Wider Reach
- Customer Education
- Product Differentiation
- E Mail to personal database
- Generate organic / search based leads
- Capturing Browsing Leads
- Engaging Leads
- Monitor conversion
- Marketing task /process automation
- E Mail to external data
- Sales increase and revenue generation
- Provide a platform for dialog
- Receive feedback from visitors
- Stimulate social sharing
- Improve Conversion rate
- Insights / analytics

V. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Digital marketing has gained solid grounds and shall stay as a key business driver. The fact was endorsed by the survey respondents as 90% confirmed that they consider it mainstream (90% said it's now part of the mainstream marketing catalog).

A simultaneous observation is that the traditional marketing still consumes a significant portion of the overall marketing budget (The mode for the group was around 70% compared to digital marketing's 30%). This was also probably because of high cost of traditional methods such as trade shows, print, TV etc. The virtual world on the other hand is a low cost alternative.

For question on future allocations,70% Of the respondents agreed on probable increase in budget for the next year and hence the finding that the investment in internet marketing is rising as a trend with organizations intending to spend more in this promising direction.

Internet marketing represented two of the top three marketing activities (email to own database and social media) currently in their marketing mix

Measuring the success of digital marketing efforts can mean different things to different companies. Survey respondents said visits to their website was a major parameter when it came to measuring the success 70% of the respondents expressed web presence as a major factor for participating in Internet marketing activities.

Conversions/sales/new customer acquisitions (50%) was second and leads generated was third (40%). This is not in line with the traditional lead generation lead management philosophy. This thought process was more akin to a real life brick-and-mortar showroom saying that people discovering that

the showroom exists is the goal, but that people coming inside and showing interest isn't as important.

E Mail marketing was a staple choice for those who maintained a personal E Mail database. Most of the respondents agreed that they have heard about SEO and their web development package included the same but were not very aware of the keywords representing their industry. Content profiling and personalization was taking a back seat. Providing for an opportunity for a dialog at the website was available only in 30% respondents.

Display ads and banner advertising was a staple choice. Low cost advertising and visibility concerns were a common desire.

40% of the respondents had some or the other method to capture leads and also to engage visitors to the site experience. Engaging prospects using the digital world is relatively easy and Video advertising is gaining ground.

Web was perceived as an easy support to conversion and educating the client with lots of digital knowledge at practically zero effort cost or money cost. Marketing is all aligned for conversions, and the Internet has become a hub of conversation related interventions.

Only 20% of respondents were using a single platform for their digital marketing activities. The other 80% were using multiple platforms to accomplish their goals. This was the crowd that reported internet marketing as more complex and less reliable than traditional marketing. Many of them were even not aware that single platform tools were available. 90% of the respondents agreed that they do not have the right manpower to seed growth in internet marketing efforts. Absence of qualified manpower was a prime cause for not diving deep in internet marketing.

Web analytics and predictive analytics was scoring a low usage currently but an astonishing 100% respondents expressed that they intend to increase the role of predictive analytics in their next year efforts.

It seemed that the use of predictive analytics would be in high demand in times to come.

The study also aimed at identifying the adaptation level of mid size business to the digital revolution. The general level of adoption in the sampled set was around 40% for digital marketing as a preferred mode. The silver lining in the situation was that 100% of the respondents had an intention for increased participation in the new era of marketing.

Most of them consider it as essential for business decision-making purposes. This was a major change in perception with internet marketing potential being acknowledged for Business Intelligence. When analyzing usage data of the current respondent set, it seems that the Internet has now been fully recognized as a vital source of marketing intelligence.

The other findings of the study showed that the businesses is massively using the Internet as a communication tool - referring to the e-mail and multimedia capabilities, sending or downloading documents, etc. and also to fulfill some primary commercial functions, such as gathering information by exploring other web sites and providing customer support.

VI. CONCLUSION

The internet has evolved into a dynamic source of information as well as an extraordinary marketing tool that is able to reach nearly any user. The internet phenomenon has become a source for gathering timely information and converting data into profitable results. A positive observation was that most of the marketing personals perceived Internet as

a Marketing Catalyst and not as a competitor to traditional marketing. Marketing and advertising in the twenty first century have taken a whole new route in hitting the targeted market. Consumers always want to know more about any product they are going to buy. Being able to research a product is crucial in any industry for sales. Consumers can research a product without difficulty, which will give them a sense of security in having the knowledge of a product they are going to purchase[9].

Furthermore, the growth and the capability of the Internet as well as the amount of users it attracts can mainly be profitable for marketing

Internet Marketing is currently witnessing the greatest change in lifestyle, and an ever increasing number of persons getting used to this lifestyle. Companies have to ensure visibility in the right target groups and at the virtual places they visit. But visibility is only the step one and the internet marketing adaptation levels must be acknowledged as a continuous journey with multiple achievements to support business on the core.

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