

Digital marketing audiences and buyer behaviour

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Annotation: A strategic framework for developing a digital marketing strategy. To realise the benefits of digital marketing and avoid the pitfalls that we have described, an organisation needs to develop a planned, structured approach. Consequently, this text defines a strategic approach to digital marketing that is intended to manage these risks and deliver the opportunities available from online channels.

How much time do you, your friends and family spend online each day? Naturally, it depends on many factors, but you'll know from the 'screen time' warnings on your smartphone that it's significant and growing, unless you have managed a 'digital detox'. The advent of digital media has prompted changes to buyer behaviour and communications, which we introduce in this section. We also consider the new ways to target audiences.

Key words: B2C, B2B, Direct-to-customer model, C2C, C2B, Metaverses, e-government, Digital natives, Benefits of digital media, Data lake and data Warehouse, Personalisation, Outbound digital communications.

Business-to-consumer (B2C)

Commercial transactions between an organization and consumers.

Business-to-business (B2B)

Commercial transactions between an organization and other organisations (inter-organisational marketing).

Direct-to-customer model

A brand that has previously communicated to its customers via intermediaries such as media sites or wholesalers communicates directly via digital media such as social networks, email and websites.

Consumer-toconsumer (C2C)

Informational or financial transactions between consumers, but usually mediated through a business site.

Consumer-to-business (C2B)

Consumers approach the business with an offer.

e-government

The use of internet technologies to provide government services to citizens.

Metaverses

Online worlds where people can game, work and communicate in a virtual environment, typically supported by VR headsets, chat and video. In the early stages of the evolution of the web, Hoffman and Novak (1996) highlighted the potential importance of

C2C interactions; the significance of their findings has been supported by the growth of social networks. More recently, Adjei et al. (2010) found how brand communities can be effective tools for influencing sales and retaining customers, and for building confidence in new customers. Digital platforms such as Facebook are touting VR-supported Metaverses for future C2C interactions (The Verge, 2021). The significance of C2C interactions, which often involve creation of what is known as UGC or user-generated content, is illustrated in Activity 1.1 . Government and public-service organisations deliver online or e-government services. Employees can be considered as a separate type of consumer through the use of intranets, which is referred to as employee-to-employee or E2E. As we will see in the next section, adoption of digital devices and platforms within consumer audiences differs widely based on age.

Digital natives

Term used to describe people who have grown up with digital media and technology. Some consider this to include Millennials (Generation 'Y', born 1981 to 1996), who started using the web and smartphones in their teenage years, but strictly it starts with Zoomers or Generation Z (born 1997 onwards), who start using tablets or smartphones as soon as they can pick them up.

Benefits of digital media

In the section on digital marketing strategy, we described some of the applications of digital marketing to support communications with customers across the purchase cycle from generating awareness, achieving direct response for lead generation or sale and supporting customer service and relationship marketing. In this section we explore key differences between digital media and traditional media that savvy marketers exploit. Digital marketing communications differ significantly from conventional marketing communications because digital media enables new

forms of interaction and new models for information exchange. A useful summary of the differences between new media and traditional media was originally developed by McDonald and Wilson (1999) and is still valid – they describe the ‘6Is of the e-marketing mix’, which are still useful to consider as they are practical benefits of digital marketing that the marketer should exploit since they highlight differences from other channels.

Interactions with consumers across all the different customer touchpoints can be stored in data lakes or data warehouses to provide insight collectively known as ‘Big Data’.

Data lake and data warehouse

A data lake is a storage repository that holds a diversity of raw data in its native format where it is available for analysis and reporting by people across a company. This in contrast to a data warehouse, which contains structured data.

Personalisation

Digital experience personalisation is the dynamic serving of customised content, product or promotional offer recommendations to website visitors or app users based on their characteristics and intent behaviour to support conversion and long-term engagement goals.

Sense-and-respond communications

Delivering timely, relevant communications to customers as part of an automated contact strategy, based on assessment of their position in the customer lifecycle and monitoring specific interactions with a company’s website, emails and staff. Outbound digital communications Website, mobile push notifications or email marketing are used to send personalized communications to customers.

Digital devices and digital platform

To select relevant communications, it’s useful for marketers to understand the context of use of digital media, i.e. how, when and why users are accessing the internet and how this may relate to other channels such as TV or print media. This can help determine investment decisions and there are options within paid media to vary the timing to test for ROI improvements since budgets won’t enable us to target everyone. For example, to reduce wastage from targeting less-relevant audiences in digital media we can use:

- device-specific targeting to target users of a particular device, e.g. iPhone users;
- dayparting to target people when they are most likely to be active during the day or week.

B2B marketers may downweight or stop spend during the evenings or weekends. How many digital devices do you, your friends and family use? When the web first launched, very few had access and most likely it was through a desktop or laptop computer. The growth in smartphone usage changed when and where access occurred, with the majority of consumer usage now via smartphones and mobile apps. When developing a strategic approach to digital media, it’s useful to assess how demand for new devices among different audiences varies so we can assess the relevance of these devices for our marketing activities.

Digital platforms

Digital platforms are where the majority of online interactions occur. Despite the vast number of websites, access to these is mediated by search engines and social networks. So, to gain awareness and visibility, selection of digital marketing tactics requires knowledge of the latest communications options available via the digital platforms that online audiences use to interact. It's useful to review the FAMGA businesses here, since all offer organic and paid media options as part of their revenue model. Despite the choice available online, the dominance of a small number of platforms poses practical and ethical issues for marketers, which we explore further in Chapter 3. From a practical point of view, the majority of media spend is now online – mostly divided between what has been called the Facebook–Google duopoly. Perrin (2019) reports that within the United States and United Kingdom, more than 60 per cent of digital media spend is now with Facebook and Google. This has led to increased competition on these platforms, with auction-based media spend driving higher advertising costs. Many consider this situation and the limited tax paid by some of these companies anti-competitive and this has led to the anti-trust investigations in the United States and Europe. Note that in some regions, such as Asia, the FAMGA businesses are less important, so options for reaching audiences on other dominant platforms are important. Plus, some sector-specific platforms may be important in particular sectors. For example, within the travel industry, TripAdvisor™ is used by so many consumers that marketers have to consider reviews and recommendations on this platform.

Conclusion. In the distant future, influencer marketing will continue to rule the digital marketing landscape, but its overarching purpose will change. Once more, we will see a change in consumer behaviour as they become less receptive to products advertised by influencers. Once impulse purchasing on the back of influencer content reduces, influencers will then carry out more of an awareness purpose – so consumers can continue to discover new, relevant products on the platforms they visit the most. Reverse engineering of consumer behaviour will still be in play, and marketers will continue to tailor their digital marketing efforts in tandem with influencers to make sure they are discovered by the right audience and remain in the comfortable top-of-mind recall bracket.

Finally, this brings us back to Mr Brogan's words – make your buyer the hero. In the fast-evolving digital marketing space, this isn't just sound advice, it's the only option.

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