

THE AID OF MARKETING IN THE AGE OF TECHNOLOGY

DISRUPTION

- HARSHINI M.U¹

ABSTRACT

This article is about how the digital expansion has changed the worlds of both consumers and businesses. On one hand, the empowerment of consumers has led to a rational consumer environment and, on the other, the traditional business sectors are being overtaken by the tech-adept businesses. This article is written from the tinge of perspective of the financial sector. The dependency of the businesses on customers outweighs the interdependence of customers and businesses have been discussed. This brings about the need for effective and efficient marketing in the digital world. To carry out the latter, adoption of social media strategy is relied upon.

REMEMBERING OUR PAST

What is the fundamental basis of everything? It sure is a ponderous question that has popped up at least once in our minds. The answer to this is expansion. Any explanation would seem small to describe the significance of expansion. It has created something out of nothing.

Expansion is the prelude to the creation of our universe. The formation of atoms to stars and galaxies, the radiations of which created a plasma that impregnates the universe and allows light to pass is aided and abetted by the process of expansion. It has created infinity within infinity.

Our beautiful planet is one among such infinity. To seek its tales, we have to unravel it by flipping through the pages of every book ever written. The tales began from the time when the stream of life trickled thin and small. The evolution of locomotory organs enabled living species to step into paths unexplored. The path towards human evolution unfolded 3.5 million years

¹ Student B.A LL.B 4th Year, School of Excellence in law, Chennai

ago.² A peek into the prehistory of human species can uncloak the evolution of our cerebral activity.

Over these 3.5 million years, we have roved about through the Stone Age to the Bronze Age and to the Iron Age. We meandered along the evolutionary path and are presently in the Digital Age. In all these periods, we have molded the world around us to our liking.

A PEEK INTO THE AGE OF DISRUPTIVE INNOVATION

Leapfrogging several years ahead, we step into the Digital Age. It set forth around the late 1970s.³ It was digitization which at once, in an incisive and positive tone paved way for multitudinous innovations and changes. It has created a whole new world which takes us wonder by wonder as new innovations pile on in between the fraction of seconds.

The onset of the digital age caused a considerable amount of excitation among various sectors, but the accelerating growth in digitization has proved incoherent in consequence. In the Age, where every one of us have access to technology, each of us could be a technology disruptor. Thus, the digital space is a quicksand where it is difficult to establish a firm structure.

The incessant growth in technology has gathered a lot of tech-enthusiasts and tech-rich business entities from start-ups to big organizations to step into the field of financial sector. The entry of fintechs and techfins has gravitated a substantial quantum of customer base towards it. There is one main reason that attributes to such a paradigm shift from the use of traditional financial institutions to the technology-induced financial platforms.

The access of internet in conjunction with the evolution of telephones to smartphones has to a profound extent caused a change in our perception of looking at the world. The convenience of availing financial services at our pleasure far outweighs the humdrum atmosphere radiating from the traditional financial institutions. This has pushed the traditional modus operandi of financial services to the endangerment zone.

It would be misleading to say that the traditional institutions would succumb to the digital pressure. Rather technology is not new to the financial sector. It has been using technology to

² <https://www.britannica.com/science/human-evolution> (Accessed on May 26, 2019)

³ <https://historyoftechnologyif.weebly.com/information-age.html> (Accessed on May 27, 2019)

refine their delivery of products and services for a long time. But it is also crucial to differentiate between the old and modern technology. Still considering ATM to be the peak of financial innovation would be a futile exercise to mask the swift changes happening in the digital world.⁴ Thus, it is vital for the traditional financial institutions to embrace the changing technology in order to be extant in the digital space.

GEARING UP IN THE CONSUMER ENVIRONMENT

Peter Drucker has explained the purpose of business in as laconic a way as possible. He said, “the purpose of business is to create a customer”. The customers are the pivot around which businesses revolve. It takes a lot of time and expense to build a customer base but only a matter of seconds to let them go. Times have changed. The transition of customers from ordinary to tech-savvy has led to the decline of consumer irrationality. Previously, customers were an easy prey to even the teeny-tiny marketing and advertising tricks, but now the light of internet has empowered customers.

Nowadays, customers base their decision upon their preliminary research from reviews from other users, easily accessed expert opinions, price comparison apps, utilization of google search engines, etc., before availing the products and services of any business entity. In simple words, their assessment is built on the “absolute value” instead of the “veiled value” or “brand value” of products and services.⁵

This calls for the need of efficient and effective marketing. The recent comparative studies reveals a surge in the online advertising to that of an array of traditional advertising platforms. Online advertising largely resorts to the platform of social media. A glimpse over social media statistics shows the significant reach of social media. There are about 3.4999 billion⁶ active social media users out of the 4.4 billion⁷ internet users in the 7.7 billion⁸ worldwide population.

⁴ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/tomgroenfeldt/2017/08/10/atm-turns-50-the-peak-of-financial-innovation-according-to-paul-volcker/#60a7af562a6a> (Accessed on June 6, 2019)

⁵ <https://www.gsb.stanford.edu/faculty-research/books/absolute-value-what-really-influences-customers-age-nearly-perfect> (Accessed on June 6, 2019)

⁶ <https://www.slideshare.net/DataReportal/digital-2019-q2-global-digital-statshot-april-2019-v02> (Accessed on June 6, 2019)

⁷ <https://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.h> (Accessed on June 6, 2019)

⁸ <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/> (Accessed on June 6, 2019)

Social media users grew by a staggering 202 million in one year between April 2018 to April 2019.⁹ That works out a new social media user every 6.4 seconds.¹⁰

Social media, a 24/7 channel, has enabled to build a globally connected world and has provided a real-time voice to the people. For example, now if a customer wants to lodge a complaint against the dissatisfied product or service, there is no need to go through long arduous processes like, telephoning the service centers or filling up a form, etc. Instead, a tweet would be sufficient. The statistics shows that a majority of customers take recourse to twitter to ask questions and seek answers. Among them, 78%¹¹ of people who complain to a brand via twitter expect a response within 24 hours. And 77%¹² of twitter users feel more positive when their tweet has been replied to.

We can infer that no business entity should be oblivious to social media. Social presence is of prime importance. It continues to play a significant role in the pursuit of digital strategy. This demands the need for social media strategy, which should be in conformity with the business objectives.

ADOPTION OF SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY

The primary step of business entities is to set a dedicated team for digital marketing and advertising. There are four crucial course of steps - planning, listening, engagement, and optimising which determines the efficiency and effectiveness of the social media strategy. A constant review, update and improvement is required in line with the acutely fast-moving marketplace.

PLANNING

Drafting a social media strategy is not an easy task. The team has to be very circumspect in their dealings in the digital platform. For example, various features like, colour, texture, font, style, margin, structure, sentence, etc., of a post determines the reach of the products and services. The businesses have to realise the importance of understanding their customers online. It would be

⁹ <https://www.slideshare.net/DataReportal/digital-2019-q2-global-digital-statshot-april-2019-v02> (Accessed on June 6, 2019)

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ <https://www.lithium.com/company/news-room/press-releases/2013/consumers-will-punish-brands-that-fail-to-respond-on-twitter-quickly> (Accessed on June 6, 2019)

¹² https://blog.twitter.com/marketing/en_us/a/2015/new-holiday-research-five-ways-for-retailers-to-engage-shoppers-on-twitter.html (Accessed on June 6, 2019)

futile to spend a fortune on marketing and advertising if there is no benefit reaped from it. There are multiple things about business websites that majority of customers find annoying. These are,

- if it has excessive ads and pop-ups,
- if it is slow to load - according to a study from KISSmetrics, 47 percent of customers expect a web page to be loaded in two seconds or fewer, and 40 percent leave a website that takes over three seconds to load. Even a one second delay reduces client satisfaction by around 16%,¹³
- if it is not portable for mobiles,
- if it has an incomprehensible and unclear ‘welcome page’ and constant rotating pages and auto-play videos,
- when the contact detail is insufficient or missing,
- if it contains keyword - stuffed copy,
- if it asks to register or fill-in forms to get prices or other information,
- if it is missing social sharing buttons on content,
- if it does not have a blog, etc.

Any move that ameliorates this situation is welcome because customer’s annoyance is a great encumbrance in the pursue of bolstering one’s digital strategy.

SOCIAL LISTENING

Social media plays an integral part in our lives. It provides businesses with a wealth of understanding and awareness about the user’s journey. It is a hotbed of research. The days, when marketers resorted to old marketing strategies like, going to focus groups, preparing long questionnaires, telephonic interviews, etc., to know about their customers are gone. The words of Bruce Temkin is apt to account for the previous strategies - “Do not waste customer’s time asking them questions unless you are prepared to act on what they say”.

Now, the art of social listening replaces the old strategies. At present, one can just head into the social media to get to know their customers and target customers. A peek into the profiles, likes, comments, and shares of the user’s accounts can enable marketers to sketch a nearly accurate biography of people. A knack of analytics can filter out the potential customers.

¹³ <https://neilpatel.com/blog/loading-time/> (Accessed on June 7, 2019)

If a business wants to launch a new product or service, then it just have to take its proposition on to the social media platform and wait for its responses to come flooding back. And technology such as Facebook pixel can track those who are visiting the website. The Facebook pixel is a website's code. It gathers information that helps to monitor Facebook ads conversions, optimize advertisements, create targeted audiences for future advertisements, and highlight individuals who have already taken some action on the website.¹⁴

If a business want to assess the already implemented products and services, then it can go to a Facebook page that talks about it and find out the problems that people have got and proceed further to put a tweet online on what people expect to change and improve in their products and services.

Social media is an instantaneous feedback loop which emanates the need of constant social presence and haw-eyed digital vision.

SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

Once an organization gets to know who their customers are, the next in line is the social engagement. As already mentioned, customers are widely influenced by the experiences of others, thus, influential marketing would be a brilliant marketing strategy. It is the use of influential customers or advocates to help business entities create a buzz for their products or services. The partake of creative and innovative content creators, bloggers, etc., would engross the involvement of the customers as they feel more connected to the brand offering products and services.

Technology has paved way for smarter ways of marketing and advertising. The utilization of advertising into messaging app and deployment of AI chatbots and robo-advisors has transformed the traditional obnoxious, one-directional and intrusive marketing approaches to a more direct and customer-friendly approach. A personalized engagement in the dealings with customers, for example, if an angry or dissatisfied customer is addressed personally then there is a probability for the conversion of a negative sentiment back to neutral. This aids in both the reputation and brand management of any business entity.

It also has to be noted that we are now in the fourth industrial revolution, also called, the age of automation. An algorithm can do the job of bankers in a better and faster rate. It has the potential

¹⁴ <https://blog.hootsuite.com/facebook-pixel/> (Accessd on June 7, 2019)

of rendering bankers obsolete. A prediction of the Bureau of Labor Statistics states that those jobs with high human touch are less likely to be automated. So, there is still hope as people still seek for trusted advisors. Quentin Hardy, writing in the New York Times, stated that, "It may be that, in a world rich in digital information, physical contact, and the personal trust and relationship that still comes by spending time with someone, has become even more valuable, since it is harder to come by."¹⁵

The only solution is to humanize the business entity (here, the financial sector) on social media. The alleviation of strict regulations on bankers would lead to their digital empowerment. Ultimately, a well-defined brand and a good social media infrastructure at the disposal of business organizations leads to the doors of opportunities which will succour in exploring brand extensions and finding potential streams for additional revenue, etc.

OPTIMISATION

Once the organization gets hold of the technology, it should proceed towards optimising their delivery of products and services. Utilization of gamification in product marketing and employment of real-time analytics in offering services can prove to be of immense importance in the second stage of the digital world we are marching into.

It is to be noted that the above-mentioned steps in the pursuance of a potent digital strategy should be contemplated in a holistic manner.

CONCLUSION

There are unrelentless efforts made in pursuit of advancement in the digital world. It can be aptly concluded that, anyone who knows what, how and when to use technology is a potential disruptor. Hence, no person (natural or artificial) can have a monopoly over the marketplace out there. However, it cannot be denied that technology favours those who are abreast of the changes happening in the digital space. A blink away would lead to a loss of many opportunities that might come along the way. This is where the traditional institutions (here, financial sector) have to work on. They hold on to the old strategies which have now become antiquated.

But there is one thing that hasn't changed yet, i.e., the customers. The digital age has revolutionized the consumer environment. It has empowered the customers to base their

¹⁵ <https://www.figarodigital.co.uk/article/service-design-way-growth/> (Accessed on June 7, 2019)

decisions on the absolute value of products and services offered in the marketplace at their convenience rather than falling prey to the tricks of marketers and advertisers.

So it is time that the traditional institutions embrace the rapidly evolving technology around them. One of the efficient methods explained in this article is the adoption of social media strategy to reach out to the existing and the potential customers to deliver their products and services. The reason for the recourse to social media is that, it has become an integral part of our lives. And it is also the most resorted platform where customers base their decisions upon.

This can be implemented by setting up a digital marketing team. As it is ultimately them upon whom depends the reach of the products and services. Through their creativity and innovativeness, they can change the outlook of the products and services and make it work for people rather than making people change for it. Apart from that, augmented intelligence i.e., the co-working of both technology and humans enables a personalized engagement with customers which would ensure a long run in the digital world.