

# Online Marketing- a Tool to Improve Efficacy of 4 P's

Fiza Fayaz<sup>1</sup>, Nair Ul Nisa<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Management studies, University of Kashmir, India

<sup>2</sup>Department of Management studies, University of Kashmir, India

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## ABSTRACT

Online Marketing is a new way of marketing a product/service globally to the targeted markets around the world. To understand the benefits of online marketing in marketing field it is important to understand its effect on the most important element of marketing that is marketing mix. Marketing is the key to success for any organization and online marketing has evolved as an emerging trend in this field. The main aim of this research paper is to look into the use of the online marketing in the marketing strategies of an organization in order to provide effective communication to the targeted population and also into the effectiveness to attract customers with means of numerous online marketing tools. In this study, we concentrate on exploring the process of Online marketing, in which, different activities like SEO, PPC, Affiliate Marketing, E-mail Marketing, Social Media Marketing etc, are presented in detail to have a closer look and better understandings of how Online marketing activities work to attract customers. Online marketing also helps in developing and maintaining customer relationships which is considered as an integral part for any marketing strategy. After reviewing the literature found on Online marketing it was found that the use of online marketing tools is increasing day by day and the firms have to adjust their businesses according to the new trends.

**Keywords:** Communication, Customer, Customer Relationship Management, Internet and Online marketing.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Online marketing is defined as the process of building and maintaining customer relationships through online activities and other digital technologies, they are used to achieve various marketing objectives and to facilitate the exchange of ideas, products and services that satisfy the goals of both parties<sup>[1]</sup>. Eley and Tilley stated that online marketing is a communication tool which can be in many forms and classified it into different types. These types are named as Search Engine Marketing, online partnership, social media, online advertising and email marketing. These online marketing tools have become important communication tools for the marketing department of any organization and are used to promote its websites, services and products in the online environment<sup>[2]</sup>.

According to Adegoke, (2004) "online marketing communications has grown to be an important part of a company's promotional mix"<sup>[3]</sup>. Shankar & Batra in 2009 also stated that companies are using internet as a new marketing communication channel and marketing through internet is growing rapidly<sup>[4]</sup>. Chaffey, (2009) states " Online communications techniques are used to achieve goals of brand awareness, familiarity and favourability and to influence purchase intent by encouraging users of digital media to visit a website to engage with the brand or product and ultimately to purchase online or offline through traditional media channels such as by phone or in-store"<sup>[5]</sup>.

The recent trends in marketing have changed the way companies do business and have challenged the traditional process of transactions and communications between customers and companies<sup>[6]</sup>. When evaluating these new trends, it is important to consider the advantages and disadvantages of traditional and new channels as well as translating them into effectiveness, from a manager's point of view<sup>[7]</sup>.

## ONLINE CUSTOMER

Customers, also known as clients, purchasers, and buyers, are organizations or parts thereof, either business-to-business (B2B) customers or end-user customers<sup>[8]</sup>. Customers can be current or potential, and all others with problems and needs who seek either product or service solutions<sup>[9]</sup>. From a manufacturer's viewpoint, customers include distributors, retailers, and persons who buy products from the retailers<sup>[10]</sup>.

As mentioned by Majava et al., (2013) various authors have referred that customers are the key players in business environment and an important source which helps in product development projects, they say that their input is critical to ensure product success <sup>[11][12][13][14]</sup>. Un & Cuervo-Cazurra in 2009 stated that customers input can minimize any doubt and enable the companies to meet customer needs in future beneficially. A continuous interaction and joint problem solving with customers enables the customers to express their needs well and also helps the companies to understand the needs of customers as well as develop successful products <sup>[15][16]</sup>.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the internet was not much practiced as many users were not well aware about the uses of the internet. Many barriers were present be it gender, occupation or education. But now, in the 21st century, internet is used by everyone be it elderly, children or unemployed. So the borders represented by gender, occupation or education in using or navigating the Internet and other digital mediums have completely gone away by habit, supported by changes in system technologies, therefore surfing the Internet, texting a mobile message or reading an online magazine is common as technologies have become more mobile, Real-time and interactive to support these behaviours <sup>[17]</sup>.

## **2. OBJECTIVES**

The attempt has been made to attain the following objectives:

1. to understand the use of online marketing in acquisition and retention of the customers;
2. to study the benefits of online marketing and its effect on the marketing mix;
3. to suggest the measures so that different types of online marketing tools can be employed in an organizations marketing strategy.

## **3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

In today's competitive world the question of how firms should interact with their customers is gaining more importance <sup>[18]</sup>. An organization will last for a longer period of time only if it focuses on the needs of its distinctly identified groups in the market and produces goods and services that satisfy their requirements productively as the emphasis is on the customer wanting to buy, rather than on the producer needing to sell <sup>[19]</sup>.

The concept of the marketing mix was first introduced in 1953 by Neil Borden and soon after that the Four Ps of marketing: - product, price, place and promotion came into existence in 1960s. Neil Borden basically got his idea from James Culliton, who used to describe the business marketing manager as somebody who combines different ingredients, one who is constantly creating a mix of various marketing procedures and policies in order to increase the profitability. The term "marketing mix" therefore referred to the mixture of elements useful in pursuing a certain market response <sup>[20]</sup>.

The mix of different means of competitions was labelled as the Four Ps by McCarthy. Therefore, of the many designs proposed, only McCarthy's has survived and has become the "dominant design" or "received view." His 4P formula detects four classes, Product, Price, Place, and Promotion as mentioned by Waterschoot & Bult in 1992 <sup>[21]</sup>. The classification of the marketing mix helped to systemize the objectives of the managers to structure marketing decision making and management <sup>[22]</sup>. The 4 Ps were further developed and extended to the 7 Ps with the appearance of People, Process and Physical evidence <sup>[23]</sup>.

Marketers could manipulate the elements of this mix in order to bring about their marketing objectives within organizational constraints, or in response to changes in the external environment including those of customer needs <sup>[24]</sup>. Changing customer needs are particularly relevant to marketers because technology has forced both marketers and consumers to change the way they conduct business <sup>[25]</sup>.

### **INTERNET**

Most people worldwide can use the Web since it is easily available and affordable <sup>[26]</sup>. The today's population is not unfamiliar with internet as the internet is easily available. In fact, from communication to information consumption, to new ways of doing business the internet and digital information have taken over many aspects of our lives and provided a platform to interact with the companies we buy our products from <sup>[27]</sup>.

Internet is a fast and flexible means for marketing <sup>[28]</sup>. Internet has provided us with a one-to-one basis, as well as, a two-way communication with customers and has become more than a medium of selling, like enhancing brand image, creating awareness and providing customer service are more important now a day <sup>[29]</sup>. The Internet has helped the organizations to gain the higher level of marketing efficiency by facilitating sales force efforts <sup>[30]</sup>.

The use of the Internet for business transactions is wide spread. For example, computer-manufacturing companies such as IBM, Xerox, Motorola, Intel, Sun, Hewlet Packard and Digital Equipment are using the Internet to link remote sites,

business partners and customers for collaborative development, software support and distribution, and communications [31].

Eid and Trueman, (2004) explained the several ways in which the Internet transforms the marketing functions. These means are disintermediation, customer relations management, mass customization, sales force automation, and collaboration and coordination [32]. Disintermediation; as explained by Papows, (1998) helps in reducing the transaction costs by enabling marketers to uncover new ways to get rid of process redundancies and make direct interface with customers, suppliers, and strategic alliance partners. He also stated that Customer relations management, the continuous interactivity, persistence, and the capabilities of customization of the internet enable the marketers to manage customers as a strategic asset [33].

Mass customization; the internet provides marketers with an extraordinary capability to target specific groups or individuals precisely and enable them to practice mass customization and one-to-one marketing strategies by adapting communications and other elements of the marketing mix to customer segments of size one [34]. Sales force automation as suggested by Kalakota and Whiston in 1997 means that the productivity and effectiveness of the sales force can be increased through the internet by facilitating the selective automation of processes related to encouraging the field sales force and incorporating the sales activities into a company's information system [35]. Collaboration and Coordination; the Internet provides a universal connectivity in synchronous and asynchronous modes that facilitates intra- and inter-organizational coordination [32].

Hamid, (2008) stated that now a day's most of the companies have adopted internet in their marketing strategies as it is considered as a utile platform for the marketing activities, such as providing information about their products and services, attracting new customers, retaining existing ones and also improving relationships with existing customers by online customer relationship management [36].

## CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT AND INTERNET

Internet provides many opportunities for companies and it can be a very useful platform for their marketing activities, such as to spread information about the products and services offered, to attract new customers, retain existing ones and even to improve customer relationship. In today's competitive world most of the companies have adopted internet as a part of their marketing channel in their marketing strategies [36]. Because of the characteristics of internet and the high numbers of users, internet has become a powerful communication channel, like TV, magazine, and radio [37].

According to Payne & Frow customer relationship management is described as the practices performed by a company to start, build, maintain and develop long-term relationships with customers [38]. The fundamental part of CRM strategies is to consider the needs and desires of each individual customer [39] and due to that customers value the factors that constitute a relationship differently based on their personal perspectives and earlier experiences [40].

CRM is a strategy for companies to build and manage long-term relationships with their customers and effective management of this relationship directly increases their profitability [41]. Therefore, the Internet can help companies to achieve this purpose by understanding the needs and wants of customers and satisfying these needs through the development of customer-centric marketing programs which creates value for customers by managing customer database and providing personalized products and services [42][43].

Including internet tools in CRM strategies enables companies to build competitive advantages through building relationships with customers, and also enhances customer satisfaction [44]. The Internet offers an unprecedented clarity to customers and marketers, way beyond the capabilities of any traditional media [45]. Also as mentioned by Lam et al., (2013) some authors even believe that without the use of Internet tools, CRM cannot be effective [46][47][48][49].

## TYPES OF ONLINE MARKETING

Online marketing communications is defined by Chaffey in (2009) as "Online communications techniques used to achieve goals of brand awareness, familiarity and favourability and to influence purchase intent by encouraging users of digital media to visit a website to engage with the brand or product and ultimately to purchase online or offline through traditional media channels such as by phone or in-store" [5]. There are various online marketing communication tools that are used by the companies to promote and increase the visits of their websites in order to acquire the customers. These acquisition tools are listed as Search marketing, Online PR, Online partnership, Interactive Ads, Opt in e-mail and Viral Marketing, under the operational process of online marketing.

Online marketing is broadly divided in to the following types:

## DISPLAY ADVERTISING

Display Advertising refers to placing the web banners or banner ads on a third-party website to drive traffic to a company's own website in order to increase product awareness. Spalding et al. (2009), spoke in favor of the display advertising by suggesting that the purchase intent from customers increases by making the ad more noticeable on any

website, he further found that the ads that are circumstantial are targeted less, whereas highly visible ads are retracted more<sup>[50]</sup>.

Therefore it is a much cost efficient and effective way for marketers to communicate about the products and services offered to the customers. The marketers can gather the information about their target population and can further place the ads or banners on the sites they usually visit. This way of communication also has its own pros and cons as found from the literature sometimes some customers might infer that the marketer is trying to manipulate them.

### **SEARCH ENGINE MARKETING (SEM)**

SEM is “a form of marketing that seeks to promote websites by increasing their visibility in search engine result pages (SERPs) through the use of paid placement, contextual advertising, or paid inclusion, or through the use of free search engine optimization techniques”. The main aim of SEM is to increase the page ranking of a website so that it will be seen on the top of the results. This helps in attracting new customers and increasing the visits of the webpage<sup>[51]</sup>.

Search Engine Marketing is the most popular and useful online advertising method among the marketers to promote their products. Search engines can be useful tool for the marketers to create brand positioning in the virtual market and building the relationship with customers by informing them time to time about the products and services offered<sup>[52]</sup>.

### **SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION (SEO)**

SEO is “the process of improving the visibility of a website or a web page in search engines via the "natural" or un-paid ("organic" or "algorithmic") search results”. The ultimate goal of SEO is similar to SEM i.e., to achieve higher ranking and bring more visitors to your website<sup>[53]</sup>. It is a great tool to create brand awareness and increase the website visits. Virtually, SEO is a must for every business to promote their website and they must be successful at implementing it<sup>[54]</sup>. Search engine optimization (SEO) is a systematic way of increasing the ranking of a company’s products or services in search engine natural or organic results listings for selected key words/ phrase<sup>[1]</sup>.

### **PAY-PER-CLICK**

Chaffey et al., (2006) defined Pay-per-click search engine or paid listings as “a relevant text ad with link to a company page is displayed when the users of a search engine types in a specific phrase”<sup>[1]</sup>. Chaffey (2009) modified the definition as “a company pays for text adverts to be displayed on the search engine results pages when a specific key phrase is entered by the search users”<sup>[5]</sup>. According to Grzywaczewski et al., (2010) “Googles pay per click (PPC) AdWords model consists of allowing businesses to choose keywords and create adverts that relate to their site and bid (against competitors) how much per click their business is willing to spend in order to generate traffic direct to their site”. It basically enables the companies to list their website in the first page of the search results so that it could be more visible to the targeted population and the marketers can easily communicate and offer their goods and services. By being easily available to the customers, marketers can also improve the customer relationships which in turn increase their profitability<sup>[55]</sup>.

### **SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING**

It is defined as the process of gaining traffic or attention towards the businesses through social media sites. “Social media is defined as a group of Internet-based applications such as blogs, social networking sites, content communities, collaborative projects, virtual game worlds and social worlds that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user generated content”<sup>[56]</sup>. According to Ryan and Jones (2009) Social media “is the umbrella term for web-based software and services that allow users to come together online and exchange, discuss, communicate and participate in any form of social interaction”<sup>[57]</sup>.

### **EMAIL MARKETING**

E-mail marketing has emerged as an important medium of marketing communication especially for the companies seeking to build and maintain closer relationships with its customers<sup>[58]</sup>. According to Martin, (2003) one of the major benefits of e-mail marketing is that it is cheaper than the traditional mail and has faster response time from customers<sup>[59]</sup>. This makes it a popular means of communication and establishing better customer relations. It involves directly marketing a commercial message to a group of people using electronic mail. Merisavo & Raulas, (2004) states “e-mail offers a promising tool to enhance brand loyalty as it helps marketers keep in touch with their customers on a regular basis at low cost”<sup>[60]</sup>.

DuFrene et al., (2005) have highlighted the basic abilities of internet which are communication, interaction and engagement which can easily be obtained through email marketing. They further mentioned that the customers who are repeatedly exposed to opt-in messages from the same retailer tend to synchronize their trusting beliefs toward the sender with their overall trust evaluation of the retailer and their purchase intentions<sup>[61]</sup>.

### **AFFILIATE MARKETING**

Chaffey et al., (2006) stated that an affiliate marketing scheme is also known as associate marketing scheme. It is defined as “a commission-based arrangement where an e-retailer pays sites that link to it for sales”<sup>[1]</sup>. In other words, a

merchant pays the affiliate for links that are generated from the affiliate site to the merchant site. It is considered as a marketing practice in which a business rewards one or more affiliates for each visitor or customer brought about by the affiliate's own marketing efforts. Akcura, (2010), stated "Affiliate marketing programs help firms to increase their reach and acquire other firms' customers when the firms agree to refer their customers to the third parties" [62].

Affiliate marketing is one of the useful tools of online partnership to create website traffic [5]. The advantage of affiliate marketing for the merchant is that they do not have to pay any fee until products have been purchased or a lead generated. It is also considered as "zero-risk advertising". Therefore, it is quite easy to control affiliate expenditure and able to ensure that spend is below the allowance cost of customer acquisition [1].

### **VIRAL MARKETING**

Viral marketing is a process in which a promotional message is transmitted to a potential customer through an email. The contents of email can be a video clip, a TV ad, a cartoon, a funny picture, a poem, a song, a political message or a news item which must be so interesting and amazing that makes people pass it on like a computer virus as it is considered as a very useful technique for reaching a large number of people promptly [1].

Viral Marketing has transferred the form of Word-of-Mouth communication to the online environment by enabling people to share news, information or entertainment in the online network with a large group of people [63]. "With viral techniques, traffic is built either through using e-mail (virtual word-of-mouth) or real-world word-of-mouth to spread the message from one person to the next" [64].

### **BENEFITS OF ONLINE MARKETING**

There are many benefits of online marketing over the traditional tools of marketing. The Internet offers a wide range of opportunities for marketers. Evans & King, (1999) defined some of these benefits as; multiple marketing usage, access to commercial research, competitive intelligence, customer service, just in time inventory planning, sales channels, support for channel partners, image enhancement, rapid growth, global reach, around the clock presence, ability to normally target marketing efforts, cost effectiveness, up to minute information, and multimedia vehicle [65]. the most important benefits of Online Marketing are listed below:

- **Cost efficient:** For adopting a marketing tool marketer have to consider many attributes and one of the major attribute is budget. Online marketing is a good choice for attracting customers at a reasonable price. It is a good strategy for any companies marketing policy. Despite the efficiency and flexibility of the conventional strategies, it sometimes refers to a high expenditure and is difficult to control. The conventional strategies of traditional marketing such as TV commercials, radio broadcasting, billboard, or brochures are costlier than the internet tactics such as internet banner ads, webcasts, or webinar; they could easily be applied as they are always within the budget [1].
- **Feedback:** Organisations using traditional marketing tools have little exposure to their customers' comments and feedback. The interactive quality of internet allows the marketers to act quickly as per needs of their customers thus enhancing the relationship among them.
- **Easy access and navigation:** Traditional marketing tool has many restrictions regarding to the delivery of instantaneous and consistent information. And therefore along with the rapid development of technology, customer could easily get the information and understand better about the corporation, thus lead to customer satisfaction. By marketing on the Internet, you can also overcome barriers of distance so that the customers can easily attain the information about various products and compare the price and products of different companies.
- **Convenience:** Internet marketing enables you to personalize offers to customers by building a profile of their purchasing history and preferences. When people read the newspaper or a magazine they may scan over the advertisements beside the article but there is no way to engage their attention. With online marketing you can encourage them to take action, visit your website and read about your products and services which results in vastly increased "stickiness" of your marketing message.

Glen, (2006) mentioned that in order to be successful in present competitiveness a company has to apply many means to satisfy its customer's interests. Factors such as costs, effectiveness and proper diversification of commodities are taken into consideration to have a precise picture of how to advocate customers in general. Because when a company advocates for its customers, the customers will in turn advocate for the company. And this relation between companies and its customers is maintained with the help of online marketing tools [66].

The top priority factor which usually affects customers' decision making in purchasing is lowest price, security, ease of navigation of the website and fast loading time of the website. In addition to this the customers have more different means to search for the products and services based on their needs and before taking any final decision they can compare and contrast these products and services. Further they are also provided with personalised products [67].

#### 4. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Over the years internet has emerged as a very important tool of marketing and developed as a medium for communication to the companies to attract new customers. According to the literature reviewed, the customers are more likely to use internet and the companies are adapting various tools of online marketing into their marketing mix and also for developing and maintaining customer relationships. Being the most cost efficient tool of marketing internet is also termed as most effective tool. The present research endeavour points out the characteristics of online marketing and how it helps the companies to attract new customers, promote their products, retain their existing customers, communicate about new products and also help the organizations to crusade the growing competition.

Online Marketing is found to be the most cost efficient, convenient and easily accessible tool used for the process of communication and provide a medium of interaction between the organization and its customers. It is important for the companies to understand the advantages of online marketing over traditional marketing techniques in order to increase their profitability by increasing customer acquisition, retention, providing proper customer service and informing about the price and place of the products/services offered.

Companies are involving online marketing activities to focus on building brand awareness among the people and also to enhance the brand loyalty of the targeted customers. Online Marketing helps organizations to target markets where each of their customers acts as individuals with different opinions, preferences and needs. With the help of online marketing the marketers can gather information about their customers that help them in maintaining customer relationship and sell their products. They have to form the trust worthy relationships with the customers, in order to achieve the full benefit of the modern technologies; the companies need to remove the barriers so that it will help them to achieve inclusive growth by increasing and maintaining their customer base.

Therefore online marketing has brought a new way to approach the potential customers inform them about the products and services offered and helps in developing the relationship with the existing customers in a very interesting, creative and a cost efficient way. In today's competitive world it is important for any organization to adapt the new online marketing techniques in order to gain competitiveness and profitability. The marketers need to understand the importance of each online marketing tool and the proper way to apply these tools effectively into their marketing programs.

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