Impact of Digital Marketing on Indian Rural Marketing

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1. Introduction
Rural Marketing is the process of taking region specific goods and services to the rural market leading to exchanges between urban and rural markets simultaneously satisfying consumer demand and achieving organisational objectives.

2. Digital Marketing
Digital marketing is the use of the internet, mobile devices, social media, search engines, display advertising and other channels to reach consumers. As a subset of traditional marketing, digital marketing goes beyond the internet to include Short Message Service (SMS), Simple Notification Service (SNS), search engine optimization (SEO), electronic or interactive billboards and other online ads (such as banner ads) to promote products and services.

3. Techniques of Digital Marketing
A. Content Marketing
It is a form of marketing focused on creating, publishing, and distributing content for a targeted audience online. It is often used by businesses in order to attract attention and generate leads, expand their customer base, generate or increase online sales, increase brand awareness or credibility and engage an online community of users. It attracts prospects and transforms prospects into customers by creating and sharing valuable free content. Content marketing helps companies create sustainable brand loyalty, provides valuable information to consumers, and creates a willingness to purchase products from the company in the future. This relatively new form of marketing does not involve direct sales. Instead, it builds trust and rapport with the audience.

B. Social Media Marketing
It is the use of social media platforms and websites to promote a product or service. Although the terms e-marketing and digital marketing are still dominant in academia, social media marketing is becoming more popular for both practitioners and researchers. Most social media platforms have built-in data analytics tools, which enable companies to track the progress, success, and engagement of ad campaigns. Companies address a range of stakeholders through social media marketing, including current and potential customers, current and potential employees, journalists, bloggers, and the general public. On a strategic level, social media marketing includes the management of a marketing campaign, governance, setting the scope (e.g. more active or passive use) and the establishment of a firm’s desired social media “culture” and “tone.”

C. Email Marketing
It is the act of sending a commercial message, typically to a group of people, using email. In its broadest sense, every email sent to a potential or current customer could be considered mail marketing. It usually involves using email to send advertisements, request business, or solicit sales or donations, and is meant to build loyalty, trust, or brand awareness. Marketing emails can be sent to a purchased lead list or a current customer database. The term usually refers to sending email messages with the purpose of enhancing a merchant’s relationship with current or previous customers, encouraging customer loyalty and repeat business, acquiring new customers or convincing current customers to purchase something immediately, and sharing third-party ads.

D. Search Engine Optimization (SEO)
Search engine optimization (SEO) is the process of affecting the online visibility of a website or a web page in a web search engine's unpaid results often referred to as “natural”, “organic”, or “earned” results. In general, the earlier (or higher ranked on the search results page), and more frequently a website appears in the search results list, the more visitors it will receive from the search engine’s users; these visitors can then be converted into customers. SEO may target
different kinds of search, including image search, video search, academic search, news search, and industry-specific vertical search engines. SEO differs from local search engine optimization in that the latter is focused on optimizing a business' online presence so that its web pages will be displayed by search engines when a user enters a local search for its products or services. The former instead is more focused on national or international searches.

E. Pay-Per-Click (PPC)
Pay-per-click (PPC) also known as cost per click (CPC), is an internet advertising model used to direct traffic to websites, in which an advertiser pays a publisher (typically a website owner or a network of websites) when the ad is clicked. Pay-per-click is commonly associated with first-tier search engines (such as Google Ad Words and Microsoft Bing Ads). With search engines, advertisers typically bid on keyword phrases relevant to their target market. In contrast, content sites commonly charge a fixed price per click rather than use a bidding system. PPC “display” advertisements, also known as “banner” ads, are shown on web sites with related content that have agreed to show ads and are typically not pay-per-click advertising. Social networks such as Face book and Twitter have also adopted pay-per-click as one of their advertising models.

F. Mobile Marketing
Mobile marketing is multi-channel online marketing technique focused at reaching a specific audience on their smart phone, tablets, or any other related devices through websites, E-mail, SMS and MMS, social media or mobile applications. Mobile marketing can provide customers with time and location sensitive, personalized information that promotes goods, services and ideas. In a more theoretical manner, academic Andreas Kaplan defines mobile marketing as “any marketing activity conducted through a ubiquitous network to which consumers are constantly connected using a personal mobile device”.

4. Review of Literature

- Erda CV (2008) studied the comparative buying behavior of rural and urban customers on mobile phones. The study highlighted the difference in terms of consciousness about price, quality, style, function and brand. It was concluded that rural segments pay less attention towards the quality, function, and brand and are more conscious about price and style. It was concluded that minor modification or extrapolation of urban marketing strategies might fail in rural marketing.

- Pooja and Neha (2014) in their study examined the scope of rural marketing in India. They concluded their findings that there exists a large scope of marketing, provided that improvement in infrastructures is carried out. It also stated that the rural market is yet to be exploited.

- Saroj Kumar Verma (2013) examined the challenges and opportunities of rural marketing in India. One of the major challenges identified in the study were the non-homogenous and scattered nature of the market. Other challenges included seasonal marketing, low per capita income, transportation, and warehousing. On the other hand, a huge population seen as huge consumer base in rural segment is admired as an opportunity for the marketers to channelize their efforts. Increase in purchasing power, as reported by Rural Marketing Association of India (RMAI) is another conclusion of the study which highlights that there indeed exists an untapped market in this segment.

- Edward J. Malecki (2003) worked on the potential and pitfalls of digital development in rural areas. Clearly there are potential benefits of the digitalization in rural area which increases the efficiency of the work but it also has downfalls like it would be the cause of shortage of human capital. As there is increase in technology the goods and services are available at a click away from people and that has reduced the human interaction. Internet and mobile have become integral part of our life, whether in case of telecommunication, entertainment or marketing.

5. Method and Material

The study is descriptive in nature. Secondary data collection technique was implemented. The data used in this study has been collected from different websites and published papers.

Digital marketing have many advantages over on-ground marketing such as follows:

A. Direct Advertising: Direct advertising helps an advertiser to create awareness about a product or brand. Recently every company can easily show their advertisements for products or services on different digital channels. Direct advertising is a good option for a marketing strategy. It can attract a large mass and develop your business.

B. Easy Consumer Reach: The main advantage of digital marketing is – it can reach a wide range of audience as early as possible. Nowadays people spend a large portion of their time in searching the web. Using internet channels, a marketer can easily and quickly approach to target a number of consumers. There are so many social media platforms for advertising. They are Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Blogs, Instagram, Google+, YouTube, Pinterest, and LinkedIn etc. Using these social medias, a marketer can easily reach its targeted customers.

C. Easy Brand Promotion: As the technology and internet have developed a lot, the brand’s may take a great advantage of customer’s reach and co-operate it’s clients successfully. Development of a company
depends on the existence of the internet. It can develop your company from any regional market to nationwide and worldwide marketplaces at the same time.

D. Reduced Cost: Digital marketing allows the marketers to save cash. It costs comparatively low than the so-called traditional marketing channels like television, newspapers, radio, banners, magazine etc. Some websites and business profiles generate huge traffic for absolutely free. It is a great option for marketers to spread their business throughout the world without any high cost.

E. Helping Marketers Career: It is a great opportunity for an individual who is making digital strategies and helping companies to expand their business. These strategy makers help to grow the business of a company and himself/herself makes their own career also. Digital marketing has spread huge career options for digital marketers.

F. Available 24/7: The World Wide Web never rests for any time. So the advertisement will work for 24 hours. Using the electronic industry, your advertisement will physically present for 24 hours a day and 7 days a week and 365 days in a year. Advertisement will always be in front of your targeted customers. This is one of the main important features of digital marketing that we cannot avoid while talking about advantages and disadvantages of digital marketing.

G. Consumer’s Convenience to Shop Online: Online shopping is a growing trend. For the popularity and capabilities of digital marketing, customers are more interested in online shopping. A customer can buy a thing whether it is in his/her country or in abroad. Today distance is not a matter to a customer. Also, a customer can get the opportunity of choosing his/her material from so many options. A large portion of people now likes online shopping for its so many benefits. So, digital marketing opens up a new opportunity for both the company and the customer. Now a retailer and a customer can connect with each other very easily.

H. Global Advertisement: This is one of the most important features of digital marketing. It enables the companies to advertise worldwide and there is no barrier, having so many geographical differences. So, a company can easily expand its business without any extra effort. Sitting in a remote place, a company can spread its business throughout the world. This will lead the company to show off it features to the rest of the world. This global advertisement will spread your company’s reputation worldwide.

Digital marketing is not limited to identify needs only, but also is a useful tool to identify the innate needs of the consumers. It can be an effective tool to implement push marketing for the market expansion of any product. At the same time, marketers must realize that the scope of the product that should be pushed into rural segment is limited. Any product which has physical form should be examined before being promoted in the rural segment. The cost of physically delivering the product must be realized prior to promotion to avoid any waste of money and effort. The few types of product that could find digital marketing helpful:

- Social Networking: Increasing craze of connecting to friends and staying in touch 24*7 have given these networks an immense market already waiting for them. With digital marketing promoting these networks, they can easily penetrate into the new market and gain a lion’s share.

- Online Educational Courses: These products have a high scope of market expansion in rural segment. With the increasing literacy rate and realization towards importance of education in the youth, these apps can easily build promising consumer base.

- Ticket Booking Systems: Ticket booking websites and agents dealing in booking of railway tickets, parcels, airline tickets, hotel booking etc. can find a substantial number of customers looking for easy means to get their bookings. Thus, these products can also have a positive response from digital marketing in rural areas.

- E-Commerce in Low Cost Products: Apps and websites dealing in low cost product such as FMCG and others might find it useless to invest in the rural segments. This is because the cost of physically delivering an ordered good might compromise their profits. Thus, these products should thoroughly examine their overall costs involved before taking a step forward.

- Games: With the youth becoming more addicted to online gaming, these apps already have customers waiting for them. Many apps might find it cake walk to enter these markets and gain a share. Further, these platforms can themselves serve as a media of marketing, hence improving on their earnings.

- Music and Video Apps: Apps dealing in music and movies have a great untapped opportunity in the rural market. On-ground marketing techniques might be almost useless whereas digital marketing might help them reach right set of customers in the rural market.

- Informative Apps: With the technology penetrating the world at an unprecedented speed, apps providing services like news, GK, current affairs, etc. might make their physical counterparts obsolete in coming years. They have high scope of gaining existing customers who are already involved in their physical commodities.
All these means discussed above can themselves act as a carrier of marketing techniques. This is another advantage of digital marketing. The media used as channel for digital marketing can themselves be a product. Thus, companies can have mutual associations to promote products of each other, thus saving cost of marketing.

6. Conclusion

Digital marketing in rural area is quite untouched area and has lot of untapped potential but the techniques are yet being devised to explore this area. Being the time efficient, largely impacted and easy availability, there are certain benefits of digital marketing. The increase in technology diversification also increase the exposure to the people, and it opens up the possibility of social networking, online courses, ticket booking system and various much more. Up until now rural market is product driven not the service driven, with information of product available beforehand to the consumers lets the company to predict behaviour of actual product before launching it, which helps in planning for the outcomes.

Reference