

# Marketing through Digital Media: A Review of Prospects and Possibilities

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**Abstract:** *Digital Media which incorporates internet and mobile mass communication, has opened up a new avenue as a marketing channel. This review paper delves into the journey of digital media over the period of last two decades. It also looks into the It also sheds light into the prospects and possibilities of using it effectively for marketing of brands.*

## Introduction

Internet over the period have come a long way since its early days of military only network. It is now one of the major sources of information, engagement, interaction, entertainment and a mode of communication among people. There are two characteristics, which makes internet a unique tool of excellence. These are persistence in its design as a decentralized, industrial communication network and development of rules of communication, which enables machines to turn raw data into useful information.

In 1973, during the cold war period, the US Defense Advanced Research Project Agency (DARPA) began research on protocols to allow computers to communicate over a distributed network. The early internet was called ARPANET, after U.S. Advanced Research Projects Agency. The protocol for internet is developed in such a way that internet does not exist in any one place particular, rather, it is a network of interrelated computers. Internet is not a physical structure, it is the protocols (rules) that make communication possible (Lule, 2012).

Email on the other hand, was there for quite a while. Tomlinson is credited with writing the first email using his program SNDMSG in 1971. Once the network became developed, using the symbol @ to denote a server helped the rapid spread of internet. It is still one of the most used services over internet. Email has revolutionized communication for being easy access, fast delivery and less expensive in nature (Lule, 2012).

In 1989, Tim Berners-Lee had the idea of sharing information and documents through internet. He

created a new language called hypertext markup language (HTML). The basic idea of HTML was documents could be constructed out of a number of links and could be viewed as if it were on the user's computer. This new language needed a new communication protocol so that computers could interpret it and it was called Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP). Tim created a browser called World Wide Web, which allowed HTML documents into readable web pages. Over the next few years Internet Explorer, Mozilla Firefox, Google Chrome and others attempted to interpret HTML documents in the same ways (Lule, 2012).

The 1990's saw a dot-com boom. At that time, many websites were built and sold for millions of dollars. However, within a decade and by the year 2000 many of these startup companies went bankrupt. These companies went to stock market to raise funds but failed to make investors understand the potential of the business as much of the business growth were evaporated. However, some persistent companies like eBay.com survived and still exists today (Lule, 2012).

However, the true potential of internet was not fully realized until the emergence of social media. Social Media has three important characteristics that change the way we connect socially: speed of information, volume of information and democratization of information and knowledge. Social Media platforms like Twitter, Facebook and others connected people to their own network and even beyond (Lule, 2012).

As an effect of digitalization of marketing activities, certain boundaries are changing. Digitization of marketing initiatives that includes planning, execution and analysis is taking a different form than the established marketing process within the traditional media.

## Marketing through Digital Media

Digital distribution channels offer platforms to reach the consumers by promoting products and services in a relevant, personal and cost-effective manner and is known as digital marketing (Corniani, 2006). Promoting products and services, using digital

distribution channels to reach consumers in a manner relevant, personal and cost-effective is digital marketing. Digital marketing includes many of the techniques and practices contained within the category of Internet Marketing.

The emergence of Internet-based social media has made it possible for one person to communicate with hundreds or even thousands of other people about products and the companies that provide them. Thus, the impact of consumer-to-consumer communications has been greatly magnified in the marketplace. (W. Glynn Mangolda, 2009)

As digital technologies spread, each communication is also a 'launch' by the transmitter to trigger a response from the receiver. However, although it is embodied in the digital flow, this response is not in itself an 'automatic' reaction. There has to be some sort of stimulus that makes the receiver interested in responding to the communication received. (Corniani, 2006)

The banners, buttons, etc. which open up in Internet connections to numerous sites, are forms of online advertising whose aim is to prompt the surfer to 'click' to obtain information about a product, a brand or a company offer. They demand the user's involvement and he chooses to search for more information, thus making it possible to transmit the corporate communication in a personalized form, in a timeframe and content that can develop an active interest in the user. (Corniani, 2006)

Moreover, digital marketing extends beyond this by including other channels with which to reach people that do not require the use of the Internet. Because of this non-reliance on the Internet, the field of digital marketing includes a whole host of elements such as mobile phones, SMS and MMS, display and banner ads, digital outdoor. This marketing method is more effective when a marketer combines multiple channels in the message campaigns. (Morozan, Enache, & Vechiu, 2009)

Marketing communication is therefore more important in virtual space than other marketing levers, and combines with them to create a supply system with a price and distribution method that can aggregate demand (demand bubbles), based on feedback from the 'launch' of digital communication, among other information. Virtual and physical space in global markets are therefore an opportunity for companies that can choose how to use them, optimizing the advantages and minimizing the limits. The most effective corporate structures on global markets, the networks, do exactly that: they distribute themselves in physical space because they can exploit the advantages of virtual space and the flexibility of positioning to monitor physical and virtual space in competitive benchmarking with the

market (market-driven management). (Corniani, 2006)

At the simplest level, we have always known that consumers tend to go through a multistage journey as they make purchasing decisions. Yet most companies still concentrate marketing resources on only two stages: brand marketing up front to woo consumers when they first consider products, and promotions at the final point of sale to sway them as they are about to make a purchase. (Edelman, 2010)

Moving from a one-way, company-driven sales mentality to a two-way relationship with consumers requires core changes in the way marketers do business. While some of them have adjusted effectively, most simply tried everything that came to mind, because they were not sure what would work. While these initiatives usually make sense, their implementation often does not: most companies merely add them to their other operations and thus stretch their organizations financially and operationally. In our experience, companies must thoughtfully integrate such initiatives by focusing on four core sources of value. (Edelman, 2010)

The content, timing, and frequency of the social media-based conversations occurring between consumers are outside managers' direct control. This stands in contrast to the traditional integrated marketing communications paradigm whereby a high degree of control is present. Therefore, managers must learn to shape consumer discussions in a manner that is consistent with the organization's mission and performance goals. They include providing consumers with networking platforms, and using blogs, social media tools, and promotional tools to engage customers (W. Glynn Mangolda, 2009).

### Digital Marketing over the Period

Pull digital marketing involves the user having to seek out and directly grab (or pull) the content while push digital marketing involve both the marketer (creator of the message) as well as the recipients (the user), the marketer having to send (push) the messages to the users (subscribers) in order for the message to be received (Morozan, Enache, & Vechiu, 2009). Few examples of opportunity for marketing through digital media are shared in following:

- **Banner Ads and Smart Banner Ads:** The first type of Internet advertising was the classic banner ad (text or image boxes that appear on a Web site linking them to the advertiser's site). When banner ads first appeared, they were well received as a novelty. In 1996, about 7% of Internet users were clicking on banner ads; however, by 2001, the response rate had

plummeted to 0.5%. Most recently, research has shown that Internet users' eyes have become so accustomed to seeing banner ads integrated into a website, that the likelihood of a busy Internet user actually noticing a banner ad was only 50%. In addition, only 11% of Internet users who actually noticed the banner ads could remember the advertisement and what it was promoting without any assistance. However, one recent study suggests that if a banner ad is presented in a forced scenario, a roadblock to further viewing, Internet users will view the banner ad and click on it (Morozan, Enache, & Vechiu, 2009).

- Browser Ads: an advertisement that pays the viewer to watch it. Browser ads are not widely used because they are expensive to implement. In addition to the initial advertisement, the advertiser must pay the consumer. Consequently, these ads are increasing in rarity and have all but disappeared (Morozan, Enache, & Vechiu, 2009).
- Unsolicited (i.e. "Spam") and Solicited Commercial E-mail Advertising: while most business-to-consumer commercial e-mails are massively distributed and unwanted (disparagingly referred to as "Spam"), some commercial e-mail advertisements are sent at the request of customers who ask to be informed. In parallel with this are a great number of business-to-business solicited e-mail advertisements routinely advising customers of product changes, availability, a delivery dates. These last commercial e-mail advertisements can be quite effective since they are being distributed to a consumers who have expressed an interest and solicited the sender for the information they contain (Morozan, Enache, & Vechiu, 2009).
- Interstitial (i.e. "Pop-Up") Ads: the fourth and most controversial Internet advertisement type is the interstitial ("Pop-Up") ad. Interstitial ads are advertisements that pop-up between changes on a Web page. These ads effectively force the Internet user to view them by appearing on the screen before they can be deleted, or it simply minimize themselves in the operating system toolbar until the advertisements are maximized and deleted. A recent Internet survey by the NUA found that 78% of respondents found pop-up ads to be "very annoying," while only 49% of respondents found banner ads to be "very annoying." (Morozan, Enache, & Vechiu, 2009)
- Sponsorship Ads: the fifth type of Internet advertising, sponsorship ads, usually take place when a specific advertiser sponsors the content of another company's website (Morozan, Enache, & Vechiu, 2009).
- Rich Media Enhancements: these advertisements do not fit into the category of Internet advertisements types in that they are a variation of existing types. By definition, they are advertisements that support "Rich Media" capabilities, such as HTML, Flash, and Java.<sup>26</sup> For example, these enhancements can be added to banner ads, interstitial ads, sponsorship ads, and can include flashing banner ads with sound or pop-up ads without borders that seemingly emerge out of the middle of the Internet user's computer screen. In research studies by DoubleClick, Inc., the use of rich media in Internet advertising was found to have increased 25% during the third quarter of the 2002 fiscal year; in addition, rich media Internet advertisements had an astounding click-through rate of 2.7% compared to .4% of non-rich media Internet advertisements. Finally, research has shown that rich media improves the odds that an Internet advertisement and the brand being advertised will be remembered by the Internet user, thus improving its effectiveness (Morozan, Enache, & Vechiu, 2009).
- Social media resulting marketers to realize the dramatic rise of social media is how brand pages can be leveraged to engage customers and enhance relationships with brands. Findings show that co-creation value, social value, usage intensity and brand strength influence customer engagement (CE) with brand pages. CE was also found to influence brand performance outcomes of CE behaviours directed at the brand page and brand loyalty. (Natalie Jane De Vries, August 2014)
- Changes in consumer behaviour require firms to rethink their marketing strategies in the digital domain. Based on a survey of marketing managers, this article shows that firms face internal and external pressures to adopt a digital presence in social media platforms. Firms' digital marketing engagement can be categorized according to perceived benefits and digital marketing usage. To improve digital marketing engagement, marketers must focus on relationship-based interactions with their customers. (Maria Teresa Pinheiro Melo Borges Tiagoa, 2014)
- Applications of Internet marketing strategy involve more than just e-commerce. Research indicates that firms are using the Internet for creating value chain efficiencies, reducing costs, and enhancing customer and channel relationships. (Fareena Sultan, 2004)

## Mobile Marketing

According to Morozan, Enache, & Vechiu (2009), operators in a well-developed market have to face the pressure of looking for new opportunities to engage customers and develop a positive earnings drift and mobile marketing could be the next solution in the business world. With the open but yet controlled and managed data field of the mobile operators, the traditional brands, content owners and marketing agencies are now able to use mobile networks for direct customer engagement. Since entertainment and advertising business are overlapping more and more, the idea that brand marketing should be budgeted for purchasing mobile content has gained ground lately. The old-fashioned pattern, which meant direct coverage to its customers no longer, seems efficient, while advertising agencies are interested in entertaining their customers with a challenging content. At the same time, mobile services providers are concerned with attracting more and more customers, all paying for their content. It will be each brand's concern to create catchy advertising content that subscriber would like to save, share with friends, turning it into something viral. Mobile marketing offers an important means for building up cooperation relationships, since specialists in mobile marketing use SMS text messages and MMS multimedia messages to get to their users by means of one of the most personal devices, namely the mobile phone. Nowadays, service providers can convert voice calls in small collections of data, which are later sent on the Internet, offering the same phone experience as traditional phone operators did, with no further investment in infrastructure (Morozan, Enache, & Vechiu, 2009).

There is perceived relative advantage (especially content), utility, and ease of use of mobile news are positively related to its adoption. The young adults' news consumption patterns and preferences, as well as media usage, all play a role in the adoption of mobile news. (Sylvia Chan-Olmsted, 2012)

Given the circumstances, the Internet will be our new phone, setting up a vast field for further business. Mobile phones have endless uses within the current socio-economical background, thanks to their technical advantages, while their providers incorporate as much entertainment, commercial and media options in their devices as possible (Morozan, Enache, & Vechiu, 2009).

## E-Commerce: An Emerging Opportunity in Digital Media

E-commerce is a fast emerging platform in digital media, which is getting bigger every day (The Nielsen Company, 2014). Trend shows that, over the last decade power has shifted from retailers to

consumers (LightCastle Partners, 2016). Consumers have also evolved to give rise to a digital sub-class who initially started using internet to have better visibility while purchasing.

E-commerce is considered as the business activities those are performed through internet. It may be full-fledged operation or a part there of (Azam, 2006). E-commerce activities may be exist either or in combination of the followings:

- Searching customers/producers/ sellers through internet.
- Communication for business made through internet.
- Selecting products /services through internet.
- Placing the order through internet.
- Making payments through internet or any other means.
- Delivery of the required products through internet, couriers or other means.
- Sales service through internet or other mean.

## Traditional Media Vs New Media

Although the overall media scenario has changed, but due the evolution of media it is important to differentiate between the traditional media and the new or emerging media. Traditional media includes all media that existed before internet and associated media technology, including broadcast media (television and radio) and print media technology (books, newspapers, outdoor etc.) (Lule, 2012).

The New media, which is also often, called digital media or emerging media includes media that is based on the internet and mobile phone platform. It includes social media, websites, online entertainment, gaming, communication and business options dependent on the internet and mobile technology. However, it must be mentioned here due to a range of socio economic and political reasons, the elements of traditional media still exist quite strongly though the way it used to exist might have changed (Lule, 2012).

However, it is also important to note that due to the rapid technological advancement, it should not come as a surprise to see some of these traditional media getting completely non-existent. In fact, there have been examples in the recent time where new media has completely taken over very popular traditional media (Capgemini Consulting, 2013). Examples of such would be:

- Over the last two decades, digital photography has taken over film-based photography completely. Initially it was the discovery of digital camera that contributed to this but finally it was mobile phone based photography

and videography that contributed to the film based photography era, which existed for few hundred years. Ease of access, low cost and ease of sharing made digital photography a mass communication tool. The classical case of Kodak must be mentioned here. Kodak was a leading producer of camera films and film based camera. Though they played a large role in the invention of digital camera but waited too long to pursue the new technology. With an attempt to protect their film based photography market they missed the opportunities that digital photography created. This strategic failure was the direct cause of Kodak's decline over the decade and digital technology destroyed the film-based model of Kodak.

- In 2015, the publicly traded newspaper in United States saw a decline of 8% in advertising revenue combining print and digital platform. However, the advertising spending only on digital media saw a growth of 20% compared to previous year with total digital advertising expenditure of US\$ 60 billion. As a result, digitally published newspaper started seeing a profit and growth.

However, there are successful examples how companies have turned these threats into opportunities by adaptation of new technology into their existing systems. For example:

- Print subscribers to The New York Times and The International New York Times get free access to NYTimes.com, which is the online version of this well reputed publication along with the access to NY Times applications that are designed considering its readers and are available in their online platform. This has not only helped them to continue having loyal and sustained print subscribers but also create new subscribers who are more used to these new technologies.
- The Daily Prothom Alo one of the leading newspaper of Bangladesh was first published on 4 November 1998. The circulation of the newspaper grew from a primary circulation of 42,000 to a circulation of half a million of copies. However, the management was quick to realize the potential of digital media and launched its digital version initially in 1999 and with a major relaunch in 2008. This online version is currently accessed by 1.6 million visitors from 200 different countries with 60 million pageview per month. The online portal of The Prothom Alo ([www.prothom-alo.com](http://www.prothom-alo.com)) is the number one Bangladeshi website in the world and continues to generate revenue and to add value to the business objectives of the group.

## Marketing Strategy for Digital Media

Usually there are two different kind of marketing communication strategies followed within the Digital Media sphere- pull and push marketing strategy. Pull marketing strategy involves the user having to seek out and directly pull or grab the content while the Push marketing strategy involves both the marketer and recipients but the marketer having to push the message to the users in order for the message to be received.

Pull digital marketing involves the user having to seek out and directly grab (or pull) the content while push digital marketing involve both the marketer (creator of the message) as well as the recipients (the user), the marketer having to send (push) the messages to the users (subscribers) in order for the message to be received. (Morozan, Enache, & Vechiu, 2009)

Each of the two types of digital marketing mentioned above leads to different variants. Within pull marketing category, blog marketing, advertising and personal interactive television, and smart ads are worth mentioning, whereas mobile marketing, text-messaging marketing, multimedia marketing and broadcasting of the latest news go into the push marketing category. (Morozan, Enache, & Vechiu, 2009)

Some key features of pull and push marketing strategies for the digital media are outlined below:

**TABLE 1: CHARACTERISTICS OF PULL AND PUSH MARKETING STRATEGY**

	Pull Marketing	Push Marketing
1.	User seeks out and marketer provides the content	Marketer push forward the message to the recipient
2.	Content is as per the active interest of the user	Content is as per the passive interest of the user
3.	An emerging concept in digital media	A traditional concept in digital media

Traditionally push marketing was a key characteristic in digital and other media (television, radio, press etc.) and was replicated for the digital media. However, trend is shifting quick towards a pull communication. One of the most popular online activity is search. Google, Yahoo and other search engines have created opportunity for marketers to be present with their services and products when consumers pull information of their area of interest.

‘Pran-RFL Group’, which is one of the largest FMCG companies in the country, uses both push and pull strategies for the digital media. In different websites such as <http://www.jagonews24.com/> they have space for fixed banner advertisements. Regardless of the visitor, the banner is displayed and is an example of push marketing. The same company has its official Facebook page, where users first like their page and then can get contents according to the area of their interest. Thus, the company is using a pull marketing strategy to reach its audience.

In the recent development of advertisements in digital media, the demarcation between the push and pull marketing is getting indistinct. This is particularly visible in social media platforms like Facebook. Currently if a marketer pushes a content in social media, audience can show their active interest by different opinion sharing options in the platform. One of the largest hair care brands, Dove in Bangladesh, recently pushed content with their proposition- ‘For softer, smoother, more glowing skin, use Dove! Now at taka 35 only!’ It was then promoted to the target audience, which is considered a consumer pool of the brand. Within a short time, it received approximately 16,000 likes, 25 shares and 81 comments. Therefore, though it was a push marketing from the company, the interaction with the users makes it a pull content in nature.

- This mixed strategy of pull-push marketing digital media is holding the marketers responsible to take some new approach:
- Marketers are taking an approach to avoid being too direct with the proposition or core communication message. On the contrary, marketers are making an effort to bundle communication messages that can cater to the need and interest of a range of audience within a selected target group. For example, during month of Ramadan, Closeup, one of the largest toothpaste brands in Bangladesh sent out a post in their Facebook page, ‘Start the day fresh and with a smile and 12 hours of fresh breath confidence! Ramadan Mubarak!’ If we observe the content, staying with fresh breath for 12 hours is a challenge during Ramadan and is a point of interest for the audience. They also prepared a customized Facebook post reference following. The content received approximately 93,000 likes, 552 shares and 280 comments.
- Usually for the traditional media, one set of creative design for the advertisement or promotional campaign works for a long time. However, due to the fast changing nature of the digital media content and

audience is interest, a range of fast changing creative works required for the digital media. As a result, the marketers need to bring in new content in a regular interval to maintain the relationship with the audience.

- As the Digital Media provides the opportunity, marketers are making an attempt to retest and conduct mid-evaluation of campaigns as a measure of taking corrective actions. This helps to deliver better results through pull and push marketing initiatives

## Conclusion

Therefore, it is seen that digital media has some distinct characteristics and opportunities compared to other media. There are ways through which digital media can contribute to marketing communication strategy which can help brands reach consumers in a way relevant, personal and cost effective.

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