

A VIEWPOINT ON DIGITAL MARKETING AND USAGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLS DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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ABSTRACT

In this article, the authors will focus on the usage of digital marketing and social media channels during the COVID-19 pandemic. This is a viewpoint-based article in which authors referred to different research articles focused on the use of social media channels and digital marketing by the industries and organizations during COVID-19. It can be said that digital marketing played an important role in improving business efficiency, effectiveness, two-way communication with the customers, spreading awareness and information, but on the other side, digital marketing also created a panic among individuals. Social media tools developed an infodemic in which a lot of unnecessary information has been shared with the customers. To a more considerable extent, social media and digital are more a boon rather than a bane during the pandemic time.

Keywords: Digital Marketing, Social Media tools, Marketing, Viewpoint, COVID-19.

DIGITAL MARKETING

Digital marketing is a type of online marketing in which marketers use internet tools in branding, product promotion, increasing brand awareness, and stimulating buying behavior. During COVID-19, when all types of traditional marketing were either on hold or too expensive, digital marketing came up as an effective solution. Digital marketing not only saved the cost of the marketer but it is also increased the reach of the company in the global market. The companies can connect with customers in the worldwide market since the time of their inception, and they can exchange helpful information. Digital marketing also provided an opportunity for two-way communication between the customer and the company because the customer can write their comments and express their opinions on digital marketing platforms. Digital marketing has primarily two main components, i.e., online and offline marketing. The components of digital online marketing are search engine optimization, search engine marketing, content marketing, pay-per-click advertising, social media marketing, affiliate marketing, and email marketing. The components of offline digital marketing are radio marketing, television marketing, and phone marketing. (Tien, et al., 2020)

Usage of Digital Marketing and Social Media Tools During Covid-19

Tien et al. (2020) have discussed the role of digital marketing and its emergence in Vietnam during COVID-19.

Digital marketing plays an essential role in business as it helps in improving business efficiency, provides competition to all businesses, and it is more economical in achieving the goals and objectives of the organization (Tien, et al., 2020). The researchers have argued that in Vietnam, people are spending more time on the internet and social media networks. Digital marketing helps brands to come more closer to the customers through effective communication channels. Prihadini et al. (2020) also argued about the usage of digital marketing in enhancing the marketing opportunities of universities during the COVID-19 pandemic and admission of new students. The study highlighted the fact the digital marketing plays an essential role in promoting private universities and admitting more students to those universities. The COVID-19 time taught the universities that they need IT-enabled staff for effective functioning (Prihadini, et al., 2020). The universities are focusing on digital marketing, but they need more IT experts for effective functioning.

Habes et al. (2020) argued about the emergence of digital marketing in lowering the burden of the healthcare industry. The researchers have argued that the COVID-19 pandemic has affected health care and other institutions in Jordan and worldwide (Habes, et al., 2020). During this situation, digital marketing will play a decisive role in spreading information about healthcare services and providing a solution as well. The findings of the study suggest that social media advertising played a decisive role in information sharing, healthcare advertising, and awareness during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is not possible to spread awareness with traditional sources. Social media advertising created awareness among a mass audience. The social media tools like Facebook and Twitter also helped in sharing the procedures of making PPE kits. These social media tools helped in reducing the shortage of PPE kits around the world. Social media tools are even helping Start-up businesses in boosting their business through several social media apps like Zoom, Telegram, Microsoft Team, and Google Meet etc. (Susanto, et al., 2021).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, SMEs are facing a tough time, and many of them are out of cash. The owners/managers of SMEs cannot rely on traditional marketing channels, and they have very few financial resources as well (Syaifullah, et al., 2021). Social media marketing tools like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Whatsapp played a decisive role for SMEs. These tools helped the SMEs in increasing sales, building customer relationships, improving creativity and innovation. Without social media tools and digital marketing, it would have been very costly and next to impossible for SMEs to reach customers at a global level during the pandemic situation. Various researchers have argued about the importance of digitization in SMEs (Kumar, et al., 2020; Kumar & Ayedee, 2021) as it helps them in reaching the goals of sustainability (Kumar & Ayedee, 2019) , but this COVID time proves the worth of social media marketing and another type of internet marketing for SMEs (Kumar & Ayedee, 2018; Kumar & Pandey, 2018). SMEs are overcoming various challenges and adopting social media tools for their marketing. During crisis time, institutes and organizations are looking for legitimate sources for effective dialogical communication with their customers. Through digital media channels, organizations can remain connected with their customers through websites, blogs, email, video sharing, and content sharing, etc. (Camilleri, 2020). Digital media communication improves both efficiency and effectiveness of the organizations in lesser time. These tools help in branding as well.

NEGATIVE IMPACT

There is another side to the coin as well. Communication through social media marketing tools also created a panic among the public. The pandemic time has observed information infodemic. Facebook, as an excellent social media tool, is spreading panic among the individuals by the flow of information about the COVID-19 outbreak. All the information about the COVID outbreak is not valid, so it is spreading fear and panic in the individuals (Ahmad & Murad, 2020). The news flow on social media is also creating a sense of panic buying in the customers. The customers are watching different types of news of COVID-19 outflow on the social media channels. They are doing panic buying because they think that after some time, nothing will be available to purchase in the market. In many countries, customers 100% believe the information posted on social media channels (Naeem, 2021). Though social media channels are a good source of information, all the information is not valid. People often float exaggerating news about COVID-19, and it is necessary to filter such communication at the time of inception only.

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