

Volume 25, Special Issue

Print ISSN: 1099 -9264

Online ISSN: 1939-4675

IMPACT OF DIGITAL MARKETING ON BUSINESS PERFORMANCE DURING COVID 19

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the impact of digital marketing on firms and businesses' performance during this time of the coronavirus pandemic. Marketing in the business sector relies on advertising to get customers for their products. During this time, a pandemic, COVID 19, has hit the world, making digital marketing the best marketing channel for many firms. Coronavirus is a global pandemic that has disrupted the operations of many institutions, including the business sector. COVID 19 has made digital marketing the only option for most businesses to market their products and services as traveling, concerts, and other forms of marketing that involve gatherings and social interaction were stopped due to coronavirus. The pandemic has affected business operations, and for this reason, the study intends to explore digital marketing impact during COVID 19.

Keywords: Digital Marketing, COVID 19, Business Performance, Saudi Arabia

INTRODUCTION

Marketing is critical as it improves businesses' performance by increasing sales by attracting more potential customers through advertising. Marketing uses posters, billboards, concerts, shows, and flyers. COVID 19 is a global pandemic that has brought both health and economic crisis worldwide. The pandemic was first experienced in December 2019 in China, and by early 2020, it had started spreading to other countries, including the United States of America, European countries, and African countries. The disease is highly contagious and can be easily spread from one person to another. The nature of the virus and its spread makes it difficult for countries with reported cases to perform their everyday activities; thus, the disease's emergence has caused a severe economic crisis to most countries worldwide (Borjas, 2020). The travel and social gathering ban, which is one of the ways to limit the spread of the virus, is one aspect that made digital marketing take over as most businesses opted to do their marketing online.

Regulations such as Social distancing that the World Health Organization suggested regulating the spread of COVID 19 mean that people could not gather anywhere regardless of what they might be doing. The rule required people to keep distancing in whatever situation. This rule meant that no more shows and concerts for marketing purposes and advertising. Also, companies and other businesses had to lay off some employees to give room for social distancing. Most firms opted for digital marketing as it requires few people, if not one, to maintain the online platforms meant for marketing purposes. The firm can lay off some of the marketing employees who were not working at the moment and reduce the wage bill and give room for social distancing, which requires only a few staff at the workplace. Digital marketing can also be done at the comfort of your house, provided there is a stable network, thus promoting the rule of social distancing (Gil et al., 2020).

COVID 19 has adversely affected the economy, whereas digital marketing has positively impacted the economy during the pandemic. It has promoted advertising and increasing sales that had been affected by the pandemic. The digital market has given customers an excellent experience in the entire world during this time of the pandemic. Customers can now access

information concerning the products they may be interested in at the comfort of their houses. Online customers also have a reason to smile as marketing is currently being done online, a medium where they do their transactions (Nair, 2011).

Today digital marketing is seen everywhere on the internet. For example, most firms have created video ads for advertising on YouTube that always pops up whenever they visit YouTube sites. Companies also have YouTube channels where they post videos that promote the company's products and services. The majority of firms today have websites that contain all the information comprising the firm, the goods/services they provide, and where they are located (Assaad & Jorge, 2013). One can access a firm's information at the comfort of his house, and some of these firms today deliver their products upon ordering.

The study will facilitate a better understanding of digital marketing impact during COVID 19. The pandemic has made many businesses use digital marketing in advertising. This has made the firm continue its operations despite the regulations to prevent the coronavirus spread (Borjas, 2020). The study intends to identify how this digital marketing has helped promote marketing and advertising during the pandemic despite the corona virus's severe conditions.

COVID 19, also referred to as coronavirus, is a global pandemic that originated from china in December 2019. The virus has spread across the world, affecting many businesses' operations in marketing as the companies can no longer do advertisements as before (Borjas, 2020). Regulations such as social distancing and limitations on travel have forced many companies to adopt digital marketing, which best suits the rules. Digital marketing does not require gatherings or trips, as it only needs a good network and favourable media platforms (Varadarajan & Yadav, 2019). Digital marketing has highly boosted marketing during this pandemic. COVID 19 has caused an economic crisis to many countries, if not all, across the world. The financial crisis has come from the restrictions to prevent the virus's spread, which does not favour economic activities. The economic crisis has been a big blow to business firms in many ways, ranging from staff management, marketing, and even paying revenue and taxes to the government and other authorities.

Digital marketing is being used by most businesses in their marketing operations today. Most companies adopted this form of marketing after the emergence of COVID 19 that affected the other forms of marketing, which involved traveling and gatherings. Digital marketing has proved to be effective in advertising because of the advanced technology and the increased use of social media platforms by people worldwide. A good percentage of people of all ages ranging from teenagers, young adults, and older adults, spend most of their time on the internet. In most cases, social media platforms where they do their communications and post pictures and other information (Gil et al., 2020). The increased use of the internet and social media platforms has been a significant boost to digital marketing. Digital marketing uses the internet and social media platforms to advertise and market their products. Firms today have Facebook pages and accounts, Twitter handles, Instagram pages, LinkedIn accounts and pages, and WhatsApp groups mainly meant for advertising their products. The companies employ someone to manage these social media platforms. Their primary role is to invite people to access these social media platforms linked to the companies, such as the company's Facebook page (Zhang et al., 2017). The marketer posts adverts that promote the firm's products/services, which all the people follow following the company's profile on the given social media platforms.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature review discusses existing information concerning digital marketing. The current information to be addressed in this research includes; customers' experience, online customer experience, the economic impact of COVID 19, and current trends in digital marketing. Digital marketing is being used by most businesses in their marketing operations today (Varadarajan & Yadav, 2019). Most companies adopted this form of marketing after the

emergence of COVID 19 that affected the other forms of marketing, which involved traveling and gatherings. Digital marketing has proved to be effective in advertising because of the advanced technology and the increased use of social media platforms by people worldwide (Kalaiganam & Kushwaha, 2018). A good percentage of people of all ages ranging from teenagers, young adults, and older adults, spend most of their time on the internet. In most cases, social media platforms where they do their communications and post pictures and other information (Zhang et al., 2017). The increased use of the internet and social media platforms has been a significant boost to digital marketing. Digital marketing uses the internet and social media platforms to advertise and market their products.

The digital market has given customers an excellent experience in the entire world during this pandemic. Customers can now access information concerning the products they may be interested in at the comfort of their houses. Online customers also have a reason to smile as marketing is currently being done online, a medium where they do their transactions. Online customers can now make wise decisions when making their purchases through online platforms (Nair, 2011). On the other hand, the economy has been affected by both COVID 19 and digital marketing in several ways. COVID 19 has negatively affected the economy, while digital marketing has positively impacted the economy during the pandemic. It has promoted advertising and increasing sales that had been affected by the pandemic.

Customer Experience

Digital marketing has brought a new experience to customers who used other marketing forms where advertisements were done through posters, billboards, concerts, and shows. Advancement in technology is the mother of digital marketing. Initially, there was no digital marketing, and customers were used to other marketing forms (Nair, 2011). Advancement in technology gave rise to social media platforms that are being used everywhere in the world today. Marketing today is being done through the internet, where business advertises their products and services through social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram. This has been an excellent experience for customers as they can now access information about their favourite products and services at their rooms' comfort (Zhang et al., 2017). Digital marketing, on the other hand, has promoted businesses as the costs of advertisements are reduced. This form of marketing reaches a broader coverage as so many people worldwide are using social media.

Online Customer Experience

Digital marketing now gives online customers a reason to smile as they can access information about products and services they may need on the internet. These online customers now spend much of their time online. Therefore, online advertising products and services give these customers an excellent opportunity to explore products and services they may need to make informed decisions (Nair, 2011). Digital marketing is an incredible experience for online customers as it makes them go for the best products at reasonable prices and avoid impulse buying. Marketing today is being done through the internet, where business advertises their products and services through social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram. This has been an excellent experience for customers as they can now access information about their favourite products and services at their rooms' comfort. Digital marketing, on the other hand, has promoted businesses as the costs of advertisements are reduced (Felix et al., 2016). This form of marketing reaches a broader coverage as so many people worldwide are using social media.

Economic Impact of COVID 19 and Digital Marketing

COVID 19 has caused an economic crisis to many countries, if not all, across the world. The financial crisis has come from the restrictions to prevent the virus's spread, which does not favour economic activities. The ban on air travel that lasted for almost nine months affected international trade as businesses across different countries could not take place (Berisha, 2020). People travel from one country to the other to engage in business activities and do marketing, advertisements, and promotions of their goods and services. Because of the ban and restrictions on travel, people could not travel and market/promote their companies' goods and services. This was a big blow to marketing, and the only solution was digital marketing, which does not require traveling from one place to another.

Traveling within the country was also restricted as there was a partial lockdown where people could not move during some hours. The lockdown meant people should stay indoors and avoid traveling and getting out of their houses during some hours (Berisha, 2020). This lockdown marketing was mainly affected as only people performing essential services could move freely to their workplaces. Some businesses continued operating though under strict rules. For this reason, digital marketing was the only solution to their marketing needs as this mode of marketing cannot bridge any COVID 19 rules and regulations. Ban and restriction on travels meant promoters and agents would not move from one place to another to market, advertise, and promote their companies' products and services, thus resolving digital marketing.

Social distancing is one of the rules and regulations that the World Health Organization put in place to regulate the spread of COVID 19. This means that people could not gather in one place, regardless of what they might be doing. The rule required people to keep distancing in whatever situation (Baker et al., 2020). This rule meant that no more shows and concerts for marketing purposes and advertising. Also, companies and other businesses had to lay off some employees to give room for social distancing. Most firms opted for digital marketing as it requires few people, if not one, to maintain the online platforms meant for marketing purposes. The firm can lay off some of the marketing employees who were not working at the moment and reduce the wage bill and give room for social distancing, which requires only a few staff at the workplace. Digital marketing can also be done at the comfort of your house, provided a stable network, thus promoting social distancing.

COVID 19 saw reduced income among many people, as most people lost jobs and declined their purchasing power (Baker et al., 2020). This led to the business making low profits as customers could not buy products as before. The restrictions on movement and traveling also made companies not make as many sales as before. The reduced income by business firms and companies made them resolve cheaper ways to reduce costs and maximize profits. Digital marketing was one of the best remedies to cut costs and maximize profits as the marketing mode is less expensive than other advertising methods. It also requires fewer people or even one person to manage the online marketing platforms, thus saving on salaries and wages that could have been paid off to many employees employed to carry out marketing services. Digital marketing also reaches a wide range of potential customers across the world. Today, many people are doing most of their things online due to advanced technology and the availability of internet services almost everywhere in the world (Zhang et al., 2017).

Current Trends in Digital Marketing

Digital marketing has made a significant step in the current world. It is being used almost everywhere by most business firms because of advanced technology, increased use of technology and access to technology and the internet, and a cheaper and reliable advertising mode. The emergence of social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, WeChat, WhatsApp, and telegram has boosted digital marketing. Firms today have Facebook pages and accounts, Twitter handles, Instagram pages, LinkedIn accounts and pages, and WhatsApp groups mainly meant for advertising their products (Borjas, 2020). The companies employ someone to manage these social media platforms. Their primary role is

to invite people to access these social media platforms linked to the companies, such as the company's Facebook page (Felix et al., 2016). The marketer posts adverts that promote the firm's products services, which all the people follow following the company's profile on the given social media platforms.

Today digital marketing is seen everywhere on the internet. For example, most firms have created video ads for advertising on YouTube that always pops up whenever they visit YouTube sites. Companies also have YouTube channels where they post videos that promote the company's products and services. The majority of firms today have websites that contain all the information comprising the firm, the goods/services they provide, and where they are located. One can access information concerning a given firm at the comfort of his house, and even some of these firms today deliver their products once ordered (Assaad & Jorge, 2013). Digital marketing is widespread today and has promoted businesses in many ways ranging from increasing sales to making work more comfortable with marketing, advertising, and promotions.

METHODOLOGY

The research was carried out through an online survey where the people's views were taken through an online poll. Questionnaires designed with questions that suited the study objectives were randomly sent to individuals who responded, and the responses were recorded down and analyzed. The study targeted business firms who are the key people in these studies as they are the majority who involve themselves in marketing activities through advertising. The objective was to determine the impact of digital marketing on their marketing during the COVID 19 pandemic period.

Data Collection

This study's primary data collection methods were questionnaires, interview guides, and the internet. The questionnaires had questions designed to respond to the impact of digital marketing during the COVID 19 pandemic. These questionnaires were distributed online through polls conducted online and answered by random people willing to participate in the study. The interview guides were designed and distributed to online interviewers who responded appropriately, and the information was recorded for analysis and interpretation. The internet played a significant role in this study as entirely everything relied on the internet, as the survey aimed at providing data for this data was also conducted online. The internet also provides information about the current trend taken by businesses in digital marketing. The information found on the internet concerning digital marketing and COVID 19 was vital in providing data for this study.

An online survey was conducted during the main study. A pilot test was done to test the reliability of the tools for collecting data. During the main research, online interviews were done with business owners, managers, and marketing directors of different business firms. Questionnaires were also distributed to some business people, managers, and marketing directors of some business firms. The questionnaires were distributed through online platforms.

Target Population

The study targeted business firms who are the key people in these studies as they are the majority who involve themselves in marketing activities through advertising. The objective was to determine the impact of digital marketing on their marketing during the COVID 19 pandemic period. The study also targeted other firms and individuals who engage in marketing activities. Marketing is done by several people and firms and makes their products and services known to people who may happen to be potential customers. Marketing also targets to increase the sales

of a given product by getting more clients. The study utilized responses from 100 respondents from online surveys.

RESULTS

An online survey was conducted among 100 respondents to determine their views on the impact of digital marketing on business performance during this period of COVID 19. From the online survey, which used questionnaires and interviews, 80 respondents out of the 100 respondents provided information that suggested that digital marketing is being widely used during this period of COVID 19. It has boosted the performance of most businesses during this period of the pandemic. 12 respondents out of the 100 respondents said digital marketing has had no impact on business performance during the period of the pandemic as the general performance of the business was low despite using digital marketing. 8 of the 100 respondents did not understand the impact of digital marketing during the pandemic as they were not using this type of marketing in advertising their products.

Data Analysis

Data from the questionnaires and interviews were assembled and analysed qualitatively. 80% of the respondents provided information that suggested that digital marketing had improved businesses' performance during this period of COVID 19. 12% of the respondents said digital marketing has no impact on the businesses' performance during this period of COVID 19, while 8% were had no much information about the Impact of COVID 19 on the businesses' performance during the pandemic. 80 % of the population refers to the largest number of people. Hence, it's evident that many business firms are using digital marketing during this period of COVID 19, and this form of marketing has improved these businesses' performance.

FINDINGS

The study found out that many firms are using digital marketing during this period of the pandemic. Many firms have resolved to digital marketing because of the rules to regulate the coronavirus's spread that does not favour other marketing modes, thus rendering digital marketing the best option for their marketing needs. Most firms opted for digital marketing as it requires few people, if not one, to maintain the online platforms meant for marketing purposes. The firm can lay off some of the marketing employees who were not working at the moment and reduce the wage bill and give room for social distancing, which requires only a few staff at the workplace. Digital marketing can also be done at the comfort of your house, provided a stable network, thus promoting social distancing.

DISCUSSION

Digital marketing has made a significant step in the current world. It is being used almost everywhere by most business firms because of advanced technology, increased use of technology and access to technology and the internet, and a cheaper and reliable advertising mode. The emergence of social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, You tube, WeChat, Whatsapp, and telegram has boosted digital marketing. COVID 19 has caused an economic crisis to many countries, if not all, across the world. The economic crisis has come from the restrictions to prevent the virus's spread, which does not favor economic activities (Berisha, 2020). The ban on air travel that lasted for almost nine months affected international trade as businesses across different countries could not occur. People travel from one country to the other to engage in business activities and do marketing, advertisements, and promotions of their goods and services. Still, because of the ban and

restrictions on travel, people could not travel and market/promote their companies' goods and services. This was a big blow to marketing, and the only solution was digital marketing, which does not require traveling from one place to another.

Traveling within the country was also restricted as there was a partial lockdown where people could not move during some hours. The lockdown meant people should stay indoors and avoid traveling and getting out of their houses during some hours (Berisha, 2020). This lockdown marketing was mainly affected as only people performing essential services could move freely to their job places. Some businesses continued operating though under strict rules. For this reason, digital marketing was the only solution to their marketing needs as this mode of marketing cannot bridge any COVID 19 rules and regulations. Ban and restriction on travels meant promoters and agents would not move from one place to another to market, advertise, and promote their companies' products and services, thus resolving digital marketing.

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Practical Implications

Firms today have Facebook pages and accounts, Twitter handles, Instagram pages, LinkedIn accounts and pages, and WhatsApp groups mainly meant for advertising their products. The companies employ someone to manage these social media platforms. Their primary role is to invite people to access these social media platforms linked to the companies, such as the company's Facebook page (Felix et al., 2016). The marketer posts adverts that promote the firm's products services, which all the people follow following the profile of the company on the given social media platforms.

Today digital marketing is seen everywhere on the internet. For example, most firms have created video ads for advertising on YouTube that always pops up whenever they visit YouTube sites (Rettie, 2017). Companies also have YouTube channels where they post videos that promote the company's products and services. The majority of firms today have websites that contain all the information, including the firm, the goods/services they provide, and where they are located. One can now access information concerning a given firm at the comfort of his house, and even some of these firms today deliver their products once ordered (Assaad & Jorge,

2013). Digital marketing is widespread today and has promoted businesses in many ways ranging from increasing sales to making work easier for marketing, advertising, and promotions.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The study had several limitations, which may make the findings not accurate. The primary end of the course is that data collection was carried out through the internet, making the data's validity questionable. The business targeted businesses, but because data collection was being done over the internet, it was difficult to ascertain whether one was a business person or not or whether one was involved in business activities. Some of the respondents must have given wrong information that does not reflect the reality on the ground. More reliable data would have been achieved if the interviews were conducted on a face-to-face basis and not online. The survey polls may have also produced unreliable data as some people who participated in the survey may have just decided to give false information intentionally. The time to carry out the study was also limited, limiting the researcher from collecting enough data and scrutinizing the data well to achieve desirable results.

Improving future related research and ensure that more reliable data is achieved, the study should be conducted manually without online survey polls. This will ensure that the researcher gets more reliable data that gives more accurate findings—interacting with the respondent, one-on-one limits providing incorrect details and information than interacting with the respondents over the internet. The time for carrying out the research should also be enough to ensure that the researcher is not limited in time to carry out his/her study.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors acknowledge the Deanship of Scientific Research at King Faisal University for the financial support under Nasher Track (Grant No. NA00067). The corresponding author for the article “Impact of digital marketing on business performance during covid 19 ” Mansour Alyahya, Department of Management, College of Business, King Faisal University, Al-Ahsa-31982, Saudi Arabia; malyahya@kfu.edu.sa

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