

E-MARKETING: CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

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Abstract :

E-marketing means using digital technologies to help to sell your goods or services. These technologies are a valuable complement to traditional marketing methods, whatever the size of your company or your business model. The basics of marketing remain the same, which is creating a strategy to deliver the right messages to the right people but what has changed is the number of options you have. Though businesses continue to make use of traditional marketing methods, such as advertising, direct mail and PR, E-marketing adds a whole new element to the marketing mix. Many businesses are producing great results with e-marketing and its flexible and cost-effective nature makes it particularly suitable for small businesses.

This paper will define the importance of e-marketing, examine how e-marketing helps businesses to reach their customers, highlight some of the most important advantages and disadvantages of e-marketing and also present the unique challenges and opportunities of e-marketing.

Key words: *Internet, Digital technologies, E-Marketing, E-Commerce.*

INTRODUCTION

The terms E-marketing, Internet marketing and online marketing are frequently interchanged and can often be considered synonymous. Electronic commerce and E-Marketing have become popular as internet access is becoming more widely available and used. Over one third of consumers who have internet access in their homes report using the internet to make purchases. The development of e-marketing has been one of the most important and influential trends in the field of business, marketing and information Technology over the past decade. It has revolutionized the manner in which certain businesses market their products and the advent of social media offers the potential to revolutionize the manner in which businesses and consumers interact in the future.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

1. To understand the need and importance of E-Marketing for today's businesses.
2. To highlight the advantages and disadvantages of e-marketing.
3. To present the challenges of e-marketing and solutions for them.
4. To outline the impact of e-marketing upon businesses.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

This study is based on Secondary data collected from books, journals, research paper, newspapers and related websites.

IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

Internet marketing is becoming a trend in every business sector, and gradually plays a truly important role in any company's multi-channel marketing strategy. However, the mechanics of using e-marketing in order to maximise its benefits to businesses is a very important element for its success. The Internet also provides new methods to improve customer services and is considered as the most cost-effective marketing tool as it reduces paper works and number of staff.

In this paper, we try to enhance the awareness of the E-marketing and highlight its need for businesses.

CONCEPT OF E-MARKETING

E-Marketing or electronic marketing refers to the application of marketing principles and techniques via electronic media and more specifically the Internet. E-Marketing is the process of marketing a brand using the Internet. It includes both direct response marketing and indirect marketing elements and uses a range of technologies to help connect businesses to their customers. E-Marketing encompasses all the activities a business conducts via the worldwide web with the aim of attracting new business, retaining current business and developing its brand identity.

OBJECTIVES OF E-MARKETING

E-marketing objectives define what a firm want to achieve through your e-marketing campaign. They set the reasons why a business wants to go online and allows estimating and monitoring the progress of online marketing activities. They also provide an incentive to focus on critical areas and formulate strategies to help achieve intended objectives.

Different businesses may develop different e-marketing objectives depending on their individual circumstances. A useful framework for developing effective e-marketing objectives is the five S's framework, which includes:

1. Sell – using the internet to sell products and services
2. Serve – using the internet to serve customers
3. Speak – using the internet to communicate with customers (both existing and potential)
4. Save – using the internet to save/ reduce cost
5. Sizzle – using the internet to build brand identity

When setting your e-marketing objectives, you need to make sure that they are SMART:

- Specific – specify what is to be achieved.
- Measureable – expressed in measurable terms such as key performance indicators, outcomes, numbers, percentage, dollars, etc.
- Action-oriented – state which actions need to be taken and who will take them.
- Realistic – achievable with the resources available.
- Time Bound – establish specified time frames.

Eg: To reduce the annual cost of direct marketing by 20% through e-mail marketing, To improve brand awareness, brand favourability and purchase intent by surveying 300 online customers each month.

IMPORTANCE OF E-MARKETING

E-marketing gives businesses of any size access to the mass market at an affordable price and, unlike TV or print advertising, it allows for truly personalized marketing. Specific benefits of e-marketing include:

Global reach: A website can reach anyone in the world who has internet access. This allows you to find new markets and compete globally for only a small investment.

Lower cost: A properly planned and effectively targeted e-marketing campaign can reach the right customers at a much lower cost than traditional marketing methods.

Measurable results: E-marketing makes it easier to measure the results of a campaign. You can obtain detailed information about customers' responses to your advertising.

24x7 presence: Through a website, customers can find out about your products at any time which results in

24x7 presence.

Personalization: More targeted offers can be directed at customers if your customer database is linked to your website. The more they buy from you, the more you can refine your customer profile and market effectively to them.

One-to-one marketing: E-marketing lets you reach people who want to know about your products and services instantly. Combine this with the personalized aspect of e-marketing, and you can create very powerful, targeted campaigns.

More interesting campaigns: E-marketing lets you create interactive campaigns using music, graphics and videos. You could send your customers a game or a quiz or whatever you think will interest them.

Better conversion rate: In e-marketing, the customers are only ever a few clicks away from completing a purchase. Unlike other media which require people to get up and make a phone call, post a letter or go to a shop, e-marketing is seamless.

High mobility: Nowadays customers can access internet through their mobile phones, pads and laptops wherever they go which provides high mobility to e-marketing.

MERITS OF E-MARKETING

The following are the merits of e-marketing:

1. Quick availability of information.
2. It helps in saving money for companies as e-marketing costs less.
3. Reduces the gap between big and small companies, thus increasing competition and hence benefiting customers.
4. Presence on the Internet can help the expansion of the company from a local market to national and international markets at the same time, offering almost infinite expanding possibilities.
5. Since the response is measurable, companies can know if their campaign is successful or not and to what extent.
6. High mobility and all-time access to required information makes it convenient for customers to make purchases.

DEMERITS OF E-MARKETING

The following are the merits of e-marketing:

1. Slow internet connection can cause distortions in communication with the customers.
2. Lack of touch and feel factor means that the customer cannot touch the merchandise and check it before purchase. Hence e-marketers are guaranteeing a specified period within which the product can be returned if customer is not satisfied.
3. Lack of trust on electronic methods of payment results in many users not purchasing products online. This has been circumvented by the cash on delivery option offered by e-marketers.
4. The chances of the customer being cheated are very high in e-marketing as there is no personal interaction taking place and false identities can be easily created.

UNIQUE CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES OF E-MARKETING

In spite of all its merits, e-marketing faces some problems that are unique. Web-based enterprises have a special set of challenges that traditional brick-and-mortar businesses do not have. Some of the challenges and the opportunities therein are:

Challenges	Opportunities
<p>❖ Marketing integration: Most companies employ multiple channels, both online and offline, for marketing their products e.g. email advertising, outbound call handling, social networking, and so on. The problem with these is that they are often handled as different parts of the work when they are supposed to serve a concrete and measurable goal as part of an integrated campaign.</p>	<p>Coordinating all marketing efforts should therefore be a priority. That means e-marketing should be done alongside the traditional campaign and should not be tacked at the end of the business plan.</p>
<p>❖ Security and privacy: Most people do not completely trust online companies and hence are careful about offering information about themselves on the cyberspace. This is especially true when companies that collect data are exposed to spammers and scammers.</p>	<p>To address this, it is imperative for e-businesses to adopt a sound policy and implement a fool-proof security measure. Encryption systems, in particular, are a tool that online companies should seriously consider investing in.</p>
<p>❖ Impersonal service: Businesses operating online often use electronic methods of providing customer service, such as emailing and posting info on the website to answer possible user questions. This may be perceived by customers as just too impersonal or uncaring.</p>	<p>To address this problem, merchants must develop efficient checkout procedures for selling goods via the web. They may also consider hiring call handling services, so that customers can talk to real people when they have inquiries or problems that need instant answer.</p>
<p>❖ Improving brand awareness: This is particularly a big challenge for companies that primarily use the internet to sell their products and services. This is because unlike traditional advertising (such as television, radio, billboard, and print) in which the campaign's message can be reinforced and repeatedly introduced to consumers at the marketers' will, online adverts can be shut off by users and they are more averse to it too.</p>	<p>Web companies are therefore required to be more innovative in their advertising strategies. A combination of good copywriting, solid search engine optimization, and drawing consistent traffic is something that should be mastered.</p>
<p>❖ Lack of Trust: Spam, identity theft, intrusive</p>	<p>This can be addressed by providing safer and</p>

❖ Lack of Trust: Spam, identity theft, intrusive advertising and technological glitches have made many to distrust marketing in general, and especially e-marketing.	This can be addressed by providing safer and secure ways of doing online transactions and educating the consumers about new and improved ways of transacting online.
❖ Intellectual Property: On the web, it is easier to steal someone else's hard work. Everything from music, to software and images are lifted from the Internet every day. This is a big challenge for companies.	Companies should invest in online security measures that will ensure protection of information and thereby keep it safe and secure.
❖ Customer Expectations: Never before have had customers expected so much. Managing your customer expectations is vital to marketers, because if you don't your competitors will and without customers you will not have a business.	A thorough knowledge of one's customers is required to be successful and fine-tuning of products and services to suit the customers needs is highly imperative for e-marketing. This can be done by linking customer database to the website.

IMPLICATIONS & CONCLUSION

E-marketing impacts upon businesses in a number of important ways. When used effectively, e-marketing campaigns and strategies have the potential to reach customers in a speedy and low-cost manner and can provide promotion for a wide range of products and services. E-marketing also offers businesses the opportunity to garner data about their consumer base to an extent that has been very difficult to achieve via traditional marketing methods. The development of e-marketing and social media advertising has led to the success of many businesses in recent times. However, despite the global reach, speed and the extent of information that can be gained from e-marketing there are a number of important disadvantages to this type of marketing that businesses must bear in mind. The technology driven approach of e-marketing leaves certain businesses vulnerable and overly-dependent upon technology. It also empowers dissatisfied consumers to a far greater extent than ever before and can lead to bad reviews that have the potential to greatly destabilize certain e-marketing campaigns and operations. However, despite these problems it is reasonable to conclude that e-marketing is on the whole a positive development for businesses and that despite certain dangers its impact upon businesses has been largely positive.

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