

## **Comparative assessment of the Digital Marketing and their Management Strategies for Healthcare Organisations**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The main purpose of this study is to develop perform the comparative assessment of the digital marketing strategies with respect to their advantages and disadvantages in context of healthcare sector. In order to manage the marketing strategies with digital platform building a conceptual framework that will further enhance understanding of the role that digital marketing may play within healthcare firms that create and capture customer value and, in turn, shareholder value. The framework establishes the concept of how digital marketing efforts must be ingrained with a corporate strategy and results in output with building customer retention. In summary, the goals of the present work is enlist all the predominant digital marketing strategies along with their comparative assessment to articulate the role of digital marketing as generator and integrator of customer inputs to the healthcare business operations.*

**KEY WORDS:** *Digital Marketing, Healthcare Industry, Conceptual Framework*

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Healthcare sector in India adopted strategic marketing approach quite late in compare with other industries, and the marketing era was not considered to begin in healthcare in late 1980s. Although certain healthcare organizations were actively involved in the retail and supplier activities, pharmaceutical companies, consumer-product vendors have a long history of marketing activities with a substantial budget for their marketing activities (KotlerPhilip, 1980).

The digital innovations paved the way for several industries inclusive of healthcare sector to pursue initiatives that might cause an emerging of new way to tackle the need. Brainstorm to generate an idea for entirely unique products, services or channels and employ the customer feedback data in new ways to gain an insight.(Margaret Rouse, 2014)

Customer loyalty is an outcome of customer satisfaction.The cost of retaining customers is far significantly lower than acquiring new customers. The unfortunate part is most companies focus on attracting and acquiring new customers than retaining old customers. This extensively need more focus on marketing strategies. Marketers use various tools to elicit the expected response from their target markets.

Due to the witnessed shift in the marketing activities and increasing focus on value based marketing activities the purpose of the article is to develop a conceptual framework that broadens our understanding of the role of digital marketing in general and specifically in relation to business processes that create the value. The intent of the framework is to highlight how digital marketing is linked to the three core business processes

The present study attempts to present a comparative assessment of the digital marketing strategies along with the conceptual framework to manage these digital marketing strategies. The propose framework effectively integrates corporate, marketing strategy digital marketing along with the customer experience management so as to retail the customer loyalty.

### **Predominant Digital Marketing Strategies Implemented in Healthcare Sector and its Comparative Assessment**

There are numerous channels by which digital marketing is implemented. The centralise necessity of all forms is that it operates through electronic devices. The most significant elements of digital marketing include:

#### **1. Email Marketing**

Email marketing is defined as, any message about the any business activity either products or services is sent through email to either the existing or future potential consumer.The direct digital marketing approach is used to create the brand awareness to build the brand and retain the customer loyalty, to build customer trust . Healthcare organisation may promote its services or products by using this element of digital marketing quite easily with direct approach. Comparatively it is cost consuming element as comparing with the advertising and other forms of media outreach. Healthcare firm may gather the complete attention of the target customer by creating graphics mix with an attractive text and relevant links about the products and services.

Email marketing mainly in B2B marketplace proved to be an effective way to build as well as maintain a relation with existing client and create rapport with future potential clients. Sending weekly or monthly email newsletter to keep their businesses top mind is strategy adopted by several companies as in when prospects and potential consumers will look to them when they are ready to purchase.

## **2. Online advertising**

One of the most significant part of digital marketing is online advertising. It is also known as internet advertising this channel serve as a platform through which any business able to deliver the message about the products or services. Internet-based advertising focus more on the content and text that best defines to consumer interests. Publishers display information about their services as well as products on their websites to which the consumers or users get free information. Advertisers ensure to place the relevant and more effective advertisement online. With online advertising, any organisation operating at various locations geographically well controls its budget and time efficiently.

## **3. Social Media**

One of the most important digital marketing channels in present age is social media marketing. A computer-based channel provides access and platform for business across the world to exchange creative ideas, information and innovation about the organisations' services or product. Today most of the internet users worldwide continue to spend substantial time on social media sites than compare with other resources online. Social media marketing networks mainly focus around LinkedIn, Face book, Twitter, and Google+. Face book, has become one of the platforms for organisations to promote their events relevant to services or products that they offer. Most of the upcoming start-ups run their promotions in comply with the Face book guidelines, explore new opportunities and achieve success faster.

Twitter, play a significant role for organisations to increase the awareness and visibility of their brand. It is considered as the best tool for the promotion of organisations' products and services.

LinkedIn is a platform where professionals create their profile and share technical information with others. This platform serves as channel to get connected with these professionals from healthcare field. Even a healthcare organisation able to create their profile in LinkedIn and make visibility so as to create network of professionals and get more information about the organisations' product and services.

Google+ is another most popular social media network that is far more effective than that of other social media tools like Face book, Twitter. Apart from a simple social media network tool, it is an authorship tool as well which links web-content directly with its owner.

## **4. Search Engine Optimization (SEO)**

One of the most valued channels among organisations is Search engine optimization (SEO). There are more than 65000 searches happening on search engine every second, however, listed on top is the natural source for getting traffic and recognition. SEO is the process of affecting the visibility of a web page or website in a search engine's "natural" or un-paid ("organic") search results. Generally, the earlier and more frequently a website appears in the search result list, the more visitors it will fetch from the search engine users. These SEO can be targeted with various types of search including image search, keyword search, video search, academic search, research search and industry-specific vertical search engines etc.

## **5. Pay Per Click (PPC)**

Pay-per-click channel of digital marketing is a way of using search engine advertising tool to increase clicks to your website rather than organically "earning" those clicks. Pay per click is good channel for advertisers as well as searchers. It is the best channel as organisation's ads as it brings greater customer engagement with the products and services in low budget. There are two main differences when it is a paid search. The paid ads appear at the top of the page, above the organic listings. The difference is that traffic from organic is free, whereas traffic from paid search has a cost incurred for each of the click. These ads are generally be targeted by search keywords, time of day, geography, language, device and audiences based on previous history of visits.

## **Text Messaging (Mobile Marketing)**

It is one of the easiest channels to send information about the products and services with cellular and smart phone devices. With the use of phone devices, organisation can send information in the form of text Short Message Service (SMS), images, photos, video and audio (MMS). Marketing with cell phone SMS became increasingly popular in the early 2000s among Europe and some parts of Asia. SMS campaigns get faster and more substantial results which are quite significantly used by healthcare professionals from India to connect with their patients. As send marketing messages to the target customers in real-time, and any

time confident that the message will be seen by the end user. Recent mobile apps as whats app and other healthcare related apps impacted to gain momentum for any marketing camping. Organisations create a questionnaire and may obtain valuable customers feedback which may be significant to develop an enhanced form of their products or services in future. With an increase numbers of Smartphone users and mobile's influence is reshaping the B2B marketplace including the purchase pathway.

Effective mobile advertising strategy means understanding your mobile customers, designing content for the mobile platforms and using geofencing advertising using GPS or radio frequency identifiers. This is creating substantial opportunities for marketer's organisations that aren't engaging customers on their Smartphone's are at risk of losing sales and market share. Also, several of B2B marketers are dissatisfied with their current mobile marketing strategy; hold up by a lack of data, ineffective performance measurement and inadequate mobile capabilities, and relevant tools.

### 6. Affiliate Marketing

Affiliate marketing channel is completely a performance-based marketing. In this strategy of marketing, an organisation rewards affiliates for each customer they refer with their marketing efforts which they created on behalf of organisation. This was actually a type of traditional approach; however in the era of digitisation as an example a company with an e-zine may become a good affiliate based on their subscriber who always looks for resources. Thus, only one introduction with "trusted" brand may attract the attention of prospects which may not have possible otherwise. There are two ways to approach affiliate marketing: Organisations can offer an affiliate program to others or it can enrol to another business's affiliate. In case any CRO or diagnostics organisation wants to drive an affiliate program, then, the business owner has to pay affiliates a commission fee for every lead or sale they drive to company's website.

Healthcare Industry has four core players: the organisation (known as "retailer" or "brand"), the customer, the publisher (known as "the affiliate"), and the created network. Today's market has grown in very complex network. As a result, there is an emergence of affiliate management agencies, super-affiliates and specialized third party vendors with main objective to find an affiliate who will able to reach the untapped markets.

**Table 1: Comparative assessment of the Digital Marketing Strategies**

Sr. No.	Digital Marketing Channels	Advantages	Disadvantages
1	<b>Email Marketing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Cost-effective way of engaging target customers on an ongoing basis</li> <li>● Helps to build relationships by regularly sharing valuable information</li> <li>● Can be customized and tailored made to specific group buyers</li> <li>● Relatively fast to create and send</li> <li>● Allows consumers to grow into their decision to take a action to purchase</li> <li>● Provides many segmentation options</li> <li>● Companies retain complete control over the content prospects and customers receive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Building a target customer email database consume substantial time</li> <li>● Risk of irritating customers by sending too many emails</li> <li>● Customers easily unsubscribe or mark emails as spam</li> <li>● It's so much saturated that many customers ignore emails</li> <li>● Spam filters kill some emails</li> <li>● Competing with other email marketers</li> </ul>
2	<b>Online advertising</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Internet-based advertising focus more on the content and text</li> <li>● Content need to define consumer interests</li> <li>● With online advertising, any organisation irrespective of its geographical operating location able to controls its budget and time efficiently</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Publishers display information about their services as well as products on their websites which the consumers or users get free information for definite time frame.</li> <li>● Advertisers need to ensure to place the relevant and more effective advertisement content online</li> </ul>
3	<b>Social Media</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A social media presence makes organisation more accessible and keeps consumers in the loop with business activities</li> <li>● Allows you to respond or react in real-time to relevant news or conversations</li> <li>● Nurtures brand loyalty through targeting consistent, and relevant presence</li> <li>● Great for customer service, including praise, suggestions and complaints</li> <li>● With good management can be inexpensive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● It's hard to break through the noise around and get the potential customers to focus on your posts</li> <li>● Takes a long time commitment to grow</li> <li>● Must engross in continuous communication to keep customers' and prospects' attention</li> <li>● Attracts spammers, trolls and all other sorts of malicious acts</li> <li>● Outreach is declining on many platforms due to changing algorithms</li> <li>● ROI for organic social media efforts is</li> </ul>

			hard to measure
4	<b>Search Engine Optimization</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Practically everyone uses a search engine to explore products and services before buying them</li> <li>Supports a cost-effective marketing strategy</li> <li>Ranking well for your chosen niche may pay off for years to come</li> <li>Scales up over time for the maximum reach of a niche</li> <li>Delivers a continuous flow of targeted traffic</li> <li>Offer businesses exposure to consumers actively in search of a solutions</li> <li>Enable to generates traffic that has a good chance of converting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May take years to match the scale of your competitors</li> <li>Requires a big investment for a competitive niche</li> <li>No control over search engine algorithms' updates and changes</li> <li>Potential for penalties if you stray into gray or black hat arena</li> </ul>
5	<b>Pay Per Click (Paid Search)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Laser-targeted visibility</li> <li>Fast deployment and results oriented</li> <li>Testable and trackable</li> <li>Granular control, including budgets</li> <li>Unrestricted access to keyword data, which can inform all advertising tacts</li> <li>Easy to conduct AB tests on ads, landing pages and call-to-action buttons to find the best results</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Requires constant investment, so costs can quickly add up</li> <li>No staying power, unlike good inbound marketing</li> <li>Poor management can deliver poor results</li> <li>Requires ongoing work to test results and continually optimize ads</li> <li>Competitive keywords are expensive</li> <li>Lots of competition and keyword bidding wars with other advertisers</li> <li>Easy for competitors to copy your strategy</li> </ul>
6	<b>Mobile Marketing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Speeds up sales, which both accelerates revenue and reduces costs</li> <li>Positive mobile user experiences build customer loyalty</li> <li>Impact extends beyond the smartphone to the desktop or laptop, tablet and offline sales</li> <li>Provides a treasure of data to build comprehensive views of customers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of direct evidence of mobile's impact</li> <li>Insufficient customer insight, marketing performance measurement and conversion rates</li> <li>Aggressive companies are establishing customer relationships that will be difficult for latecomers to dislodge</li> <li>Slow-moving companies are in danger of being eliminated from consideration</li> <li>Difficulty of tracking its impact across channels and devices</li> </ul>
7	<b>Affiliate Marketing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A performance-based marketing</li> <li>More relevant for service based sector e.g Diagnostic, Hospitals</li> <li>Organisations can offer an affiliate program to others or it can enrol to another business's affiliate.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Challenge is to associated with an affiliate and manage who will able to reach the untapped markets</li> </ul>
8	<b>Web Marketing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Flexible platforms with multimedia capabilities for distributing content in a variety of formats</li> <li>Low barrier to entry with minimal technical or IT skills required</li> <li>Attracts new prospects, while engaging with existing customers</li> <li>Excellent for brand awareness, authority building, storytelling and passive sales messaging</li> <li>Provides the ability to measure and track performance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creating sites that attract and retain visitors requires strategic, design and content creation expertise</li> <li>Creating relevant content on a regular basis can be challenging and time consuming</li> <li>Requires a publisher mindset from brands possibly not used to this model</li> <li>Requires planning, organization and editorial control, particularly if there are multiple authors</li> </ul>

**Own illustration with observed secondary literature data**  
 (Source: <https://www.kunocreative.com/blog/digital-marketing-channels>)

### 7. Website Marketing and Blogging

Websites and blogs are essentially digital channels for every organisations operating today. They are workhorses for communicating and selling to prospects and customers. Prospects today expect companies'

websites and blogs to provide copious amounts of content that answer their specific questions. Also, when they care about a brand, they expect to receive regular blog posts that provide them with news, insight, offers and more.

### **Conceptual Framework for management of Digital Marketing Strategies**

Corporate strategy is at the core of any business activity. Generally, the business strategy is a blue print map for future activities of any organization and provide guidance for an organization to be consistent on its predefined path. It gives general direction. Then, the other element is the customer strategy which says what type of customers we want to acquire and with what costs and then what type of customers we don't need and with what cost we are going to defend our existing customer base. These two strategies give direction for the three core processes that create and hopefully also capture value for us.



**Fig. 1 Strategic Framework for Effective Management (DMS: Digital Marketing Strategies)**

A conceptual framework is presented that integrates digital marketing into three core business processes named here as customer experience management, supply chain management and innovation as an entity that is partly controlled and influenced by marketing actions. It is also shown how digital marketing creates value for both customers and shareholders in the customer relationship management. Moreover, it is also depicted how the digital marketing enhances the value created in the supply chain management. Additionally, it is illustrated how digital marketing influences innovation. More importantly, the traditional view of digital marketing as customer focused is expanded to encompass a broader idea of market perspective to digital marketing with the developed strategic framework pinpointing to the digital marketing management.

Today, with the help of digital marketing direct interaction with customers is possible which was not so easily possible with the initial traditional marketing approaches. While digital marketing strategies requires the brand to interact with the customers in the appropriate tone. Anyone able to establish brand story with digital marketing channels at present market. But three essential aspects apart from 7Ps master mix (Product/service, Promotion, Price, Platform, People, Process, and Physical evidence) the strategic process flow also required supporting functions as:

- Building digital campaign

Online serve of customers can easily have done with digital marketing. Today's digital campaigns are highly growing as a part of a multi-screen ecosystem, in order to amplify a brand's message to create an involvement with on-the-go customers through highly targeted messages. The success of these campaigns depends on a thorough knowledge of the consumer mind-set and location relevance (Screen Media, 2016).

- Digital content creation

Internet business are further impacted with the introduction of technologies like cloud computing, big data and responsive web designing, thus drastically altering the way we share information (Brown et al. 2011). Content marketing strategies require a clear vision of one's business objectives, to be able to create viable web content strategies to engage both targeted customers and search engines. Strategies also help generate improved ROI through improved search engine rankings and thus sales.

- Digital consumer behaviour analytics

This dimension gives vital real-time insight about their 7 customers and more importantly the possibility to react upon this collected data, with offering for instance personalized options for its clients (Bose 2009). For maximum outcome it is also important to understand that the analytics should be incorporated into the company's daily operations and the data should be collected and analysed in real time, without delays (Bose 2009). Organisations can use different kinds of tools like Google Analytics, which easily gives the companies valuable insight about the online activities (Toncin, 2012).

## II. CONCLUSION

Information technologies including the Internet, mobile communications, electronic, social media, geographical positioning systems, and more technological innovations are reshaping markets and marketing in fundamental manners across the world. The present work has provided a detailed overview of digital marketing channels in general, and healthcare sector, in particular. A conceptual research framework has been proposed to manage and measure performance from digital strategy applied based on the perspectives acquisition of new consumers as well as retention of the existing customer base. The delighted consumers who remain loyal will also be willing to pay more for enhanced services or products. In this regard, a path analysis along with the comparative assessment of digital strategies discussed in the present research will help the healthcare professionals and organisations not only in understanding customer preferences and targeting them but also retailing and measuring the performance of each channel used during the process.

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