

Digital Marketing: A Transformative Shift in Social Media Marketing – Opportunities and Challenges

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ABSTRACT

Globalisation and digitalisation have positioned digital marketing as a critical driver of structural growth and competitive advantage, particularly in India's dynamic market, which is distinguished by a tech-savvy young, increased internet access, and rising disposable incomes (Suguna & Selladurai, 2017). This study investigates the opportunities and challenges of digital marketing, focusing on social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and LinkedIn. Artificial intelligence (AI), search engine optimisation (SEO), and data analytics offer hyper-targeted advertising and real-time interaction, but they also pose difficulties such as data privacy, algorithmic biases, and platform saturation (Leeftang et al., 2014). This study investigates how digital tools transform marketing by analyzing secondary data, emphasizing the importance of ethical, user-centric methods that combine innovation, compliance, and customer trust. The findings emphasize the importance of connecting digital strategies with developing trends and ethical frameworks in order to fully realize India's digital potential in a global economy.

Keywords: Digitalization, Digital Marketing, Artificial Intelligence (AI), Marketing with social media, Opportunities, Challenges, Competitive Advantage.



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INTRODUCTION

What is Digital Marketing?

Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2019) define digital marketing as the use of online platforms and technologies to increase product sales, engage customers, and drive sales. It includes tactics such as SEO, "Content Marketing," E-mail Marketing, pay-per-click (PPC) advertising, and Social Media Marketing (SMM), which disrupt traditional marketing paradigms. This encompasses a variety of tactics, such as:

Digital marketing comprises a wide range of methods that use digital platforms to engage people and achieve measurable results. Search Engine Optimization (SEO) aims to increase a website's prominence in search engine rankings, hence increasing organic visibility. material marketing entails providing valuable material to pique and hold the interest of a certain audience, hence increasing engagement and brand loyalty. Email Marketing allows for direct engagement with clients via personalized email messaging. Pay-Per-Click (PPC) advertising uses sponsored ads that appear on search engines and social media platforms to attract targeted visitors. Social media marketing (SMM) focuses on distributing

information and engaging with customers on social media networks in order to establish community and increase brand visibility. These tactics define the digital marketing era by focusing on audience interaction, personalization, and data-driven optimization (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019).

The Evolution of Digital Marketing

Technological breakthroughs and shifting consumer preferences have affected the evolution of digital marketing. The internet's advent in the 1990s opened up new marketing channels, with banner ads, simple online adverts, and email marketing emerging as core tools for direct consumer involvement (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). By the late 1990s and early 2000s, the rise of search engines such as Google had transformed product discovery, forcing marketers to prioritize search engine optimization (SEO) to improve organic search exposure (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). In the mid-2000s, social media platforms like Facebook (2004), Twitter (2006), and LinkedIn (2003) emerged, transforming brand-consumer interactions by allowing firms to create profiles and stimulate community involvement (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

In the 2010s, content marketing became a pillar of digital strategy, with blogs, videos, and infographics boosting consumer engagement, while influencer marketing gained traction as firms cooperated with individuals with large online followings (Patrutiu, 2015). Concurrently, the rise of smartphones brought in a mobile-first approach, requiring organizations to focus mobile-friendly content, responsive design, and mobile apps to keep up with rising mobile usage (Statista, 2023). Today, data-driven marketing is dominant, as modern analytics tools enable marketers to track user behavior, preferences, and conversion rates, resulting in highly targeted and effective campaigns (Reinartz et al., 2005).

The Role of Social Media in Digital Marketing

Social media has altered digital marketing by allowing for direct and dynamic connections between brands and customers. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn enable brands to interact directly with customers, collect feedback, and develop communities, resulting in stronger relationships (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Social media's viral potential allows content to spread quickly, reaching large audiences in short periods of time (Yasmin et al., 2019). Furthermore, advanced targeting choices based on demographics, interests, and behaviour improve the accuracy of advertising campaigns (Leeftang et al., 2014). User-generated content boosts brand reputation by allowing customers to produce and share content that supports products or services.

Current trends in digital marketing reflect the changing scene. Short-form video content on platforms such as TikTok and Instagram Reels has grown in popularity due to its interesting and user-friendly structure. Personalization, powered by data analytics, enables brands to personalize experiences and campaigns to specific customer preferences. Social commerce is gaining traction, with seamless shopping experiences built right into social platforms. Furthermore, customers are increasingly prioritizing sustainability and ethical marketing, compelling firms to align with environmentally sensitive and socially responsible ideals (Statista, 2023).

The digital marketing era is distinguished by the use of digital platforms to connect with customers, with an emphasis on measurable outcomes via analytics and personalized methods. SEO, social media marketing, content marketing, and email marketing are all core methods that place an emphasis on audience engagement and real-time interactions. The integration of AI and automation improves campaign optimization, allowing marketers to produce more effective and efficient results.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Schlosser et al. (2006) investigate how website investments affect consumers' trust beliefs and predict their intentions to make online transactions. These impacts were particularly obvious when consumers

wanted to search rather than explore, and when online purchases were high-risk.

Farrar (2010) investigates digital marketing and offers advice to administrative managers navigating the various organizations and consultants offering services in this developing field of marketing. In the article, he presents methods for administrative managers to examine various situations of traditional marketing tactics, allowing them to grasp similar issues in internet marketing and devise solutions.

Berman and Kesterson-Townes (2012) investigated how to engage with future customers living in the digital age. The report investigated the need for enterprises to prioritize providing personalized, on-demand experiences at all time, rather than simply being digital. This is critical since today's customers are more empowered, demanding, and well-informed, and they expect personalized information based on their choices.

Vendrell-Herrero et al. (2014) recognized digital technology' hidden advantages, which they dubbed digital dark matter. Product service systems (PSSs) are collections of linked products and services intended to produce value via their use, resulting in benefits that may not be immediately apparent. The study set out to objectively evaluate digital dark matter within PSSs and investigate its relevance to national competitiveness.

Sathya (2015) described digital marketing as the use of electronic communication by marketers to direct items and services to the marketplace. The article highlighted that the primary purpose of digital marketing is to provide consumers with a thorough understanding of items through digital media. It focuses on the extent to which digital channels are used for marketing and customer engagement. The study gathered data from 100 respondents to analyze the impact of digital marketing on a company's sales.

Rathore, Pant, and Sharma (2017) examined the changing patterns in digital marketing in India. The study looked at efficient digital marketing techniques, emerging trends, India's growing internet and mobile user base, and the country's future digital marketing potential.

Rowley (2008) emphasizes the importance of digital material on commercial and societal results. The study gives an in-depth look into digital content marketing, emphasizing its core as being based on providing value to customers. The study investigates the different elements of digital content marketing using a set of structured questions, as well as the challenges of defining and judging "worth" in digital marketplaces. These problems have an impact on value chain frameworks and pricing strategies, demonstrating the complexities of managing digital content in a value-driven market.

Suguna and Selladurai (2017) conducted a SWOT analysis of digital marketing in India, a country with a population of over 1.25 billion and roughly 20% internet coverage. Although India's internet penetration is low in comparison to countries such as the United States and China, its massive population results in a high number of internet users, making it the world's third-largest. The report explores the strengths, flaws, possibilities, and risks of digital marketing in India, emphasizing its growing importance and potential despite infrastructural and literacy issues.

Niharika and Satinder (2020) examine the growth of internet usage and e-commerce in India, highlighting the significant role of e-marketing in fostering IT development and the expansion of online businesses. Identified opportunities encompass affordable market accessibility, e-commerce assistance, and providing tailored content. Nonetheless, obstacles such as limited internet access, gaps in digital literacy, infrastructure challenges, competition, and privacy issues continue to exist. Drawing from Rowley's (2008) customer value framework, the authors emphasize the need for strategic initiatives to address technological obstacles and unlock the full transformative potential of e-marketing in India.

Yasmin, Tasneem, and Fatema (2019) examine the impact of digital marketing on improving business performance and customer value through a study involving 150 firms and 50 executives. They analyze how tools such as social media and SEO influence brand visibility and sales, highlighting significant opportunities for customer engagement and expanding market reach. Key challenges involve adjusting to fast-paced technological advancements and handling intricate data, reflecting Rowley's (2008) insights on the complexities of functioning in ever-evolving digital landscapes. The study highlights the strategic significance of digital marketing but recognizes substantial challenges in its implementation.

Leeflang and colleagues (2014); emphasize the worldwide increase in internet usage, establishing digital marketing as an essential competitive edge in both B2C and B2B environments. Opportunities encompass expanding market reach, tailored customer interactions, and worldwide accessibility. Nevertheless, significant obstacles like workforce skill gaps, inflexible organizational frameworks, and the absence of dependable performance indicators obstruct progress. These challenges reflect Rowley's (2008) perspectives on assessing value in digital marketing and are equally applicable to the Indian context, as highlighted by Suguna and Selladurai (2017). The authors emphasize the importance of cultivating talent and strong analytical skills to maximize the opportunities of digital marketing.

Rationale of the Study

Social media platforms have transformed marketing by enabling precise targeting and real-time engagement (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). However, challenges like

data privacy, competition, and technological complexity persist (Leeflang et al., 2014). This study explores digital marketing's impact on social media marketing, identifying opportunities and challenges to provide strategic insights for businesses navigating India's digital landscape.

This research aims to explore the significant changes that digital marketing has introduced to social media marketing, assess the opportunities it presents for businesses, and pinpoint the key challenges that could impede success. By investigating current practices, technological advancements, and evolving consumer behaviours, the research seeks to offer strategic insights that businesses can utilize to enhance their social media marketing initiatives. In light of the increasing dependence on digital platforms for brand visibility, customer interaction, and business expansion, this study is both relevant and essential for enriching academic understanding and practical marketing approaches in the digital age.

Key Objectives of the Study:

- To explore how digital marketing has transformed the landscape of social media marketing.
- To identify the new opportunities created for businesses and consumers through the integration of digital technologies in social media marketing.
- To examine the major challenges faced by marketers in adapting to the evolving digital and social media environment.
- To analyze the impact of digital tools and platforms on consumer engagement and brand communication.

METHODOLOGY

The study is descriptive in nature. Secondary sources of data were used in the study. The required and the relevant data were collected from websites, internet and published scholarly research articles.

Key Characteristics of the Digital Marketing Era

The digital marketing landscape is defined by a multifaceted approach that leverages various strategies to connect with audiences and drive measurable outcomes. Digital platforms, including social media, email, search engines, and websites, serve as critical channels for engaging customers and building brand presence (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). Quantifiable outcomes are achieved through analytical tools that monitor the effectiveness of marketing initiatives, enabling data-informed decision-making (Reinartz et al., 2005). Customization enhances engagement by tailoring marketing communications and experiences to individual customer preferences and behaviours (Berman & Kesterson-Townes, 2012). Customer interaction is prioritized through interactive content and social media, fostering relationships that cultivate loyalty and advocacy (Rowley, 2008). Immediate marketing leverages real-time data to adapt strategies swiftly, capitalizing on current events or

trends. Artificial intelligence and automation streamline processes like content generation, personalization, and analytics, boosting efficiency and effectiveness (Ransbotham et al., 2017).

A robust content strategy focuses on producing and disseminating valuable, relevant, and engaging content to attract and retain customers while establishing brand authority (Patruti, 2015). Search Engine Optimization (SEO) enhances websites and content to improve search engine rankings, increasing organic traffic and visibility (Yasmin et al., 2019). Social media promotion leverages platforms to boost brand recognition, engage customers, and drive traffic to online resources. Email campaigns deliver targeted communications to nurture leads, promote products or services, and strengthen customer relationships (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). Together, these strategies underscore the dynamic, data-driven, and customer-centric nature of digital marketing.

Different types of digital marketing

Digital marketing employs a diverse set of strategies to enhance brand visibility, engage audiences, and drive conversions through various online channels. Search Engine Optimization (SEO) focuses on improving a website's ranking on search engine results pages to boost visibility for relevant products or services, converting organic traffic into leads through targeted strategies (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019).

Social Media Marketing raises brand awareness by fostering audience interaction on platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Email Marketing involves sending promotional emails, such as newsletters, transactional emails, and behavioural emails, to engage audiences with commercial messages like discounts, sale notifications, and product announcements (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). Pay-Per-Click (PPC) Advertising ensures brands pay only for clicked ads, optimizing investment by targeting engaged users (Leefflang et al., 2014).

Content Marketing centres on creating and distributing high-quality, relevant content—such as blog posts, e-books, newsletters, videos, whitepapers, and infographics—to provide value to a target audience (Patruti, 2015). Affiliate Marketing enables creators, publishers, and bloggers to earn commissions by promoting products or services, as exemplified by Amazon's large-scale affiliate program (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). Native Advertising blends seamlessly with surrounding content, as seen in Instagram and Snapchat story filters or Twitter hashtags, making it less identifiable as a marketing campaign (Yasmin et al., 2019). Influencer Marketing, including affiliate strategies, leverages individuals with large followings—celebrities, industry experts, or content creators—to enhance brand visibility (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Marketing Automation uses technology to streamline and enhance the relevance of advertising efforts (Ransbotham et al., 2017). Finally, Mobile Marketing engages audiences through SMS,

MMS, social media alerts, and app notifications on smartphones and tablets, capitalizing on the ubiquity of mobile devices (Statista, 2023). These strategies collectively define a dynamic, data-driven approach to digital marketing that prioritizes engagement and measurable results.

Emerging trends of Digital Marketing

Due to the rise of digital marketing, marketers are using new technologies to market their products and services. Most of the marketers are unaware of these new technologies and thus these are still in their infant stage. The marketers need to be aware about the latest trends so as to be ahead of the competitors and maintain a loyal base of customers.

UX Design

User Experience (UX) design emphasizes understanding customer needs to deliver satisfying online experiences. It goes beyond creating visually appealing interfaces by fostering meaningful connections between people and technology through quality content and website optimization. Effective Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is critical to ensure well-crafted content reaches its intended audience, enhancing the overall user experience (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019).

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Artificial Intelligence (AI) refers to machine intelligence that mimics human cognitive abilities. In digital marketing, AI reduces errors and aids in predicting consumer purchasing patterns. As voice-based searches gain popularity, integrating voice search capabilities becomes essential to improve customer convenience and enhance the overall experience (Ransbotham et al., 2017).

Google AdWords

Google AdWords, launched in 2000, is an online advertising platform that enables businesses to place ads on Google's search engine. Ads appear at the top, bottom, or right side of search result pages based on budget and keyword relevance. The platform operates on payment models like cost-per-click (CPC) and cost-per-thousand impressions (CPM), generating significant revenue for Google (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019).

Integration of AR/VR in Marketing Campaigns

Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR) are transforming marketing by offering dynamic and engaging experiences. AR allows users to visualize products in real-world contexts, such as fashion and home décor, aiding decision-making. In contrast, VR creates fully immersive brand experiences, commonly used in real estate and automotive marketing. As hardware becomes more accessible and social media platforms integrate AR elements, these technologies increase customer engagement, emotional connection, and conversion rates (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019).

Use of Chatbots and Automated Customer Service

The demand for instant, 24/7 customer support drives the growing use of AI-powered chatbots and automated customer service in digital marketing. These chatbots handle common queries, provide personalized responses, and guide customers through the sales funnel. By improving customer experience and reducing operational costs, chatbots are becoming more conversational, effective, and integral to digital marketing strategies focused on automation and interaction (Ransbotham et al., 2017).

Opportunities of Digital Marketing

Digital Publicizing can be successful and opportunities after utilizing different tools and techniques. These tools help marketers to get maximum benefits of digital marketing such as:

Easy Consumer Reach

Digital marketing serves as a powerful communication tool, enabling businesses to reach a vast number of potential customers simultaneously. Internet-based marketing facilitates rapid outreach to prospects and customers worldwide. Social media marketing has transformed these efforts, leveraging platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, and others to expand reach and engagement (Leeflang et al., 2014).

Direct Advertising

Digital marketing enables direct advertising to raise brand or product awareness. Businesses can easily showcase their products and services across various digital platforms. However, in a competitive marketing environment, success relies on a robust online advertising strategy supported by effective promotional tools (Yasmin et al., 2019).

Constantly Displaying Ads

Digital marketing allows targeted ads to be visible to customers anytime, anywhere. Prospects can browse websites and view advertisements at their convenience, enticing them to engage with businesses and access desired products or services. Effective management of these ads is crucial to ensure they appear correctly on webpages, often following a structured four-step process for ad display (Yasmin et al., 2019).

Global Advertisements

Through digital marketing, companies can advertise globally, connecting with customers across different countries and expanding their market presence (Leeflang et al., 2014).

Brand Coverage and Development

Online marketing enables brands to reach customers worldwide, transcending national boundaries. This global reach fosters brand recognition and development on an international scale (Leeflang et al., 2014).

Benefits of Viral Coverage

Social media facilitates viral coverage, where content shared via website share buttons rapidly reaches a broader audience. Likes and shares on advertisements boost brand popularity without additional costs, amplifying visibility and engagement (Leeflang et al., 2014).

Increased Engagement

Digital marketing encourages prospects to take action by guiding them through the purchase process. It provides multiple options, supports various payment methods, and often includes delivery to the customer's location at no extra cost, enhancing engagement and conversion rates (Yasmin et al., 2019).

Convenience for Customers

Online marketing offers 24/7/365 accessibility, allowing customers to shop from the comfort of their homes with a variety of options. Transactions can be completed quickly, enhancing customer convenience and satisfaction (Yasmin et al., 2019).

Challenges in Digital Marketing

Limited internet access: Digital marketing relies heavily on the internet. In some locations, internet access may be unavailable to customers or with weak internet connections. Digital marketing can be unsuccessful in locations with no or limited internet connectivity (Suguna & Selladurai, 2017).

Limited consumer engagement: Because digital marketing relies heavily on the internet, marketers may struggle to create complete advertisements and engage customers in conversations about the company's brand image or products.

High brand competition: When a customer looks for a certain product on the internet, many rival goods and services with similar marketing methods emerge on their home page. This causes disagreement with clients and provides an alternate choice to buy a cheaper and higher-quality product from another company. As a result, some customers are sceptical of many advertisements that appear on a website or social media, viewing them as fraud and portraying the brand as dishonest (Niharika & Satinder, 2020).

Risk of Hacking Strategies: One disadvantage of digital marketing is the potential of hackers targeting a company's promotion strategies through digital channels (the internet). Hackers or competitors can simply track and copy a well-known company's valuable promotional methods, which they can then use for their own goals.

Anti-Brand Activities (Doppelganger): opinion leaders use social media to promote offensive or disapproving tales, logos, and images of brands, known as Doppelganger Brand Image (DBI). A negative review or feedback from customers can cause significant damage to any organization's brand image, as it can go viral in a matter of minutes in the digital world. This is an additional challenge in digital marketing.

Advertisement for Limited Products: Another practical disadvantage of digital marketing is that it is only useful for consumer products. Industrial items and pharmaceuticals cannot be promoted via digital means. The facts presented above may help digital marketers recognize the strengths and disadvantages of digital marketing. To understand more about digital marketing, follow the links in the connected pages.

DISCUSSIONS

This study emphasizes the revolutionary power of digital marketing, particularly through social media platforms, in redefining marketing tactics in India's rapidly changing digital world. The combination of modern technologies such as AI, SEO, and data analytics has transformed consumer engagement by enabling hyper-targeted advertising and real-time interactions, consistent with the findings of Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) and Leeftang et al. (2014). According to Berman and Kesterson-Townes (2012), these tools provide considerable opportunity for firms to broaden their market reach, improve brand recognition, and nurture consumer loyalty through individualized experiences. The rise of short-form video content on platforms such as TikTok and Instagram Reels, combined with social commerce, demonstrates shifting consumer preferences and the increasing importance of mobile-first initiatives (Statista, 2023). However, data privacy problems, algorithmic biases, and platform saturation all pose substantial challenges, as noted by Leeftang et al. (2014) and Suguna and Selladurai (2017). Limited internet connectivity and digital literacy in some parts of India hamper efficient campaign implementation (Niharika & Satinder, 2020). High competitiveness and threats such as hacking or negative viral material (e.g., doppelganger brand pictures) highlight the need for strong, ethical measures to sustain customer confidence (Yasmin et al., 2019). According to the report, organizations must balance innovation with compliance, relying on data analytics and user-centric ways to efficiently manage these hurdles. Future research could look into the long-term effects of future technologies such as AR/VR and AI-powered chatbots on consumer behavior and brand loyalty in India's digital market.

CONCLUSION

Digital marketing, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, offers cost-effective, trackable, and personalized strategies (Statista, 2023). Despite challenges like privacy concerns and limited internet access, businesses can succeed by leveraging data analytics and ethical content to navigate India's digital landscape (Rowley, 2008; Suguna & Selladurai, 2017). However, obstacles such as integrity issues, a lack of face-to-face connection, security concerns, and trust deficits must be solved in order to fully realize its potential. The COVID-19 epidemic has expedited the rise of digital marketing, opening up new prospects for career advancement, global expansion, and inventive business promotion. Despite its problems, digital marketing continues to be a low-cost and crucial

technique for reaching out to target consumers. Businesses must adapt by developing compelling, targeted content and optimizing campaigns with data analytics to ensure long-term success in a quickly changing digital world.

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