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Faculty of Economics - Prilep

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FACULTY OF ECONOMICS – PRILEP**

**XII International Conference on
Economy, Business & Society in Digitalized Environment
PROCEEDINGS**

23-25 September, 2022 Prilep, North Macedonia

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BOOST YOUR BRAND IMAGE WITH DIGITAL
MARKETING

Natasha Miteva¹, Dushica Popova²

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Abstract

No different from the traditional marketing, digital marketing aims at building a programme to express organizational purposes, to keep in touch with customers, and meet and exceed their need, but with the use of technology tools. The continuous use of technology worldwide and digital marketing by organizations encourages constant analysis of them too. Given the continuous growing number of people present online, marketers are analysing each tool an organization can use in order to compete, grow and sustain in the competitive markets. As a result, the number of objectives of the digital marketing rises too. Organizations use digital marketing for many reasons among which to increase their sales and revenue, build their brand, improve their SEO, stream new leads, increase qualified traffic, manage online reputation, become an influencer, and so on. The scope of this research paper is to present the main objectives of digital marketing and focus on the different ways it can help organizations boost their brand image. Organizations can build their brand offline and online, but in order to sustain on the competitive market, they must implement digital marketing strategies to construct a brand. Digital marketing helps organizations boost their brand and make it well-known, credible, trusted, strong. Furthermore, when used properly, digital marketing tools and activities help create brand awareness, build community, and increase brand equity.

Keywords: brand image, digital marketing, customer awareness, brand recognition, strategy

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1. Introduction

Internet has been part of this world for more than 60 years, but the communication started with the introduction of World Wide Web, and the evolution of the digital era began. According to the DataReportal, by today 63.1% of the world population is online, and 59% of them are social media users. During this progression, many disciplines have developed, and new ones established. This applies to marketing too. According to the researchers and literature review the digital marketing as a discipline derives from the traditional marketing, serving the same purpose of reaching and engaging customers for a certain product, service, or idea. Differently from the traditional marketing, the digital marketing uses the digital technology to fulfill its purposes, that is to target the audience, to build the preference database, to engage, and finally to increase sales. At the beginning, digital marketing was mostly used when referring to the online sale of products and services, or the well-known e-commerce. However, today digital marketing is a term that indicates how entire organizations operate, and how they adapt to the changes brought by the digital era.

Some of the main objectives of the digital marketing today are to increase sales and revenue, build a brand, improve SEO, stream new leads, increase traffic, manage online reputation, and become an influencer. Building a brand with digital marketing today is even easier since it offers many tools to do so, such as e-mail, websites, social media platforms, etc. Digital marketing helps organizations build and boost their brand so that it can be well-known, credible, trusted, and strong. With the use of digital marketing strategies, organizations create brand awareness, build community, and increase brand equity.

2. Building a brand

Building a brand is one highly important process for every organization. Creating a brand includes decisions about the name, design, sign, term, and/or symbol that will distinguish one seller from another. The main reason of creating a brand is to get recognized more often. But the brand is more than just a logo or name. In today's competitive market, the brand stands for the organization's identity and personality. It serves as an identifier on the market, and a promise for the ones that interact with it. Moreover, the brand is a set of perceptions about a product, service, or organization, and a customers' mind share based on experience and future expectation. The process of branding is vital for every organization since it can help build trust, and creates value, experience, and loyal customers.

The focus of organizations today is building a strong brand that will last even for decades. A strong brand means building a brand that will stand out in customers' minds. The one that sends a clear message, has solid identity, and visual synergy. Strong brands are easy on the eye and relevant to its industry, and as a result are easily recognizable.

Reaching all these branding goals in today's digital era is possible, but it has its drawbacks too. With all the technological tools and Internet in hand, brands are partly less durable today given that the customers have evolved too.

Nowadays, customer's needs, and interests change continuously given that they have more information available leading to more choices and hence comparison of offers. Assumed all this, the key to success is to create an adaptable brand that will use everything the digital era offers, in their advantage.

3. Boost a brand with digital marketing

Digital marketing as a discipline has numerous advantages when it comes to building and boosting brands. Given its nature, it offers organizations a global reach, meaning entering new markets, operating globally, and still having the possibility to track and measure results. Additionally, digital marketing is highly customizable and offers tailoring campaigns so that it can reach specific target audience. It is very important for an organization to target customers who are the "right fit" for their offers given that today 63.1% of the population are Internet users, 66.9% are unique mobile phone users, and 59% are active social media users³. Digital marketing tools help organizations with the analysis of their online marketing campaigns, giving them data about where the budget is spent, what is the return on investment (ROI) and return on advertising spend (ROAS), so that further decisions can be made. Another advantage of digital marketing is the possibility for personalization, including personalized offers, messages, ads etc., depending on the marketing funnel stage. With all the digital tools under its umbrella, digital marketing is great for customers relationship management too, giving the opportunity for direct communication.

Digital marketing is a dynamic discipline that offers numerous opportunities for the organizations striving for strong brands and tools to boost their brands, and some of them are content marketing, social media, website, search engine optimization (SEO), and pay per click (PPC).

3.1. Content marketing

By definition, "content marketing is a marketing technique of creating and distributing relevant and valuable content to attract, acquire and engage a clearly defined and understood target audience – with the objective of driving profitable customer action". (Charlesworth 2018) The concept of content marketing is not new, but its popularity is increasing tremendously with the increase of digital tools. The content marketing means understanding all that brand creates, including the purpose of it and to whom it is intended. When creating content organizations must make decisions about *who* they are trying to reach and *why*. Furthermore, they must decide about the structure of the content including where it is, how people can find it, and how it is organized. During the process of content creation, organizations must be aware of laws and regulations, guidelines, standards, etc. As a result, the purpose of content marketing is creating a content that will increase brand awareness, brand loyalty, web traffic, customer retention and acquisition, lead generation and increase sales. It is of great importance to note that the main objective of the content marketing is not immediate sale.

³ <https://datareportal.com/global-digital-overview>

Organizations use content marketing to boost their brand by focusing on customers' values and interests and supplying information that will suit their needs. By doing this, organizations with the use of content marketing practice a storytelling, spread a customer-generated content building strong customer relationships, and enjoy unified brand experience.

3.2. Social media

By just typing the social media term, several sites pop out such as Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok, and many more. The definition of social media is still open to debate, but basically it understood as a group of various social networks and community sites with user-generated content. It is imperative to note that users do not have social media sites under their control. For organizations to get the most of social media as a tool for boosting their brand, it is vital to understand how they work too. One clear presentation offers the social media matrix by Zhu and Chen shown in Table 1. (Zhu and Chen 2015)

Table 1. Social media matrix

| | <i>Customized message</i> | <i>Broadcast message</i> |
|----------------------|---|--|
| <i>Profile-based</i> | Relationship Allows users to connect, reconnect, communicate and build relationships (e.g. Facebook). | Self-media Allows users to broadcast their updates and others to follow (e.g. Twitter). |
| <i>Content-based</i> | Collaboration Allows users to collaboratively find answers, advice and help (e.g. Reddit). | Creative outlet Allows users to share their interest, creativity and hobbies with each other (e.g. Pinterest). |

As show on the matrix, social media can present customized and broadcasted messages which can be either profile or content based. When it comes to using social media as a digital marketing tool it is essential to know that social media and social media marketing are different things, it is not a solution to all the problems, and it is not free of charge. However, social media marketing advantages are numerous, including targeting very specific audience segment, opportunity for presence on existing social media and therefore quick and easy connection with customers. Social media marketing is inter-related with the content marketing because the content is in the core of any social media used. Therefore, social media marketing includes content creation such as blogging, video sharing, and microblogging.

The importance of social media marketing can be backed up with the latest statistics. According to the Datareportal, there are 4.70 billion (or 59% of the population) active social media users spending an average daily time of 2 hours and 29 minutes. Facebook is placed to number 1 most active social media platform with almost 3 billion monthly active users as of April 2022. Furthermore, the total potential reach of ads on Facebook is 2.14 billion. Second most active platform is YouTube with 2.562 billion users that can be reached with ads, followed by WhatsApp with 2 billion active users. Forth on the list of 2022 is

Instagram with potential advertising reach of 1.45 billion. Analyzing users' reasons, 23% use it for seeing content from their favorite brands and 27.9% for finding inspiration for things to do and buy. (Global social media statistics, 2022) These percentages offer high opportunities for organizations to boost their brands using social media.

3.3. Website

Differently from the social media, websites are owned and controlled by the organizations. At the beginning of the web introduction, organizations designed websites for themselves rather than the customer, and offered only information that they wanted visitors to know. As time passes, organizations vastly using websites into their digital marketing strategy, shift the focus to the visitors or their customers. Organizations today put customers in focus when creating their website, focusing more on web presence, meeting customers' needs, and achieving organizational goals. When developing a website for a stronger presence and brand awareness, organizations must put emphasis on several elements, including aesthetic design, processing speed, security, ease of use, structure, content readability, corporate credibility, business functionality, adequacy and quality of information, appearance, availability, usability, service interaction, playfulness, attractiveness, usefulness, etc. Each of these elements are intangible and differ from customers and developers' perspective. If any of the elements are not easily met, customers would leave the site before even finding the information they need. All these design elements are important when creating a professional and user-friendly website. However, when using the website as a digital marketing tool more accent should be put on the web presence since today people, hence potential customers, have more choice than ever. As Charlesworth in his book states, when developing a website, organizations must answer the www questions – what the site's objectives are, who are the visitors, and why are they visiting the site. (Charlesworth 2018) The successful websites are the once that put customers' needs in focus when designing one, and continue during the process of presence, providing all the information needed and valuable content. Websites are vital part of the digital marketing, and organizations use them to boost their brands since they go hand in hand with SEO, social media, and e-mail marketing. Besides all other online tools used by customers, organization's website is the one that is always visited for more information, allowing customers to find the organization, connect, and engage. Websites are perfect place for showing off the brand using multimedia, fonts, and colors, for powerful first impression. To get most of it and boost the brand, organizations pair websites with SEO and other analytical tools. By doing so, they get relevant data about the website traffic and engagement metrics which is used to create impact, drive more traffic, attract more visitors, convert visitors to customers, etc.

3.4. SEO

Search engine optimization, or widely known as SEO, is considered Internet's front door. The process of SEO implies ranking websites and webpages

on Internet. Any organization seeking to sell anything on Internet is concerned about the SEO since it gives the insight of what affects their website position in search results pages. According to the world Internet statistics, there are 63.1% Internet users and an average daily time spent by each Internet user is 6 hours and 49 minutes.⁴ Looking further at the Internet usage statistics connected to the SEO it is important to note that already 68% of the online experiences begin with search engines, 63% of all shopping begins online, and 66% of the people engage in some kind of online research before making an online purchase.⁵ The statistics related to SEO go deeper and provide organizations with helpful data for website optimization so that they can achieve even higher ranking on the search engine results page. Here comes the focus on customers helpful again, since the SEO process is used for website optimization intended for better user experience and tries to ensure that users can find what they are looking for. The algorithms for SEO are changing constantly, so it is vital that organizations follow them so that they can keep or/and improve their online ranking. The SEO process helps organizations boost their brands with the optimization of website's critical elements, identifying relevant keywords, and targeting core audience.

3.5. PPC

Pay-per-click, or PPC, is paid online advertising intended to drive more traffic to certain websites. To use the PPC organizations link their advertisements with specific keywords, and each time a search is made regarding a certain product or service, the information is linked, and a solution offered. The organization is charged for every click on its ad, so the whole PPC system works on bidding, meaning the more competitive the keyword is, the more it will cost. PPC is effective digital marketing tool to boost brands because it offers the opportunity to beat competitors' website and helps organizations to place their brand in front of a certain target audience. Furthermore, PPC can be used through different platforms including search engines, video platforms, social media platforms, and other related websites. According to the latest statistics an average Internet user is exposed to 4 000 to 10 000 ads daily, paid advertisements have 200% ROI, and 65% of customers click on PPC ads. When it comes to brand awareness it is vital to know that according to the statistics the ads can increase brand awareness by 80%.⁶ Looking at the market share of search engines, Google holds around 78% of it with 8 billion searches per day and almost 105 000 searches in 1 second.⁷ Placing a PPC ad on such a highly visited search engine enormously increases the chances of being seen, increase influence and boost brand.

⁴ <https://datareportal.com/global-digital-overview>

⁵ <https://inter-growth.co/seo-stats/>

⁶ <https://techjury.net/blog/ppc-stats/#gref>

⁷ <https://www.internetlivestats.com/one-second/#google-band>

4. Companies that boost their brands with digital marketing

As mentioned in the previous sections, research and literature review give clear bases of definitions for what marketing is, what are the processes and tactics imposed by it, what are the different disciplines arising from it with the changes and challenges everyone is facing. However, the market is where everything happens in practice. Looking at the world market, there are numerous companies that outline the pros of digital marketing. The most outstanding ones that boost their brands with digital marketing according to many researchers are: ASOS, Netflix, Nike, Airbnb, Tesco, Starbucks, Zappos, Yelp, and Tesla. They aren't all in the same industry. Some of them are in apparel industry such as ASOS, Nike, and Zappos, others in retail like Tesco and Starbucks. There are representatives from automotive and energy industry, like Tesla, from hospitality industry like Airbnb from internet entertainment such as Netflix and local search like Yelp. Still, they all have outstanding digital marketing strategies that helped their brands. To do so, these companies focused their digital marketing strategies on their customers and creating valuable content, real communication, personalization, usable information, and experience. Furthermore, they are present on social media which is of great importance for today's "digitalized" customers. The success of these digital marketing strategies lays in the focus of sharing content and making connections and engagement. Instead of selling a product, service or idea, these brands share knowledge and experience. This creates loyal and satisfied customers who trust and are confident about the brand. Of course, the end result is profitability for the companies, but with boosted, trustworthy, and influential brands. (Gilliland, N.; *How 5 Emerging Tech Brands Use Digital Marketing to Grow Their Customer Base*; Raehsler, L.; Summer; Siu, E.; Barraclough, D.)

5. Conclusion

Digital marketing is a vital part of any organization today operating on the market, so it is of great importance to establish a clear digital marketing strategy and be able to implement it. Digital marketing offers many tools to be used in order to compete in today's digital world. Organizations seeking to succeed and flourish, focus on building a strong brand that will stand out in every customer's mind. Strong brands have customers in the focus, are recognizable, promising, loyal, and consistent. All these objectives of a strong brand are very likely to be achieved and organizations boost their brands with the use of digital marketing tools such as content marketing, social media, website, SEO, and PPC. All these tools are interconnected and to be used together in order to get the most of it.

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