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Event Management: Defining Digital Marketing Trends

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to define and explore the trends of digital marketing in event management. As confirmed by Hensel and Deis (2010), digital and social media must be employed in a way that will ultimately improve that will improve marketing efficiency (as cited in Cole, DeNardin & Clow, 2017). Research by Cesaroni and Consoli (2015) further established that it is important how small businesses in particular social media -as many event management firms are utilizing digital and social media in such a way that they take full advantage of every feature and tool that are available and accessible to expand both productivity and profitability (As cited in Cole, DeNardin & Clow, 2017, p. 205). As the Internet continues to dominate other means of advertising so, too, does digital media represent one of the best ways for event management professionals and firms to reach the largest number of potential clients. In addition to the opportunity that digital media represents for event management professionals and firms, the “integration of people [with] the rapid development of social media” also presents a significant opportunity for the event management industry to efficiently market itself to a diverse audience” (Harb, Fowler, Chang, Blum, & Alakaleek, 2019, p. 29).

Key words: social media, event management, digital marketing

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Introduction

As technology has become modernized, the number and types of approaches to digital marketing and communication that are available have increased and become streamlined as well. “Digital marketing includes both direct marketing, which treats customers as individuals and defines them not only by their individual characteristics but also by how they behave, and interactive marketing, which has the ability to address an individual and the ability to gather and remember the response of that individual” (Deighton, 1996, as cited in Wymbs, 2011, p. 94).

The access platforms designed to address the preferences of an individual then deliver content and enable interaction through specific online communication tools that include organizational websites, portals, search engines, blogs, e-mail, instant messaging, and text messaging (Wymbs, 2011). These methods have now also created new ways of communicating that allow families and friends to keep in touch and share news and other updates. Not only does digital marketing benefit family and friends but it also benefits businesses. “Small businesses can efficiently use digital marketing and social media marketing to promote their businesses and engage consumers with their brand” (Cole, DeNardin, & Clow, 2017, p. 205). The internet has allowed users to have access to digital marketing trends like email marketing, social media advertising on Facebook and Instagram, where they are able to share personal information, pictures, videos and more. “Each participating customer becomes part of the marketing department, as other customers read their comments or reviews” (Bajpai, Pandey, & Shriwas, 2012, p.215). Digital marketing is different than the traditional marketing. “A key difference between digital marketing and traditional marketing is that the former uses digital technologies that are inherently measurable, permit conversations to be targeted, and facilitate the creation of

relationships between customers and firms, whereas the latter is much more mass communication oriented” (Wymbs, 2011, p. 95). Internet users are able to communicate 24 hours a day by having access to a computer, laptop, smartphone or tablet. “Because the Internet is only one technology and marketing is increasingly using other digital forms to serve customers, the term *digital marketing* seems to be more appropriate than the more limited term defined earlier, *Internet marketing*” (Wymbs, 2011, p. 95). These digital forms change as technology continues to change. “The key to future marketing success is rather simple to articulate but much more difficult to implement: Get the customer the desired information when they want it and where they need it and avoid providing irrelevant informational clutter and violating their privacy concerns” (Wymbs, 2011, p. 95).

Marketing has drastically changed over the years, causing businesses to change as well, along with their digital marketing strategies. “The stronger the attitude service business owner had toward advertising the greater the level of satisfaction with the blog and social media marketing strategies” (Cole et al., 2017, p. 210). It is like any other business plan or task: the more work and planning a person puts in, the better chance of success. “With the more widespread adoption of digitalization in event delivery and as the supply chains of all events become intertwined with technology, we can learn how the digital maturity of events in the 21st century is shaping event management and event control” (Fenton, Ahmad, & Scarf, 2020, p. 48).

Social Media giants like Facebook and Instagram allow business to have their own pages and also allow ads to be purchased. “Metrics available through Facebook and other social media platforms allow the small business to have an idea of how much traffic, interest, and sales are being generated through the social media marketing efforts” (Cole et al., 2017, p. 210). As the social media community continues to expand, the event industry has a huge marketing playing

field to catch users' attention. "Through social networking sites, products/companies can have conversations and interactions with individual followers. This personal interaction can instill a feeling of loyalty into followers and potential customers" (Bajpai, Pandey, & Shriwas, 2012, p. 215). Customers and followers are able to share their reviews and thoughts for the world to see. "Social media networking offers a great opportunity to interact with event organizers, marketers and attendees" (Harb et al., 2019, p. 29).

Literature Review

During the research, data was collected and compiled from peer reviewed journal articles based on the subjects of marketing, social media and event management. "Some have argued that investments in digital marketing evolve in parallel with perceived benefits such that high levels of digital marketing usage are indicative of higher levels of digital interaction, and low levels of digital marketing usage indicate a more traditional Web presence" (Tiago & Pinheiro, 2014, p. 707).

Use of Communication Technologies

Marketing plays important role in event management. "Consumers are now using the web to look for product pictures and videos; they want more information and want to see what they're considering buying" (Bajpai, Pandey, & Shriwas, 2015, p. 218). Digital marketing is so popular it is important that all companies get onboard. "If most customers engage with social media, firms should engage with social media as well. In the past, marketers employed e-mail blasts, direct marketing, telemarketing, informational websites, television, radio, and other mechanisms to disseminate information related to the firm or its products" (Tiago & Pinheiro, 2014, p. 704). Digital marketing is way cheaper, even sometimes free compared to marketing in the past. "From

a consumer's perspective, the use of information communication technologies offers a number of benefits, including efficiency, convenience, richer and participative information, a broader selection of products, competitive pricing, cost reduction, and product diversity (Bayo-Moriones & Lera-López, 2007 as cited in Tiago & Pinheiro, 2014, p. 704). Technology increases with time and so does its users. “Social interactions among fans on Facebook event pages are expected to create an emotionally engaging environment, which will, potentially, increase the number of attendees” (Harb et al., 2019, pp. 31).

Event management digital marketing is beneficial to companies of all sizes. “Successful events are no longer measured by simply achieving a respectable attendance; a great deal more engagement is manifest through digital technologies” (Fenton, Ahmad, & Scarf, 2020, p. 49). Event management businesses are promoted by networking, email marketing, online advertising with social media, blogs and more. “With on-going developments in technology, data can be and to a large extent are being provided by the delegates themselves in real time during the event as their movements and engagement is collected as data” (Fenton et al., 2020, p. 49). The content of each trend is likely to be shared by a viewer which increases the number of people a business reaches. “Social media in business allows anyone and everyone to express and share an opinion or idea somewhere along the business’s path to market. Each participating customer becomes part of the marketing department, as other customers read their comments or reviews” (Bajpai, Pandey, & Shriwas, 2015, p. 215).

Email Marketing

Another strong marketing trend is email marketing that can be accessed on cell phones. Email marketing is a trend that gathers email addresses of past, present and potential customers and generates emails that can be accessed on cell phones. “Cell phone usage has also become a

benefit for social media marketing. Today, many cell phones have social networking capabilities: individuals are notified of any happenings on social networking sites through their cell phones, in real-time” (Bajpai et al, 2012, p. 215). According to one study, “If a company engaged in e-mail marketing, then that company tended to have a more positive attitude toward advertising” (Cole, DeNardin, & Clow, 2017, p. 208). It is a networking capability that only takes seconds. “This constant connection to social networking sites means products and companies can constantly remind and update followers about their capabilities, uses, importance, etc.” (Bajpai et al., 2012, p. 215).

Social Media Platforms

Social media websites like Facebook and Instagram play a big part of the latest digital marketing trends. “Through social networking sites, products/companies can have conversations and interactions with individual followers” (Bajpai et al., 2012, p. 215). Users can view posts, videos and pictures with just a tap of their finger. “Digital marketing is literally everywhere, all the time, it is where the conversation is happening with the consumer and as such represents a fundamental and irreversible change in marketing” (Wymbs, 2011, p. 101). Blogs can be linked to social media networks by sharing an event and all the details involving the event. “Blogs allow a product or company to provide longer descriptions of products or services. The longer description can include reasoning and uses” (Bajpai et al., 2012, p. 217). Blogs are available by a direct link or by the click of a button on a business’s website. “Content such as product discussions and webinars on products generate the highest level of direct comment onto the blog post, and users and customers interact through this medium by sharing ideas and asking questions” (Dobele, Steel, & Cooper, 2015, p. 7).

Another social media giant that is used as marketing tool is Twitter. “Twitter allows companies to promote products on an individual level. The use of a product can be explained in short messages that followers are more likely to read. These messages appear on followers’ home pages” (Bajpai et al., 2012, p. 216). All these examples are just some of the ways digital marketing is used. “Rapid growth of Web-based platforms that facilitate online social behavior has significantly modified the nature of human activities, habitats, and interactions” (Tiago & Pinheiro, 2014, p. 703).

Digital Marketing

In this study a qualitative research methodology is being used because of the collection of data from various resources about digital marketing. “The term ‘digital marketing skills’ is used in this research to refer to the knowledge and awareness of digital marketing and its applications in the creative industries” (Royle & Laing, 2013, p. 65). All marketing tools require that a business know its audience. “A company that engages effectively in online platforms enhances the diffusion of word of mouth information and also the generation of new content in collaboration with customers and users” (Dobele, Steel, & Cooper, 2015, p. 5). In event management, a company is effective if they are organized, very detailed and have a great marketing plan. “Creating memorable event experiences can be described as being dependent on a number of factors including creating regular attendee engagement, providing appropriate activities, relevant subject matter, topical and contemporary focus and targeted to a sizable receptive audience” (Fenton, Ahmad, & Scarf, 2020, p. 49).

The more details a business has about the audience target the more successful it is at reaching them. “Because of the popularity of smartphones, the Internet, and social media, consumers are spending more time on these platforms than with traditional media” (Cole,

DeNardin, & Clow, 2017, p. 210). Traditional media such as print media and television are still being used but not to the extent that social media is. Further, television is still used in almost every home today but social media marketing proves to be more informative and entertaining (Motif & Bilge, 2019).

In digital marketing, it is important to know what is the best time of day to reach more people. In one study, “Social media is an effective marketing tool that helped reduce marketing expenses because it is fast, accessible and an easy method to share information” (Harb et al., 2019, p. 30). The research presents how beneficial digital marketing trends are to event management. “Without marketing, event organizers will not be able to attract an audience for their events” (Harb et al., 2019, p. 31).

Research has been done on how digital marketing and social media has been used in planning and marketing products and events, past and present. “Social media is one of the best available marketing tools to enable a brand to connect with potential consumers by winning consumers’ trust” (Harb et al, 2019, p. 31). An event management business can execute an effective digital marketing plan by using social media platforms. “While much of digital marketing can be said to be measurable, with ‘inbuilt’ measuring systems such as number of web page hits, clickthrough, number of ‘likes’ on a Facebook page or followers on Twitter, the research found that more efficient measuring and evaluation processes were required for digital marketing procedures” (Royle & Lang, 2013, p. 70).

There have been several studies on how digital marketing empowers internet users. “The research to date shows that blogs add to the connectivity, communication, creation and channel diffusion of firm’s marketing efforts towards and with customers” (Dobele, Steel, & Cooper, 2015, p. 7). Every social media platform offers a unique opportunity to draw in users. In another

study, “Lee et al. (2012) investigated the factors that influence special event fans’ attitudes and behavior toward Facebook event pages. The findings indicated that perceived enjoyment of Facebook has significantly influences users’ attitudes and intensions toward an event” (Harb et al., 2019, p. 31). Current and future customers help with the marketing efforts and do not even realize it. “One study by the author Neti concluded that social media is no longer fad. Rather, it has become one of the main communication tools between consumers themselves and consumers and businesses” (Harb et al., 2019, p. 31).

The use of a digital marketing trend is beneficial but it also comes with more work like keeping content updated for the followers. “Other benefits of online marketing praised by respondents include ease of use, its potential for increasing knowledge, and the promotion of firms’ internal and external relationships” (Tiago, & Pinheiro, 2014, p. 705). According to a study by Harb, Fowler, Chang, Blum, & Alakaleek, it was “Recommended that every business should adopt social media as a marketing tool. Therefore, Hypothesis (H1), hypothesis (H2) and hypothesis (H3) were as follows:

H1. Perceived enjoyment will influence event fans attitudes towards using social media as a tool to find out about and decide to attend events. H2. Event fans’ attitudes will influence their behavioral intentions towards using social media as a tool to find out about and decide to attend events. H3. Event fans’ subjective norms will influence event fan’s behavioral intentions towards using social media as a tool to find out about and decide to attend events. (p. 31)

Social media platforms can also be a way to network with other professionals in the study. “All of the communication professionals agreed that digital marketing was a growing part

of the service they provided, predominantly due to the widespread adoption of social media such as Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and YouTube among the public” (Royle & Lang, 2013, p. 69).

Limitations

This study on event management and digital marketing has several limitations. “In terms of digital and social media marketing strategies, one study stated that the most popular were e-mail marketing (22.4%) and social media marketing such as Facebook and Twitter (24.9%), but less than 25% of service operations have any type of email marketing programs and have a presence in social media ” (Cole, DeNardin, & Clow, 2017, p. 210). It is important to remember these studies and surveys are based on the convenience sampling, participation and privacy rules. “As the research also uses social media, consideration must be given to trust from the contributing members” (Ryan et al., 2020, p. 52).

Some studies were compiled from online scholarly articles and studies. “In one study, the research focused on a single company and its global operations in the online environment, further case examples could be incorporated and re-examined in light of our results” (Dobele et al., 2015, p. 22). A single company will have different measurable goals and may use a variety of digital marketing trends. “Future research could consider the full range of business performance measures, including, financial implications (such as the impact of the firms’ blogging activity on ROI, revenue, and loyalty measurements) and innovation or new product ideation over a longitudinal study rather than a static snapshot” (Dobele et al., 2015, p. 22). This research will provide a deeper look into how beneficial digital marketing is aspects of the business and it will contribute to changes needed based on user’s responses. “Perceived enjoyment was effective in forming positive attitudes towards events’ social media pages. This highlights the need to

provide information and contents in an enjoyable and user-friendly way” (Harb et al., 2019, p. 41).

Event Management is a service industry and the customers are top priority. “In addition, when using social media as a marketing medium for events, event marketers and organizers should understand how other important people’s opinions and perceptions affect the intention and behavior formation” (Harb et al, 2019, p. 41). In the event industry, businesses need to join in and provide the needs of users using the technology that is available to them. “If the marketing goal is to encourage many people to become interested in the event, then social media is a perfect tool for spreading the word to a core base of customers, members and donors” (Harb et al., 2019, p. 41).

Conclusion

This paper defined digital marketing and the types of digital marketing trends. “The first part of the digital marketing definition demonstrates the range of access platforms and communications tools that form the online channels that e-marketers use to build and develop relationships with customers” (Wymbbs, 2011, p. 95). In any research, there is always factors that might impact the interpretation of findings. The following factors could impact the findings regarding digital marketing. “One might argue that engagement with technology, or indeed lack of it, does not provide evidence of the immaturity of digital technology in events (Fenton, et al., 2020, p. 63). Digital marketing trends will continue to provide great benefits to the event management industry. However, “Real-world social relationships have been migrated to the virtual world, resulting in online communities that bring people together from across the globe” (Tiago & Pinheiro, 2014, p. 703). The communities include, family, friends, organizations and businesses. “Creating a basic social media presence is easy enough, getting your community to

actually do something is more difficult. Make sure your site is included in local business directories in order to help ensure that consumers find you when they need you” (Bajpai et al., 2012, p. 223).

In the event management industry, engagement is very important. “With on-going developments in technology, data can be and to a large extent are being provided by the delegates themselves in real time during the event as their movements and engagement is collected as data” (Fenton, Ahmad, & Scarf, 2020, p. 49). For example, an engaged Facebook user can be browsing through their timeline and see a live video of a reception with uplighting by a dj. “The future of digital marketing will simply follow the customers wherever they may go” (Wymbs, 2011, p. 95).

Digital marketing is the new traditional marketing with a twist. “This research has shown that there remains a great deal to discover about the use of technology at events and many opportunities exist for further research from academics and practitioners working together to provide mutual benefits for both industry and education” (Fenton et al., 2020, p. 64).

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