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How the digital age has changed the corporate communication world: the case of Digital Marketing in the Fashion Business

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Abstract

Digital Marketing have revolutionized the way companies communicate and interact with their publics, in particularly in the Fashion Business. The use of digital communication on a daily is increasingly intense, which leads companies to work the digital business strategy around the objectives, as well as incorporating digital methods into the objectives. According to Hamel, "The advantage of the competitiveness comes from a technological introduction and the constant adaptation along the time to the technological evolution inserted in the strategy of the organization".

So, this research is a qualitative analysis to understand what are the digital factors that contribute to sustainable competitive advantages of organizations which can support strategic and future actions.

Keywords

Business; digital; fashion; marketing; revolution.

1. Introduction: Digital Marketing

The American Marketing Association, defend marketing as an organizational function and progress for creating, communicating and delivering value to consumers. As well as enabling customer relationships to be managed in a way that benefits the organization and its stakeholders (Yudi Fernando, Norizan Mat Saad, Mahmud Sabri Haron, 2012). This is ultimately the most important motivational factor when planning a business, and therefore is no different when looking at a marketing method for the Digital Fashion Marketing Director.

Digital Marketing, defined by Chaffey et al (2012), is the achievement of marketing objectives through the use of electronic communications technology. Meaning that brands and their Digital Fashion Marketing Directors should not be making the aims and objectives about digital media and marketing, rather working the digital business strategy around the objectives, as well as incorporating digital methods into the objectives if the business depends on it.

With the rapid growth of significance of e-marketing, it has a direct impact on traditional marketing strategy and operations. In order for the Digital Fashion Marketing Director to make it successful, it requires planning and innovation, while implying organisational commitment and effective management. All supported by digital methods including technology, process and structure (Harris, L. & Denis, 2008).

The advantages of digital marketing can come from different marketing methods. For example the marketing grid of Ansoff (1957) can be updated to include digital marketing methods and strategies. Businesses can use the internet to see what existing products are currently selling well to existing markets, meaning for Market Penetration is an available option for all companies. For new markets, in the Market Development and Diversification strategies, digital methods can be used to reach across the globe using the internet. For new products in Product development and Diversification, the internet not only allows for delivery to be much easier, but other digital software enables companies to track what type of products customers like.

Geyskens et al (2002) suggests that there is 3 main reasons for companies to use the internet to expand, as an alternative way of categorising the subject to the more traditional Ansoff matrix (1957). Market expansion which occurs when new groups of customers are reached, who have not yet purchased from the company. The introduction of the internet and digital methods of marketing, means that brands have accessibility to global locations, where they might be able to provide a better service to what is available locally.

Second is brand switching, when a brand wins over customers from competitors, either by use of better quality, price or service. Digital media, mainly online websites, has allowed consumers to switch between brands and online shops with ease. Leaving Digital Fashion Marketing Directors to focus on keeping the consumers attention, as well as offering a better overall service than their competitors. This is done by monitoring what the competitors are doing, as well as what the consumers want and need. Working with both these factors, the director should be able to improve their own brand.

Lastly relationship deepening, meaning selling more to existing customers who would commonly use traditional methods to make purchases in stores. This can often be done by advertising different services that can only be provided in stores, as well as making sure that the stores are well advertised online. By making the transition from physical to digital simple and easy, the Digital Fashion Marketing Director will make the brand more suited to the existing customers. They are likely to want less change, but to see an improvement in the brand and its services. If the addition of digital methods changes too much about the brand, they may be encouraged to move to a competitor.

Chaffey D, Ellis-Chadwick F (2012) use a case study on North West Supplies, as an example for the benefits that the internet has for smaller companies. The addition of using a website meant that the company had an increase in direct sales, this would have been partially down to the increased accessibility of the store. This also helped reach new customers that are not local to a small individual store. North West Supplies apparently now has sales abroad regularly. The final benefit stated is the improved promotion of the companies range, as there is no limit to the number of products that can be on a website, unlike in a physical store. Customers also have an easier time searching for what they would like, meaning that they are more likely to walk away happy with a purchase.

2. Interactivity and personalization

Digital marketing has allowed businesses to create a more interactive communication system with its consumers. By gaining feedback and the opinions of consumers, the Digital Fashion Marketing Director can improve the business' image, as well as the business strategy both online and offline.

The traditional forms of marketing are seen as push media, where the information is going from the brand to the consumer. Whereas digital media is known as pull media, where the consumer is in control of when they see the media and advertising. This means that the marketing director will have less control of which consumers see the media and advertisements, and focus on pushing physical stimuli to attract people to the website, or social media.

The internet has allowed for two way conversations, making interactivity a process of dialog rather than a monolog. Consumers can now talk directly to the business through emails, social media and phone calls. Deighton (1996) claimed that the interactive benefits of the internet are a way of developing long-term relationships with customers. This is one of the factors that leads towards repeat and loyal customers, within a very competitive market online.

Digital technology has allowed for one-to-one communication between brands and customers, through personalised messages created by software monitoring the consumers behaviour. Brands can send emails, for example, to all of their customers as part of their marketing scheme to interact with them. This email could be the same or more personalised, due to technological advancements that can track consumer behaviour.

There is also many-to-many communication through digital media, with example of social media posts and auction websites. Brands and consumers make a post for the mass to see, creating an ongoing conversation. Digital Fashion Marketing Directors can use this method of interactivity, to involve the brand in these large scale conversations. Interacting with many and creating a sense of community with both current and potential customers.

While this is a new factor within marketing, one-to-many marketing is still important to consider and use for the Digital Fashion Marketing Director. Digital media allows for detailed information to be conveyed to consumers, making the overall message from the brand less important. While an ecommerce website is a method of selling to consumers, it is also considered a way of advertising (Berthon et al. 1996). As when looking for one product, others can be suggested as well as other services.

Digital marketing attracts the consumers undivided attention, resulting in the viewer wanting to be in control and to have their needs responded to. This is different to some traditional marketing methods which are more relaxed and laid back, for example TV and radio advertisements, which viewers don't always pay attention to. The Digital Fashion Marketing Directors use this change in levels of involvement to their benefit, when planning advertisements online.

A successful interactive marketing strategy integrates traditional marketing methods as well as new digital methods. The traditional methods should help direct consumers towards the digital media, such as a brands website. Not only this, but all methods chosen should be able to work together and be all connected and simple for the consumer to navigate. The website should contain the information for instore services, and any other offline services.

The new digital formats available for businesses to use, including videos, streams and blog posts, also helps with interactivity. Businesses can "use integration for better customer dialog and feedback" (Brown, 2012, p34), as it has many options available that every business will find a method that suits themselves and their customers.

3. Challenges and opportunities

While digital branding and its methods seem to be more beneficial than traditional methods, it does come with its challenges. One of them is the complexity of the different systems, no matter what digital method is used it needs to be consistent both online and offline. This is when the consumer is not online, and the brand should be interacting with them still through methods such as emails, texting and other messages on social media. This takes specialist expertise and software, either in-house or supplied by an agency, organized by the Digital Fashion Marketing Director to manage the campaign (Chaffey, D., & Ellis-Chadwick, F. 2012).

Monitoring competitors is another challenge, what the competitors are tweeting, posting and how they are interacting with consumers, comparatively in order to make sure that the own brand is also competing and keeping to the same standard. Tracking competitors is also part of keeping up to date on technology, because as soon as one brand releases a new method of advertising using digital branding, then it is important that the competitors keep on the same level. Digital Fashion Marketing Directors should be able to investigate what competitors are using, before that release a new digital method. This is so they can either improve their own current digital methods and strategy to compete, or create their own version of the new method so that they are on the same level.

A common challenge of all business related factors and changes, is the cost. In terms of digital marketing, each advertisement or marketing method needs to receive enough activity from consumers in order to be worth the cost of setting them up and keeping them active. Each time a consumer clicks onto a brands advertisement, it could earn them up to \$10 (Chaffey, D., & Ellis-Chadwick, F. 2012).

Keeping track of the brands own levels of interactivity is another challenge, in that activity of the branding and marketing that is in place needs to be kept in check. Customers clicking on advertisements and views on social media posts, all should be reviewed and analysed to see how effective the chosen method of branding is. Though it is difficult to track all of the attention that an advertisement is receiving, as not every consumer that views the advert will click on the link, but they may still be influenced by it. One way to help monitor this is to become more interactive with both the current consumers and potential ones.

The introduction of the internet has given opportunities to both small and large businesses, in order to compete within the global market place. Evans and Wurster (1997) argue that there are three different characteristics of information, that can have a major impact on the general marketplace, and all have their own opportunities when combined with digital media. The reach of the business will increase dramatically, due to the brand having access to international consumers at a low cost. Reach also refers to the different categories and products a consumer interface can cover, for example amazon.com and boohoo.com. These are brands that are online only, and have built their business strategy to do so. Other brands such as NewLook and H&M, have used the internet to expand their range.

The second characteristic given is richness, which refers to the information about the products that the brand and Digital Fashion Marketing Director put online to be available to the consumers. Increasing interactivity with the consumers, this opportunity is aloud more information to be put online than when traditional methods are used. Though Evans and Wurster do comment that it can be overdone, by putting too much information on a website customers may feel over whelmed.

The final characteristic Evans and Wurster (1997) state is affiliation, which is referring to the links a brand has with partners. Online, a brand with the most and richest links with compatible organizations and other brands, will have access to gain a larger reach and influence consumers. E-businesses such as google, and other search engines are successful examples of creating partnerships, or acquirer other companies to provide diverse information services including social media.

4. Market Environment

Within the fashion industry, everything depends on fast moving change. With every new season, brands provide new trends that lead to obsolescence of last year's clothing. Majority of the changes are introduced by the designers themselves, to create new activity to keep the customers happy. While this is a true, others are there because of influences beyond the control of marketers. These together form the marketing environment, shown in the figure below. (Easey, 2009) While the mico-environment is not directly affected by the introduction of the internet, the macro-environment changes dramatically. Mainly in size, as the internet allows businesses access to all over the world, as well as being effected by international factors.

The market environment has vastly grown with the introduction of the internet and digital methods of branding and marketing. Forces like PESTLE have to be researched again and almost in a different format. Technological advances, in terms of digital branding, become a very large influencing factor allowing brands to develop their products, new ways to target markets and improve their accessibility. (Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, 2016) Economical, Political and Social factors all change depending on the location. Each country

has its own economic problems, its own cultural differences, and its own political factors that may control what its residents see online. Each will need to be looked into and assessed, before a brand expands to a new location. There are also different legal requirements and ethical guidelines on what can be advertised and sold online, to the normal laid out for instore sales.

Social media are websites that allow people to communicate within a group or between individuals, by providing the facilities and software to do so. (Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, 2016) Leonardi et.al. (2013) states that many brands use a strategy that crosses platform, using a range of different social media to reach different markets. With the increase of internet use globally, 50.3 million (Digitaldayresearch.co.uk, 2017), it has become essential for brands to adapt to keep up with competitors online. Social media increase in popularity has led to majority of brands also having accounts, and enabling them to become more interactive with their consumers. Digital Fashion Marketing Directors now have to reach out to consumers who are "now spending less time within mainstream media sites or channels." (Chaffey, D. and Smith P.R. 2013, p114)

In terms of consumer behaviour, the internet has had an effect on the consumer buying process model on every step. From making consumers aware of a product or service through advertising, being active on search engines when the consumer is conducting research, and online accessibility allowing online purchases and transactions. Digital Fashion Marketing Directors have to make sure that they are interacting with the consumers at all stages, without being invasive.

5. Political factors

Digital Fashion Marketing Directors need to focus on their home countries laws and regulations, before considering international restrictions. The political stance the home country of a businesses has, can limit international operations and domestic operations. As well as what countries the international firm may enter, to do business with. (Hollensen, 2012) Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2012) comments that Digital Fashion Marketers need to be aware that political action enacted through government agencies to control the adoption of the internet, in order to improve the country's economic state.

In terms of the internet, brands have to oblige by many different laws and political factors, as they will be accessing people from around the world, though they only have to legally obey the laws on the country in which it is based. For example in the UK, the regulation of different market places occurs through the Financial Service Authority, Ofgem and Ofcom. (Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, 2012) It is organisations like these that the Digital Fashion Marketing Director has to take into consideration, and make sure they are follow.

As well as sponsoring research into the best practice among companies, enacting laws to regulate the environment and involvement of the setup of international bodies such as ICANN, to coordinate the internet. Introducing the internet to most marketing plans means that the Digital Fashion Marketing manager is putting the brand out there, for more people to see. This not only means that they are more likely to be caught if they break a law, but also that they are open to the opinions of the general public, which differs in each country.

As each government for different countries will have different approaches to business, as well as the own governments stability varying across different countries. Digital Fashion Marketing Directors have to be able to predict to influence and respond to government action and any influencing factors provided by them. (Mathur, 2008)

When planning new marketing campaigns, it is important to take into consideration the potential political, regulatory and economic factors that would impact it. With international growth within the fashion industry, it is important that brands keep up with this development to be relevant within the market. It is also important that these factors are taken into consideration when looking at the application of marketing, by the Digital Fashion Marketing Director. It is up to them to be aware of national and international circumstances, and be able to steer the brand and campaign in the right direction. The regulatory frameworks have to be adapted to be used as part of communication campaigns, especially for global and pan-European fashion brands. Each individual market needs to be investigated, and no assumptions should be made. (Hines and Bruce, 2008)

6. Economic Factors

Political factors are closely connected to economic factors, nationally and internationally, as a government has a large influence over the economical state of a country. International businesses are affected by globally economic factors, which affect supply and demand. It is constantly important for digital markets to identify which economic influences they need to keep an eye on, and monitor them. Classic economic factors can affect every aspect of business activity, and are equally permeant to both online and offline business trades. International market growth and emerging economics, both have the potential to influence digital marketing activates. (Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, 2012)

Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2012) bring up the subject of the economical difference across the world, which online businesses now have access to. When deciding on target market, a brand will categorise the market into demographics with the normal variables including age, education, gender, lifestyle and income. But when using the internet to expand and reach across the world, these categories will not work across different countries. A Digital Fashion Marketing Director needs to be able to take into consideration that in developing countries, they will not be able to use the same variables, due to average age differing, as well as income and lifestyle.

Because of the increasing diversity of sociocultural and economic environment, where research is being conducted, international marketing researchers will have to be able to develop the capability to coordinate and conduct research reaching a broad range of environmental context and research questions. (Samuel Craig and Douglas, 2001) The divide between economic and political situations of different countries is one of the larger problems a Marketing Manager has to figure out. This could result in different marketing methods being used for different locations, as using the same theory is very unlikely to work in locations it is not designed for.

Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2012) comment on Gorell's observations about how to cope with the economic changes. Saying that point out the need to focus on increasing opportunities and innovations, be selective in which innovations are likely to produce early profit to the company as well as manage company resources, and finally to get the whole company involved in working towards a common goal and objective. These steps are all for the marketing department, and the Digital Fashion Marketing Director duty to keep in place, in order to survive economic downturn and recession. With the introduction of the internet, keeping to these more basic rules are easily transferred, if not the whole process is speed up with the ability to respond almost instantly.

7. E-Strategy

A business strategy is an overall plan to reach long, medium, or short-term objectives of a brand (Lea-Greenwood, 2013). There are a few different types of strategy, and this section of the paper will mainly focus on how e-strategies (or digital strategies) work and how they fit in with the rest of the brands planning.

In order to create a successful e-strategy Digital Fashion Marketing Directors have to be able to incorporate traditional business strategies. Existing businesses had to adapt their current business strategy to include e-business methods, without changing their objectives and aims. While new businesses starting up have the option to create their whole business strategy around being online, while employing methods from traditional business plan models. (Chaffey, D. 2011) This combination is what can lead to a successful business strategy over all, with the brand being able to compete in both the online market and the offline market.

A business e-strategy is very similar to a business strategy, in that they are both based of a brand's current performance, defines how objectives will be met, allocates resources and provides a long term plan to develop the organization. (Chaffey, D. 2011) Although an e-business strategy can be incorporated within a functional strategy, it is possible that the e-strategy will het forgotten about and not seen at a higher level within the business' organizational planning. If this happens the digital methods of marketing are reduced in quality, and management funding. The Digital Fashion Marketing Director needs to refrain this from happening, so that the digital method is not forgotten about and remains a large part of the overall corporate strategy.

Rowley (2002) comments that the e-business strategy should support and help influence the corporate strategy, as well as support the functional and supply chain market strategies. Digital Fashion Marketing Directors have to make sure they are involved in the e-strategy in the whole process, rather than just being behind the scenes. Hughes (2001) recognised that in the early stages of developing an e-business, there is little to no

clarity from a senior level in e-commerce. This suggests that senior management should take a more active interest in the e-strategy, and senior sponsorship alongside the Marketing Directors.

The internet has given way for a range of different business models, mainly the tried and tested being popular and reused by many new brands. Auction, internet start-up, advertiser and e-tailing are all new versions of business model, that came around after the introduction of the internet. There is currently existing fashion brands that have taken advantage of these new types of business models, and has been successful in doing so. Ebay its self does have a fashion and clothing department, where customers wishing to sell can do so. But there are also websites like kerrytaylorauctions.com which is solely designed to auction off couture fashion items. Digital Fashion Marketing Directors of new start up businesses, have the option to take the brand online only, and use these new and tested business models.

8. New Marketing Mix

The traditional marketing mix tools consist of Price, Product, Promotion and Place. All would be used by the marketing director of a brand, to create the marketing strategy. While the basics can also be applied to digital branding, the marketing mix needs to be slightly updated to work to its full potential for the Digital Fashion Marketing Director. The key to a successful marketing mix on the internet, is to make sure that it is interactive (Eid and Trueman, 2002). By updating the traditional mix to include modern technology and methods, a business can keep up to date with latest trends, while a new business can create a mix based solely on the use of the internet.

Product mix now means there is the possibility for digital products, as well as finding out customer needs and wants much faster. Digital Fashion Marketing Directors should have a detailed understanding of international marketing environment, to be able to assess the relative advantages of their own products and services, in this sense the brands fashion designs. (Quelch and Klein, 1996). Digital products have the advantage of easy transport, and quick service, any brand can take advantage of this and incorporate it into their own strategy. The internet has made the prices of competitors much more standardized, influencing the pricing mix, as consumers are much more aware of alternative brands and prices across the globe (Poon and Jevons, 1997). There are even websites a that are designed to analyse prices and compare different stores, to help consumers find the best deal for them. This means that Digital Fashion Marketing Directors have to be much more aware of the other competitors' prices and how they fit in.

While on the internet, hard-selling and advertiser-push promotion strategies are not as effective (Poon and Jevons 1997). Consumers become less susceptible to advertising campaigns whilst online, as they have the option to ignore them and click away. Online advertising and promotion is generally cheaper than traditional methods, with some even being free for example trading links on websites, and the updated word of mouth which is now much quicker with the use of social media.

Eid and Trueman, (2002) believes that physical distribution is the new version of place within the marketing mix. The use of the internet reduces the importance of traditional methods of distribution and intermediaries in international marketing. Internet consumers are less likely to want to visit a physical store when browsing online, and rather expect any purchases to be delivered to them directly. Digital Fashion Marketing Directors have the task of making sure that the distribution service of the brand is up to the standard expected by the customers.

9. Conclusion

In conclusion, Digital Fashion Marketing Directors have to be able to update any existing business plans and strategies, to include digital methods due to the high demand online and to keep up with competitors. Although physical stores are not going anywhere, it has become essential for brands to have a presence online in order to compete within the market. The idea of either adapting or dying is not new, but because of the international expansion possibilities of a lot of brands it is of high importance that Marketing Directors manage the branding to keep up with competitors.

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