

Course Book



ONLINE AND SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

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ONLINE AND SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

MASTHEAD

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INTRODUCTION

WELCOME

SIGNPOSTS THROUGHOUT THE COURSE BOOK

This course book contains the core content for this course. Additional learning materials can be found on the learning platform, but this course book should form the basis for your learning.

The content of this course book is divided into units, which are divided further into sections. Each section contains only one new key concept to allow you to quickly and efficiently add new learning material to your existing knowledge.

At the end of each section of the digital course book, you will find self-check questions. These questions are designed to help you check whether you have understood the concepts in each section.

For all modules with a final exam, you must complete the knowledge tests on the learning platform. You will pass the knowledge test for each unit when you answer at least 80% of the questions correctly.

When you have passed the knowledge tests for all the units, the course is considered finished and you will be able to register for the final assessment. Please ensure that you complete the evaluation prior to registering for the assessment.

Good luck!

SUGGESTED READINGS

GENERAL SUGGESTIONS

Godin, S. (2000). *Unleashing the ideavirus*. Hyperion.

Kingsnorth, S. (2019). *Digital marketing strategy: An integrated approach to online marketing* (2nd ed.). Kogan Page.

Scott, D. (2017). *The new rules of marketing and PR* (6th ed.). Wiley.

UNIT 1

Laurie, S., & Mortimer, K. (2019). How to achieve true integration: The impact of integrated marketing communication on the client/agency relationship. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 35(3/4), 231–252.

UNIT 2

García-Morales, V. J., Martín-Rojas, R., & Garde-Sánchez, R. (2020). How to encourage social entrepreneurship action? Using Web 2.0 technologies in higher education institutions. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 161(2), 329–350.

UNIT 3

Tellis, G., MacInnis, D., Tirunillai, S., & Zhang, Y. (2019). What drives virality (sharing) of online digital content? The critical role of information, emotion, and brand prominence. *Journal of Marketing*, 83(4), 1–20.

UNIT 4

Anderson, M., Karami, A., & Bozorgi, P. (2020). *Social media and COVID-19: Can social distancing be quantified without measuring human movements?* [Working Paper]. arXiv. Available online

UNIT 5

Voicu, M.-C. (2020). Research on the impact of social media on consumer trust. *Global Economic Observer*, 8(1), 120–132.

REQUIRED READING

UNIT 1

Popovici, V., Muchina, S., & Popovici, L. (2018). Traditional versus online marketing for B2B organizations: Where the line blurs. *Ovidius University Annals, Series Economic Science*, 18(1), 382–387.

UNIT 2

Antonijević, S., & Gurak, L. (2019). The internet: A brief history based on trust. *Journal of Sociology, Social Psychology & Social Anthropology*, 61(4), 464–477.

UNIT 3

Singh, S. (2019). Investigating consumer satisfaction towards mobile marketing. *Journal of International Technology & Information Management*, 28(2), 93–108.

UNIT 4

Yaghtin, S., Safarzadeh, H., & Zand, M. K. (2020). Planning a goal-oriented B2B content marketing strategy. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 38(7), 1007–1020.

UNIT 5

Spencer, S. (2020). The problem of online manipulation. *University of Illinois Law Review*, 2020(3), 959–1006.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Developing and implementing a successful marketing strategy is critical for a company's long-term growth. To expand market share and create a sustainable brand identity, it is increasingly important to fully embrace **Online and Social Media Marketing**. In this course, we will begin with the basics of strategic online marketing, focusing on the importance of an integrated communications plan. We will explore the internal and external conditions of online marketing within the context of environmental analysis and review the objectives of online and social media in both business to business (B2B) and business to consumer (B2C) models. You will learn how to develop a successful online marketing presence by becoming familiar with the best practices of companies that excel at using social media to connect with their various stakeholder groups.

A timeline of the history of the internet will be discussed, and the advantages of Web 2.0 will be analyzed. The various tools made possible by the availability of recent technologies will be identified and evaluated for their practical implementation in helping companies reach their goals. We will discuss future trends considering issues related to the Coronavirus pandemic and heightened societal concerns relating to privacy, as well as legal and ethical considerations.

With a solid foundation in the basics of online and social media marketing and web technologies, we will address the online marketing mix, the instruments available, and their inherent strengths in meeting various marketing goals. Integrated and online viral campaigns will be examined. You will discover the basics of the planning, management, measurement, and control of the marketing process, as they are inherent to all successful marketing efforts. We will discuss the future of online marketing and examine applications of artificial intelligence as well as augmented and virtual reality.

The recommended reading will add a further dimension to the concepts that constitute this course by introducing you to influential authors and articles in the field of online and social media marketing.

UNIT 1

BASICS OF STRATEGIC ONLINE MARKETING

STUDY GOALS

On completion of this unit, you will have learned ...

- the elements of an integrated marketing campaign.
- the purpose of conducting a SWOT analysis.
- how internal and external conditions can impact the success of an organization's marketing efforts.
- the differences between B2B and B2C marketing approaches.

1. BASICS OF STRATEGIC ONLINE MARKETING

Case Study

Jericho Road Press (JRP) is an American independent book publisher. According to founder Diane Robinson, JRP's main competitive advantage is their ability to develop long-term relationships with their authors. She feels that this has been a key component of their success. JRP's revenue is based upon a percentage of sales made by the authors that are published with them. She admitted that revenues have been stagnant for the past few years, despite signing three to five new authors each year.

At the suggestion of one of their authors, Robinson turned to Brennan Advertising for help in increasing their online presence to grow their business. Agency executives began by reviewing everything they could about JRP's current use of social media and found that Facebook was the only vehicle currently in use. In looking at JRP's Facebook page, they found no recent posts and only 650 followers. As the books that JRP publishes are primarily action and suspense titles aimed at men 25 to 59 years of age, it was determined that Facebook was an excellent choice for a social media platform, but that the content and posts needed to be updated regularly. Further, there needed to be a way for readers to connect with JRP as well as their favorite authors and drive traffic to the JRP website.

With the goal of creating an exclusive online community to encourage brand loyalty and return customers, JRP's Facebook page was revised. Building on the strong relationships JRP has with their authors, the new page "Road Warriors" featured articles, photos, and weekly interviews with JRP's most successful authors. Authors were encouraged to go live on social media several times during their week and sponsor trivia contests, ask questions, and reward participants with an opportunity for free books. A number of authors chose to slightly adapt the theme to "Road Warriors at Home," focusing on how the COVID-19 pandemic was impacting their daily lives as writers and readers. Visitors to the site responded with photos of themselves reading at home and posed with pictures of their families and pets. Traffic to the site increased by 500 percent in the first week alone.

With all the new leads, JRP started compiling an email list for future use. The agency helped put a content plan in place, allowing for weekly updates and encouraging engagement from current followers and potential new readers. JRP's authors were recruited to become brand ambassadors in support of the overall campaign.

Results: Robinson reports that only three months since the launch of "Road Warriors," their Facebook page now boasts 2,300 followers. Weekly posts are reaching roughly 1,000 viewers, engagement has increased to 20 percent, and 100 new followers are being added weekly. JRP's website, which was redesigned to keep with the theme, now gets 40 percent more visitors as a result of their improved social media presence. Sales are up 22 percent over last year and JRP plans to pursue new social media opportunities to build on their success.

Consider the following prompts:

- Why is the support and engagement of JRP’s authors a critical component to the “Road Warriors” campaign?
- How does the “Road Warriors at Home” theme contribute to the success of the campaign?
- What other types of companies could benefit by employing a similar strategy?

1.1 Integrated Communications as the Basis for Success

Integrated Marketing Communications

To maximize results and increase the return on investment in advertising and promotion for both traditional and online marketing efforts, an organization must develop and execute campaigns that are well integrated. The concept of integrated marketing communications (IMC) is based on the notion that “the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.” This theory is also a foundation of the Gestalt school of psychology. The word *Gestalt* is German for the way things have been put together (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2020). Business buyers and consumers alike will respond much more favorably to a campaign in which the various promotional components work together to create a unified brand image and a clear, consistent, and compelling brand identity and value proposition.

The foundations of integrated marketing communications (IMC) are

the premises of consistency, collegiality and synergy. It requires people to work together, across the client organization and across the various external stakeholders, so that all brand touch points are integrated, and the customer journey is smooth and efficient(Laurie & Mortimer, 2019).

Each element being considered for use in a campaign needs to be carefully designed and executed, always keeping in mind how it contributes to the overall brand identity and the campaign’s goals. Based upon the target audience an organization is trying to reach and the specific objectives of the campaign, the choice of elements in the promotional mix will vary but may include any or all of the following traditional media elements.

Traditional Media

Traditional marketing efforts include the standard elements of the marketing mix, also known as traditional media. They include advertising (print, outdoor, radio, and TV), sales promotion, public relations, personal selling, and direct marketing (direct mail, telemarketing). The focus is outbound, as traditional media tools are controlled by the sender or the source who decides what information will be sent.

Traditional marketing continues to be extremely effective despite the growth of new media opportunities. Some organizations prefer the tried-and-true methods they have relied upon for years as they have been proven to be effective and have stood the test of time, while others experiment with a blend of both traditional and new media. The digital marketing firm eMarketers estimates that \$104.32 billion will be spent on traditional techniques in 2021 (Shah, 2020).

Advertising

This is paid non-personal presentation delivered through media (newspaper, magazine, radio, television, and outdoor) and the promotion of ideas, goods, or services by an identified sponsor.

Table 1: Advantages and Disadvantages of Advertising

Advantages	Disadvantages
Reach masses of buyers at a low cost per exposure	Often difficult to track results
Increase legitimacy and awareness of the brand	Media channels can be crowded
Illustrate product benefits with sound, motion, or color	Impersonal one-way communication

Source: Olmsted (2021).

Sales promotion

Sales promotion uses short term incentives to encourage the purchase of goods or services, e.g., contests, sweepstakes, coupons, gifts with purchase, and loyalty programs.

Table 2: Advantages and Disadvantages of Sales Promotion

Advantages	Disadvantages
Attract consumer attention	Sales promotion effects are short-lived
Motivate purchases	Can damage a reputation or lower perception of quality
Generate sharing on social media and word-of-mouth advertising	Customers learn to wait for deals and price breaks

Source: Olmsted (2021).

Personal selling

In personal selling, the firm's sales force creates a personal presentation to make sales and build customer relationships, including face-to-face, telephone, email, and other digital communication channels such as Zoom or Skype.

Table 3: Advantages and Disadvantages of Personal Selling

Advantages	Disadvantages
Assist buyer in purchases requiring major decisions (bigger ticket items)	Requires longer-term commitment than advertising
Can build buyer preferences and long-term relationships	Difficult to manage and monitor sales process
The buyer is more likely to listen and respond to salesperson	Most expensive promotional tool

Source: Olmsted (2021).

Public relations

The term public relations (PR) refers to how a firm builds relationships with stakeholders through favorable publicity, corporate image and media handling, sponsorships, and support of social causes.

Table 4: Advantages and Disadvantages of Public Relations

Advantages	Disadvantages
Very believable, adds to credibility (news stories, sponsorships, and events)	Efforts can backfire
Teach those who avoid ads or salespeople	Little to no control over how the message is presented
Communicate the values of a company (gets to the buyer as news)	No guarantee that articles will run or events will receive media coverage

Source: Olmsted (2021).

Direct marketing

As its name implies, direct marketing is a form of one-way communication with the **target market** via email, mail, or telemarketing.

Target market
A target market is the audience that a company wishes to reach with its marketing efforts.

Table 5: Advantages and Disadvantages of Direct Marketing

Advantages	Disadvantages
Customized offers can be targeted to specific groups or individuals	Too much clutter in the marketplace
Evaluate response to offers, price points, and product features	No real impact on customer loyalty or brand preference
Can complement advertising and sales promotion	Can be seen as junk mail; addresses and phone numbers can be blocked

Source: Olmsted (2021).

New Media

The web has opened a tremendous opportunity to reach niche buyers directly with targeted information that costs a fraction of what big-budget advertising costs (Scott, 2017). Online marketing efforts, known as digital marketing, include certain emerging elements, which are also referred to as new media (i.e., websites, mobile marketing, blogs, and social media). The focus is on engagement with customers and providing a way for them to interact with each other. New media is considered inbound marketing as the customers frequently create and forward the messages themselves. Inbound marketing tends to provide more willing consumers than outbound marketing (Shah, 2020).

Digital channels have exploded in popularity over the past decade and companies are now spending more on new media than traditional elements. It is estimated that businesses will invest \$172 billion in 2021 (Shah, 2020). New media opportunities are changing and evolving rapidly, and marketers who wish to compete in tomorrow's global marketplace need to understand the challenges. They need to incorporate digital marketing into "almost every key business decision from product development and pricing through to public relations (PR) and even recruitment" in order to use it to its full advantage (Kingsnorth, 2019).

New Media Channels

Websites

The use of websites helps to build brand image, educate customers about the company and its products, create online communities, solicit feedback and messages from customers, and provide a strong call to action with user-friendly links. It is difficult to identify a company of any size that does not have a presence on the web. The most basic websites are purely informational with company and product updates, a section with frequently asked questions (FAQ), and basic contact information. Today, however, it is relatively simple to develop a strong web presence with a small budget. Consumers are looking for ways to engage with your company and interact with like-minded individuals and groups. The posting of videos, photos, and reviews by customers and fans are currently allowed on many websites, as savvy firms recognize the power of customer involvement in spreading their message and strengthening their brand identity.

Popular websites such as Google, YouTube, and Facebook are household names. However, there are many others who also receive millions of visitors each year such as Tmall, a Chinese corporation offering internet-related services, and Taobao Marketplace, an online shopping company also based in China (TBFocus, n.d.).

Mobile marketing

Mobile marketing provides customers with useful information and money-saving opportunities via text messages, mobile-friendly websites, and apps. According to data presented by mobile market data and analytics firm App Annie, these are the ten most popular apps of the past decade: Twitter, YouTube, UC Browser, Tiktok, Skype, Snapchat, Instagram, WhatsApp Messenger, Facebook Messenger, and Facebook (App Annie, 2019).

Mobile marketing

This is multi-channel marketing designed to reach audiences on smartphones, tablets, and other devices.

Blogs (weblogs)

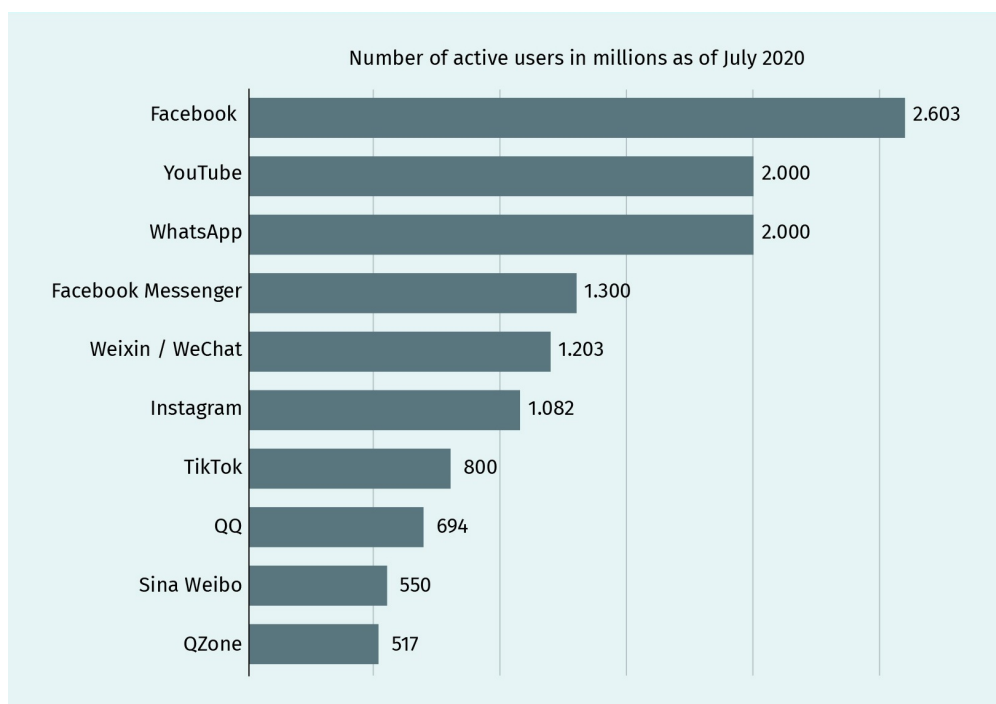
A shortening of the term “weblogs,” blogs provide an opportunity to communicate with readers on company issues and trends and create an online community of like-minded individuals. As an example, with podcasts and features such as *How to find a job during a pandemic and a recession*, *Fast Company* is a leading publication, focusing on innovation in technology, creativity, and design (Davis, 2020). Popular blogs in the world of celebrities and entertainment include Billboard, TMZ, and People.

Social media

The use of social media in marketing increases customer connection through social interaction and supports the development of communities of customers with special interests. An excellent example is the Harley Owners Group or HOG, a unique community made up of more than one million active users, connected by the fact that they all own Harley-Davidson motorcycles. This lifestyle brand has united passionate fans from all over the world who appreciate the opportunity to engage online and connect with each other (Fisk, 2016).

The following graphic shows the ten most popular social networks worldwide as of July 2020, ranked by number of active users in millions (Clement, 2020).

Figure 1: The Most Popular Social Media Networks



Source: Clement (2020).

Regardless of the new or traditional media channels chosen for a campaign, the promotional elements described above need to be selected and utilized carefully and in combination to achieve one or more of the following campaign objectives: inform, persuade, remind, and reinforce the intended message to the target audience, as described below (Kokemuller, 2019).

Product life cycle

Also called PLC, this term describes the stages that products go through: introduction, growth, maturity, and decline.

- inform. This objective aims to increase product awareness, especially in the introductory stage of the **product life cycle**, provide customers with product features/benefits, and alert customers to special sales or promotional events.
- persuade. In this case, the goal is to convince consumers to take action to try new products, brands, or services, and create demand (especially for products facing stiff competition in the growth and early maturity stages of the product life cycle).
- remind. The goal of this objective is to create awareness, stimulate re-purchase, and increase demand for seasonal products or unbought goods and services, especially those at the mature stage of the product life cycle.
- reinforce. The aim of this objective could be to improve consumer perceptions, support sales promotion efforts, pre-sell products, or stimulate early demand.

Advantages of new media

With its relatively low cost, new media can be an easier way for new companies to get noticed. Regardless of the size of the company, however, new media can offer the following advantages:

- value. Using new media is often less expensive than traditional media.
- communication/interaction. New media offers a simpler way to establish direct communication, as well as increased interaction and engagement.
- ease of projecting and measuring results. With new media, it is easier to attain details on the number of customers viewing, interacting, and sharing information. Results can be viewed immediately to allow for changes and revisions.
- reach. It can be a cost-effective way to reach and connect with customers all over the world, while targeting specific countries or groups.
- relationship building. Customers become brand ambassadors by sharing posts and reviews, resulting in increased brand loyalty and word of mouth advertising (Shah, 2020).

Disadvantages of new media

New media tools are not without their drawbacks, however. Potential challenges may include the following:

- security and privacy issues. Not everyone is comfortable sharing personal information online and the threat of hackers accessing this information is a real concern for many.
- level of engagement. Customers expect up-to-date content and real-time communication, which requires significant resources to provide current information and timely responses to posts and questions.

- lack of control. Despite the best intentions, it is very easy for your carefully crafted message to become distorted or misunderstood after being shared and commented on.
- heavy reliance on ads. The marketplace is increasingly crowded with digital messages and getting seen or heard is challenging (Jaiswai, 2020).

Despite these disadvantages, new media spending continues to outpace investment in traditional media. But despite this increase, it is important to remember that new media marketing efforts can work well when combined with traditional elements, provided there is sufficient integration to create a clear and compelling message that will resonate with your target audience.

One example of excellent integration is Oreo's #GameofCookies campaign in 2019. Nabisco brand Oreo took advantage of the finale of the popular series Game of Thrones (GoT). The company remade the Game of Thrones opening credits with the same music, and the animations were made entirely of cookies (about 3,000!). The hashtag #GameofCookies became wildly popular on social media and received a lot of attention for its impressive animation. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram were utilized in creating buzz and awareness for the brand, and a viral-worthy contest allowed participants to choose their favorite among the limited-edition cookies marked with the insignia of House Lannister, House Targaryen, House Stark, and the Night King. This GoT-themed Oreo cookie marked the first time the brand teamed up with a TV show to make a limited-edition product (Mahoney, n.d.).

When creating a campaign, it is essential to determine how you can relate it to popular events occurring in your target market's world. Provided you can engage in the initial stages and the event reaches critical mass (i.e., goes viral), your company will benefit from media exposure through increased brand awareness and a gain in website traffic. According to Godin (2000), "the future belongs to marketers who establish a foundation and process where interested people can market to each other. Ignite customer networks and then get out of the way and let them talk" (p. 15).

1.2 Internal and External Conditions of Online Marketing

The development and execution of successful strategies for online and traditional marketing do not occur in a vacuum. Both internal conditions and outside forces will affect the planning, execution, and results of a campaign. Before developing a **marketing plan**, it is critical that companies are aware of the following internal and external conditions, as each can have a significant impact on the results of the plan.

Internal Conditions

Internal conditions address the organization's current capabilities and include:

Marketing plan

This is a written document detailing a company's objectives, as well as the strategies and actions which will assist them in meeting their goals.

- financial resources (e.g., cash reserves, cash flow, and bad debt)
- physical resources (e.g., real estate holdings, and inventory)
- human resources (e.g., the skills, training, and experience of personnel)
- natural resources (e.g., patents, copyrights, trademarks, and software)

These make up the company's strengths and weaknesses, which are explored further in the following section. Internal conditions are those that are considered to be entirely under the control of the organization.

External Conditions

Although external conditions are out of an individual organization's direct control, executives and managers must understand their markets and the impact that these factors can have. They include

- demographic factors (e.g., age, gender, race, religion, household size, and income)
- political/legal factors (e.g., current and pending legislation, industry-specific regulations, and recent and upcoming elections)
- economic factors (e.g., the rate of inflation, foreign currency exchange rates, and interest rates)
- sociocultural factors (e.g., beliefs, values, customs, and current trends)
- technological factors (e.g., access to the internet, use of mobile phones)
- competitive factors (e.g., market share, industry makeup)

These conditions make up the company's opportunities and threats, which are explored further in the following section.

An example of the importance of understanding the impact of the external or macro-environment is the Coronavirus pandemic that swept through the world in early 2020. While no individual company could affect or change the situation, companies who responded quickly and made significant changes to the way they promote and distribute their products fared relatively well. Below are a few examples of companies that made considerable adaptations.

Anheuser-Busch

During the early days of the Coronavirus pandemic, **Anheuser-Busch** made the transition from brewing beer to manufacturing hand sanitizer. Recognizing a need for a product in short supply, Anheuser-Busch was one of the first international companies to make this sort of strategic move, and it gained them a great deal of positive publicity, resulting in increased brand loyalty. The lesson to be learned from this example is that to generate positive word of mouth and get people talking, an organization needs to give back to the community in a way that makes a meaningful contribution. Doing this, rather than just donating money, helps a brand go further by providing consumers with something to talk about and share (Mahoney, n.d.).

Lusmann's

Lusmann's is a British-based restaurant chain which transitioned itself from offering a traditional sit-down experience to online ordering practically overnight. Realizing that the coronavirus lockdown would have a devastating impact on his business, owner Andrei Lusmann quickly adapted his operation to complete upwards of 400 online orders weekly. He transformed one of his six sites into a "dark kitchen," where meals were prepared for pick-up or delivery. Volunteers were sought from the pool of employees who had been furloughed. Lusmann's willingness to adapt to the changing conditions was favorably received and allowed the company to grow awareness of their brand. In this way, they positioned themselves for further growth after restrictions have been lifted (Jones, 2020).

Travel Curious

One of the hardest hit industries since the early onset of the pandemic is travel. The combination of canceled flights and stay-at-home restrictions negatively impacted both private and business travel around the globe. Rather than shut their doors, Travel Curious, a small travel agency which launched in London in 2019, saw the growing pandemic as an opportunity. They recruited their travel guides to offer live virtual tours on Instagram. Walking tours led by the guides were offered in less restricted areas and filmed by housemates of the guides, for example. In Venice, a tour of the Grand Canal was filmed from the tour guide's apartment. Tips and donations are requested at the end of the tours. Amir Azulay, chief executive of Travel Curious, wanted to support his employees and, at the same time, offer viewers an entertaining preview of some of the locations they might wish to visit in the future (Jones, 2020).

1.3 Situation and Environment Analysis

To successfully develop and execute a marketing strategy, it is critical that an organization clearly understands their current standing in the marketplace and has identified the challenges inherent in their own company in addition to the potential impact of their external environment. These include examining existing company strengths and weaknesses (internal), as well as a thorough analysis of the environment's opportunities and threats (external). One of the best methods of accomplishing this is by using a planning tool such as SWOT. SWOT is an acronym for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. It allows for a thorough exploration of the organization to understand both the current climate and what is needed to realize goals and promote future growth. SWOT analysis was invented in the 1960s by Albert Humphrey, a management consultant at the Stanford Research Institute, to produce a long-term planning method that was both executable and reasonable (Lucid, 2020).

The best way to approach a SWOT analysis or a similar process is to seek input from all **stakeholders** (i.e., executive staff, managers, line employees, customers past and present), and perform research to gather crucial information on the external environment and the competition. The process must be conducted objectively with all relevant data considered and no bias or preconceived ideas.

Stakeholders

These are individuals, groups, or organizations with a vested interest in your business and include customers, employees, suppliers, and shareholders.

The following is an example of a SWOT analysis. The organization being analyzed is Jericho Road Press, an independent American book publisher.

Strengths (internal):

- strong relationships with their authors
- good name recognition among target audience (i.e., men who read action and suspense)
- several authors are classified as best-sellers or have won major awards

Weaknesses (internal):

- increasing costs of production
- low visibility in a crowded marketplace
- a single target demographic, which is limited in size and growth potential

Opportunities (external):

- growth potential of audiobooks
- continued demand for electronic books
- increase connection with readers via social media

Threats (external):

- competitive environment with bigger publishers offering advances and higher royalties
- strong downward trend of book sales over many years
- savvy authors increasingly turning to self-publishing, eliminating the demand for traditional publishers

Additional approaches

Although SWOT is well known and has been used by leading organizations for decades, there are other methods that may yield useful results. One of these is PESTEL, an analytical tool that looks at political, economic, social, technological, legal, and environmental factors. The PESTLE (aka PEST) framework was developed in 1967 by Francis J. Aguilar, a Harvard University management professor, for scanning the business environment (ToolHero, 2019).

With the goal of developing future growth strategies, companies are encouraged to consider implementing the following practices:

- Solicit feedback from clients and customers.
- Ask your customers what they think your company does well, as well as what they think you should change.
- Use a pro-con perspective.
- Review the merits as well as potential challenges for a variety of growth opportunities.

- Look at more successful businesses.
- Study the practices of the leaders in your industry to determine how to better compete with them (Farmiloe, 2020).

Regardless of the specific tool or practice that is utilized, if your situation analysis is complete and provides value, it should be straightforward and practical to use, be understandable to an outsider, focus on internal and external critical factors affecting your business, identify future goals, and generate further analysis.

If your analysis falls short on any of the above, it should be revised to improve its likelihood of use and overall functionality. Once you know how your business is currently doing, you can implement proper strategies to ensure its success in the future.

1.4 Definition of Objectives of Online and Social Media Marketing in B2C and B2B Contexts

What is B2C?

The business to consumer (B2C) model represents a company selling products or services directly to an individual. Purchases are made to satisfy the personal or household needs of the buyer and often include single units and smaller transactions made irregularly. Well-known B2C businesses include Amazon, McDonald's, and Netflix. Many companies sell products and services to organizations as well as individuals, which makes them both B2C and B2B businesses. Due to the unique differences between business buyers and consumers, the approaches that they utilize are quite different and should not be used interchangeably (Lee, 2019).

What is B2B?

The business to business (B2B) framework is made up of one company selling products or services to another company. These can include raw materials, supplies, finished products for resale, or services that the purchaser would utilize to operate their business. Many of these purchases would result in large transactions made on a regular basis. Well-known B2B businesses include Samsung, Intel, and Panasonic (Lee, 2019).

Key Differences between B2B and B2C Marketing

B2B

Business buyers tend to be looking for solutions to problems they face or ways to increase their growth and sustainability. The buying process is more complicated, takes longer, and often involves several people or even an entire department. B2B marketing requires more face-to-face interaction with customers, often in a series of formal meetings over weeks or

months. The information provided to B2B customers often needs to be customized to address the highly unique needs of each organization. Business buying decisions can be influenced by trade shows, webinars, and group functions, all of which create a more personal connection between buyer and seller, but most business purchases are made online or over the phone (Lee, 2019). More than half of B2B buyers report turning to social media to make buying decisions and about one third report that they are spending an increasing amount of time on social media researching vendors and solutions (Lee, 2016).

B2C

Consumers can be driven by emotion when it comes to making purchases of goods or services for their personal or household use. They look for products that satisfy their needs for safety, security, and/or social acceptance. Buying decisions for most consumer purchases are made by individuals or, in some cases, a couple or a family. These decisions may be made impulsively or as a result of extensive research into larger ticket items, such as cars and homes (Lee, 2019). Consumers are growing increasingly comfortable purchasing goods online and researching reviews for both goods and services, in part, as a result of the social distancing rules in place since the initial stages of the 2020 Coronavirus pandemic. Consumer buying is often motivated by discount codes and exclusive offers received via email and mobile texts, as well as sponsored ads and mentions on social media. According to Scott (2017) “social media provides the way people share ideas, content, thoughts and relationships online” and it “can take the form of text, audio, video, images and communities” (p. 62). Further, the content of messages is specific to the type of effort being implemented, which can differ greatly between B2B and B2C marketing.

Table 6: B2B Messages versus B2C Messages

B2B Messages	B2C Messages
Technical & detailed information	Simple information
Logical appeals	Emotional appeals
Solution focus	Benefit focus
Content-rich	Concise
Micro-targeting to a small audience	Macro-targeting to a broader audience

Source: Olmsted (2021).

While it is critical to offer a clear and compelling value message to all customers, business customers are seeking a true connection with their vendors and suppliers. In order to create an ideal customer experience, these companies require tailored marketing strategies; however, this is not always possible as businesses often have to deal with multiple customers at a time in the B2B sector (Popovici et al., 2018).

Appeals
These refer to the approach (informational or emotional) taken by an advertiser to reach their target market.

In conclusion, organizations which cater to both individual consumers and business buyers need to maintain separate and distinct marketing efforts to attract attention, stimulate demand, and facilitate transactions with their target markets.



SUMMARY

Although the bulk of marketing expenditures have shifted from traditional to new media in recent years, the foundation behind successful campaigns has stayed the same. Regardless of the media you choose to utilize, a successful marketing approach requires that you implement the following steps:

- Identify your target audience(s). Who is it you wish to reach? What do they need or want?
- Research where they are. Is your audience watching TV, surfing the internet, listening to the radio, or scrolling through their phones? How can you communicate with them?
- Determine the message you wish to send. Be sure it delivers value and needs satisfaction to the intended recipients.
- Create and execute your campaign utilizing media appropriate to both your audience and your message.
- Track your results to determine the proper allocation of future marketing expenditures.

Try not to think of traditional and new media as competitors; in reality, they complement each other and can be used together to make your overall marketing approach stronger than ever. Marketers must shift their thinking away from the short head of the demand curve (mainstream marketing to the masses) and toward the long tail (a strategy of targeting vast numbers of underserved audiences to the web)(Scott, 2017).

UNIT 2

INTRODUCTION TO BASIC WEB TECHNOLOGIES

STUDY GOALS

Upon completion of this unit, you will have learned ...

- the history of the internet from its inception.
- the defining characteristics of Web 2.0.
- the trends and forces shaping the future of technology.

2. INTRODUCTION TO BASIC WEB TECHNOLOGIES

Case Study

Jericho Road Press (JRP) is an American independent book publisher. They currently have 30 authors who write for them, and they release approximately 25 new titles annually. Their target audience is males, aged 25 to 59, who enjoy reading action and suspense. After three years of zero revenue growth, they have recently seen a revenue increase of 22 percent over one period last year. They attribute this gain to their recent efforts to expand upon their social media presence.

To boost reader engagement and website traffic with the overall goal of increased sales, JRP founder returned to Brennan Advertising for help. Based on the success of the recently introduced “Road Warriors” theme, featuring weekly articles, interviews, and contests created by JRP authors, the executives at Brennan Advertising determined that JRP should continue growing their social media presence to further encourage brand loyalty and increase sales.

At Brennan’s recommendation, JRP agreed to the use of a social media calendar. The calendar would facilitate more consistent posts with less likelihood of errors featuring content to support the company’s marketing goals. The calendar would also allow JRP to track what works and identify the type of content, format, post frequency, and best time of day to post for each social platform. They decided to utilize Hootsuite’s social media dashboard to manage the process. Hootsuite, a leading tool in social media management, was started in 2008 by Ryan Holmes. Using this tool will allow JRP to create and schedule posts, plan campaigns, respond to incoming messages, and analyze their results (Hootsuite, n.d.).

JRP followed the following five steps in developing their social media calendar:

1. Audit social networks and content. Identify areas for improvement and opportunities for new efforts.
2. Choose social channels. Review the social media platforms’ user demographics as well as the best practices for business marketing strategies. Facebook and Instagram were identified as the channels on which to focus.
3. Decide what data to track. By utilizing Google Sheets, JRP chose to focus on launches for new titles being published, approximately one title every two weeks.
4. Review creative strategy and timing with authors. Solicit their input and support.
5. Implement the campaign. A total of six books were launched during the first quarter of 2020. JRP chose to focus on two different metrics: reach (the number of individuals exposed to each post and engagement) and actions taken by visitors (including clicks, likes, shares, and comments).

Results: The reach ranged from 300 to 850 viewers per post. Not surprisingly, posts containing a photo of the author and/or the book covers had a higher reach. Engagement rates ranged from 1 to 5 percent. Titles by new first-time authors scored lower in both reach and engagement. On average, sales of new titles increased by 25 percent over the same period compared to last year.

Consider the following prompts:

- Why do you suppose JRP chose to measure reach and engagement, instead of simply focusing on sales?
- How does the use of a calendar and a program such as Hootsuite maximize social media presence?
- What other types of companies could benefit by employing a similar strategy?

2.1 Web Basics

In order to compete in today's global marketplace, it is more critical than ever that an organization understands and utilizes the latest technological advancements in order to meet the needs of an increasingly sophisticated customer. Here's a brief review of how the internet has developed and continues to influence the way we live.

A Timeline of Internet History

1960s

J.C.R. Licklider is credited with the development of the idea for a global computer network in 1962, while employed at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) as a computer scientist. Workers at the U.S. Department of Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA) collaborated on the development of the world's first wide-area computer network. Lawrence G. Roberts was credited with the plan for the ARPANET, an ARPA-funded computer network (Jefferson Online, 2016).

1970s

Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protocol (TCP/IP) was the result of efforts by Robert Kahn and Vinton Cerf in 1973. They collaborated on a plan to link together multiple computer networks. The Ethernet, originally named Alto Aloha, was developed at Xerox Corporation by Robert Metcalfe. Ted Nelson was credited for his proposal for the use of hypertext as a means of organizing network information. Nelson's efforts resulted in Unix, which quickly gained popularity. A Unix-based system for transferring data over phone lines utilizing a dial-up connection, was developed by Tom Truscott and Steve Bellovin and became known as USENET (Jefferson Online, 2016).

1980s

Local area networks (LANs) were established in 1981 as a result of Ethernet products for both computer workstations and personal computers developed by Metcalfe's company 3Com. While at the University of Delaware, Dave Farber constructed a network using dial-up phone lines. In 1982, the first commercial network, Telenet, was created through the connection of the PhoneNet system to ARPANET. Access to the internet was expanded and global email communication was now possible. Domain names were created by Paul Mockapetris, Jon Postel, and Craig Partridge in order to manage the increasing number of users on the internet. The first domain was registered in 1985 and belonged to a computer manufacturer (Jefferson Online, 2016).

1990s

Tim Berners-Lee and his colleagues at CERN developed hypertext markup language (HTML) and the uniform resource locator (URL). This resulted in the introduction of the World Wide Web. In 1995, Microsoft launched Windows 95; in the same year, Amazon, Yahoo, Internet Explorer, and eBay were introduced. Animation on websites was made possible with the launch of Java. The Communications Decency Act was passed by the U.S. Congress in 1996, for the purpose of combatting the proliferation of objectionable material on the internet. Google was founded in 1998. In 1999, music and video piracy concerns increased with the launch of Napster. In 1999, the world's first internet virus was discovered (Jefferson Online, 2016).

2000s

Internet-based businesses became collectively referred to as dotcom, and this quickly growing bubble burst in 2000, resulting in a catastrophic drop in the Dow Jones industrial average. During the demise of most publicly traded dotcom companies, the search engine market became dominated by the rapidly growing Google. Wi-Fi, or wireless internet communication, was in high demand from businesses and consumers alike and smartphones and other mobile internet devices became must-have items (Jefferson Online, 2016).

Web 2.0

Web 2.0 is the second generation of services on the Web, emphasizing online collaboration, connectivity, and content sharing among users. The term Web 2.0 was first used by O'Reilly Media at a conference in October 2004. Months later it was Tim O'Reilly, founder of the company, who defined and trademarked the concept and made it known in the tech community (Delgado, 2019).

Websites are no longer comprised solely of text and hyperlinks. Today, most websites combine images, Flash animations, advertising, popup windows, videos, games, and complete applications. Web 2.0 encompasses three main concepts: rich internet applications, the semantic web, and social media (Delgado, 2019).

Rich internet applications (RIA) are web-based and are similar to desktop application software. They can provide improved visuals, faster speed, and an enhanced interactive experience for the user. The semantic web was created with the goal of making internet data machine-readable. Based upon standards set by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C),

the semantic web provides a collaborative opportunity for users to create vocabularies and share data. Social media provides an opportunity for users to communicate electronically and connect with others worldwide, for both personal as well as professional purposes. Social media networks include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn. Businesses can measure reach as well as engagement and analyze the impact their social media presence has on overall sales and revenues. Pictures, ideas, messages, and videos can be shared and forwarded to individuals, large groups, or highly targeted audiences. Users access these sites on desktop computers, laptops, tablets, and, increasingly, on their smartphones (Delgado, 2019).

2.2 Current Technologies and Trends

Web 2.0 reflects a major change in the way internet content is both created and utilized. Previously thought to be the responsibility of publishers and webmasters, information came to be generated by the users themselves and shared by the websites. Web 2.0 involves the evolution of digital applications towards applications aimed at the end user, which include services such as social networking, blogs, and wikis.

Social networking

Social networking can be explained as “the use of internet-based social media sites to stay connected with friends, family, colleagues, customers, or clients.” Furthermore, it “can have a social purpose, a business purpose, or both, through sites such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Instagram, among others” (Kenton, 2020).

Blogs

The weblog, commonly referred to as a blog, is a regularly updated website that can contain information of a personal or professional nature. Most blogs focus on a particular topic and are written with a specific audience in mind. The modern blog is an evolution of online journals. Justin Hall, who in 1994 wrote his personal blog while a student at Swarthmore University, is recognized as one of the first bloggers (Delgado, 2019).

Wikis

A wiki is a website that allows visitors to make changes, contributions, or corrections to content on the web. Wikis are very popular because they allow for interactive collaboration among users. Currently, the largest one that exists is the English version of Wikipedia (Delgado, 2019).

Advantages of Web 2.0 applications

Web 2.0 applications provide a number of advantages for both businesses and consumers, allowing for increased security and ease of use. These include

- centralization of customer information in a single secure database;
- storage of information on secure servers protects against theft, fire, and power outages;
- compatibility with any device including laptops, tablets, smartphones, and gaming consoles; and
- the ability for multiple parallel users to share the same data in real time.

Trends



Technological advances continue to escalate, allowing for faster change and progress. The following are **the top technologies trending in 2020** (Duggal, 2020).

Artificial intelligence (AI)

AI technology provides computer systems with the ability to perform tasks faster and more efficiently than humans with less margin for error. These tasks are varied but center around the recognition of images and sound and allow for decision making previously made by humans. AI services include navigation apps, streaming services, smartphone personal assistants, ride-sharing apps, home personal assistants, and smart home devices (Duggal, 2020).

Machine learning

Machine learning is a subset of AI and refers to computer systems with the capacity to learn using algorithms and various statistical models to review and understand patterns of data (Duggal, 2020).

Robotic process automation

Robotic process automation (RPA) was developed to reduce or eliminate certain repetitive tasks, with the goal of increasing efficiency and maximizing production through the reduction of both errors and waste. RPA software is utilized to automate certain business processes and is a proven competitive advantage (Duggal, 2020).

Edge computing

The adoption of cloud computing is still growing, as more businesses migrate to a cloud solution. Edge computing is designed to help with the abundance of data by bypassing the latency caused by cloud computing and getting data to a data center for processing. Data can exist “on the edge,” closer to where computing needs to happen (Duggal, 2020).

Virtual reality and augmented reality

Virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) are used in a variety of ways in entertainment, training and education, marketing and sales, and even for medical applications such as rehabilitation. Video games, which can provide players with an entertaining simulated experience, are an everyday example of virtual reality. Viewing how new furniture might look on your outdoor patio is an example of an augmented reality (Duggal, 2020).

Cyber security

Though the technology of cyber security has been around for a while, it must be continually adapted to fit new situations. Computer threats from hackers are a growing concern, and cyber security is constantly evolving to minimize those threats (Duggal, 2020).

Blockchain

Blockchain can be described as data you can only add to, not take away from or change. Not being able to change the previous blocks is what makes it so secure. Additionally, blockchains are consensus-driven, which means that no single entity can take control of the data. Blockchain does not require a trusted third-party to oversee or validate transactions (Duggal, 2020).

Internet of Things (IoT)

Consumers around the world are benefitting from the Internet of Things (IoT) without even knowing it. We are more connected than ever to our cars, devices and homes; the IoT enables the exchange of data resulting in our ability to lock doors remotely, lower our thermostats before we arrive home, and track our steps on our watches (Duggal, 2020).



SUMMARY

The digital world changes quickly, and new and improved technologies are constantly being introduced. While it may be tempting to attempt to keep up with all the latest advancements, it is more important to focus on the big picture. The reason you want to keep apprised of the new developments is because of one overriding reason: you want to stay in contact with your customers!

Consumers today are spending more of their time on their screens: mobile phones, laptops, tablets, and gaming devices. The convenience and variety afforded by shopping online are known by all demographic groups, and the only way to reach them and gain their loyalty is by offering all the services and enhancements that they have come to expect.

It would be wise to focus first on the needs of your current and potential customers. What are they seeking in order to satisfy their needs and wants? How can you be sure to deliver value and meet those needs? What types of services would assist you in meeting or even exceeding customer needs? Companies today need to deliver more than just fast service and quality products. Your customers want to connect with you in a meaningful way; your job is to determine how to achieve that goal.

For example, if you determine that a weekly newsletter offering valuable content on issues is important to your customers, you should focus on programs to help you grow your email list and automate the process, allowing you to focus on developing the appropriate content. If a series of videos demonstrating how to use your products would assist consumers in understanding how to maximize the benefits you offer, you should be looking for ways to deliver the message and focus your time and talents on creating the best possible content. If your customers are seeking faster delivery or response time, look at the leaders in the field and determine how to adapt to what they have learned to benefit your business.

In summary, technology is a means to an end. Focusing on what you are looking to achieve will streamline the process of how you will get to your desired goal.

UNIT 3

THE ONLINE MARKETING MIX

STUDY GOALS

On completion of this unit, you will have learned ...

- how changes to consumer behaviors are impacting retail strategies.
- classic and alternative instruments of online marketing.
- elements of both mobile and social media marketing.
- the importance of integration to marketing efforts.

3. THE ONLINE MARKETING MIX

Case Study

Jericho Road Press (JRP) is an independent American book publisher. Based upon the positive impact their recent promotional efforts have had on sales revenue, the management team at JRP determined that it was time to continue in their evolution from merely offering books written by their authors, to the distribution of the books as well. Recent analysis showed that 68 percent of their sales were generated online, with Amazon being responsible for 85 percent of those sales. The Amazon sales, however, come at a high price with operating margins of less than 20 percent compared to the 45 percent margins realized on books sold through their own website.

The JRP team determined their best course of action would be to utilize email marketing to reach their customer base with customized offers. This is the four-step process they followed:

1. Create a list of email addresses from past and current customers.
2. Add an opt-in tool to their website to collect visitors' email addresses.
3. Automate the process of sending a welcome letter to new email subscribers, utilizing the automation tool Mail Chimp, with an offer of 10 percent off their next purchase.
4. Add "through email" as an option for customers to check when asked "Where did you hear about us?" at the time of the sales transaction.

Initial results were dismal. Their efforts yielded a gain of 50 new subscribers to their existing email list of 350 addresses. Two thirds of the new email subscribers chose to opt-out or unsubscribe in the first two months. Also, no discernible increase in sales could be attributed to the email campaign.

Consider the following prompts:

- What could JRP have done differently in order to grow their email list?
- What sort of incentives should they consider offering in order to gain more leads?
- What steps can JRP take to maintain their list of email subscribers?

3.1 Fundamentals of Online Marketing Effects

The impact of online marketing can be viewed in a variety of ways, including

- advertising focus,
- consumer behavior, and
- retailing and delivery of goods and services.

Advertising Focus

The shift to online marketing and the use of new compared to traditional media has created the need for companies to adopt a dual approach in their advertising efforts. Increasingly, the focus of advertising has switched from a primarily push approach to a blended push and pull strategy. Traditional marketing efforts utilizing television, radio, print, and outdoor advertising as the main platforms to deliver promotional messages are viewed as push strategies, i.e., the business promotes specific products to target audiences. Although still utilized frequently as in the case of social media, push strategies are increasingly being supplemented by pull strategies, whereby the objective is to draw potential customers towards the products and services offered. Utilizing search engines and databases such as Google and YouTube, companies are attempting to pull traffic into their websites in order to provide the information that is sought (Petrov, 2020).

Gaining the attention of potential customers is increasingly complicated due to the preponderance of multimedia and the many options that consumers have to choose from as sources of information, entertainment, and shopping. In a survey, 36 percent of marketers stated that getting attention in a crowded marketplace is the top challenge they face (Rasmussen, 2020). This is the first step in the process to building trust, increasing sales, and generating customer loyalty. By first understanding the needs and makeup of the various groups you are targeting, it will be possible to identify those advertising platforms that will deliver the customers you are seeking.

Increasingly, advertising messages can be personalized as a result of advances in technology, such as artificial intelligence and advanced machine learning. Businesses can offer customized shopping experiences and individual recommendations and offers based upon past purchases (LiftIgniter, 2019).

Consumer Behavior

Today's consumers have access to a virtually unlimited source of ways in which to gain information about the products and services that they seek. Social media and online marketing both contribute to higher levels of **involvement** on the part of many consumers. Word-of-mouth advertising and the rating and reviewing of purchases, as well as the sharing of those experiences, increase the levels of involvement or importance placed upon the purchase (Accountlearning, n.d.). The opinions of others play a greater role in the purchase decision, resulting in more communication and the consulting of additional sources of information.

Involvement

This refers to the amount of time and effort invested in the buying decision process, as well as the overall impact of the purchase.

Consumers today are increasingly selective in how they allocate their time among the various social media platforms and online marketing sites. The concept of an omni-social presence whereby social media is seen to intersect with our lives in a multitude of ways has resulted in increased functionality and additional services being provided by the various platforms (Appel et al., 2019). **Facebook**, for example, has moved beyond its original purpose of providing a site to share images and thoughts with friends through the introduction of a number of additional products, including

- Facebook Messenger,
- Instagram,
- Facebook Marketplace,
- Facebook Store,
- **Facebook Pay**,
- Facebook Business Tools, as well as
- a proposed audio chat service to compete with the popular Clubhouse app (Isaac, 2021).

Facebook Pay
This service is similar to Venmo, Google Wallet, and Apple Pay, allowing users to transfer money directly from their bank account or credit cards.

These incremental services are new sources of revenue for Facebook, but more importantly, serve to establish the brand as being innovative and a go-to source to meet a variety of customer needs and wants (Facebook, n.d.).

Retailing and Delivery of Goods and Services

Over the past twenty-five years, the shift from a brick-and-mortar focus to online marketing has impacted our society in a number of significant ways. The convenience of browsing and ordering products online from the comfort of our homes or offices and receiving the delivery the next day, or even the same day, or having the option of curbside pickup has resonated with today's consumers and business buyers alike. Online pioneers such as Amazon have reshaped the buying experience for shoppers on a global basis. But this shift does not mean that physical store locations, shopping centers, and malls are obsolete. Shopping in-store provides a social experience and allows for instant gratification, as well as the ability to touch, test, and try on products. Rather than labeling online marketing as what was predicted to be a permanent threat to physical stores, today's successful retailers are embracing a blend of online and in-store shopping to maximize customer convenience as well as overall revenues (Bosstab, 2019). The largest retailers in the world, some of which are described below, are in the process of combining their online and physical store operations.

Walmart

Walmart is currently the largest retailer in the world, based on yearly revenues of \$524 billion USD (Walmart, 2020). Despite recent store closings, they operate 11,000 brick-and-mortar locations around the globe. They are experimenting with same-day delivery options and openly charge higher prices for many of their products when they are purchased online (Bosstab, 2019).

Amazon

Amazon continues to evolve from being virtually 100 percent online to a blended retail model in order to offset delivery costs and to meet the needs of consumers who want to have the in-store experience. They opened their first physical bookstore in Seattle in 2015 and more bookstores are scheduled across the U.S. They also operate 460 Whole Foods store locations throughout the U.S., Canada, and Great Britain. In 2018, Amazon opened a series of cashier-less grocery stores under the brand Amazon Go (Schaverien, 2018).

Jingdong

Jingdong is not only China's largest online retailer, it is the country's biggest retailer overall with net revenues of 83 billion (U.S.) in 2019. In order to meet the needs of the company's 441 million customers, they have shifted their operations to being more compatible with online ordering. Today, more than 90 percent of the orders they receive are placed on customers' mobile phones. Additionally, they now offer same-day and next-day delivery, and they are exploring the use of drones to assist them in their efforts (Jingdong, n.d.).

These retail giants are influencing the delivery strategies of mid-size and smaller retailers as well, as customers increasingly are demanding a choice in how and where they shop. Consider the following:

- Fifty percent of U.S. shoppers decide where to shop online based upon the convenience of in-store pickup, proving that physical location still factors into an online purchase decision (Bosstab, 2019).
- Sixty-eight percent of U.S. consumers have made a **BOPIS** purchase (Bosstab, 2019).
- Eighty-five percent of shoppers buy additional products in store when going to pick up products ordered online (Bosstab, 2019).
- Showrooming is facilitated by retailers offering free, high-speed Wi-Fi service in their stores. Showrooming is when customers visit a physical store to see merchandise in-person before purchasing the item online, possibly from another retailer for a lower price (Bosstab, 2019).
- Consumer behavior post COVID-19 is anticipated to reflect a higher portion of purchases being made online. There is expected to be a growth of 50 percent or more for the following: groceries (U.S.), snacks (Spain, Italy, and India) and alcohol (Germany and India) (Charm et al., 2020).



BOPIS

This acronym stands for "buy online, pick up in store."

Overall, despite the lure of online deals and free shipping, most retailers will continue to offer a blend of retailing methods in order to deliver value, ensure customer satisfaction, maximize earnings, and remain competitive.

3.2 Overview of Classic Instruments of Online Marketing

Just as traditional marketing efforts include the use of print (e.g., newspapers and magazines), television, radio, outdoor (e.g., billboards and transit ads), and direct mail, online marketing has its own set of tools or instruments, outlined in this section.

Blogging

Blogs are web-based journals on particular topics of interest to customers and other stakeholders. Blogs generally seek comments from viewers and sharing of content is encouraged, which strengthens the bond not only between the organization and its cus-

tomers, but also between customers. An effective blog is well-written, contains useful or entertaining content not found elsewhere, and is updated regularly, with responses to questions and comments from readers (Optimizely, n.d.-a).

SEO

Search engine optimization (SEO) is the effort that a company puts into maximizing traffic to their website. Through the use of popular or commonly used **keywords**, an organization can increase the likelihood that a potential customer will be exposed to their name and website. The proper use of keywords can result in a greater number of visitors and the potential for increased engagement with the intended target audience (Raulf, 2015).

Keywords

These are the words or phrases that one might utilize in searching for a product or service online.

Social media marketing

There is a wide range of activities that an organization can engage in depending on their overall objectives and the amount of time and financial resources they are willing to invest. A company's efforts may be more passive, whereby they focus their efforts on analyzing customer reactions and respond to their comments, or more active, utilizing a variety of social marketing tools such as Instagram or Facebook as a direct marketing channel to maximize awareness, create a strong value proposition, and facilitate sales transactions (Hutchinson, 2020).

Website

An organization's website is one of its most important marketing instruments. The overall look of the website should reflect the company's image and personality. Early on, it was enough to include graphic images, basic information, and a way to contact the company, but today's customers expect much more when visiting a company's website. Information needs to be updated, well-organized, and easy to access. Messages or posts left on the site must be addressed quickly and purchase transactions need to be handled seamlessly. It is not uncommon for an organization to utilize the skills of a website designer in order to create and maintain a professional and modern image (Optimizely, n.d.-b).

Lead management

Companies that advertise regularly need to ensure that they are capturing the contacts that they attract through a lead management system. Leads are potential customers who have expressed an interest in the goods or services offered, either through a phone call or online query. When a customer responds to an advertising message or clicks on a company's website, their contact information needs to be stored in order for the company to respond immediately or in the very near future. Lead management is the process of qualifying incoming leads (whether they meet the basic requirements such as age or other demographics, location, etc.), analyzing, and following up on these in order to convert leads into qualified prospects and ideally into customers. Lead management is also an effective way to determine which advertising efforts yield the best results (Optimizely, n.d.-c).

CRM

Customer relationship management (CRM) software assists an organization in tracking, utilizing, and storing important data such as sales history and returns (Deshpande, 2019).

Customer relationship management (CRM)
Abbreviated CRM, customer relationship management is the process of managing and analyzing customer relationships and interactions.

Landing pages

A landing page, also referred to as a destination or lead capture page, is the single web page that a customer would be brought to after responding to a promotion, email, or advertisement. Landing pages generally include a form to collect visitors' information. The overall purpose of a landing page is to convert interested parties into paying customers (Optimizely, n.d.-d).

Calls to action

Calls to action are invitations for respondents to take some desired action such a phone call, email, or store visit. The prompts "buy now" or "click here" are commonly utilized calls to action (Optimizely, n.d.-e).

Email marketing

Email marketing entails sending a message of a commercial nature to a specific individual or a particular group of people using electronic mail (Belyh, 2020). Email marketing can be a powerful tool in your marketing plan when you consider the following:

- Approximately 293.6 billion emails are sent and received each day.
- Eighty-one percent of small businesses rely on email as their primary customer acquisition channel, and 80 percent for retention.
- The average open rate for a welcome email is 82 percent.

By using an automation tool ~~like Constant Contact or Mail Chimp~~, an organization can increase engagement with customers and target their marketing efforts with offers to the right audiences. The features of an automated system can include

- timely welcome emails for newly signed subscribers;
- a series of emails sent at specific intervals;
- tools to build email lists;
- specific offers for different target audiences;
- resending emails to non-openers; and
- powerful list-building tools.

Prior to embarking upon an email campaign, it is wise to thoroughly research your potential audience to better understand what they are seeking. In this way your offers are more likely to entice them to sign-up and stay active.

Digital marketing analytics

Digital marketing analytics translate customer behavior and activity collected from sources such as websites and mobile marketing into data that can be both useful and actionable. The analytics that matter the most are as follows:

- traffic, or the number of visitors to your website;
- conversion, which is measured by the time spent on your site, the number of pages that are viewed or the actions taken by visitors;
- engagement, the number of likes, shares, or comments received;
- click-through rate (CTR), the ratio of visitors who click on a specific link to the number of total viewers; and
- site load speed, which, according to most experts, should be less than three seconds (Dickey, 2017).

The above tools are the most critical elements to include when developing an online promotional strategy.

3.3 Mobile Marketing

An effective and well-designed strategy regarding mobile marketing is a requirement for any organization wishing to communicate with today's connected consumers. The goal of mobile marketing is reaching your intended audience on their smartphones, mobile devices, and tablets through the use of apps, SMS, email, social media, or through your website. In order to be successful in mobile marketing, you will need to deliver **mobile-friendly** content and utilize mobile apps and platforms effectively (Trillo, 2020).

Mobile-friendly
To be considered mobile-friendly, a website should be responsive, easy to search, fast, and feature large fonts and large buttons.

The benefits of mobile marketing include

- convenience. The target audience can be reached through the utilization of software interfaces.
- simplicity. The campaign design is fairly simple as text messages tend to be brief.
- speed. Load time is virtually instantaneous.
- analytics. Tools to assist in the tracking and analysis of mobile activity include Google Analytics for mobile, Countly, and Smartlook.
- responsive design. Your website will work correctly and be visually appealing regardless of the viewer's choice of device.
- location-based. This feature unique to mobile devices allows customers to receive information relevant to their particular location at any time.
- multi-language. Viewers are allowed to utilize the language of their choosing, increasing their level of comfort and overall engagement (Trillo, 2020).

There are a number of advantages to the use of mobile marketing. Businesses can benefit from the use of mobile marketing as the tracking of sales activity and campaign results are simplified. Since it is location-based, mobile marketing creates the opportunity to deliver a more personalized and effective message to a more targeted audience. Mobile marketing campaigns are relatively simple to produce and cost-effective with timely results. Further, as search engines favor mobile-friendly websites, it is likely that rankings will improve as a result of the use of mobile marketing.

Customers rely on their mobile devices to keep them connected and entertained. Most customers access websites and apps through their phones, so creating a mobile-friendly environment will enhance the customers' experience, resulting in increased loyalty for the organization or brand. Customers trust what they know, and the ability to shop and communicate in real-time with an organization will increase the likelihood of sharing information with their personal or professional networks (Trillo, 2020).

In order to ensure an effective mobile-marketing presence, companies need to ensure that their promotional tools are mobile-friendly and utilize the latest in technological advancements.

3.4 Social Media Marketing

Social media marketing refers to an organization's creation and sharing of promotional content on social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. By interfacing with their target audience(s) on the platforms where they spend the most time, an organization can achieve a number of objectives, including increased conversion of sales leads and higher levels of both brand awareness and customer loyalty. In 2018, there were 3.2 billion people on social media globally, and that number has only continued to increase (Baker, 2020). By sharing content related to products or the company itself, an organization can increase its engagement with the target audience(s) with entertaining, educational, and informative videos and posts. Social media marketing can serve as a means of advertising, as well as a way to enhance relationships in a B2B environment and a platform for recruitment. Encouraging user-generated content will build trust and generate positive word-of-mouth (Baker, 2020).

Social media and the marketing opportunities they offer continue to evolve. All of the major platforms have made significant adjustments in the past year and there is no reason to believe that the level of change will decrease anytime soon. These are among the most significant recent changes, broken down by platform.

Facebook

Facebook's primary focus for the future will be eCommerce with the introduction of Shops on Facebook. Facebook Commerce or F-commerce is a term which includes the design and development of content used to sell goods and services on the social network's platform (MBN, n.d.). The goal is to utilize facets of Facebook to assist businesses seeking to build their own digital storefronts, with clear directions and simplified ways to facilitate sales transactions. They are also expanding the availability of Facebook Pay, a one-click purchasing option, and exploring new opportunities for advertising purchases within posts. Facebook also plans to merge their messaging apps including Messenger, Instagram Direct, and WhatsApp to increase audience potential and cross-platform promotional opportunities. Finally, they seek to develop more live-stream promotions with an eye towards increased traffic and a gain in resulting commercial transactions (Hutchinson, 2020).

Instagram

Instagram **plans** to focus their efforts on eCommerce as well, by adding a variety of shopping tools, including one-click purchasing and a new Shop tab. They **will be** increasing their focus on augmented reality (AR) options such as try-on tools and utilizing **video tags** for products to influence direct buying behavior (Hutchinson, 2020).

Video tags

These are used to embed video content, such as a movie clip, into a document.

Twitter

Twitter is not anticipating any significant changes to its platform that will impact its use as a tool in marketing, with the possible exception of their focus on new categories of verification. These could assist them in the identification of fake accounts and those managed by bots, also known as web robots, which are software applications that can run without human intervention. An increase in the number of verified accounts could impact the level of engagement on Twitter, increasing its use in commercial marketing (Hutchinson, 2020).

TikTok

There are nearly **a billion TikTok users currently**, and the short-form video app is working to become a key player in social media marketing. Like other social media platforms, their focus is on eCommerce, but their primary goal needs to remain maximizing lucrative revenue-share deals for their top creators or risk losing them to competitors. New features **being planned** include different category segments, such as beauty and fashion, view rankings, as well as more display options and profile links for member businesses (Hutchinson, 2020).

LinkedIn

The social networking and job search tool for professionals has more than 700 million users and reports record levels of engagement. **Their focus of late** has been on creating and delivering virtual events with the addition of live-video integration. They have found a significantly higher level of sharing when there is a video component and now have a dedicated video section within their app for that purpose. This should also provide a revenue opportunity for them as well as a way to enhance brand loyalty (Hutchinson, 2020).

3.5 Assessment of Alternative Online Marketing Instruments Including Possible Applications and Limitations

Existing customers are a valuable source of information, provided there is a process to gather and analyze critical data regularly and act upon what is learned. Emailing a survey or including pertinent questions at checkout can provide a wealth of useful and actionable information, and response rates will increase with the inclusion of an incentive that the respondent will view as valuable.

Inherent to the development of an online marketing strategy is the creation of a buyer persona. This is a profile of your ideal or target customers based on thorough research, including key demographics and buying behavior. Buyer personas help an organization to get into the minds of their potential customers and learn more about their needs and wants as well as how to satisfy them. This can result in more tailored marketing campaigns with higher response rates and less waste.

Investment in original research and the development of a buyer persona both serve to aid in the analysis of the target audience. As a result of the constant level of evolution and change associated with technology, there are a number of alternative online marketing instruments that should be investigated further (Gero, 2020).

Optimizing for voice search technology

The use of keyboards in the information search process may soon be a distant memory, according to the experts at Gartner Digital Marketing. Advancements in voice search technology, combined with the spread of voice speakers, is a sign that an increasing amount of web browsing will occur with the benefit of a screen. The use of natural voice (versus intellectual speak) in this implementation is recommended. Gartner predicts that in the year 2021, sales will increase for brands whose websites better support voice and visual search, expecting them to grow 30 percent from e-commerce (Gartner, 2020).

Launching a native advertising campaign

This type of paid advertising gets noticed, but since it matches the form, feel, and function of the network on which it appears, it is viewed in much the same manner as the non-sponsored content of a website. **Native ads** include ads that appear in a news feed on social media, ads that appear at the top of Google searches, and content recommendations (Outbrain, 2020). Native ads offer a number of advantages over traditional advertising methods:

- Consumers look at native ads 53 percent more than display ads.
- Native ads create an 18 percent increase in purchase intent.
- The visual engagement with native ads is the same, or even slightly higher, than the original editorial content (Outbrain, 2020).

Marketing through videos

Humans are generally visual beings, and sharing customer testimonials, how-to tutorials, or behind the scenes footage in video format is an excellent way to communicate with existing and potential customers. No longer a complicated or expensive proposition, engaging video can be created and distributed utilizing services such as YouTube and Instagram. This type of engagement results in higher levels of customer confidence and greater brand loyalty, and translates into increased sales and revenues. Explainer videos are the most common, followed by presentation videos, testimonial videos, sales videos and video ads. Wyzowl, a company that designs videos for their clients, recently conducted a survey on the use of videos in marketing. They found that the majority of companies who use videos feel that they are successful, and that videos are a critical component of

Native ads

These are recommended articles from a third-party sponsored site that can drive traffic to specific blog posts.

their overall promotional strategy. Video marketing is viewed as a way to drive increased traffic to an organization's website and provides a good return on their investment (Wyzowl, 2021).

3.6 Integrated Online Marketing and Viral Campaigns

According to Scott (2017), "what a brand means is determined by a consumer, the end user" (p. 111). Consumer and business buyer perception have always been critical elements in determining the success of a brand and how it is perceived in the marketplace, but never as much as today. The internet provides an immediate feedback loop for customer comments and input, as well as a way for them to share their thoughts and experiences with others (Scott, 2017). To be successful, an organization must be seen as authentic and all of the tools and instruments that they utilize must work together. Integration is key when it comes to delivering a clear, consistent, and compelling message to current and potential customers, as well as other stakeholder groups such as employees and shareholders.

Integrated Online Campaigns

Campaign
A campaign is a coordinated effort to achieve a particular goal or objective in a set period of time.

Well-integrated online marketing **campaigns** will serve to increase overall brand awareness and should be seen as a significant contributor to sales revenue. The components, including a company's website, social media platforms, emails, and videos need to work well, not only with each other, but with the more traditional marketing tools, such as the company logo, visuals, choice of font, tagline, and any audio components.

An excellent example of a well-coordinated social media campaign was launched in February 2020. In the U.K., Starbucks' #WhatsYourName campaign was run on Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, as well as traditional advertising outlets. In order to support the transgender and gender-diverse population, they teamed up with the non-profit organization Mermaids in order to promote inclusivity to youth of all genders. The message was simply that Starbucks would honor and respect you by using the name you choose, not necessarily the one you were given at birth. Tying in nicely to the brand's well-known tradition of writing a customer's name on their cup, one of their ads focused on a transgender boy whose face lights up at the sound of being referred to as James instead of Gemma (Cyca, 2020).

Viewers were encouraged to use the #WhatsYourName hashtag and post photos of themselves with the mermaid tail-shaped cookies, sold to raise money for their partner organization. Traditional TV spots that tie to the social media platforms used are an excellent example of integration. As is the case with all issues or social causes that are viewed as controversial, there were critics of the campaign. More importantly, however, Starbucks' message of inclusivity and respect also won them a number of fans and inspired trust and loyalty in their customer base (Cyca, 2020).

Viral Campaigns

A message goes viral when it is perceived to be so interesting or timely that others want to distribute it for you through shares, comments, and re-postings. Viral campaigns have a large reach and capture a great deal of interest. Ads, posts, and videos go viral as a result of the creation of something so valuable that others want to pass it along, by spreading it to their network of family, friends, and colleagues and, in doing so, tell a company's story for them. According to David Scott (2017), there are some key elements to a successful viral campaign. His six rules for a world-wide rave that will trigger audience reactions are as follows:

1. Remember that customers don't care about your product; they buy to satisfy their needs and wants.
2. Customers don't need to be convinced with special deals or offers to believe your message is worthy of sharing.
3. You have to provide something seen as valuable and it needs to be free—no strings attached.
4. You and your brand need to be a part of the community that will spread your message. The key to being successful with social media is being social by connecting with others, not just selling products.
5. You will need a hook or trigger to get everyone talking and sharing.
6. Online buzz will result in traffic to your website, so be ready!

Although there are no guarantees that your message will go viral or create a world-wide rave, if you can create something of value, you will benefit from positive word-of-mouth advertising and increased brand awareness.



SUMMARY

Regardless of whether your company utilizes strictly traditional marketing elements, such as direct mail and radio; exclusively new media, such as Facebook and email; or a blend of both traditional and new elements, it is important to remember the purpose behind it all. Your goal in marketing is to engage with your target market. To do this, you need to understand who they are, what they want, how and where they spend their time, and what they value. The more you research your customers and their buyer behavior, the more likely it is you will create products and services that deliver value and provide satisfaction. Delivering your message effectively requires that the market is aware of your company, sees your products as satisfying their needs and wants, and values what you stand for.

Recent changes to consumer behavior are having an impact on all retailers and service companies, causing significant changes to their marketing strategies. The classic instruments of online marketing (blogs, search engine optimization, social media, websites, lead managements, cus-

customer relationship management, landing pages, calls to action, and email) are proven methods of growing brand awareness and increasing sales revenues, but they will only work if you have the right message and are directing it to the proper audience.

Investment in original research and the development of a buyer persona will help an organization to analyze their target audience. Along with the level of change associated with technology, there are a number of alternative online marketing instruments that should be investigated further, including utilizing voice search technology, launching a native advertising campaign and marketing through videos.

Mobile marketing offers several significant advantages, including: ease of tracking activity and results, an enhanced customer experience, increased customer loyalty, reaching a more closely-defined target, or conversely a broader audience, an improvement in search engine rankings, cost-effectiveness with timely results and real-time communication. In order to be viewed as mobile-friendly, a website must be responsive, easy to search, and fast, utilizing large fonts and large buttons.

Social media marketing can be very effective, but whether you choose to utilize Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, LinkedIn or all of the above, savvy marketers need to keep current with the changes and enhancements on each of these platforms and more importantly, to know precisely who is using them. Consumers are constantly in search of the next great thing and viewer profiles for these tools change rapidly.

Overall, the tools chosen as part of a specific campaign must work together to create a degree of synergy, ensuring that your message is delivered clearly and consistently and that it resonates with your target audience.

UNIT 4

PLANNING, MANAGEMENT, AND CONTROL OF ONLINE MARKETING

STUDY GOALS

On completion of this unit, you will have learned ...

- the meaning of SMART and the importance of setting SMART goals.
- the elements of a marketing plan.
- methods used to measure the impact of a marketing campaign.
- how a content management system can assist in analyzing website traffic.

4. PLANNING, MANAGEMENT, AND CONTROL OF ONLINE MARKETING

Case Study

Jericho Road Press (JRP) is an independent American book publisher. The management team has determined that they need to expand their product offerings. Known primarily for their action and suspense titles targeted to a young male demographic, they have decided to pursue a new target market: young women readers who prefer romance and romantic comedies.

Based upon industry research and secondary data, which indicates the growth potential of this new audience, JRP plans to actively pursue this new target market. Their first order of business is to secure authors in the romance and romance-comedy genres. The opportunity for open submissions was posted on social media with the message that they were expanding and looking for authors to join the JRP family. To reach these authors, they sponsored ads on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

The open submission period lasted two months and Margaret Thompson, JRP's acquisitions editor, was pleased with the resulting 275 submissions. She and her team began the arduous job of reviewing the manuscripts, many of which were from first-time authors. At the end of the review period, they had chosen one dozen titles they would publish and had signed contracts with the authors. No advances were offered, and the team began to work with the chosen authors on editing, formatting, and cover design issues to meet their ambitious launch goals. They planned to release one new title a month for a full year and, based upon initial sales results, they would continue to expand with more titles to follow.

Laurie Cain, the newest member of the management team, was hired to provide JRP with the needed background information on their new target market. Cain was recruited from Hallmark Publishing, a leader in the romance publishing field and JRP's chief competitor. She immediately began to develop launch plans for the individual titles which would be released beginning in just three months.

JRP's marketing plan included detailed information on the demographics and buyer behavior of their new target market, as well as a brief analysis of the competition and a description of the new product offering. Sales were forecasted for each title and would be reviewed monthly. It was anticipated that the sales breakdown of the new titles would mirror that of their existing titles: 70 percent of orders placed online (85 percent from Amazon and 15 percent from the JRP website) and 30 percent from independent bookstores.

Consider the following prompts:

- Were JRP’s sales goals SMART? If not, what could have been improved?
- Was it wise to launch a plan to diversify (new target market and a new product line) based solely upon industry data and secondary information?
- What sort of measures should JRP implement to ensure that sales from their established target market are not negatively impacted by their new launch?

4.1 Planning of Online Marketing Instruments

A comprehensive marketing plan is essential for virtually any organization. Regardless of whether you are a recently formed company seeking to grow your business through the addition of new customers, a more mature company with a focus on the retention of current customers, an organization looking to diversify with a new line of products to satisfy a previously unreached audience, or a nonprofit organization seeking donations or volunteers, a carefully developed plan will provide you with

- clear-cut goals and objectives,
- tactics and strategies needed to meet those goals, and
- tools to measure performance.

As the old saying goes, “if you fail to plan, then you plan to fail.” An online marketing plan would generally be included as part of an overall marketing plan.

The Elements of a Marketing Plan

Statement of objectives

This is a statement clearly defining your goals or objectives for an individual campaign or over a specified period of time. Are you trying to increase brand awareness, grow revenue, introduce a new line of products, increase website traffic, solicit donations, build your base of volunteers, or gain new members or subscribers? Whatever you are attempting to accomplish, your goals should be SMART: specific, measurable, attainable, relevant (or realistic), and time-based. An example of a SMART goal might be something like this: We plan to increase overall sales revenue in the first quarter of 2021 by 10 percent over the same period from the previous year (Khillar, 2020).

Target market demographics

Identifying your target market(s) is an important step in planning. The more you know about your current and potential customers, the more successful you will be in gaining their attention, engaging with them, creating offerings that will satisfy their needs and wants, and delivering value. Who is most likely to buy from you? Is it reasonable to assume you can increase market share by adding more customers from among your current markets? Are you trying to attract former customers or reach a new audience?

Identification of competitors

Who are the companies who offer products or services that are similar to yours? A fast-food restaurant would clearly look at other fast-food restaurants as direct competitors, but what about grocery stores offering pre-made sandwiches or a salad bar? Knowing your indirect competition is also important if you are trying to increase your share of the market and overall revenue.

Budget

This deals with how and where funds will be allocated among traditional and new media. How will you determine your overall spending: a percentage of anticipated sales or some pre-determined amount? What portion of your budget will you devote to online marketing efforts?

The 4 Ps of Marketing

Of course, no marketing plan would be considered complete without the inclusion of a thorough analysis of the elements of the marketing mix, aka the 4 Ps: product, place (or distribution), promotion, and price (Twin, 2021).

Products and services

What do you offer and how do your offerings differ from those of competitors? What needs and wants are your customers looking to satisfy? How do current customers perceive the quality and value of the products you offer? How will a previously unreached target audience respond to a new line of products? Will there be a fallout from your loyal customer base if you choose to diversify your brand?

Place or distribution of products and services

How and where will customers review and take possession of your products? Will distribution take place through your own stores or website? Retail partners such as department stores or Amazon? Should a new plan be considered when you attempt to reach a new target market?

Promotion strategy

What are the best ways to attract a potential customer's attention? Are you seeking to inform, persuade, or remind them of the benefits of your products? What tools have worked previously? Where are your customers spending their time: in the malls, watching television, on social media? Will the buying behavior of a new target audience match that of your existing customer base?

Pricing strategy

How will you price your products? Will you consider the cost of goods sold and add a standard markup? Will you base your prices on those of competitors or will you adopt a more flexible pricing strategy based upon the type of customer or time of year? How will the introduction of new products impact your pricing strategy?

A plan that contains all or most of the above information will aid you in meeting your marketing and sales goals, measuring your actual performance compared to the goals set and identifying which elements, traditional or new media, should receive additional funding or investment and which should be decreased or dropped altogether. The marketing plan should not be considered something set in stone, but rather a flexible guide that can be updated and expanded over time (Evans & Ballen, 2018).

4.2 Essential Success Factors of Online Marketing

Historically, the success of marketing campaigns was measured in terms of ROI, meaning return on investment. In other words, how much money did I make back on my marketing expenditures? David Scott argues against this approach, in favor of new measures to more accurately assess the impact of your marketing efforts (Scott, 2017).

When it comes to online marketing, there are a number of ways to measure success. These can include any or all of the following:

- likes on **Facebook**. Although generally considered a **vanity metric**, new likes can be a measure or indication of increased exposure within your target market and/or potential interest in your brand.
- follows on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Although not necessarily a measure that equates with conversion or engagement, customers who follow your company or brand may be more predisposed towards a future purchase.
- subscriptions to your blog. Customers who see value in the content you provide are likely to engage further in the future, which may result in sales or other desired behavior.
- sign-ups for your newsletter. Similar to blog subscriptions, these are customers interested in hearing more from your company.
- registrations for a webinar you are offering. Offering a free or low-cost webinar on a topic seen as valuable to your market is an excellent way to stand out among your competition.
- the number of times any of your content was downloaded. Offering free ebooks or articles can be an excellent way to introduce yourself to a prospective customer. If seen as valuable, a free sample can improve awareness and stimulate interest, which can lead to increased demand.

Vanity metric

This refers to a number that looks good (or poor) on paper, but is not necessarily tied to sales, nor is it a reflection of customer behavior.

- mentions by bloggers or writers in your field. This form of public relations works as free advertising when authorities in your industry are seen as recommending your products or services.
- the number of completed contact forms or requests for more information on your website or social media. These leads must be tracked and responded to immediately to maximize the likelihood of conversion to sales (Gregory, 2019).
- revenues. These are most often considered to be the truest indicator of success and appear in the form of sales or, for nonprofit organizations, donations.

Regardless of what you measure, it is critical to track results carefully in order to maximize those instruments that are effective and eliminate those that do not positively impact your business.

4.3 Approaches and Instruments for Measuring the Success of Online and Social Media Activities

Tracking the number of visitors to your website is a way to measure awareness and company or brand recognition. Although this number by itself does not give us much information about our marketing strategies, it can be broken down as follows:

- organic traffic. These are visits to your website resulting from the use of a search engine. These are the visitors who typed in keywords that provided a list of results, among them your company's website.
- direct traffic. This includes those who type in your URL. These visitors planned to visit your website, as a result of an advertisement or a mention on social media.
- referral traffic. These are people who visit your domain after clicking on a link from a social network or website, without searching on Google.
- social traffic. These are viewers who come to your website or mobile app after spending time on a social media network or platform.
- paid traffic. Clicking on a paid or sponsored ad or promoted content will deliver paid traffic to your domain (Gregory, 2019).

Software such as Google Analytics will allow you to break down your website traffic by source. Being able to measure organic traffic resulting, at least in part, from your search engine optimization (SEO) efforts will assist in your future choice of keywords. Further, measuring the return on paid advertising and distinguishing it from other traffic will help to determine your spending levels and choice of platforms (Dickey, 2017).

In addition to analyzing traffic from the above sources, there are several other considerations to assist you in measuring your success online, including conversions, engagement, and click-through rate.

Conversions

Analyzing your conversions, also known as conversion rate optimization (CRO) is an important step in developing a better understanding of your current and potential customers and their behavior. Conversions, or actions taken by viewers, include spending time on your site, downloading information, filling out forms and signing up for email. Software such as **Optimizely** and Google Analytics can further break down the number of new visitors compared to returning ones and the amount of desktop use versus mobile use. Knowing which pages are visited, for how long, and which content pieces drive the most traffic will be useful in future enhancements to your website design and in the development of useful or engaging content.

Engagement

This refers to the number of likes, shares, retweets, and comments that are received by a post, which can result in more followers and increased contacts for further action on your part. In addition to **Hootsuite Analytics** and Google Analytics, there are a number of free resources to track levels of engagement on social media, including analytical tools provided by Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat. Knowing how and when engagement occurs can assist you in designing more effective content and in analyzing which platforms are most effective in delivering your message.

Click-through rate (CTR)

This is the ratio of viewers who click on a specific link compared to total viewers. Understanding what types of offer, graphics, or message interest prospective customers assists you in understanding your customer base that much better. Knowing what works well and what does not will result in more effective advertising to your target audience (Dickey, 2017).

Customer Relationship Management (CRM)

In order to succeed in a competitive and increasingly complex marketplace, it is common today for an organization to utilize a system to enable them to stay in touch with their customers in order to retain them and to discover new ways to grow their business. The term customer relationship management (CRM) refers to the process and software used to manage and enhance critical relationships with an organization's customers and vendors.

An effective CRM tool systematically collects, stores, and tracks data and customer interactions and assists in the identification of new opportunities to upsell existing customers with additional goods and services. Customer relationship management tools are available from a number of vendors, including **Hubspot, Zoho, Freshsales, and Mailchimp**. The tools provided by these and other suppliers vary in price and complexity, but all can be used to manage or address the following:

- contacts. This is the key information needed to identify potential customers.
- leads. The first stage in the sales funnel or pipeline, leads are contacts who have expressed an interest in the goods or services offered, usually through a phone call or online query.

- pipeline. This sales funnel that describes the stages of the purchase process is often broken down into four sections: lead, qualification, proposal, and the sale itself.
- automation of sales tasks. This allows for increased efficiency of repetitive activities that can be programmed to occur at preset times, including the sending of follow-up emails or invoices.
- sales forecasts. This is the use of data to predict future sales activity and assist in goal setting and the budgeting of resources.
- storage and sharing of files. This allows centralized access to essential information to improve inter-departmental collaboration.
- email. It provides direct communication from the CRM with customers, vendors, and other departments.
- reporting and analytics. A dashboard is utilized to customize, create, and convey key findings and sales results (Deshpande, 2019).

4.4 Legal Framework for Online and Social Media Marketing

There are a variety of legal matters relating to online and social media marketing. The major categories are intellectual property and consumer protection laws and regulations.

Intellectual Property

Intellectual property (IP) issues include trademarks, copyrights, and patents. Not only will you want to ensure that you are protecting your organization's valuable assets, but it is also equally important to not infringe on the rights of others (Patel, n.d.).

Trademarks

Protecting your brand from misuse requires proper registration in order to maintain exclusive rights to non-generic words, logos, slogans, and colors used to identify the goods and services you provide. This is done using **trademarks**. Laws vary by country, but protection can be valid for ten years or longer, as well as be renewable (Legalvision, 2020).

Copyright

Copyright refers to authorship of work that is of an original nature and can include language or text used in books, music, art, and other works. The concerns are two-fold: protecting your own work from being used without your explicit permission, as well as being certain to not infringe on the rights of others. Properly registering your original work is critical in order to protect it from being used improperly. Obtaining the required licenses or written permission to use another's intellectual property, including all text and images in your own advertising and marketing efforts, will protect your organization from charges of copyright infringement (Patel, n.d.).

Trademark

This includes text (names, slogans) and graphics (logos, images) that identify the product and its owner and distinguishes it from others.

Patents

A patent is a form of protection relating to an invention. Patents are effective for a limited amount of time, must be granted by a governing body, and include the requirement of full disclosure of the components of the product or the process involved in creating it (Rainy, 2020).

Consumer Protection Laws and Regulations

In the **United States**, for example, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) serves to protect consumer rights and regulates advertising and anti-spam practices. Their regulations include the requirement that advertising is fair and free of deception that might mislead consumers or negatively influence their behavior. Advertisers must be truthful in their claims and product descriptions and include all relevant information that a consumer might consider in searching for goods and services. Comparative advertising deserves special attention, as exaggerating your products' benefits or minimizing those of your competitor can result in monetary fines and legal action. **Other U.S. advertising** regulators include the Children's Advertising Review Unit (CARU) for advertising that is aimed at children (Patel, n.d.).

Spam refers to advertising messages, which are both unsolicited and sent in a bulk manner. There are anti-spam laws in many parts of the world, including CAN-SPAM in the United States, Canada's Anti-Spam Legislation (CASL), and the Spam Act of 2003 in Australia. Although there are anti-spam laws in a number of individual countries, there are no singular laws covering all of **Europe, Africa, Asia, or South America**. Anti-spam laws are in place to prevent companies from using misleading or deceptive email headers and subject lines, as well as requiring that messages are identified as advertisements, provide a company's location, and that they honor opt-out requests simply and on a timely basis (Sugar Market, 2020).

A final issue regarding advertising for online and social media marketing is bait advertising. This happens when products are advertised at sale prices, but there is insufficient inventory to meet consumer demand. Bait advertising can result in customers feeling pressured into purchasing a similar or competing product, generally at a higher price (Legalvision, 2020).



SUMMARY

Being successful on social media requires the development of a carefully laid out marketing plan and the setting of SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant or realistic, and time-based) goals. Having a clear understanding of your current situation (where you are) and your destination or desired state (where you want to be) is the basis for formulating an effective growth strategy.

In addition to the setting of goals or objectives, a marketing plan includes the following: target market demographics and an understanding of both current and potential buyer behavior; an analysis of your competitors, their offerings and the way in which they are perceived by the target market; your budget and its allocation among both traditional and new media efforts; a full description of your existing products and services as well as any new products being introduced; the planned placement or distribution methods for products and services, including current and potential retail partners; your planned promotional strategy with its goals (inform, persuade, or remind) and planned tools or media choices; and your choice of pricing strategy, including any planned discounts.

There are a number of different ways to measure the success of online and social media marketing efforts. These measures include likes, follows, retweets, and comments on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram; subscriptions to your blog; signups for your newsletter; registrations for a webinar you are offering; the number of times any of your content was downloaded; mentions by bloggers or writers in your field; the number of completed contact forms or requests for more information on your website or social media; and last but certainly not least, revenues in the form of sales or, for nonprofit organizations, donations.

A further analysis of your presence on social media and your effectiveness with online marketing includes the tracking of traffic or visits to your website or mobile apps. Tracking the number of visitors to your website is a way to measure awareness and company or brand recognition. With the use of software such as Hootsuite Analytics, traffic can be broken down by the source as follows: organic traffic or visits to your website resulting from use of a search engine; direct traffic or visitors who typed in your URL; referral traffic sourced through a link on social media; social traffic or those directed to your site via social media; and paid traffic from your ads and sponsored or promoted content.

Other useful measures in determining the effectiveness of your social media and online marketing efforts include: conversions or actions taken by viewers to your site, including spending time and visiting certain pages, downloading information, requesting additional information, and purchases; engagement, or the number of likes, follows, retweets, and comments; and click-through rate, the ratio of viewers who click on a link as compared to the total number of viewers or visitors to your website.

Customer relationship management (CRM) allows an organization to stay in touch with their customers in order to retain them and to discover new ways to grow their business. CRM refers to the process and software used to manage and enhance critical relationships with an organization's customers and vendors. CRM tools collect, store, and

track data and customer interactions and assist in the identification of new opportunities to upsell existing customers with additional goods and services. Features common to CRM software include: the management of contacts, leads, and the sales pipeline or funnel; the automation of repetitive sales tasks; the forecasting of sales; the storage and sharing of files; and the facilitation of email, reporting, and analytics.

UNIT 5

OUTLOOK AND DISCUSSION: THE FUTURE OF ONLINE MARKETING

STUDY GOALS

On completion of this unit, you will have learned ...

- the outlook for businesses, including retailers and advertisers, and the issues that could affect their operations.
- the trends shaping consumer behavior regarding online marketing and social media.
- the legal and ethical issues that affect online marketing.

5. OUTLOOK AND DISCUSSION: THE FUTURE OF ONLINE MARKETING

Case Study

Jericho Road Press (JRP) is an independent American book publisher. Pleased with the growth of their business over the past four months, the management team decided to review its policies and procedures about the information they collected from the visitors to their website, including their customers. They wanted to ensure that they were meeting or exceeding all the current requirements for keeping information both private and secure. Another goal was to increase the level of trust among their customers and reduce the likelihood of credit card fraud. Their goals for the process were to create goodwill, reduce the security concerns of buyers, and minimize any legal risks.

Their plan was made up of the following five steps:

1. Conduct a privacy audit to decide what data are necessary, and how they would be collected and stored securely. JRP decided to collect and store only the following information:
 - customer browsing and purchase history to improve the quality of the recommendations made to buyers
 - demographic information of buyers (age, gender, and zip code) to improve their marketing efforts
 - addresses of current and new customers to speed up the checkout process
 - credit card information should no longer be stored
2. Protect the above data with a certificate of Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) to ensure that the connection between the JRP website and the user's browser is secure when data is transmitted.
3. Add a two-step verification process for all purchases made on their website. Prior to being allowed to place an order, a buyer would need a six-digit code sent to them via email or text message and enter that code prior to placing an order. They felt that this was in keeping with the secure checkout standards set by the Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI DSS).
4. Strengthen the privacy policy to describe their practice of collecting, using, and storing data more accurately. They decided that the online tool TRUSTe's Privacy Policy Generator was the best way to develop a clear policy for \$500 USD annually. After updating their policy, they would communicate directly with their vendors, site visitors and customers. Visitors would be given the option to opt-out of sharing data using the click-wrap method, requiring them to click "I Agree" to the privacy policy.
5. Invite feedback from all parties using an online forum as well as a new email address: talkwithus[at]jrp[.]com. Monitor social media comments and incoming email to ensure that customers feel secure about doing business with them.

Consider the following prompts:

- Are there more types of information JRP should collect and store?
- What else could JRP have done to secure the information they receive?
- What other means could JRP employ to learn about their customers' beliefs about privacy and security?

While it is difficult to predict precisely how businesses and consumers behavior will change **post-COVID-19** and in the years ahead, there are a few trends and insights to consider.

5.1 Current and Future Developments in Online Marketing

Business Forecast

Retailers

Online marketing has forever changed the way both consumers and business buyers research, order, and receive goods and services. On the part of retailers, there will be a continued shift to an increased blending of online and in-store offerings. Retailers will continue to build an infrastructure to allow customers to BOPIS (buy online and pick up in store) as this provides greater convenience to the customer without incurring added fulfillment expenses (Bosstab, 2019). Livestreaming of shopping events on social media will continue to increase. A **recent** Tommy Hilfiger livestreaming event in China drew 14 million viewers and sold out 1,300 hoodies in just two minutes. Projected livestream revenues in the U.S. are expected to reach \$25 billion USD (about \$77 per person in the U.S.) **by 2023** (Hootsuite, 2020). Further, more retailers will invest in electric delivery vehicles to reduce their carbon footprint and the negative impact on the environment as well as cutting the expense of home delivery (British Council, 2020). Business buyers are expected to continue to consult social media prior to making purchases, the majority of which will be facilitated online (Lee, 2016).

Advertisers



Advertisers will continue to shift spending from traditional media to new media and further increase their profiles on social media (Shah, 2020). The top 3 reasons why companies will invest in social media are: increased acquisition of new customers (73 percent), increased brand awareness (64 percent), and drive conversions through leads, purchases, and product inquiries (45 percent) (Hootsuite, 2020). Brands will also become more strategic when it comes to choosing social media platforms and influencers (Mander, 2020).

Ad spending in the U.S. for Connected TV (smart TV services including Roku, Amazon Fire TV, Samsung, and Vizio) is expected to increase from \$8.11 billion USD (about \$25 per person in the U.S.) **at the end of 2020 to \$18.29 billion USD (about \$56 per person in the U.S.) by 2024** (Blustein, 2020). Moreover, 61 percent of businesses surveyed plan to increase their advertising investment on Instagram, versus 48 percent on Facebook, 45 percent on

YouTube, and 44 percent on LinkedIn (Hootsuite, 2020). Instagram’s projected growth is attributed to two of the social media platform’s recent innovations: Instagram recently became more search-friendly, dropping the need for hashtags in the consumer’s search for video and posts; and the introduction of Reels to compete with TikTok and offer advertisers an opportunity to produce 15 to 30 second video content to inform and entertain viewers (Jenkins, 2020).

Social/Consumer Behavior

Even before the impact of the COVID-19 crisis in 2020, eCommerce was on the rise. In the United Kingdom, 87 percent of internet users made a purchase online in 2018 and in Denmark, the Netherlands, Sweden, Germany, Switzerland, and Norway, over 80 percent of internet users shopped online (OECD, 2019). Overall usage of the internet and visits to social media sites are increasing. While the amount of time spent daily on social media varies by country, the average amount of time has not changed significantly. Gains in social media usage originate from the increasing number of users, not in the amount of time being spent on the various platforms.

The recent pandemic has changed the way that we use social media and view and utilize online marketing. While internet usage is expected to drop post-pandemic, the way we think and use social media has permanently shifted our online behavior, causing increased engagement and a greater appetite for digital news and current events, as well as entertainment and shopping. Live streaming has increased and there is a growing appetite for live events and video. According to a 2020 study, 23 percent of global consumers plan to watch more video content in the months to come, 64 percent of Facebook visitors have watched a video in the last month, 38 percent of Instagram visitors have watched a video clip, and 46 percent of U.S. and U.K. Gen Z and millennials watched a live stream or virtual event on YouTube in the past two months (Mander, 2020).

Table 7: Daily Time on Social Media in 2020 versus 2018

Highest Countries	Time in 2020	Time in 2018
Philippines	3 hr 50 min	4 hr 8 min
Nigeria	3 hr 42 min	3 hr 26 min
South Africa	3 hr 32 min	2 hr 58 min
Lowest Countries		
South Korea	1 hr 12 min	1 hr 11 min
Austria	1 hr 16 min	1 hr 15 min
Germany	1 hr 20 min	1 hr 8 min

Source: Olmsted (2021), based on Mander (2020).

While the average amount of time spent on social media has not changed significantly, the number of visitors and users of various social media platforms is growing (Mander, 2020). Countries experiencing the highest usage of the various social media platforms are as follows:

Table 8: Percent of Citizens visiting or Using a Platform in a One Month Period

Facebook	Instagram	Snapchat	Twitter
Philippines 96%	Indonesia 86%	Denmark 46%	Saudi Arabia 72%
Vietnam 95%	Brazil 84%	France 37%	Turkey 68%
Columbia 94%	Argentina 0%	Ireland 37%	Kenya 61%

Source: Created on behalf of IU (2023)

Legal Issues

Legal issues affecting online marketing generally fall into one of two primary areas of concern: privacy and security. Protection of private or sensitive information and the security of financial data such as account numbers are the major concerns of online shoppers. Protecting a customer’s private information will continue to be a challenge for organizations, both large and small, as there is an increasing threat from sophisticated hackers using state of the art technology. There is a growing list of laws and regulations designed to increase levels of privacy and improve overall security when conducting business online (Patel, n.d.).

Privacy

It is important, and in some jurisdictions required, that an organization disclose the kinds of customer information that they plan to collect and store, how it might be shared or utilized and a way that customers can see what information has been collected and make changes to it. To comply, every organization involved in online marketing should post a privacy policy on their website and use a **clickwrap method** (Patel, n.d.).

A few of the more recent attempts to increase online privacy include the following:

- **General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).** In effect since 2018, the GDPR is a privacy law created by the European Union (EU) to enhance digital security for EU citizens by supplying more control over the personal information shared online. The purpose of the GDPR is to update digital security for the citizens of the EU by giving them a higher level of control on the personal information they share online. Businesses around the world must follow the GDPR or risk severe financial penalties (Rainy, 2020).
- **EU Cookies Directive.** This 2011 amendment to the ePrivacy Directive was part of the EU’s move to strengthen the online privacy of all its citizens. Businesses must notify users of their policy on the usage of cookies, or files stored on a user’s computer which hold data about specific websites. Though generally considered harmless, companies must provide a way for customers to decline them while on their site (Elizabeth C., 2020).

Clickwrap method

This refers to the practice of requiring customers or users to click “I agree” to a private policy when visiting a website.

- COPPA. The Children's Online Privacy Protection Act in the U.S. aims to protect the privacy of children under the age of 13 by restricting the online collection of their personal information and providing parents with added control (Elizabeth C., 2020).
- The American Cloud (Clarifying Lawful Overseas Use of Data) Act or CLOUD Act. This law was passed in 2018. It allows the United States government to obtain requested data stored by technology companies, whether their servers are located in the U.S. or on foreign soil (Swaminathan, 2018).



Security

To protect both organizations and customers from unauthorized access to information that is collected and stored, most companies enable some sort of Transport Layer Security (TSL) or its predecessor Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) to ensure that the connection between their website and the user's browser is secure when data is transmitted. It is increasingly common to use a two-step verification procedure or two-factor authentication, as well, which requires a customer to provide their password along with a multi-digit verification code (Patel, n.d.).

Storage of information is facilitated via the cloud, or internet servers, instead of an individual hard drive. Cloud storage is thought to be a safer alternative, but it is still possible for outsiders to hack in and access information stored by another organization. Efforts to improve security for businesses and customers alike include the following measures:

- The International Cyber Law Project. This is an online reference tool which provides up to date information on cybersecurity policies globally. The tool is meant to “increase knowledge transfer and the exchange of best practices, and ultimately enhance security, trust, and cooperation in cyberspace” (Weingarten, 2020, para. 4).
- PCI DSS. The Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard impacts transactions using credit or debit cards and requires all businesses to provide a secure checkout opportunity with no threat to a purchaser's personal data (Rainy, 2020).
- PIPEDA. The Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act was introduced in Canada in 2000, to govern organizations and their collection of personal information. The foundation of PIPEDA is based upon principles including accountability, accuracy, and access and requires organizations to gain consent prior to collection of information and provide purchased goods and services regardless of receiving consent (Elizabeth C., 2020).



Ethical Concerns

In addition to being knowledgeable about and meeting the legal requirements of all jurisdictions in which a business operates, there are ethical considerations, the most critical of which are trust and the humanization of brands and their parent organizations.

Trust

Trust is still a critical issue when it comes to social media. While 47 percent of all internet users use social media for updates on news and current events, only 14 percent rate social media as the most trustworthy source of news (Mander, 2020). Since the most stated rea-

son for using social media is staying up with news and current events, social media platforms are showing signs of greater responsibility. For example, Facebook is actively notifying users about the practice of sharing outdated news stories, as well as is instituting a trial practice of communicating media literacy tips to aid viewers in recognizing truthful versus misleading headlines. Twitter is now asking users to open links and read articles before sharing them to decrease the proliferation of fake news (Mander, 2020).

Humanizing Marketing

\$500 billion USD (about \$1,500 per person in the U.S.) are spent on marketing worldwide every year. With this much power comes the responsibility to humanize, to adopt a human-centered way of doing business to maximize a positive impact along with profits (Forbes, 2020). According to a recent Forbes report on the topic, the foundations of human-centered marketing include the following principles and actions: consensus to maximize opportunities for growth, increase employee empowerment and provide enhanced customer experiences, company values which link purpose and profit, with an emphasis on personal connections and well-being, transparency which allows for an organization to control its own message versus being reported on by a third-party, and a focus on company strengths and capabilities by leveraging the current competencies of an organization (Forbes, 2020). Viewing marketing as a stimulus for positive change can create new ways to define economic success—measuring the comfort and welfare of shareholders, including employees, customers, and suppliers.

Technological

While it is impossible to identify which technological advancements and products of innovation will be forthcoming, it is a safe assumption that transformations that will aid organizations in developing desirable content, helping fast and secure transactions, and increasing connectivity will be the cornerstones. These include livestreaming of events on social platforms and connected TVs, including shopping events (Mander, 2020), connected TVs, also known as smart TVs, including tablets and mobile devices that allow for video streaming, web searching, and shopping (Blustein, 2020). Universal access to quality broadband connections for information, shopping, and entertainment, as well as high-speed fiber networks to facilitate the expected growth of cloud computing and storage are also expected to grow (OECD, 2019). Artificial intelligence will likely be implemented to improve customer relationship management systems, increase cybersecurity efforts, and create three-dimensional customer experiences (Uzialko, 2019). Finally, **big data analytics** will be used to predict consumer behavior, facilitate business decision making, and increase revenues (Simplilearn, 2021).

Big data analytics
These are utilized to process sets of data that are too large for traditional methods and can aid in decision making and the identification of trends (Simplilearn, 2021).



SUMMARY

The increasing shift to online marketing has changed the way both consumers and business buyers research, order, and receive goods and services. Livestreaming of shopping events on social media will continue

to increase and retailers will reduce their environmental impact through investment in electric delivery vehicles. Business buyers will increasingly consult social media to improve their purchase transactions.

Advertisers will continue to shift spending to new media and further increase their profiles on social media to increase sales and brand awareness. Brands will need to improve their strategies for choosing social media platforms. Advertising investment will be increased, with Instagram expecting the highest level of growth.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the way we use social media and shop online. While internet usage is expected to drop post-pandemic, there has been a permanent shift in our online behavior, causing increased engagement and a greater appetite for digital news and current events, as well as entertainment and shopping. Overall usage of the internet and social media sites is increasing.

Protection of information and financial data are the major concerns of online shoppers as there is an increasing threat from sophisticated hackers using state of the art technology. There is a growing number of laws and regulations to increase privacy and improve overall security when conducting business online. Organizations need to post a clear privacy policy and allow visitors to decline to share information, enable security measures, consider a two-step verification procedure, monitor the security of cloud storage, and ensure a safe checkout procedure for all transactions.

Ethical considerations include greater levels of time and effort being spent by the various social media platforms to improve the level of trust among users. On the part of manufacturers and service providers, other issues include the production of safe products, pricing policies, promotion that is neither deceptive nor offensive, and distribution practices that are fair and cost-effective.

Technology will continue to advance in the areas related to the development of desirable content including video formats and livestreaming. Online transactions will be facilitated using big data analytics and artificial intelligence and there will be increased connectivity with smart TVs and mobile devices.

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