

An Analytical Portrait of Digital Marketing in India: Sustainability of Business and Commerce during the Pandemic of COVID-19

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Abstract

The roles of digital marketing are significant during the pandemic of COVID-19. Digital marketing has shown several significant roles since its arrival but with the advent of COVID-19 it has gained momentum. The article entitled "An Analytical Portrait of Digital Marketing in India: Sustainability of Business and Commerce during the Pandemic of COVID-19" is based on a thorough analysis of various contents and data available and reflects several significant roles played by digital marketing during the pandemic. It helps to maintain sustainability in the field of business and commerce and helps to promote the sell volume of various products, goods and services. During the days of pandemic the digital marketing provides a wide support to the small business organisations to revive their business and to strengthen the economical infrastructure. The article also reveals the causes behind the growth of digital marketing during the pandemic period of COVID-19. Along with these significant roles, the article also shows how digital marketing maintains a cordial relationship with the consumers and provides them various options to purchase and to fully fill their need and demands when the entire nation feels safe to stay at their home.

Key words: Digital Marketing, Digital Media, Sustainability, E-Commerce, Economic Infrastructure, Effective Communication, Social Media, COVID-19, Pandemic, Lockdown.

INTRODUCTION:

Digital marketing is one of the most vital forms of marketing system of modern era. It is the form of marketing where the marketers and the business organisations use digital technologies for the marketing and to promote their products, goods and service. During the pandemic crisis of COVID-19 when the situation turned worst and most of the business organisations, markets and shops were closed, digital marketing served its best to the marketers and the society. Through various digital platforms like social media, email, SMS, via computers, laptops, tablets and mobile phones, marketers conducted marketing and succeeded to achieve various marketing objectives and goals.

The role of digital marketing during the pandemic crisis of COVID-19 was enormous. It played several significant roles with the help of digital media and effective communication system. Digital marketing support in sustaining the business and commerce and shows a fruitful result in maintaining a steady economic progress. It directly promotes the business organisations and their brands along with their goods and service while on the other it maintains a cordial relationship with the consumers and the society at large. The significance of the digital media during the pandemic of COVID-19 is highly appreciable and valued from the point of view of marketers, business organisations and the society.

Objective of the Study

The article entitled "An Analytical Portrait of Digital Marketing in India: Sustainability of Business and Commerce during the Pandemic of COVID-19" reflected some clear objectives which tried to define the roles of digital marketing during the

pandemic of COVID-19, how digital media and the communication system played a significant role in the digital marketing and what are the causes behind the growth of digital marketing during the pandemic period of COVID-19. Along with all this objectives the article overall focuses on the supportive role of digital marketing in the sustainability of business and commerce.

Research Methodologies:

The article entitled "An Analytical Portrait of Digital Marketing in India: Sustainability of Business and Commerce during the Pandemic of COVID-19" is based on a thorough analysis of various contents and data available in several books, news articles published in news web portal along with various articles available in various websites of new media.

Data Collection Method

Data is collected from the Internet resources such as Journals, Research Papers, and Blogs.

Research element is a tool that allows researchers to conduct research on a specific topic, problem, or purpose. The most popular research tool for collecting data is the research specific questionnaire. This is the most common method for collecting basic data. The responses and suggestions of the respondents were considered as needed to change the survey instrument.

Data is also collected from reports of the similar related project reports and articles.

DISCUSSION

Digital Marketing in India during the Pandemic of COVID-19:

COVID-19 is the most deadly infectious viral disease which caused the greatest pandemic of the twenty-first century. The pandemic has changed the entire scenario of the world within a very short span of time and created a heavy confusion across the globe. It affects almost every nation and thousands of people died every day in various parts of the world. It has dramatically changed every system of our society and tries to cripple the continuous flow of life. Indian media house 'The Hindu' launched a wonderful e-book with the title 'The Pandemic Notebook'. The book is highly valuable as it contained various data and information related to COVID-19 and its precautions. In the introduction of the book the situation during the initial days of the pandemic was mentioned as: "Lockdown, curfews, massive airport screenings, quarantines, and social distancing have become the norm across the globe." (Prasad, Perappadan, Shelar & Koshy, 2020).

India was also affected by the pandemic of COVID-19 just like various other nations of the globe, but India was ready from the very beginning of its arrival. In India, the touches of COVID-19 put a mark on almost every sector and present a big challenge especially in front of the business and commerce. Government of India declared lockdown with the advent of COVID-19 to protect the Indian citizen from the infection of novel corona virus. The lockdown proved highly beneficial in protecting the citizen from the infection of the deadly viral disease called COVID-19 but it has a tremendous negative effect on the business and commerce. The pandemic and the lockdown in India reflected the scenario where most of the citizens stayed within their home for a long time, most of the shops and markets were closed, no marketing or promotional activities, consumers avoid roaming in the markets, maintain social distance, avoid rapid touching and checking of consumer's products in the markets, etc. The lockdown and the precautionary habits are good to avoid the infection of COVID-19 but act as serious obstacles in the process of business and traditional marketing system.

However digital marketing brings solution to all these problems. Digital marketing has changed the pattern of

marketing system and develop various innovative style and strategies of marketing technique. Republicworld.com in the introductory part of a news blog article with entitled 'How COVID-19 Pandemic Has Changed The Future Of Digital Marketing And Advertising Agencies' has mentioned about the digital marketing as "No arena of the marketing world has changed faster than digital marketing and credit goes to the COVID-19 pandemic"- (Republicworld.com, 22nd June 2021). Digital marketing has reflected a steady growth in various part of India during the pandemic crisis of COVID-19. It used digital media to propagate advertising and promotional message throughout the nation. Digital marketing has shown several significant roles since its arrival but with the advent of COVID-19 it has gain momentum. During the pandemic crisis of COVID-19, the role of digital marketing was significant in sustainability of the business and to maintain a cordial relationship among the business organisations, marketers and the society. It helps to maintains sustainability in the business and commerce by giving a wide promotional exposure to various brands, products, goods and service provided by several business organisations through digital media. The process played a significant role in the growth of the sell volume of various products, goods and service during the crisis. Along with it digital marketing also provides a strong support to the small business organisation to revive their business and to strengthen the economical infrastructure.

When the entire nation feels safe to stay at their home, digital marketing tries to satisfy the consumers by providing various options to purchase or to full fill their need and demands while staying directly from their home. It tries to bridge the gap between the manufacturing industries and the consumers. However it was reflected that in digital marketing digital media played a significant role which act as a medium that helps the business organisations and the marketers to promote their brands, products, goods and service through digital advertising.

Digital Marketing and the Digital Media

The term digital marketing refers mainly to the promotional activities or advertising propagated through the digital medium such as social media, email, mobile apps, various website and web portal, etc via computer, laptop or mobile phone. Digital marketing can also be described as a unique modern marketing technique where business organisation or the manufacturing industries display and sell their product through the use of digital technologies. The digital marketing can go beyond the traditional marketing system and can easily pursue more consumers than the traditional one. In the preface of the book 'Digital Marketing: Strategic Planning & Integration' Annmarie Hanlon opined about the digital marketing as: "Digital marketing is a journey that can take an organisation towards new markets, discover new opportunities and protect the current landscape"- (Hanlon, 2019). Dave Shaffey and Fiona Ellis -Chadwick in their book 'Digital Marketing' defined and explained the term digital marketing as:

"The use of digital media, data and technology to support marketing activities has given rise to a bewildering range of labels and jargon created by both academics and professionals. It has been called digital marketing, internet marketing, e-marketing and web marketing."- (Shaffey & Chadwick, 2019).

However in the pre digital era, the marketing technique is totally traditional and manual in nature but digitalisation has put a huge impact and changed the concept of marketing system. The process of digital marketing is totally turn digital in nature where the sellers or the marketers completely use digital

technology and internet facilities to promote marketing of brands, products, goods and service. Digital medium or the digital application plays a significant role in the process of digital marketing. It has changed the concept of marketing and proved success in the promotion of products, goods and services, formation of brand and in the selling of the products. The uses of digital media in marketing make the business more easy and comfortable from various dimensions.

However during the pandemic most of the citizen involved with the digital media and spend most of the time with social media, reading digital news, social media marketing, gaming, etc. The marketers and the business organisation also use the digital platform during the pandemic to gain the marketing objectives. The pandemic has compelled the marketers and business organisations to use digital platform to showcase their products and service as millions of people spend most of their time on internet and dealing various digital platforms.

Several e-commerce organisations have their own digital web site through which they offer several products to the consumers. The e-commerce organisations put online advertising on various website which easily engaged the consumers and provides them all details of the product along with few photographs of the products or service and finally pursues them to take decision to buy the product. E-commerce organisations or the online marketing stores like the 'Flipkart', 'Amazon' or 'Big Bazar' reflects how digital marketing flourish through the use of digital media. 'Flipkart', 'Amazon' and 'Big Bazar' all of them use the digital media as a platform to reach the consumers and to gain marketing objectives during the pandemic period of COVID-19.

Digital Marketing and the Effective Communication:

The pandemic of COVID-19 is the most unwanted negative crisis that arises during the 21st century which hamper the economical status of almost every business organisations. It is a huge crisis that put a massive effect on social as well as on the economical structure of the society. During the crisis, communication plays an effective role in social dimension. In information dissemination and awareness campaign the role of communication was essential and proved necessary for the speedy recovery from the situation. Effective communications are also proved helpful for the business organisation and the marketers during the crisis. The communication system helps the business organisations and the digital marketing system from multi dimensional ways. Communication is getting used for several purposes in the digital marketing and in every field it brings success and proved helpful. The main purpose of communication is to educate the consumers and helps to make them understand what the marketers and business organisations are offering.

Communication supports in the sustainability of the marketers and business organisations as it was reflected that the effective communication helps the marketers by pursuing and motivating the consumers to use their products and services. The process helps to enhance the productivity and growth rate of business organisations. Effective communication act as a backbone of business and marketing during the pandemic crisis. Effective communication make the digital marketing more successful and helps in formation of brands, elimination of hoax and support to provide feedback to the consumers. Along with sustainability of the business organisations, communication in digital marketing help to maintain a cordial relationship among business organisation, marketers and the society during the period of crisis. The roles of effective communication in digital marketing proved significant during the pandemic of COVID-19.

Digital Marketing and the Economy:

Digital marketing has a wide impact on the economical development during the pandemic of COVID-19. The pandemic shows most of the public maintained social distance and feel safe to stay at home. Lockdown imposed by the central government maintained a full closure of shops and small business organisations but later they partly open while maintaining time, schedule and protocols imposed by the central and states governments. This closure of markets and shops act as an attempt to ruin business and commerce which creates a massive negative impact on business and economical infrastructure.

However during the pandemic of COVID-19, digital marketing from various e-commerce and business organisations shows a right way to develop marketing system and to strengthen the economic infrastructure. The wide promotion through the uses of several forms of digital media helps to increase the sale volume of various products, goods and services manufactured and offered by several marketers and business organisations that directly influenced the economical infrastructure of the state as well as of the nation.

Digital marketing promotes various brands, products, goods and services and helps to maintain a steady flow of business during the crisis. In a published research article it was mentioned about the e-commerce during the pandemic as:

“While official statistics are not available for most of the countries, estimates suggest that online orders were up across several regions during the first half of 2020, including Europe, North America and Asia- Pacific. For Asian- Pacific countries, e-commerce had already increased significantly during the first quarter of 2020, while the increase occurred later in Europe and North America, namely after several OECD countries followed Italy’s example and introduced confinement measures within a short period of time of each other” (OECD, October 2020)

However the concept of digital marketing also helps the small or micro business organisations during the crisis. The pandemic shows most of the small business organisations were shut and closed but several e-commerce organisations helps them to revive their business and support them to join the online or the digital marketing platform. E-commerce organisations have reflected their social and economical responsibilities towards the small business organisation during the pandemic of COVID-19. However the small business organisations also show satisfaction and joined hand with the online e-commerce organisation to sustain their business and to provide service to the consumers. Through online platform of several e-commerce organisations they start to offer and sell their products, goods, and service to the consumers. The process maintain the business and economic infrastructure at the grass root level which proved highly beneficial for both the big e-commerce organisations as well as for the small business organisations.

Growth of Digital Marketing during the Pandemic of COVID-19:

Digital marketing shows a significant growth rate during the pandemic of COVID-19. In a blog article entitled ‘Scope of Digital Marketing in India - COVID-19 Updated’ it was clearly mentioned the scope of digital marketing is gradually increasing due to pandemic. It was stated as:

“The scope of digital marketing in 2020 and 2021 has seen drastic growth. When we think of the key indicators of success in marketing, the first thing we think of is the number of

people reached through marketing practices. The internet’s penetration has reached outstanding numbers. Looking at India, It has the 2nd largest number of internet users in the world. By 2023, the number of active Indian internet users will grow to almost 666 million. Thus, this indicates that larger shares of people are shifting online and hence it makes complete sense to start marketing online” - (IIDE, 2020)

Digital marketing shows a significant role in the field of marketing since its arrival but the advent of COVID-19 brings pace in its growth. The pandemic create horrific situation which the public realise and stayed within their homes for a long period. The field of traditional marketing was almost collapsed. The pandemic shows no option to the public rather them to widely accept the concept of digital marketing. It displayed a wide range of brands, products, goods and services and provides the public an opportunity to full fill their needs and demands during the pandemic of COVID-19 and especially during the lockdown. The digital marketing acts as a blessing to the marketers as well as to the consumers. However the growth and acceptance of the digital marketing by the public during the lockdown mainly depends on few potential factors such as the declaration of Lockdown, heavy use of social media, attractive marketing display, display of wide range of products goods and services through online advertising, wide option to the consumers, easy to access the products, goods and services from several e-commerce organisations, availability of the return policy and the reasonable prize of the products.

► The Declaration of Lockdown:

Indian Government took the issue of Covid-19 very seriously from the very beginning of its arrival. Initially Indian government check the situation very carefully and on 22nd of March 2020 Prime Minister Shri. Narendra Modi gave a clarion call for the citizen of India where he urged for a fourteen hours nationwide ‘Janta Curfew’. It was the beginning of a long battle against corona virus and the disease called Covid-19. On 24th March 2020 Government of India took a vital decision of ‘Lockdown’ Honourable Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi declared 21 days lockdown that began from 25th March 2020 to 14th April 2020. It was the first phase of lockdown. Lockdown in India shows shut down of all factories, government office, schools, colleges, universities, transportation and communication system along with shops and markets. However groceries, food store, hospitals, banking sectors, police system, high ranking government office and all essential services are excluded from the lockdown. In the initial days citizen were little bit confused and in a hurry to gather ration and medicine but government declared no need to get worry as grocery and medicine shop will remain open for few hours every day. Several state governments of India provide a wide support to supply foods, ration and medicine to their citizens. Citizen of India were started to feel bored as they are staying for a long time in their resident but while staying home they feel secure and safe. Several companies and organisation ordered their employee to work from home via computer and internet.

However the lockdown is one of the main reasons behind the growth of digital marketing and change the consumers marketing behaviours in India. The horrific unprecedented changing nature of the pandemic gave the traditional local marketers minimum scope to trade and to form relationship with the consumers. The high percentage of the transmission of corona virus, the lockdown and the closure of shop and markets, push the consumers to prefer digital or online marketing platform to select and purchase products, goods and services for meeting their need and demands.

When all the shops, store and markets were close due to lockdown, digital marketing was an easy option which attract the attention of the most of the consumers through digital platforms. E-commerce and several business organisations put online advertising on various website and on the platform of social media which provides the consumers an easy option to select the products, goods or services and to purchase them directly from their home with the help of digital platforms.

► Heavy Uses of Social Media:

Social media has played an outstanding role in controlling the pandemic of COVID-19. The wide network of the social media shows its capability and performs various significant roles in a wonderful way during the crisis. Social media shows its efficiency in information dissemination, instruction propagation and health education, which are highly necessary to resist the spread of infection during the initial period of COVID-19 pandemic. Along with these functions, social media has also shown a significant role in business and digital marketing. It easily attracts and connects the consumers through its wide networks and can easily exchange information or any form of data from one corner of the world to another within a very short span of time. Along with social media provides an interactive feedback facility which is essential in digital marketing for giving feedback to the consumers. These facilities of social media support the digital marketing in various dimensions and proved successful. Digital marketing through the use of social media become highly effective during the pandemic of COVID-19.

Social media is one of the significant forms of digital media which was heavily used by most of the Indian citizen during the pandemic of COVID-19. 'Firstpost' the Indian news and media website published a report on April, 09, 2020 with headline 'Media Usage during COVID-19 Lockdown: Indian user flock to FB and WhatsApp; general news site sees number rise'. The news report clearly indicates that there was a sharp rise in the user of social media and the social media were mainly used for news, communication, entertainment and various other purposes. In the website of Statista an article with entitled 'Impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) on social media usage across India from January to July 2020' has shown the growth of social media users and it was mentioned within the sub titled 'COVID-19 impact on social media app usage in India 2020' as:

"As per the results of the survey on the impact of the corona virus (COVID-19) pandemic on media usage across India, there was a spike in usage of social networking applications in the first phase of the nation-wide lockdown. This stabilized in the following weeks with individual users reporting an average 3 hours and 37 minutes on social media in the last week of June that year." - (Statista, June 2021)

The heavy use of social media is one of the main reasons behind the sudden growth of digital marketing in India. However during the pandemic of COVID-19, record has shown that there is a sudden growth in the percentage of social media users and most of the time the users of the social media remain online and check various details related to news and information along with various promotional online advertisements presented by several e-commerce organisations. The rise in the percentage of social media users helps the e-commerce and business organisations to gain the marketing objectives through digital marketing. Several e-commerce organisations introduced social media marketing where they showcase their goods and services through online advertising by using the platform of social media. The role of social media in the growth of digital marketing during the pandemic period of COVID-19 is highly valued and significant.

► Attractive Marketing Display:

The pandemic of COVID-19 present a big challenge in front of the business organisation and marketing systems. Most of the business organisation adopted the help of digital marketing instead of traditional marketing system to reach the consumers. The pandemic crisis has shown the growth of digital marketing and its significant role in the steady flow of business. One of the main reasons for the growth and its acceptance among the consumers is its attractive display of the products, goods and services through digital or online advertising. Most of the organisation display their products, goods or services in an attractive way through online advertising which easily helps to attract the attention of the consumers and insist them to enter and read the details and finally pursue them to buy the products.

Most of the digital or online advertising used for digital marketing purposes are highly informative and colourful in nature and mainly comes with few photographs of the products, goods or services. The photographs and the colours are used as a display that attracts the attention of the consumers and the information provide full details of the products to the consumers. Digital technology provides a big support in the development of attractive display as it make the photographs of the products and goods more lively and attractive. The digital technologies provide a clear presentation which touches the heart of the consumers and pursue them to buy the products, goods or services.

► Display of Wide Range of Products, Goods and Services through Digital Advertising:

Digital or online advertising is a vital part of digital marketing. Through digital advertising several companies' display and promotes their wide range of products in front of the consumers and the products variety insist the consumers to check and purchase the products or service. However during the pandemic of COVID-19 when the most of the shops and stores are closed, digital marketing offers a wide range of products and service to the consumers through digital advertising. The growth of digital marketing through digital advertising shows dominance over the traditional marketing system. In most of the cases the platform of social media and email were used to advertise a wide range of products, goods and service. In the field of digital marketing, the platform of email for digital advertising plays a unique role during the pandemic but the role of social media as a platform in the propagation of digital advertising is significant. Several interfaces of social media display a wide range of products of various e-commerce organisations which attracts consumers of various ages and groups. When the consumers click on the advertising they directly enter the marketing portal through the hyperlink where the consumers get the display of a wide range of products. In this marketing process the consumers can select the products according to their choice and budget. The offering of wide variety of products, goods and service through digital advertising enhance the growth of digital marketing during the pandemic crisis of COVID-19.

► Wide Options to the Consumers

The pandemic has shown that the e-commerce and several business organisations used digital marketing technique for the promotion of their products and service but it was clearly revealed that the characteristics of the consumers of the e-commerce industries and business organisations are widely varied in nature. They can be classified under various strata or categories such as age difference, gender differences, professional differences, religion, financial background, rural and urban differences, etc. Each consumer shows his or her own choice and preferences which has no match with the other. The e-commerce and business organisations are fully aware of it.

For the digital marketing they mainly use digital or online advertising which help them to promote brands, products, goods and services. Most of the online advertising presented by the e-commerce industries or business organisations displays a wide range of products, goods and service so that the consumers of various strata can select according to their own preference. The e-commerce industries and the business organisations also provide a wide range of options to the consumers mainly based on products categories, size, colour, prize, budget, etc. The digital marketing system with the help of online or digital advertising and wide options provides the consumers a freedom of selection. Providing wide options to the consumers is one of the vital reasons behind the growth of digital marketing during the pandemic crisis of COVID-19. During the pandemic several consumers were influenced by the online or digital advertising and move to purchase various goods and products according to their necessity through e-commerce industries. Most of them purchase with full satisfaction as they were provide wide options related to budget and products quality.

➤ Home Delivery- Easy to Access the Goods or the Commodity:

There are several reasons which help to enhance the growth of digital marketing during the pandemic but among them one of the main reasons for the growth of the digital marketing and its acceptance by the consumers during the pandemic is that the consumers feel easy to access the purchase product through the facility of home delivery and free delivery system. In most of the cases, digital marketing provide wide offers and home delivery strategy or option. Consumers don't have to go outside from their home for purchasing products, goods or services. In the field of digital marketing, e-commerce industries and most of the business organisations adopt the home delivery strategy where they deliver the purchase product directly to the consumer's home or in mention address. In several cases it was seen that free delivery option was also available to satisfy the consumers and to sustain the business during the pandemic of COVID-19. The home delivery system of the digital marketing provides a big support to the consumers during the pandemic of COVID-19. It maintains the sale and the continuous flow of the market and also satisfied the consumers.

Conclusion

Digital marketing has shown a wide scope in the field of marketing and provide a lot of opportunity to the marketers and business organisations during the pandemic period of COVID-19. It helps to sustain business and commerce and reflected a positive result in maintaining a steady economic progress. It provide support not only to the big business organisations or the big e-commerce industries but also it provide a wide support to the small business firms and organisations and help them to revive again their business within the crisis. During the pandemic period of COVID-19 the marketers and most of the business organisations has conducted digital marketing to promote a wide variety of products, goods and services with the help of digital media. The wide use of digital media helps to disseminate the message of the marketing system to a wide variety of the consumers and the skilled communication technique make the marketing system more effective. Digital marketing has shown the marketers and the business organisations a new dimension of marketing system during the pandemic crisis of COVID-19. It arises as a hope in front of the marketers and the business organisations when the pandemic was running and the lockdown was effective throughout the nation.

Digital marketing played a significant role in sustaining the business and commerce during the pandemic while on the other it also helps to maintain a cordial relationship with the wide variety of consumers. It educates the consumers about various products, goods and services with detail information and in most cases fulfills their needs and demands by delivering the purchase products or services directly to their homes or in mentioned address. The growths of digital marketing during the pandemic serve both the marketers as well as the consumers and act as a blessing for both of them.

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