

Traditional and Digital Media – the interwoven landscape

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MKTM027 – AS1
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Introduction

Several factors have culminated over the past decade to disrupt the media landscape giving more power and audience access to consumers than ever before. Consumers are demanding that businesses reconsider their marketing strategies, not only from a logistical channel perspective but from the ground up, as media democratization continues. The digital boom continues to alter the way people and businesses interact and engage with information, devices, and networks (Rudman & Bruwer, 2016). Digital media, including the web, online tv, online radio, and online press, continue to have a significant, wide-ranging and complex impact on society, business and culture. While there has been considerable hype around digital media for advertising, traditional media channels are still playing a role in the marketing mix of global companies despite the inevitable growth of digital media worldwide, especially amongst younger consumers in emerging markets (Schroeder, 2018). The shift from traditional to digital media has been ongoing over the past decade, however, there is very little agreement about how these changes should be understood or integrated from a strategic marketing perspective. Therefore, we need to re-examine integrated marketing strategies that place the consumer at the centre (Schroeder, 2018).

Through examining key differences between digital and traditional media and consumer media consumption trends, this paper argues that both digital and traditional media channels are not as different as one may presume. They are merely tools used to operationalize the marketing function and decisions on which channel to leverage should always be derived from sound integrated strategy first - one that is derived from deeply understanding consumers, their journey

and preferences for engagement (Schroeder, 2018). Hence, sound integrated marketing communication (IMC) principles and strategy should be placed above tactics around traditional versus digital channels. Further, mounting evidence on the effectiveness of cross-media campaigns shows that combining online advertising with advertising in offline media results in more positive consumer responses than using only one medium (Voorveld, 2011; Chang & Thorson, 2004; Dijkstra, Buijtels & van Raaij, 2005; Dong, Chang, & Fan, 2017; Voorveld, Bronner, Neijens & Smit, 2013). Therefore, the objective of IMC strategy building will be to maximize and exploit the unique strengths of each medium (Voorveld et al., 2011).

Despite the on-going hype of digital media including social, and its lofty promises of being the holy grail of business profitability, the fact is that traditional media is still being heavily used and will have its place in the marketing mix for the foreseeable future. This paper attempts to highlight a more fundamental shift in the media landscape that businesses need to recognize as they plan for their futures - the democratization of media and what this means for marketing strategy (Jebril, Loveless & Stetka, 2015).

Key Media Differences

Digital and traditional forms of media have some obvious differences in lead time, reach, time, flexibility, commitment, convenience, cost and tracking with traditional media generally being costlier, logistically linear, more restrictive and rigid. One significant difference between traditional and digital tactics is that digital media marketing offers reams of customer data and insight, otherwise known as big data. Traditional media campaigns have long been criticized for

their inability to provide meaningful data on the return on investment (ROI), whereas metrics on behaviour, campaign effectiveness and other ROI are much more robust with digital media. The challenge for organizations is leveraging mass amounts of customer data collected from various digital media forms and campaigns and using it to create competitive advantage. Some of the top global brands like Starbucks, Sephora or Disney have effectively constructed an omnichannel ecosystem, where both consumer and tactic are seamless no matter what channel the media is consumed on. This is especially important as second-screening media consumption has become the norm in our media-saturated lives. A recent study showed that 85% of consumers are using another device while watching television (Havlena, Cardarelli, & de Montigny, 2007). Seemingly, organizations whose strategies are centered around the customer instead of the channel are generating the best results in this evolving landscape (Chan & Fang, 2007).

Media Consumption Trends

There is widespread agreement that digital media consumption is on the rise and traditional forms on the decline (Austin, Barnard, Hutcheon, 2016; PQ Media, 2016; Martens, Aguiar, & Muller, 2018; Nixon, 2016). However, while digital media has been responsible for some of the most wide-ranging changes in society over the past quarter-century, research demonstrates that traditional forms of media are not being abandoned but are rather being used in conjunction with and to supplement (Chan et al., 2007). As an advertising channel, linear TV media consumption still remains ahead of online TV in all international markets and represents the single biggest daily media activity (Schroeder, 2018) and still retains a central role within media

portfolios. The average consumer tunes in for two hours and five minutes each day, meaning that linear TV accounts for close to a fifth of daily media time (Schroeder, 2018).

While overall television viewing has been decreasing, it is still very popular with older demographics. Adults aged over 50 watch on average 5.2 hours of television a day, while their Gen X counterparts (aged 35-49) consume 3.2 hours a day (Austin et al., 2016). Other forms of video consumption are becoming more popular with both Gen X'ers and Millennials (aged 18-34), as they turn to online streaming and video on demand services instead of traditional television services (Schroeder, 2018). Time spent on digital media has grown exponentially, increasing 49 percent from 2013 to 2015 with mobile and tablet adoption driving much of the boom (ComScore, 2019). Consumers are spending longer online than they are on linear TV, broadcast radio, games consoles and print press combined (Schroeder, 2018).

In a recent study, internet users are now spending an average of almost 6.5 hours online with 2.5 of those hours spent on mobile (Austin et al., 2016). In addition, daily time spent on social networks and services continues to increase. The 16-24 age group and those in fast-growth markets are the most enthusiastic social networkers, but social networks are capturing more time across all the age groups and markets. Moreover, second-screening media consumption is pervasive: over 85% are using another device as they watch TV, engage social sites and read the news. It is clear that simultaneous multi-media consumption is now the norm (Foehr, 2006). This is especially interesting as advertising research has been dominated by sequential marketing

communication models where the consumer is a passive receiver of one type of media at a time (Bardhi, Rohm, & Sultan, 2010).

Considering recent media consumption trends, traditional marketing theories which were suited to mass media are seemingly outdated and no longer suited to digital media – since new media often have elements of both (Schroeder, 2018). Conceptualizations, new models and frameworks are needed to better understand the nuances associated with the digital market space in a global context. As consumption trends suggest, it would be advantageous to take an integrative approach with the traditional marketing strategy development rather than consider digital as completely separate to the business as a whole. This could serve to create greater opportunity for corporate-wide cohesion, knowledge sharing and performance. Even Porter (2001), conveyed the importance of connecting traditional forms of doing business with online approaches in the development of strategy.

From a business and marketing perspective, while it is clearly important to understand channel differentiation, media selection and media consumption trends there is a larger issue at play for business and marketing strategy. Media has effectively become democratized, meaning the digital revolution has facilitated an important power shift in society. This is the first time in history where anyone can decide if they want to become a part of media or not, without anyone's permission, which was never possible in the 80's or 90's. The traditional media landscape along with their audiences have been heavily controlled by systems of power.

Now, however, nearly everyone has the opportunity to make their mark on media, as access to an audience has never been easier. As a result, the cost of producing and disseminating messages to broad audiences has decreased substantially. With current technologies people are able to create content at a relatively low cost, have millions of people view it, become overnight sensations without anyone's permission. Media has transitioned from an aristocratic system to a democratic one. Prior to understanding what this means for business and marketing it is critical to look at traditional marketing strategy and how the consumer has evolved.

Traditional Marketing Strategy

The traditional strategy of mass marketing over the last century has been to target the masses with average, standardized products for average people. Some call this the "TV industrial complex" (Godin, 2007). Typical mass advertising looked like this: purchase expensive TV ads, interrupt millions of people with your message, receive lots of distribution to sell more products, use the profits and buy more TV ads. The idea was the more you "touch" average people (or the masses) with your TV message, the more effective. These same principles and strategies, with a little more savvy, have been ported to digital advertising. However, the masses are caring less and less about average products, have become geniuses at ignoring interruption shot-gun advertising, have shorter attention spans (McSpadden, 2015), higher expectations (Meehan, 2015), increased negativity and mistrust biases (Darke & Ritchie, 2007), cognitive dissonance, choice overload (Iyengar, Lepper & Diener, 2000), and increased ad-blindness (Singh & Potdar, 2009) and have more choice and less time than ever before.

The history of traditional marketing methods can be attributed to prominent influential business thinking and theory that belies the 100-year history of traditional marketing and advertising. Theodore Levitt, credited with coining the term “globalization,” has had a lasting impact on businesses in general during the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s – the age of mass marketing. His influence, widely seen, has had an extreme focus on internal company variables and a high product focus (millions of average products for average people) with familiar communications and marketing tactics disseminated through mass push interruption marketing. Embedded in this manner of business was and is the tendency to disregard the faculties of the consumer, as Levitt (1983) purports “... never assume the customer is a king who knows his own wishes”.

During the TV industrial complex a natural disparity of power existed between business and consumer whereby consumers were interrupted, whether they liked it or not, with advertising and communications, via traditional channels. The widespread sentiment being that the consumer, for the most part, doesn't know what they want or need and it is the role of savvy businesses with money to define those needs and wants.

Empowered Consumers

Consumers, increasingly embedded in the digital marketplace, have taken us in a radically different direction than the one Levitt understood during the TV industrial complex. Consumers, empowered by the democratization of media, are less and less open to advertising (digital or traditional) that represents outbound interruption marketing. From "average products for

average people," consumers are increasingly searching for meaning in the products they buy and the services they use, creating global niche markets (Rudman & Bruwer, 2016).

The democratization of media brings increased media saturation and amateur content creation, making it more difficult for firms to attract attention and penetration as, as already highlighted, traditional advertising strategies are in need of modernization. Increasingly, products and services need to be remarkable and companies need to reevaluate strategy, placing a greater importance on the consumer and sustainable integrated marketing strategies. The new order means it is advantageous to target consumers on the fringes, who actually care about your product or service. These consumers do not need to be interrupted by your advertising because they care about what you have to say and will even share it with their friends and networks. Increasingly, companies that spread good ideas, who are authentic and make efforts to honour people and the planet will win.

CONCLUSION

Businesses have been forced to keep up with the digital revolution and its inevitable changes that have swept the landscape in the past decades. Media consumption trends outlined in this paper indicate that digital alone cannot fulfil its lofty promise of being the holy grail of business profitability. Traditional forms of media still influence daily consumption habits and while consumers are less impacted and receptive to traditional methods of advertising, it still holds a place in the marketing mix for the foreseeable future. Hence, it would be advantageous to take an integrative approach rather than consider digital as completely separate to the business as a

whole, serving to create greater opportunity for corporate-wide cohesion, knowledge sharing and performance. More fundamental, however, is the empowerment of the consumer through the democratization of media. This global shift in not only behaviour, but also worldview, should concern business and marketing planning for the future. Therefore, integrated marketing communication strategy building, with a many to many, non-linear approach needs to be considered.

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