



# A STUDY ABOUT THE RECENT TRENDS IN ONLINE MARKETING AND THEIR ADOPTION BY THE SELLERS IN INDIA

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## Abstract

Online marketing refers to the use of internet-based tools by a company to promote and sell its products and services to the prospective customers. The online marketing is characterized by continuous evolution in the tools and techniques of providing improvised and novel shopping experience to the customers. In the race of getting maximum number of customers marketers are continuously engaged in innovations to better market themselves. Businesses encash the novelty seeking tendency of the customers. Customers like to experience something new and therefore sellers are also always in search of some ultra-modern experience that they can cater to the customers. This paper studies about the recent advancements in online marketing techniques and how sellers are being benefitted by adopting these state-of-the-art techniques in their online marketing campaigns. The study also takes into account the hindrances faced by the marketer as well as the customers and how the marketers can overcome these hindrances of online marketing. The study reveals that both consumer as well as the seller are enthusiastic towards the adoption of innovative online marketing tools.

**Keywords:** Online marketing tools, current trends in online marketing, digital marketing tools.

## Introduction

“Each business is a victim of Digital Darwinism”. Due to continuous changes in the customers’ taste and preferences marketing trends are constantly evolving. Tools, techniques and marketing practices have witnessed an unprecedented and rapid change over the last two decades. In order to remain in the market and stay ahead of competitors it has become inevitable for the marketers to adopt themselves according to changes in the customers’ demands. Cyber presence is the foremost requirement for the businesses these days. Online presence means being traceable over the internet whether by developing company’s website, a social media page, or presence on e-commerce sites; or by a combination of these three.

Businesses which had earlier marked their presence over the internet are enjoying the benefits and those who remained stagnant lost their market share. For example, in 2005, Yahoo was one of the dominant players in online advertising. But they decided to focus on media content and neglected the importance of search and need of improving user experience. As a result, they managed to get a large number of viewers for the content but failed to make profits necessary for the organization’s growth, as a result its popularity eroded and Google grabbed this opportunity with open arms.

India has 110 crore mobile connections which is equal to 79% of its population. Recent advancements in internet technology, availability of high-speed internet data at nominal rates has led to an exponential growth in the number of internet users. There are more than 62 crore internet users in India which makes around 45% of the total population of the country. Use of social media is the most popular activity over the internet, there are around 44.8 crore people who use at least one social media platform, this is equal to 71.8% of the internet users and 32.3 % of the total population of the country. The above figures themselves speak about the immense possibilities for online marketing in the country. (*Digital in India: All the Statistics You Need in 2021 – DataReportal – Global Digital Insights*, n.d.)

This growth in internet technology over the last two decades has opened new channels of promotion for the marketers. Businesses which early understood the importance of online channels for marketing are reaping the profits. But as all the businesses are coming online, a user is bombarded with advertisements as he opens a web page or scrolls down on social media home page. To survive in this crowd advertisers come with tools and techniques to distinguish themselves from the crowd. Today marketing practices are more driven by the needs and wants of the customer than ever before. As soon as a new technological innovation takes place, customers expect their brands to deliver the experience provided by this new technology. In order to give customers the best experience, keep them engaged and retain the existing ones; it has become inevitable for the marketers to keep themselves updated with these advancements. Failing to keep pace with these emerging trends could leave a marketer lagging behind his competitors.

## Recent Trends in Marketing

Here I am discussing some important trends which have gained marketers' attention in the recent years.

**Artificial Intelligence (AI)** is the most appreciated technology by the marketers. It works on the concepts of machine learning and deep learning to analyse consumer behaviour and search patterns. It automatically bids for advertising space on a website and also helps businesses to answer customers' questions in real time through Chatbots.

**Conversational Marketing-** Traditional marketing works on one-to-many approach, it means a single advertisement is drafted to target a group of people whereas in conversational marketing approach an advertisement is designed and drafted as per the individual's psyche. According to B2B community 82% customers want an immediate response for sales and marketing related queries and in order to better their customer relationships marketers are becoming more conversational with their customers.

**Video Marketing** is also an effective form of internet marketing which is widely adopted by the businesses. It is a great way to teach people about products and services as people retain what they simultaneously see and hear much more than what they read, hear or see singly. In comparison to any other advertising method, videos influence consumers the most. Besides, the Covid-19 pandemic has induced many businesses to go digital. Artists started performing with the live streaming features of Facebook and Instagram in place of live concerts which is necessary for social distancing in order to prevent spread of the disease. As a result, live streaming feature of social media sites like Instagram and Facebook saw an upward shift and people have adopted this trend and prefer to enjoy a live program sitting in their homes than going to an orchestra.

**Influencer Marketing.** brands typically partner with someone who has a huge fan following and has the ability to persuade others to act as per his/her recommendations. Brands pay the influencers for featuring them in his /her social media stories. Consumers are more influenced by an influencer's opinions, his brand preferences and trust more on what he says about a brand than what the brand says about itself. (*Influencer Marketing Now Trusted More than Brand Marketing*, n.d.).

**Personalised Advertisements-** To stand firmly among the competitors, businesses are under continuous pressure to provide more curated and personalised experiences to users. Personalised promotional efforts have the potential to increase customer engagement and differentiate the product from the products of other sellers. For this they serve users with advertisements exclusively tailored as per their personalities and interests. People readily share their personal information with an organisation for better customer experience if the organisation has transparent policies about how it would use the data.

**Voice Search** is a very useful tool specially for the people lazy in typing. This tool is much popular among those who don't know writing but have somehow learned to operate mobile phones or the people poor in grammar and language. Brands are figuring out ways to incorporate voice search feature in their marketing avenues so that the customers can be relieved from the task of typing and making it interesting for them to locate the brand over the internet. 27% of the global mobile users are using voice search. (*Voice Search Mobile Use Statistics - Think with Google*, n.d.). Innovations like Google Assistant, Amazon's Alexa, Apple's Siri have revolutionised the voice search experience and as a result businesses are interested in working upon optimising their resources for the voice search.

**Social media stories.** Story section of a Social Media platform is typically situated on the top of the home screen in the form of an image with a coloured circle surrounding it. Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp, Snapchat are some of the apps which provide users with the opportunity to post stories. These stories typically last for 24 hours. These apps provide users with various interesting features for creating and customizing stories. For instance, Instagram provides features like add location, #hashtag, ask question, GIF, music, poll, quiz, time, stickers etc. to make stories striking so that users recall them for a long time.

**Content Marketing** provides users with valuable information in response to their searches. As Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is becoming more and more prominent, content marketing will continue to be useful for the brands. When content is written keeping in mind SEO, a brand has more likely an improved search engine result pages (SERPs) position. Interactive content claims people's attention. For maximum benefit content should be written in natural language, it may include quizzes and polls and the writer of the content must be well versed with the use of key words related to the subject matter. Use of keywords increases your chances of being located over web browsers. For the questions frequently asked by the consumers marketers can write a blog post addressing some of these topics.

**Shoppable social media posts-** social media sites are helping brands by releasing more convenient online shopping features. Brands can create advertisement for sales which users can click to go to the product page.

From Instagram's shopping to Facebook marketplace, many social media platforms are now releasing programs that allow shoppers to directly buy a product in the app without going to a business site.

**Programmatic Advertising** or programmatic ad. buying is the use of software to buy display space. It is the distribution of advertising when humans are not directly involved in the process. Programmatic advertising uses machines and algorithm whereas traditional method involves request for proposals, tenders, human negotiations. Advertisers can outsource their pay per click (PPC) campaigns to Google's AI system, which will then optimize their budget to maximize their ROI (return on investment). This automation is much more efficient and faster which increases click through rate and lowers customer acquisition cost.

**Chatbots.** Organizations are using chatbots to deal with frequently asked questions. Chatbots provides 24x7 service. These are programmed to provide a set of replies to FAQs and direct the conversation to human agent if the conversation is complicated. Chatbots are cost effective and sometimes can be more effective and polite than human. People prefer chatbots because they accurately recall the purchase history and don't lose patience in answering customers queries.

**Visual Search** tools like google lens, Pinterest lens assist people in conducting a search by uploading an image. For instance, if we want to know about the usage of a herb but don't know its name, we just need to capture its photograph with our mobile phone and use the google lens feature of the google photos app, we will be supplied with enormous information about that herb with just a click.

**Browser Push Notifications.** Notifications triggered by customers' behaviour are used to re-engage people who had earlier shown interest but failed to convert into buyers. Push notifications are very helpful in reminding the customers of abandoned shopping carts and thereby earning revenues.

**Omnichannel Marketing** brands today don't depend on a single medium but use more than one channel for promoting themselves. They follow their prospects over different social media platforms, through emails and blogs.

**Virtual reality and augmented reality.** VR and AR technologies are immersive in nature. Marketing using VR and AR technologies enables marketers to craft experiences, engage customers and encourage conversions in interesting ways. Though both the technologies are in infancy stage and provide somewhat similar kind of experience to a user, the difference between them needs to be apparent. Virtual reality creates simulations using computers, it means it shuts down the real world and "immerse" the viewer into alternate world using computers and sensory equipment such as headsets and gloves. Through this technology a company can provide an individual the experience of driving its car while the prospect is sitting in his home. Unlike VR, AR can be accessed through much more common equipment such as mobile phones, and it superimposes images such as characters on top of video or a camera viewer, which most consumers already have; making it much more usable for retail, games, and movies. VR replaces what people see and experience whereas in case of AR content is inserted into the real world with some device, augmented reality actually adds to the real world. Using devices such as Google Cardboard, VR covers and replaces users' field of vision entirely, while AR projects images in front of them in a fixed area.

**Geo-fencing** technology is a new development in online marketing. This technique is based on user's location. When a user enters or leaves a geographic area, upon entry and leaving he receives push notifications from business units. For example, with the use of Geo-fencing technique a restaurant sends notifications to users when they enter or leave a certain periphery of that restaurant.

**SERP-position zero** is the topmost position on the search engine result pages. Highly coveted position zero also known as 'snippet' is the place where every web advertiser dreams to appear. Featured snippet, is a box that appears at the top of the search results, one can achieve this spot by including short, direct answers to questions in the content.

**Blockchain technology.** Blockchain is a system of recording information in such a way that makes it difficult or impossible for someone to make changes in the information, hack or cheat. A block is essentially a digital ledger of transactions that is duplicated and distributed across the entire network of computer systems on the blockchain. Each block in the chain contains a number of transactions and every time a new transaction occurs on the blockchain a record of that transaction is added to every participant's ledger. The decentralised database managed by multiple participants is known as Distributed Ledger technology (DLT).

**FOMO (Fear of Missing Out).** It is a form of marketing where marketer leverages consumer's desire to grab every opportunity they get. The message is framed in such a way that push the customer to make an impulse purchase rather than later on regretting the lack of action.

**Predictive and Augmented Analytics-** Through the use of data mining, predictive mining and machine learning patterns can be identified and future can be predicted. Augmented analysis uses machine learning and natural language processing to automate data preparation and enable data sharing.

**User Generated Content-** many businesses offer incentives to audience to share unique content about the company's products that they have used; as customers have more faith on what the users of a brand say about a product than what the brand says about itself.

**Quantum Computing** traditional computers store data in bits which can exist in one of two states 'zero' or 'one'. Quantum computers use a new unit of measurement, a single atom known as qubit (quantum bit). Quantum computers are able to theoretically work on millions of calculations at once.

**Semantic Keyword research** means using keywords to enhance search engine optimization. When organisations use keywords for their sites, they need to ensure that they are matching the user search intent for the keyword.

Semantic search helps search engines determine what people are looking for based on the phrasing of their searches. One need to start taking semantic search into consideration while developing web pages, articles, blogs, PPC advertisements or any other form of online promotion.

## Why do businesses need an online presence??

In digital era, online presence has become essential for any business. Whether it's a website, an e-commerce platform, a social media site or a combination of all these, online presence will reap major benefits for a company. Customers expect to see a marketer online, if they don't find it there then it could lose the opportunity to increase its customer base. I am listing down some of the most fascinating reasons for a company to do business in online mode.

1. **Makes it easier for potential customers to come to the company**-now a days most of the customers search for information about a product/company over the internet; online presence will provide company a competitive edge. A simple google search about a business should provide customers all the information they are seeking.
2. **Makes it easier to showcase company's products and services**- if company has a website, with a simple click its customers can know what it has to offer.
3. **Make it easier to build relationships with customers and potential customers**- presence over one or the other social media platforms make a company more 'humane' and relatable.
4. **Makes it easier to market company's brand**- blogging, social media posts, Instagram stories are the most cost-effective methods of disseminating information to thousands of people. Modern consumers look a company in negative light if they fail to locate it online.

## Significance

**Visibility:** small businesses cannot be present all the time everywhere in physical form, with digital presence it can be visible to potential customers in search engines.

**Authority:** from publishing informative content to posting demonstrative videos, company's digital presence can show customers why they should shop from them.

**First Impression:** a premium digital profile and attractive website will help business to catch the attention of the audience and thereby bring them to the physical outlet.

**Customer Relationship and Trust** online presence of a business enables it to promptly resolve queries of the consumers, satisfied consumers do word of mouth publicity for the business and therefore helps in building a positive image.

## Reasons why some customers hesitate in buying a product online

1. **Complicated navigation and complex checkout-** an appealing website may attract good traffic but it's of no use if the conversion rate is low. Forced lengthy registration, lack of automatic entry of repetitive information can make company's profile appalling for the consumer.
2. **Lack of market research and absence of competitive pricing-** the widespread expansion of the internet has made consumers more selective and choosier than ever before. Before making a purchase, they compare the price and the acquisition cost of a product offered by various marketers. Therefore, if a firm is not aware about the moves and deals offered by its competitors, it loses its customers.
3. **Additional or hidden charges-** lack of transparency in pricing and payment process can trigger customers to leave the website. Delivery charges, shipping, logistics cost, VAT etc. should be clearly mentioned.
4. **Security Concerns-** news of cyber-attacks frighten customers. If a firm fails to gain trust of the audience regarding the security and use of their personal and critical data e.g., Debit/Credit card details, he would not like to engage in business with the firm. People like to shop from a site which uses encryption technology and have a security certificate.
5. **No physical address and contact details-** Physical address, contact no. and a valid email address increases the reliability of a firm. "About Us" page of a website is the second most visited page after the home page. In case of insufficient or no information about the physical address a firm fails to win the trust of the prospects.
6. **No or minimal social media presence-** people actively use social media for getting reviews and for searching products/services. If people fail to locate a brand on social media there are high chances that they wouldn't take interest in that brand.
7. **Insufficient and unappealing product details-** in online system business has to create a lively and compassionate environment with the content and images or it can be said that the online creativity of the seller speaks on his behalf, and if the presentation of the products of a firm on the web is not appealing, customers don't like to shop from it.
8. **Lack of convincing sales copy and any encouragement for revisit-** sales copies have captivating titles, engaging description, company logo etc., these things help customers in recalling a brand, apart from this an incentive/reward system works well in encouraging the visitors to visit again.
9. **Irrelevant products and lack of categorisation, unprofessional web design, website crashing, sudden pop-ups** also cause discontent in consumer.
10. **Delivery options and coverage-** last but not the least, it is also a big reason that discourages people for shopping online. If a marketer accepts debit cards of a particular company or only a few selected companies, doesn't provide cash on delivery or return options, doesn't deliver all the products in all the locations; then customers find it easy to go and buy from a brick-and-mortar store.

## How a business can strengthen its online presence

Brands today don't depend on any one medium for advertising and promotion but are adopting omnichannel marketing strategy i.e., use of more than one medium for marketing activities. They follow their prospects over different social media platforms, emails and blogs etc. Apart from this a brand can strengthen its cyber presence by taking the following steps.

1. Have a website as it is the online version of brick-and-mortar store.
2. Optimize website for SEO for it increases visibility in search results of search engines like Google, Bing.
3. Build an online experience that is accessible to everyone, for e.g., providing zooming option so that a person with weak eye sight could also learn about a product by reading the details.
4. Incorporate immersive technologies i.e., Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality.

5. Schedule time for managing company's online presence. If today a brand appears at position zero, it's not necessary that it will be there tomorrow also. Writing a blog, post, responding to a review on Facebook, developing a new advertisement should be done regularly.
6. Establish a budget for improving online presence. Setting a budget as well as evaluating strategy and its potential impact can help organisation to focus on the areas that matter the most.
7. By creating a profile on local directories like Google Business, businesses can have more chances of coming to the notice of the audience. As it is easier to compare restaurants on Google My Business rather than going back and forth between the websites of different restaurants.
8. Always keep an eye on the competitors moves and strategies.
9. Develop interactive content and tools, it can include quizzes, puzzles etc.
10. Promote products and services through online advertisements. Advertising on Google, Facebook, YouTube etc. drives brand awareness. With PPC advertisement marketer has complete control on the advertisement budget.
11. Create profile on the social media networks that company's target audience uses the most.
12. Engage with the people and respond to their queries online. Marketer needs to ask audience opinion on the post and honour their suggestions.
13. Run regular A/B tests as it helps in conversion rate optimisation.
14. Provide helpful and informative content regularly.
15. Formulate strategy for building a qualified email list. Valid email addresses of the genuine audience can be obtained by offering a downloadable guide or eBook providing a free tool that requires users to supply their email addresses, other users are also tempted when exclusive offers and discounts are given to email subscribers.
16. Track online channels- there is a range of tools like *Google Analytics*, *MarketingCloudFx* that will help marketers track their strategy's performance.
17. Encourage clients to post reviews online on websites, local directory listings.
18. Website Security today has become more important than ever. The need for security is even higher for sites where users share financial information. Having a security certificate from any authorised institution will be helpful in winning the trust of audience.

## **Conclusion:**

After a critical study of various literature available online and offline including articles from various newspapers, data available on government of India owned websites, I am of the view that Indian businesses are actively engaged in incorporating any kind of innovative technique of online marketing that suits their product and/or service. Customers are also very keen in experiencing any new trend in the market. Therefore, it can be said that customers welcome technological creativity in marketing with open arms and sellers are also putting their efforts to adopt new trends of marketing in order to attract more and more customers.

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