

A Consensus Review on the Evolution of Digital Direct Marketing

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ABSTRACT

Direct marketing, often perceived as an old-school marketing tool, involves direct communication with targeted customers to generate a response or transaction. This method has undergone a significant transformation in the digital age, integrating emails, personalized ads, and social media campaigns into its arsenal. The challenge, however, lies in cutting through the noise of a crowded digital marketplace to reach potential customers effectively. In the 2000s, advertisers started investing in digital direct marketing through targeted ads through social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter and digital ads across multiple media channels. This ecosystem has continued to grow more complex, and recently with additional privacy restrictions that are continuing to be defined and redefined, the challenges for marketers continue to expand. However, direct digital marketing offers opportunities for personalization, quicker insights into your audience engagement, and endless testing opportunities. This must stem from rich insights beyond basic demographic and lifestyles in order to be done well and at scale.

Research Objective: In present scenario of digitalization, direct marketing is used by marketers to develop close relationship with each customer in order to achieve the loyalty of customers. The purpose of this study was to explore direct marketing as the most effective form of marketing.

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Introduction

Today, direct marketing has evolved even further, with businesses using a variety of digital channels to reach consumers. From targeted ads on search engines to retargeting campaigns on social media, modern direct marketing is incredibly sophisticated and effective. As we now explore the adoption of AI, by personalizing marketing technology stacks, further refining the ability to track user behavior and personalizing messages based on consumer data, businesses can create highly targeted marketing campaigns that drive conversions and build brand loyalty. The evolution of direct marketing has been shaped by changing consumer behaviors, technological advancements and industry innovations. From early mail-order catalogs to sophisticated digital campaigns, direct marketing has come a long way over the past century. Today, businesses have more tools than ever to reach consumers directly and build relationships with their target audience. With continued advancements in technology and data analysis, the future of direct marketing looks promising, with even more personalized and targeted campaigns on the horizon. However, as with any marketing technique, it is important to use direct marketing responsibly and ethically. Consumers have become savvier and more discerning, and they can quickly tune out messages that feel intrusive or irrelevant. Businesses that want to succeed with direct marketing must provide value to their audience, respect their privacy and stay up to date with the latest trends and best practices in the industry. As the direct marketing landscape continues to evolve, businesses that are willing to adapt and embrace innovative technologies and techniques will be well-positioned to succeed.

The key is to stay focused on the customer and their needs, providing personalized and relevant messages that resonate with their interests and behaviors. By doing so, businesses can build lasting relationships with their customers and drive long-term growth and success [1,2].

Literature Review

Definition of Digital Marketing and Direct Marketing Definition of Digital Marketing

Digital marketing is an activity that offers or sells products or services using digital means or electronic communication networks in the form of the internet. One of the goals to be achieved by digital marketing is to influence and retain consumers and attract the attention of new potential customers precisely and quickly. According to Krisno Wibowo (Kumar, S., 2024), currently society is able to accept the development of digital media very well. The characteristics of a digital society are the need for high information and depend on the development of information technology innovation so that the existence of digital marketing for audiences is considered quite efficient for large companies. Interestingly, people easily accept the small feedback provided by the company through a short advertisement from digital media and easily disseminate the advertisement or information without the need for big reciprocity. As a result of this convenience, companies will eventually choose a quite challenging path through a competition such as creating content that unique to display in marketing activities on social media. know the types of digital marketing that can be done as follows [3-5].

Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

SEO stands for Search Engine Optimization. SEO itself is an attempt to optimize the website that we use in doing digital marketing so that our website gets a good ranking from search engines like Google. The main goal of SEO is to make our websites easier to find by internet users who are accessing search engines. So the possibility of people knowing about the products or services we provide will be greater. SEO itself is divided into two, namely On Page SEO and Off Page SEO. 2. Search Engine Marketing (SEM) ; SEM is an abbreviation of Search Engine Marketing. SEM is a method used to increase website visibility on search engine results pages such as Google (SERP). SEM in the world of digital marketing has the same goal as SEO, namely to display your website on search pages like Google, so that your website will be easy to find [6].

Content Marketing

In general, Content Marketing is a way of marketing that is focused on creating and distributing content. What kind of content will you answer? Content that is relevant and consistent in order to attract and retain an audience. What kind of audience? The intended audience is those that have been clearly defined as your target market. The goal? Just like marketing as a whole itself, which is to drive customer action so that it can generate profits.

Social Media Marketing

In the most recent development, the media used to distribute content is social media. This channel is referred to as Social Media Marketing (SMM).

Advertising on the Internet

Apart from using SEO and SEM and Social Media Marketing methods, in the world of digital marketing there are features offered in the form of digital advertising. There are many models or ways of creating digital advertising, whether offered by social media such as Facebook and Instagram, or those from the Google search engine to raise web rankings to the top.

Pros and Cons of Digital Marketing

Digital marketing allows marketers to see accurate results in real time. If an advert is put in newspaper, it is difficult to estimate how many people actually flipped to that page and paid attention to ad. There's no surefire way to know if that ad was responsible for any sales at all. Yet digital marketing would help you to know reach for your product/service, to get engaged with prospective customers, to have global reach, to promote in personalized manner. However, with digital marketing have some setbacks. Digital marketing is highly dependent on the internet. Because internet may not be accessible in certain areas or consumers may have poor internet connection. It has lot of clutter, so marketers find it hard to make their advertisements stand out, and get consumers to start conversations about an organizations brand image or products. But still large amount of competing goods and services that are also using same digital marketing strategies can be the disadvantage. Some companies can be portrayed by customers negatively as some consumers lack trust online due to the amount of advertising that appears on websites and social media that can be considered frauds. Even an individual or small group of people can harm image of an established brand. Digital marketing disseminates only information to prospects most of whom do not have purchasing authority/power. Hence reflection of digital marketing into real sales volume is skeptical [7].

Definition of Direct Marketing

Direct marketing in Indonesian is often also called a Strategi Pemasaran Langsung. Because the marketing process is indeed carried out directly to consumers, whether face to face or not. Reporting from Investopedia, direct marketing is a marketing technique that communicates directly to customers, both new and potential customers, without going through third party intermediaries, such as media or advertising. Direct communication here means introducing or selling a product or service. As we know, in today's era, many marketers use advertising to increase brand awareness and sales. However, Investopedia believes that marketing strategies that directly target customers are considered more effective than conventional advertising. Quoted from the book Marketing Communication (2019) by Redi Panuju, direct marketing will produce a number of responses from potential consumers [8].

According to Kotler and Armstrong, as United States marketing consultants and professors, argued that there are six indicators of the form of this direct marketing strategy, namely as follows.

Face to Face Selling

The first form of indicator is face-to-face selling or often referred to as personal selling, which is direct (face-to-face) communication between the seller (usually carried out by a sales assistant) and potential customers to introduce and shape consumer understanding of the product being offered. This is done so that potential consumers are willing to try or buy the product.

Direct Posting Marketing (Direct Mail Marketing)

This is a form of direct marketing which involves the activity of sending offers, announcements, and even warnings about the arrival of goods at a certain address. By using a selected posting list, marketers will immediately send millions of letters every year. These letters can be in the form of advertisements, samples, circulars, faxes, e-mails, and even ballot boxes [9].

Catalogue Marketing

Namely a form of direct marketing that involves sales through catalogues. This catalogue will later be posted to a list of selected customers or even provided in distribution stores.

Telemarketing

This is a form of direct marketing that uses the telephone to sell products directly to consumers. Telemarketing is deliberately designed well and has many targets to facilitate the purchasing process and providing information on the products or services being offered [10].

Direct Response Television Marketing (Direct Response Television Marketing)

In this form of direct marketing it has two sub-units in the form of:

- Direct Response Advertising (Direct Response Advertising) Namely a form of promotion in which the marketer will directly broadcast television advertisements with a duration of around 60-120 seconds. In this advertisement there will be a dialogue in the form of a description explaining the product along with a toll-free number addressed to customers if they want to make an order.
- Home Shopping Channels with a television channel dedicated to promoting its products and constantly giving discounts to first callers.

Direct Marketing as the Most Effective form of Marketing

- **Thomas A R:** The traditional mass marketing approach practiced for decades is no longer a viable one. Companies should develop direct marketing strategy to build relationships with their best and most profitable customers.. Find that the companies are discovering that traditional mass marketing approaches are giving way to more targeted approaches that communicate directly with their customers. Direct marketing is infused with the idea that the best allocation of companies marketing dollar should focuses on and communicates with micro market—and reinforces the distinctive benefits that firm provide to those customers.
- **Jing B, et al.:** Identify that Personalization occurs when the firm decides what marketing mix is suitable for the individual. It is usually based on previously collected customer data. Customization occurs when the customer proactively specifies one or more elements of his or her marketing mix. DMA (2008).The direct marketing will play in driving the growth of the digital economy of the UK.
- **Fan C K, Cheng S:** Revealed that the efficiency score of a direct marketing channel is significantly higher than that of a comparable indirect marketing channel. The efficiency relationship between the indirect marketing channel and the direct marketing channel is independent.
- **Danaher P J & Rossiter J R:** The paper finds that, although e-mail is well established and widely used, the traditional channels of television, radio, newspapers and direct mail retain their historically favored attributes of trust and reliability of information that make them still preferred by consumer recipients of marketing communications, even by “tech savvy” younger consumers who use e-mail and SMS extensively.
- **Anbalagan C:** Direct communications, with its arsenal of mailers, brochures, road shows, sampling, events, phone calls, emails and digital contacts, is favored by advertisers as a cost-effective, measurable medium in these times, when companies are trying to cut costs.
- **Suman M Anuradha, T & Veena K:** Inferred that direct marketing is widely used in the fields of marketing like telemarketing, direct mail marketing and email marketing. Direct marketing firms may also keep addresses of those who match a certain age group or income level or special interest.
- **Webber R:** This paper describes the key trends that have shaped the evolution of direct marketing over this period. Many of the business concepts that underlie DM are as relevant today as they were 25 or even a hundred years ago.
- **Risselada H, Verhoef P C, & Bijmolt T H A:** With respect to timing of direct marketing, the authors recommend that marketers use this instrument heavily in the months immediately after product introduction because its effect is largest then and decreases as time progresses.
- **Simpson & Mortimore:** This research has clearly identified that Direct Mail will still have an effect in years to come. Most notably, the identification of convenience, trust and the reminding effect are further strengthened by their correlation with the stimuli that effect purchase.
- **CUZAA I:** Both direct marketing and direct selling are two interactive systems, allow obtaining a measurable response.
- **Yasmin A, Tasneem S & Fatema K:** Find that digital channel in marketing has become essential part of strategy for many companies s. Digital marketing has no boundaries. Company can use any devices such as smartphones, tablets, laptops, televisions, game consoles, digital billboards, and media such as social media, search engine optimization, videos,

content, e-mail and lot more to promote company itself and its products and services.

- **Karaxha H, Tolaj S & Abazi S A:** In major companies, direct marketing has an impact in increasing sales and companies used telephone and email to present their products or services and to create close contacts with their clients.
- **Faruque S, Khatun M & Rahman Md:** By using the data of social networks direct marketing will be more effective as friends on social networks can influence buyer’s purchasing decisions. Moreover, return on investment (ROI) and ratio of marketing to sales can be calculated properly on this platform by direct marketing rather than viral marketing.
- **Subramanian K:** Direct Marketing enabled companies to roll advertising and marketing into one seamless effort. Digital Technologies have enabled Companies to access customer profiles and preferences quickly and sharpen their marketing strategies and product offerings.
- **Kannan V:** Identify that earning of profit is possible only through consumer satisfaction. Recently, direct marketing had a greater impact, both positive and negative on the economy of the world.

The Key Challenges and Opportunities for Direct Marketing in the Digital Era

Data-Driven Personalization

One of the main advantages of direct marketing is that it allows you to segment your audience and tailor your messages and offers based on their needs, interests, and preferences. Data is the fuel that powers this personalization, and in the digital era, you have access to more data than ever before. Companies can collect and analyze data from various sources, such as web analytics, CRM systems, social media, surveys, or loyalty programs. Companies can use this data to create customer profiles, personas, and segments, and to deliver relevant and timely content and offers that resonate with their audience. However, data-driven personalization also comes with challenges, such as ensuring data quality, security, and privacy, complying with regulations, and avoiding over-personalization or creepiness [11].

Multi-Channel Integration

Another key aspect of direct marketing in the digital era is that it requires integrating multiple channels and platforms to reach your audience where they are and when they want. Customers today use various devices and platforms to interact with brands, such as smartphones, tablets, laptops, social media, email, or web (Kumar, S., 2024). They also expect a consistent and seamless experience across these channels, which means that Companies direct marketing campaigns need to be aligned and coordinated. Companies need to use the right channel for the right message and the right audience, and to ensure that your messages are coherent and complementary across channels. Companies also need to measure and optimize your performance across channels and platforms, and to use feedback loops to improve your campaigns [12,13].

Customer Journey Mapping

A customer journey map is a visual representation of the steps that a customer takes to interact with Companies brand, from awareness to loyalty. It helps Companies understand their customer’s needs, goals, pain points, emotions, and behaviours at each stage of the journey, and how Companies can deliver value and satisfaction. A customer journey map is a useful tool for direct marketing, as it helps Companies identify the key touchpoints where Companies can communicate with your customers and prospects, and the best

channels and messages to use. It also helps Companies optimize their customer experience and loyalty, and to identify gaps and opportunities for improvement [14.15].

Content Marketing

Content marketing is a strategic approach to creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and engaging content to attract and retain a clearly defined audience and to drive profitable action. Content marketing is an essential component of direct marketing in the digital era, as it helps Companies build trust, credibility, and authority with their audience, and to educate, inform, entertain, or inspire them. Content marketing also helps you generate leads, nurture prospects, convert customers, and retain loyalty (Kumar, S., 2023). Companies need to create content that matches their audience's needs and interests at each stage of the customer journey, and that showcases their value proposition and differentiation. Companies also need to distribute your content through the appropriate channels and platforms, and to measure and optimize your content performance [16].

Social Media Marketing

Social media marketing is the use of social media platforms and networks to connect with Companies audience, to build their brand, to increase their sales, and to drive website traffic. Social media marketing is a powerful form of direct marketing in the digital era, as it helps Companies reach a large and diverse audience, to create awareness, engagement, and advocacy, and to generate word-of-mouth and referrals. Social media marketing also helps Companies listen to your audience, to understand their needs, feedback, and sentiment, and to respond to their questions, comments, or complaints (French, A. and Smith, G., 2013). Companies need to choose the right social media platforms and networks for their audience and goals, and to create and share content that is relevant, valuable, and engaging. Companies also need to monitor and analyze their social media performance and to optimize Companies strategy [17].

Email Marketing

Email marketing is the use of email to send messages and offers to Companies audience, to build relationships, to generate leads, to convert sales, and to increase loyalty. Email marketing is one of the most effective forms of direct marketing in the digital era, as it helps Companies communicate with their audience in a personalized, direct, and cost-effective way. Email marketing also helps Companies drive traffic to their website or landing pages, to deliver value and incentives, and to increase retention and referrals. Companies need to build and segment their email list, to craft compelling subject lines and copy, to design responsive and attractive emails, and to test and optimize Companies email campaigns (DMA, 2008). Companies also need to comply with email regulations and best practices, and to avoid spamming or annoying their audience [18].

The Two Major Points of Discussion Relationship Value

The importance of customer loyalty becomes evident through the study of customers' value to the company depending on the length of relationship. A customer's contribution to net profit may vary substantially over the lifetime of the relationship. New customers who may initially be unprofitable will increase their profit contribution as the relationship continues, thus making it essential to study the life cycle of a customer when determining the value of the relationship. The lifetime value of a customer relationship to the company can be calculated as the net present value of the net profits

that can be expected over the years. In order to estimate the future behaviour of a customer, existing or new, historical data is needed for calculating actual repeat purchases that have taken place and projecting model for expected future purchases. Although marketing literature mainly includes models of the value of a customer, in the context of relationship marketing one should also pay attention to the value-to-customer perspective. Philip Kotler (1997, 412) defines customer perceived value as the sum of core solution and additional services divided by the sum of price paid and relationship costs. Relationship costs follow from the customer's decision to engage a relationship with another party. These costs can be of monetary or psychological in nature, ranging from membership fees to feeling of inconvenience. If the costs become greater than the benefits from the additional services, the customer is likely to prefer a transactional mode approach instead of relational mode. The most loyal customers are commonly considered to be also among the most profitable ones, but the evidence behind this assumption is not unambiguous. Reinartz and Kumar (2002, 4-12) suggest that the relationship between loyalty and profitability is much weaker and subtler than what has been claimed in loyalty literature. Their study found little or no evidence that customers who purchased steadily from a company over time would be cheaper to serve, less price sensitive, or particularly effective at bringing in new business. Reinartz and Kumar (2002, 4-12) found that loyal customers tend to be even more price sensitive than an occasional customer. These customers are generally more knowledgeable about product offerings and can better evaluate their quality. Furthermore, consumers seem to strongly resent companies that try to profit from loyalty, since they believe loyal customers deserve lower prices. With this in mind, it is clear that one should not use measurement of customer loyalty as the single indicator of relationship value, nor should one aim to make all existing customers loyal to the brand [19-21].

The Single Customer View

One of the most important recent studies in this area is, which concluded that there were notable differences in company's expectations of the value to be extracted from the surge of new data (Big Data) and the development of a single customer view (SCV) (SCV, in which a company's knowledge about each customer is summarised, ideally fully documented, in a single data record which is accessible to all those making decisions about and managing the customer). The benefits from investment in SCV, Big Data and high performance analytics (HPA) were difficult to prove and in the economic and regulatory climate priority tended to be given to regulatory compliance and projects with better risk profiles. Those companies that had committed to a SCV strategy and were the furthest along the path were seeing the greatest returns and were most determined to retain this advantage. The more advanced companies also stressed that SCV is not an IT project but should be seen as a part of implementing a customer focused strategy. Organisations that were striving to achieve a single customer view were starting to tackle the "Big Data" challenge. Companies investing in a SCV strategy were seeing significant benefits by using a Big Data approach involving data integration and sophisticated analytics to generate customer insight (CI), primarily to improve customer segmentation and to target marketing campaigns more effectively. While the concept of a complete SCV was seen as a useful aspiration, changes in technology, markets and customer requirements meant that not all companies see it as completely achievable or desirable. The most common strategy was to move incrementally towards a SCV, each step being dictated by the cost/benefit analysis and the availability of scarce analytical skills. A minority of companies were content with a product silo approach as they believed that there was little overlap of customers across

products. However, a large majority of companies had a project underway to move towards a SCV although most admitted that achieving a full SCV was some way off [22-24].

Result & Findings

The main areas in which the digital direct marketing strategies should be focused are:

- ✓ Customer management (optimising recruitment, retention, development and efficiency strategies).
- ✓ Channels; communications and sales (e.g. digital, web, social, mobile, field sales).
- ✓ Promotions (promoting the right products to the right customers in the most cost-effective way, to produce the best results).
- ✓ Product management (optimising product mix, bundles, own/brand and management).
- ✓ Pricing (setting the right prices to make the most revenue/profits and satisfy customers).
- ✓ Purchasing (acquiring the right products for customers and markets).
- ✓ Logistics/supply chain/payment/finance (the flow through the business and delivery to customer).
- ✓ Process (how efficiently, transparently and speedily things are being managed, speed to market).
- ✓ Colleagues (how well people are performing, where improvement is most required).

Conclusion

An effective digital marketing strategy combined with right tools and technologies allows to trace all sales back to customer's first digital touch point with ones business is called attribution modelling. It allows identifying trends in the way people research and buying your product, helping you to make more informed decisions about what parts of ones marketing strategy deserve more attention, and what parts of your sales cycle need refining. Connecting the dots between marketing and sales is hugely important -- according to Aberdeen Group, companies with strong sales and marketing alignment achieve a 20% annual growth rate, compared to a 4% decline in revenue for companies with poor alignment. If one can improve ones customer's' journey through the buying cycle by using digital technologies, then it's likely to reflect positively on your business's bottom line.

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