

Digital marketing as a mechanism to pursue the digital transformation: Case study of Sephora

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Abstract:

This study aimed to explore the way to apply a digital transformation in marketing, by learning concerning the evolution of the transformation stages and the way some different establishments were experimenting with a digital transformation, likewise to demonstrate the various elements and marketing mix of digital marketing in line with world trends in marketing. Sephora was highlighted as a model.

The study concluded necessary to publicize and promote the services and products available through using modern technology such as social networking, online advertising and viral marketing, so that the organization and its products can be made known to the customers.

Keywords: Digital Transformation, Digital Marketing, Digital marketing mix.

JEL Classification Codes: M31, G21.

1. INTRODUCTION

It is globally known that modern Information Communication Technologies (ICT) is in revolution. Hence, organizations, big or small, need to keep up with the tempo of technological development because organization who no longer takes part in the latter may fail. Managers are also seeking to develop and improve their services and enhance their communication with beneficiaries to ensure that most of their profits will be from the digital aspect. They also aim to become more business-efficient by coming into line with the technology used by staff and clients who live in an accelerated digital world and apply most of the content related to digital transformation.

Therefore, Digital transformation is using digital technology as part of a mechanism and structure for action. Starting with the fact that digital transformation is not an easy task, but a long and tiring process that starts with decision-makers believing in digital transformation. Thus, it is required to develop strategic plans and define transformation objectives and appropriate expertise for its implementation.

Whereas the drive to embrace digital marketing in the services sector is no longer an option for services organizations but an imperative, and the success of an organization depends heavily on its marketing plan, each organization must learn how to develop and implement a successful digital marketing plan to raise profits.

Digital transformation has changed the business world of marketing by changing many old concepts and activities. For example, marketing was old-fashioned on newspapers and television. Enterprise marketing managers must learn all about these modern technologies to ensure their optimal success.

Therefore, the problem of the present research is highlighted in the following main question:

- How was Sephora able to keep pace with the digital transformation and apply it in the field of marketing?

This main question stems from a subset of questions as follows:

- What are the dimensions and areas of digital transformation in marketing?

➤ What are the implications of Sephora adopting digital marketing?

Objectives of the study

More specifically, this study sought to achieve the following objectives:

- Recognize the meaning of digital transformation and dimensions.
- Discover the definition of digitization and digital marketing.
- demonstrate elements of digital marketing used by Sephora.

Significance of the study

The importance of the study is as follows:

For digital marketing, this has a positive impact in achieving a competitive advantage within the services sector through the ability to communicate directly with the customer through digital media. So that focusing on meeting their needs and designing an integrated marketing mix, this leads to increased competition and the emergence of alternatives. This work is investigating the used of digital marketing by Sephora and its role in improving the customers' services.

Methodology

The present study adopts the analytical descriptive method through analyzing the concepts of digital transformation and elements of digital marketing used by Sephora that contributed to its success. The study is based on a desk survey of theoretical studies relevant to the subject of the study.

2. Digital Transformation

2.1 Evolution and definition of digital transformation

Digital Transformation is new-born concept that has been in use since 2004 and has long been associated with the term "Technological Revolutions". Furthermore, the term "Digital Transformation" is fully relevant beyond the business side considering both strategic and people aspects, as well as innovation (Ziyadin et al., 2020, p.409).

According to Lio et al. (2011), digital transformation can be defined as an organizational transformation that integrates digital technology and business processes into the digital economy. However, digital transformation is more than a process redesign; it is about building new businesses that leverage and maximize core business skills through digital

technology to gain a competitive edge.

Therefore, the Web is one of the key technologies of the 21st century. Its nature, structure, and uses have evolved. This development has also profoundly changed our business and social activities (Zidane & Ounis, 2017, p.84). This evolution has gone through four major phases: Web 1.0, Web 2.0, Web 3.0, and web 4.0

2.1.1 Web 1.0:

Web 1.0 is primarily a read-only website. Companies provide catalogs and brochures to publish their work on the Web where people are able to read them and contact the companies. The Website users and visitors can only access websites that have no impact or contribution, and the topology is too low. The main protocols for Web 1.0 are HTTP, HTML, and URIs. (Kujur & Chhetri, 2015, p.134);(Hiremath & Kenchakkanavar, Anand Y, Keshab Nath, 2016, p.01).

2.1.2 Web2.0:

Web 2.0, known as the Participatory Web or the Bidirectional Web, is a web-like platform that allows users to retain many of the controls they are used to. In other words, Web 2.0 users can have a dialog with less control. Moreover, Web 2.0 makes it easy for people to flexibly design the web, use creativity, and co-update, create, and edit content. One of the great features of Web 2.0 is that it supports collaboration and helps gather more collective wisdom than Web 1.0. (Aghaei et al. 2012, p.02) ;(Wilson et al. 2011, p.05).

2.1.3 Web3.0:

Web 3.0 is known as semantic web. Its basic idea is to define structured data and link it for more efficient detection, automation, integration, and reuse in different applications. Web 3.0 attempts to connect, consolidate, and analyze data from different datasets to capture new information flows. It also helps improve data management, support, and mobile internet accessibility, emulates creativity and innovation, encourages elements of the phenomenon of globalization, improves customer satisfaction, and organizes social web collaboration (Hendrik et al., 2015, p.1040);(Ohei & Brink, 2019, p. 1842).

2.1.4 Web 4.0:

Web 4.0 is identified as a smart web. The entire Web OS acts as an

operating system that controls the flow of information and provides an appropriate interface for communication between machines and humans. With the help of artificial intelligence, it will always have self-learning ability available to create systems that understand and communicate well with users effectively, such as, human-machine communication. Web 4.0 can be utilized to create more powerful interfaces such as mind control interfaces. Put simply, machines are smarter at reading web page content, respond by doing and deciding what to do first, load web pages faster with better quality and performance, and create more command interfaces. (Singh, 2020, p. 499)(Patil & Surwade, 2018, p.813);(Kurgun et al., 2018, p. 59).

2.2 Dimensions of digital transformation

There are two dimensions of digital transformation:

2.2.1 The Digital technologies

Digital transformation represents the transformation that results from developing new technologies in the form of computers, laptops, tablets, smartphones, mobile phones, etc. The main purpose of digital technology is to create connections between people quickly, easily, and economically. People connect together using a variety of digital services and resources. By using digital technology in an organization, individuals can become more self-reliant and less dependent on supervisors, managers, and so on. All in all, digital technology gives people a better understanding of the development of organizations and their work. (Brewer & Hogarth, 2015, p.12)(Kapur, 2018, p.20)

2.2.2 The User experience

Digital transformation puts users at the Centre of an organization's strategy, demanding ever-higher-quality products and services and expecting an organization to adapt to developing needs and customize quickly. This is especially true of the new digital generation which has a deep understanding of new technologies and the ability to share experiences with others through social media. To meet these new expectations, organizations must adjust their behavior towards products and services based on consumer trends. That's why digital transformation typically

begins with a transformation of marketing capabilities, particularly, with the adoption of next-generation CRM tools that integrate powerful social dimensions through social network analytics units. The digitization of personnel functions also includes the introduction of social relationship management tools that treat employees as internal customers and aim to guarantee a high level of services. (Henriette et al., 2016, p.03)(Gillpatrick, 2019, p.145)

3. Digital marketing

3.1 Definition of Digital marketing

Digital marketing is all about the facilitation of the desired exchange, where the products or services offered to the exchange partner exist as data in the form of zeros and ones that are sent electronically (Ferié, 2017, p.03) (Krishen et al., 2021, p.184). The term “digital marketing” refers to using electronic media by marketers to promote a product or service on the market, with the primary purpose of attracting customers through digital media and facilitating interaction with the brand (Mkwizu, 2019, p.07) (Tamanna, 2021, p.87).

Krishen defines digital marketing as apple’s data, ICT-based technologies such as artificial intelligence, and platforms such as social networks, media, and devices to expand and improve marketing in both physical and virtual spaces. Customer relationships by empowering, informing, influencing, and engaging consumers (Krishen et al., 2021,p.183). Also for fulfilling marketing objectives in both consumer-to-consumer and business-to-consumer environments, Digital marketing utilizes all forms of technology and digital tools (Pandey et al., 2020, p.1191).

3.2 Digital marketing mix

The marketing mix is the set of all marketing decisions and actions taken to ensure the success of a branded product, services, brand, or market. These decisions are typically made in four key areas: product, price, promotion, and distribution.

3.2.1 Product in digital marketing

In general, digital products refer to any goods or services that can be digitized (converted into a binary format). Examples include conventional

digital products like software or music, as well as reports, magazines, or books that are now increasingly digitized and sold via the Internet (Wang et al., 2009, p.16). Digitization has created innovative products and digital connectivity has paved the way for new services and business models (Tunn et al., 2020, p.02). The constant exchange of information in the digital age enables entrepreneurs to develop personalized services, interact directly with consumers, optimize ABPSS services, and make them attractive to consumers and beneficial to their businesses (Bocken et al., 2018, p.499).

3.2.2 Price in digital marketing

Price is one of the most versatile parts of the direct and marketing mix and in the short term hampers a company's profitability and economy. While price is important for performance, this factor doesn't seem to be getting enough attention from many academics and marketers (Hermann, 1992, p.57). In addition, pricing is one of the most important business decisions because it affects a company's profitability and profitability, as well as its competitiveness in the market (De Toni et al., 2017, p.122).

In the digital environment, price plays a special and more important role. The new technology provides new and efficient management tools for pricing policies but makes pricing more difficult and complex. Prices were set through negotiations between buyers and sellers. However, at present, pricing for all buyers is the norm; a relatively new idea developed in modern mass production and retailing (Mauri, 2015, p.04).

But recently, the web has overturned the fixed-price policy. New technology devices allow online sellers to track and analyze customer behavior, gain valuable insights into customer preferences (product customization), and better knowledge regarding price sensitivity and payment intent (Mauri, 2015, p.04).

3.2.3 Distribution in digital marketing

Digital distribution has eliminated some of the intermediaries that significantly increase the price of products. However, other network entities, such as brokers and publishers, have emerged to facilitate the distribution of information. Web developers implement shopping cards and online payment services providers. Online marketplaces are useful for promoting, paying for, and buying products online. Except for the

distribution of digital products, physical products purchased online represent a problem that is reflected in the cost of the product at a rate of around 10%. Companies can choose to distribute their products through specialized distributors, such as DHS or in-house. In that case, a very consistent logistics and logistics management system is required (Pistol & Ţoniş Bucea-Manea, 2017, p.762).

3.2.4 Promotion in digital marketing

The digital age has brought many changes in an organization's communication policies. Today, digital media has significant advantages over traditional media, such as (Reducing costs, accessibility, and services such as Google Analytics which provides information that allows you to correctly configure the “Buyer” profile and Customer-directed communication messages based on the social networks they use, such as their interests and needs), so no business, regardless of size, can be without an online media strategy (Baltes, 2016, p.37).

3.3 Various elements of digital marketing

Digital marketing is constituted by several models, which are briefly discussed as follows:

3.1. Online Advertising: It is the most well-known online marketing tactic. This model uses real spaces to place marketing messages on both websites to attract Internet users. Its main goal is to increase sales and increase brand awareness (Suleiman et al., 2020, p.166).

3.2. Email marketing: It is the process of sending product information to a target group of customers. It is considered as one of the most effective online marketing tools. Email marketing is a fast process because you can send messages related to the company's products and services to many customers in seconds (Hossain & Rahman, 2017, p.05) (Omar & Atteya, 2020, p.122).

3.3. Search Engine Optimization (SEO): SEO is the process of increasing the visibility of a website and its content in search engines. SEO technology allows websites and business pages to appear on search engines. It is also the process of designing, building, and coding web pages in a way that helps people using organic search results or free search engines improve volume, quality, and visibility. (Al-haraizah et al., 2020, p.1272)(Akre et al.,

2019, p.123)

3.4. Social Media Marketing: social media also stands out for its interoperability from the impersonal and traditional means of communication. Tools like Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube allow many individuals and organizations to interact in real-time anywhere in the world. Using social media is facilitated by ease of use (Sashi, 2014, p.19) (Ghezali & Boudi, 2019, p.35).

3.5. Viral marketing: It refers to the exponential process of sharing videos, images, or content. Viral marketing is a form of digital marketing by word of mouth that can spread media messages exponentially. The company uses a variety of techniques to encourage the public to share positive messages about its products and brand. Viral marketing is another popular marketing tool these days that allows you to build a strong brand image (Hossain & Rahman, 2017, p.05).

3.4 Traditional Marketing versus Digital Marketing

Below is a table of differences between Traditional Marketing and Digital Marketing:

Table 1. Traditional Marketing versus Digital Marketing

Traditional Marketing	Digital Marketing
Traditional marketing includes print, broadcast, direct mail, and telephone	Digital marketing includes online advertising; email marketing, social media, viral marketing, search engine optimization.
No interaction with the audience	Interaction with the audience
Results are easy to measure	Results are to a great extent easy to measure
Advertising campaigns are planned over a long period of time	Advertising campaigns are planned over short period of time
Expensive and time-consuming process	Reasonably cheap and rapid way to promote the products or services
Limited reach to the customer due to limited number of customer technology	Wider reach to the customer because of the use of various customers technology
Success of traditional marketing strategies can be celebrated if the firm can reach large local audience	Success of digital marketing strategies can be celebrated if the firm can reach some specific number of local audience
24/7 year-round exposure is not possible	24/7 year-round exposure is possible
One campaign prevails for a long time	Campaigns can be easily changed with ease and innovations can be introduced within any campaign
No ability to go viral	Ability to go viral
One way conversation	Two ways conversation
Responses can only occur during work hours	Response or feedback can occur anytime

Source: (Yasmin et al., 2015, p.72)

4. Case study of Sephora Company in adopting digital marketing

Sephora is a French multinational retailer of beauty and personal care products. The Sephora collections offers beauty products including cosmetics, skin care, body, perfumes, nail polish, beauty tools, lotions and hair care (wikipedia, 2021).

Owned by LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton, the world's leading luxury goods group, Sephora was founded in France by Dominique

Mandonnaud in 1970 (Sephora, 2021). It owns more than 250 beauty brands, and generates revenue of more than €4 billion annually (Rigby, 2021).

Sephora continues to offer innovative brands, including a wide range of Clean Beauty products and exclusive brands like Selena Gomez's Rare Beauty and Rihanna's Fenty Beauty, first introduced to the market through Sephora (Sephora, 2021).

As well, Sephora main purpose to inspire fearlessness, as well as to believe beauty is for each person to define, to celebrate, to support and to encourage bold choices in beauty and in life (visionary businessperson, 2021).

Aside from that, the brand promote a culture of belonging through inclusion programs and stand for those who are facing major life transitions through classes of confidence and with women entrepreneurs through accelerate (Sephora stands, 2021) .

Also, Sephora is a powerful beauty presence in countries around the world thanks to its unparalleled assortment of prestige products in every category, unbiased service from beauty experts, interactive shopping environment, and relentless innovation, including its expanding array of the ways in which clients can shop with Sephora (Sephora, 2021).

When it comes to successful digital transformation, cosmetics retailer Sephora is one brand that makes a prime example using the power of digitalization to become a digital trailblazer. Sephora has built strong brand recognition and loyal customers by its digital marketing techniques, and has made a significant step forward in digital retail by integrating the physical and digital teams into an omni-retail department. The following presents some of Sephora's successful digital initiatives and how they helped the company capture value:

4.1 Sephora Lab Innovation:

The CEO of Sephora Americas, Calvin McDonald (2015), states: "Innovation has always been in our DNA". Sephora team have created The Sephora Lab, an internal program to produce new creative concepts inspired

by ideas from Sephora workers to improve the consumer experience (Trishim, 2020). The head of the lab Bridget Dolan says: “Sephora’s Innovation Lab team is always scouring the market for new technologies, as well as technologies that have been around and may finally be ready for prime time or could be leveraged in a unique way. We focus on teaching our clients about products and techniques — our clients are savvy and want to understand a product and how to use it.” (As cited in Hilary Milnes, 2016).

4.2 Sephora’s Mobile App:

Using Google Analytics, it was discovered that customers often look for product recommendation, reviews, and discounts when considering buying in-store. Therefore, Sephora developed a Sephora mobile app to fulfil its customers’ needs. The app works as a digital personal shopping assistant that provides product reviews, suggestions, prices, and product information allowing customers to comfortably purchase products (Menon, 2016).

4.3 Sephora Virtual Artist Mobile Feature:

Sephora’s cosmetics app employs face recognition to enable users to test on items anywhere, bringing virtual reality technology to the beauty business. The feature was launched in 2016 as the new update of Sephora’s mobile app. This tool combines user-uploaded pictures, virtual reality, and artificial intelligence to give a virtual makeover for app user. In other words, users can virtually try on over 1000 different Sephora products to check how they would look on them before purchasing. They can try on different eyeshadows, false lashes, lip colors, and blush shades to find the perfect shade for them without stepping a single foot in a store (Menon, 2016).

The VP of Sephora’s Innovation Lab Bridget Dolan adds:

“When a shopper comes into Sephora, she will be prompted to switch her app to ‘Store Mode,’ allowing her easy access to all of the features she needs while shopping. For example: like the ability to scan products for ratings and reviews, look up past purchases, view her wish list, and pull up her scalable

loyalty card and saved gift cards, saving her an additional step at check-out. It also rewards pre-shop efforts by popping up the items she's left in her cart that are available in this store. And lastly, it lets her know about all of the perks available to her in store, like free mini makeover services and a free gift during her birthday month." (As cited in, Alex Samuelly, 2017)

4.4 Sephora's AI Powered Chatbots:

Sephora was the first beauty retailer to implement the use of Chatbots and continues to improve it with extra features. Two of its newest features present two bots that address the shoppers' experience on different aspects. One bot assists clients with scheduling appointments with a Sephora beauty professional, while the other assists customers in making their own purchase selections and provide them with customized product recommendations (Myers, 2018).

4.5 Sephora's Beauty Board:

A social-media platform created for collaborative browsing and connecting and creating with the community. This community site allows makeup and skincare lovers to take pictures and share their looks and beauty tips within the "community" and to get inspired by other's makeup tutorials. Beauty board users can also tag the products they used to make their makeup so others can just click on the product to purchase it on Sephora shopping website. This social platform helped Sephora lovers connect together with giving a sense of belonging (Honigman, 2018).

4.6 Sephora's Social Media Marketing:

Sephora's content focused on what might resonate with her audience. First, rather than directly selling anything, they have focused on information and sharing through a series of YouTube classes in makeup classes and guide publications where Sephora's content is educational and informative and provides its clients with something useful that they can implement in their daily routine. Second, they used the advertising feature on YouTube. Sephora seamlessly integrated links to every product shown in the video which the user could open or hide. They also used the ads during

the broadcast to connect to every product they discussed in the video. Users can click on top of any of the products and they will be moved directly to Sephora's web page where they can make a purchase, thus creating a seamless user experience and not disrupting the professional. On Instagram, Sephora's account has 20 million followers. Sephora benefited from it as a new sales channel that allowed it to reach new customers. They can put their products up for direct sale there, taking advantage of the influence of influencers who promote Instagram Checkout-compatible articles on their Instagram accounts (Honigman, 2018). Instagram also helps attract emerging and digital local brands, which specialty retailers look for, through exclusive partnerships, to make a special offer. Partner brands include Drunk Elephant, Milk Makeup, Urban Decay, very well-known Cosmetics Names (Kiehl's, MAKE UP FOR EVER).

5. CONCLUSION

Through the study applied on Sephora, we reach the following results:

- Sephora Retail is a world leader in cosmetics and self-care.
- Sephora has been transformed into digital retail by integrating physical and digital teams into the aggregate sales section.
- Sephora adopts a culture of innovation by creating its own laboratory to offer new creative ideas to its clients, especially in the digital field.
- The company developed a mobile app that serves as an assistant to its customers on digital personal shopping as a tool for digital marketing.
- The company developed a cosmetics experiment application by default from customers through the website, where they can experiment with more than 1000 products from Sephora by default. - Sephora is the first cosmetics retailer to use robot to help customers choose Christmas gifts for their relatives.
- The company created a social media beauty platform as a virtual community that helped its customers connect and benefit from their experiences.

- Sephora used social media marketing through educational lessons on youtube and took advantage of Instagram through influencers to get new customers and new brands that can be displayed in their stores.

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