

A Brief Overview of the Challenges and Implications in Advertising and Public Relations

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Introduction

The tools being used to promote events and services or buy and sell products have transformed the way individuals and institutions think and operate. Each day, pictures, words and signs are being crafted with state-of-the-art technology and disseminated on different mass-accessed platforms to persuade audiences to think and act in a certain way. The researcher, the sponsored expert or corporate practitioner is constantly working to have a better understanding of how brand sites drive traffic to social sites, how brand sites function, or whether content from social sites can drive traffic to the brand site. In fact, since the internet was introduced to the world in 1990, advertising has never been the same. Advertising and public relations (PR) techniques continue to change to meet the needs of an unpredictable set of consumers. Grosso modo, advertising and PR trends have shifted away from the big screen and toward the digital universe, giving new meaning to how much of a product or service buyers truly desire and how much the market can offer. To find new markets, companies and practitioners have resorted to digital channels of communication more than to radio and television, simply because they can reach a broader audience. According to a blog by Zachary Reiss-Davis posted February 19, 2016, global digital advertising is forecasted to grow from \$135 billion in 2014 to \$240 billion in 2019 (Figure 1) [1,2].

Other interactive digital advertising agencies such as e-Marketer and Media Two Interactive, which provides programmatic media buying, search engine marketing and direct publisher media buys report astronomical figures in terms of spending on digital platforms. According to Media Two Interactive, banner impressions will surpass 6 billion by the end of 2016 alone [3]. Media Buyers foresee a consistently higher spending on TV Ad spending until 2020 (Figure 2) [4].

With its presence in more than 90 countries e-Marketer is the most widely cited market research brand in the media. Recognized by the *Wall Street Journal*, *Bloomberg BusinessWeek*, *British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)*, *National Public Radio (NPR)* in the US, and the *Financial Times* among other major news outlets and economic resources for its acumen in delivering research data on global markets and advertising trends, e-Marketer has understood the importance of

social networks, traditional media, and dot.com content sites for the promotion of brands in emerging and existing markets.

However, audience segmentation still plays a role in determining the suitable communication platform and the potential for the success or failure in advertising. In India, for example, which has one of the world's fastest growing markets besides China, adults are spending more time with traditional media than with digital media. The average adult spends about 2.5 times as long each day with traditional media, including TV, radio, newspapers and magazines [5]. The figure below produced by e-Marketer November 22, 2016, projects adults' reliance on traditional media for at least one more year, which means that if companies were to observe their use of the internet as well, it would be interesting for companies and PR strategists to see what attracts them there and produce relevant content (Figure 3).

Nonetheless, because the majority of adults are exposed to traditional media, advertisers would still benefit from such data when packaging and marketing their content.

Digitization of Integrated Marketing

Over the last decade, marketing agencies have taken a holistic approach to buy and sell products and services based on the changing needs of the population. Integrated marketing and buzz marketing

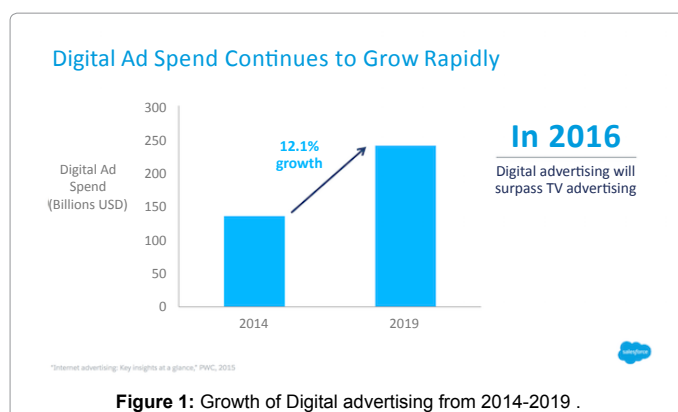


Figure 1: Growth of Digital advertising from 2014-2019 .

US Total Media Ad Spending Share, by Media, 2014-2020							
% of total							
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
TV*	39.1%	37.7%	36.8%	35.8%	34.8%	33.7%	32.9%
Digital	28.3%	32.6%	35.8%	38.4%	40.8%	43.1%	44.9%
—Mobile	10.9%	17.3%	22.7%	26.2%	28.8%	31.0%	32.9%
Print	17.4%	15.4%	13.9%	12.9%	12.2%	11.6%	11.1%
—Newspapers**	9.1%	8.0%	7.2%	6.6%	6.1%	5.7%	5.5%
—Magazines**	8.3%	7.4%	6.8%	6.4%	6.1%	5.8%	5.6%
Radio***	8.4%	7.8%	7.4%	7.0%	6.7%	6.4%	6.1%
Out-of-home	4.0%	4.0%	3.9%	3.8%	3.7%	3.5%	3.4%
Directories**	2.8%	2.5%	2.2%	2.0%	1.9%	1.7%	1.6%

Note: *excludes digital; **print only, excludes digital; ***excludes off-air radio & digital
Source: eMarketer, March 2016
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www.eMarketer.com

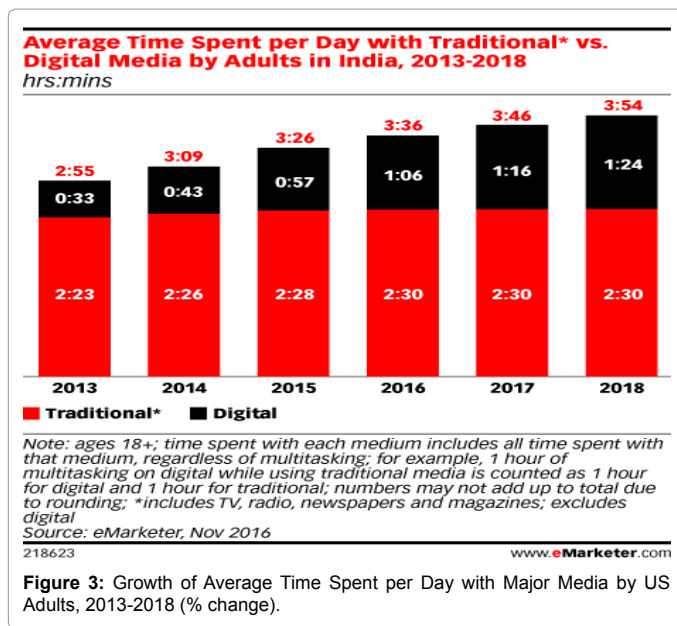
Figure 2: Comparing Share of Ad Spending vs. Share of Time Spent.

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techniques are now receiving greater attention in the advertising industry. E-marketing campaigns, search engine optimization (SEO), pay-per-click, affiliate, email, banner, web related channels for webinar, blog, RSS, podcast, and Internet TV, are frequently used along with offline marketing channels, newspaper, magazine, mail order, public relations, industry analyst relations billboard, radio, and television to maximize buying and selling.

Magna Global has forecasted that digital advertising will surpass television advertising for the first time with \$66Billion in revenue in the U.S. this year alone. E-market agrees with this assertion. A report published only a month after Reiss-Davis's assertion has revealed that "TV ad spending will total \$72.01 billion, or 35.8% of total media ad spending in the US, and a total digital ad spending in 2017 will equal \$77.37 billion, or 38.4% of total ad spending [6]. This should come as no surprise to anyone who owns a phone, has access to the internet, or has been exposed to radio or television broadcasting. Wherever we are today, we're inundated with one type of message or ad. As potential customers we enjoy the thrill of being found and served products or services we often think we need. And marketing firms recognize this. They carry out activities aimed at informing us about their products and persuade us to buy. Firms constantly conduct interviews and other forms of surveys to gauge the interest levels of consumers and re-design or improve the product/service to maintain the seller-buyer relationship. Of course, there can be no seller without a buyer or vice versa. Marketing and PR are indeed first cousins who operate in a delicate family.

Buzz Marketing

Buzz marketing -- a strategy employed by firms and marketing agencies to spread word rapidly about a new product or service, using individuals, social media, radio and other communication methods as brand promoters essentially acts as corporate gossip. But instead of spreading news and information about people, it educates customers about products [7]. A major characteristic of buzz marketing is that people have to be given something to talk, thus the product has to be interesting to keep them talking. Features of a product capable of creating a buzz among consumers or sustaining audience interest

are that it is a taboo, unusual, outrageous, hilarious, remarkable, a secret, or contagious [8]. The marketing agency is more likely to reach more people with their advertising (product) than they would with traditional campaign because people are usually prone to the unusual. People like distractions. The fact that talk shows, soap operas, reality programs such as *Survival*, *Amazing Race* and *Big Brother* as well as ET have been broadcast prime time on major television networks for many years, and continue to be available to web audiences demonstrates the high level of interest and attention in outrageous and hilarious content by advertising companies and audiences.

Social Media Marketing

We can agree that business is being transformed from a transactional relationship to a social relationship. It is now more critical than ever that successful businesses use engagement marketing principles to plan for successfully engaging their prospects and customers before, during and after their purchase cycle, and that the basis for this engagement is high-quality and relevant information [9]. While some marketing experts have dismissed marketing via social media as a fad, new data show a different picture. According to Hubspot, a marketing and sales software that helps companies attract visitors, convert leads, and close customers started by MIT students back in 2004, 92% of marketers agreed that social media is important for their business, up from 86% in 2013 [10]. Managing a flexible presence on Facebook, twitter, and Google+ has become an imperative for every marketer, every business. With more than 665 million of daily active users on Facebook and over 500 million registered accounts on Twitter [11], companies looking for greater exposure in the digital market are more likely to have their brand and services better recognized than those using social profiles on platforms such as LinkedIn, Pinterest, Tumblr, Stumble upon, and Reddit.

Social marketing has been found to be effective when consumers get instant responses to their questions on the brand. When consumers do not get the response of the questions they post on the brand page they tend post inappropriate information or publish reviews on social media that could have negative implications for the company's image and/or brand. An empirical study on social media as a marketing tool has found that the desire to engage with the brand either through dialog with the brand's representatives or with other consumers (business to consumer+consumer to consumer communication) leads to advocacy and loyalty towards the brand and such consumer starts working as a brand ambassador of the product/service [12]. Thus, it is necessary for the company to provide instant feedback to consumer query.

Through the success of consumer-based companies with social media presence like Oreo, Denny's and Netflix and top online companies that constantly conduct research on social media marketing like Martell Home Builders and Zappos (an online retailer that sells shoes, clothing and accessories), it is clear that strategic social marketing is a welcomed trend. The consumer-based companies may no longer rely on middlemen (publicists, etc.) to bring them business. In a similar way, companies that provide informed insights to clients do save them money and time by targeting the client's brand, competitors, and demographic.

Low-cost Advertising

With our entire world is now connected digitally, powerful marketing tools are available to many of us at affordable cost. More people are using it for social engagement, including but not limited to selfies, photo sharing, and exchange of other personal content. Articles

in *Social Media Today* and other trustworthy online platforms find social media to be a cost-effective and in-depth tool for gaining insights into their customers, market, brand appearance and other important market research aspects. In his widely-read article on *How to Use Social Media for Market Research* Ray Nelson has offered six tips for improved, measurable results [13].

As long as Facebook, twitter, and other social networks are operational, marketing experts will continue to explore new approaches to market research and develop innovative techniques for buying and selling products and promoting services through those social media platforms.

The Beauty of Public Relations (PR)

Defined as the professional maintenance of a favorable public image by a company or other organization or a famous person; as the state of the relationship between the public and a company or other organization or a famous person, or a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics, [14] public relations establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the publics on whom its success or failure depends [15]. PR professionals are brand and image developers who understand the internal characteristics of the organization and/or client.

Allen Mireles, a Marketing, PR and Social Media Strategist has offered the following arguments about PR as a worthwhile profession. In a detailed article posted online November 13, 2014, Mireles stated that PR professionals work hard every day to:

- Tell a brand's story through both traditional and new media channels
- Manage investor relations and communications
- Build relationships with media, bloggers and industry influencers
- Help create strategies to address the next crisis—online or off
- Guide companies and organizations through those crises when they happen, as they happen
- Create content in a growing number of formats including written, video, audio and visual
- Monitor and manage reputations on and offline
- Coach clients in how to handle on-camera interviews and tough questions
- Stay abreast of changing industry trends
- Educate clients and coworkers on new tools and technology
- Measure and evaluate the effectiveness of each campaign and initiative and translate the data into understandable language [16].

Challenges

Despite the huge investments made in advertising and PR activities so far, programmatic advertising may result in superficial behavior than actual returns. Although savvy programmatic advertising focuses in such fundamentals as validated foundation of data, insightful audience segmentation, organized media optimization, and sound measurement as Oscar Garza, director of Essence Digital contends [17], there is no guarantee that all potential consumers reached would become

qualifying buyers. Customer loyalty is not guaranteed for a defined period. One poor product or accident in the production of marketing approach of a product or brand can and does lower expectations or diminish profit. Companies and celebrities known to lose everything from a faux pas in quality of product placed on the market or some human error. Experts on emerging media are concerned that ad fraud has become rampant and hard to control. Companies that spend millions of dollars targeting consumers or selling services and programs online may not have the capacity to control replication and duplication of their products. This could cause them to lose money overtime. Oscar Garza, Director of Programmatic and Audience at Essence Magazine has raised the concern that there are a lot of unknown situations for advertisers who build advertising around technology because technology is always shifting based on cookies [18]. The greatest challenge is that the gap in understanding public relations function and establishing effective communication among sellers and buyers cannot be closed permanently as different factors do influence actions. Human expectations are among the hardest things to manage. Matt Prohaska, CEO of Prohaska Consulting is quoted as saying that managing expectations internally and externally with clients or ad tech partners is critical as clients frequently change their attitudes [19].

There are challenges in implementing PR programs mainly because the general public does not have a clear understanding of public relations as a practice. Some scholars for the American Psychological Association and other academics have regarded public relations as mere propaganda, thereby besmirching the profession, while other scholars have provided training on methods of persuasion and publicity, which are among key paradigms of public relations practice. PR practitioners themselves have questioned the feel that the substance of PR has much to do about little. There is a widespread belief that PR only creates a spin, therefore, the purpose of creating PR content is to promote hype rather than fact. In the words of Bruce Buschel, "P.R. people are paid to twist reality into pretzels and convince you that they are fine croissants. At some point, they actually believe their own concoctions" [20]. Every PR professional or advertising executive will tell you that there's no guarantee persuasion will automatically convert to cash flow, that a convinced person will take action based on what he/she knows or has learned. People do not always make decisions based on the quantity of persuasion they're exposed to. The outcome of the 2016 US President Election showcases this point as exit polls showed Hilary Clinton leading, but Donald Trump won the electoral votes and became the president-elect. A major feature of PR business, press and editorial placement, requires huge sums of money if it's to be successful. PR professionals must build and maintain a relationship between the client/company they work for and traditional and non-traditional media outlets. They must constantly re-brand their product or message before reaching the traditional media houses that have their own information packages, information sources, and audience needs to deal with. The PR professional cannot be sure that the information or brand being circulated would have the desired effect with the target audience, since every other client with access to the internet or an I-phone and a relatively smaller budget can also reach any audience. Individuals using their own I-phones are now able to use personalized content (body images, personal stories, etc.) and their twitter accounts to reach millions of viewers while professionally packages content is not necessarily expected to achieve the desired results such as educating the public, resolving a crisis, or determining the effectiveness of an initiative. In short, the competition between public relations and personalized content is a mismatch. From an academic standpoint, the Critical Theory may have retained its role of describing the foundations

of modern society--a critique motivated by a desire to understand society and change it for a better future. But the daunting challenge for rhetoricists, ethicists, propaganda scholars and publicists is how to deliver content that will meet the needs of a complex global market that is already distracted by various forms of visual content.

All's not Lost

We have a sound bite addicted society and we're drawn to deciphering meaning through images and buzz words. Fortunately or unfortunately, this will not change. As we drift further into the 21st century we're increasingly amazed at the impact of visual communication in marketing. The IT experts, who are creating new technology to make our lives easier, as well as companies, media consumers, organizations, public figures and other brands are more likely to see an increase in the exploitation of video content in hand held devices at the expense of traditional broadcast media platforms. They must reflect these in their dealings with the public no matter what their personal convictions may be. Advertisers should master open exchanges with consumers before they utilize the results for prospecting and learning their audience. No matter what new technology we choose in the near or distant future trained, I am convinced that media and communication persons, particularly public relations professionals will still be needed to develop content and establish public trust in new and existing products, and to garner public support for the organization, service or brand.

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