

# Critically Discuss the Changes Taking Place in the Sphere of Advertising and Promotion as a Result of the Spread of Digital Media in an International Context

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**Abstract:** The world is changing drastically, which are spreading throughout the social, economic and political activities of the human. One of the significantly affected areas has been in the economic field. Global trade is an important aspect in the world today such that there has been a greater choice for the consumer due to increased competition, and thus, businesses and companies have resulted in advertising and promotions to maintain their brands and reputations. In the past, advertisements and promotions were greatly concentrated on communication mediums such as television and radios. However, with the increase in the spread of digital media in the international arena, there have been introductions of new means that continue to revolutionize advertisement and promotion. Internet advertisement, for example, the interactions of ads and e-commerce websites, has been a great tool that companies and individuals continue to utilize to reach their customers. Therefore, this essay will critically discuss the changes experienced in the field of advertising and promotion as a result of digital media use in the international context, and also these changes are impacting or hindering the critical elements of advertisement and promotion.

**Keyword:** Digital era; Promotion; Advertising; Social media

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## 1. Changes in the field of advertising and promotion

The field of advertisement and promotion has not experienced changes from the abyss but through innovations such as technology. According to Rodger (2003), people who have new ideas and tend to seek more information are innovators. More so, they possess extensive knowledge of mass media, and they have a wide range of networks (Rogers, 2003). It is through the mindsets of innovators that the business world has experienced drastic changes. Markham, Gatlin-Watts, and Bounds (2001), in their analysis on both traditional and internet advertisement methods, realized that extensively business has migrated to the internet world to enhance their sales and market themselves among other potential competitors. Some of the traditional methods such as advertising or promoting products in the newspaper have become obsolete with time as the reading culture has gradually declined as the new generation emerges.<sup>[1]</sup> However, the integral position occupied by the televisions and radio is still there even though millions of people continue to spend their time browsing the internet (Markham, Gatlin-Watts and Bounds, 2001).<sup>[2]</sup>

However, for a business to reach their global markets, they need to have better marketing strategies that drive success into their realm. Lavinsky (2013) notes that new tactics and media have dominated the advertisement and promotion arena and thus raised questions on the validity of the traditional methods. The use of local radio cables, billboards, and TV are no longer effective for international business that needs to address consumers from all parts of the world (Lavinsky, 2013).<sup>[3]</sup> Therefore, the development of the internet and social media has been a breeding ground for better changes that have been evident in recent years and are better situated for international marketing. Some of these changes have been expounded extensively in the next parts.

## 2. Social media and Personalized advertisement

More than 4.5 billion people are active on social media platforms throughout the world, 93% can access the internet through their mobile phones. It is the existence of a rich pool of users that the integrations of personalized and non –personalized ads were introduced (Murphy and Roser, 2018). Personalized ads, initially known as interest-based advertisements, are tools that track users' interest based on the website, applications they have visited. Tran (2017) affirms that personalized ads are an effective tool for any marketers to integrate into their Facebook advertisement. A study conducted by Zawacki (2019) noted that 90% of the consumers are agitated by advertisements and promotions that offer irritating messages irrelevant, and 54% consider such an advertisement irrelevant (Tran, 2017; Zawacki, 2019).<sup>[4]</sup> Therefore, personalized ads tend to improve the users' digital experience, which is why many businesses have integrated them into their business models and have reaped benefits because of positive user engagement. The effect of using personalized ads is that it impacts user decisions on what to purchase. Amazon is a good example of an international business that integrates personalized ads to target and influence consumer's behaviours. Amazon does this through personalized onsite content and emails. A consumer is therefore reminded of a product they checked online or placed in their basket, and thus in the process, Amazon can personalize a user homepage and tailor products based on the customer's searches and purchase records (Bullock, 2018).<sup>[5]</sup>

Personalized ads have been enabled through cookies. McDonald and Cranor (2012) argue that cookies are an effective tool that enables marketers such as Goggles to personalize ads, control the number of time an ad is shown to a person, measurements of ads effectiveness, and disabling of the ads a user chose to rejects (McDonald and Cranor, 2012). Publishers and <sup>third</sup> parties incorporate cookies to track a person and their behaviours online. This means that websites can recognize a person's computers

once they come back and tailor their experiences to save time and improve their browsing experiences. Companies, therefore, tend to use cookies to save on the ads a person has seen or been exposed to. They then personalize the ads based on the browsing habits of a consumer. <sup>[6]</sup>However, Individual need to offer their consent on whether to accept or rejects cookies when visiting any websites (Cahn et al., 2016).<sup>[7]</sup>

### **3. Viral advertising and buzz marketing**

This is another change that has been evident in advertisement and promotion. Viral advertisement or creating a buzz as the name suggests, viral advertisements can capture the interest, sale, and brand through messages that are quick from one person to another through word of mouth (MOM). Viral and buzz marketing has greatly been enabled by the existence of social media and thus a powerful tool that marketers use in promotion and advertisement.<sup>[8]</sup> Viral marketing tends to taps into the curiosity of the users. Notable companies around the world, especially phone manufacturers, tend to utilize consumer curiosity to create viral marketing. A good example was in 2018 when IHOP created a viral campaign when they stated they would be changing their name from IHOP to IHOB. The company did not explain what “b” stood for, but the upcoming week saw active social media engagements as users speculated on what “b” could have meant or the intention of the company. This further escalated confusion and speculation, which attracted a wide range of audiences. Through such a viral and buzz advertisement, IHOP later revealed that the “b” stood for the burger and, in the process, earned \$113 million in media and sales of their burger. This viral marketing campaign was indeed a success (Troitino, 2018)<sup>[9]</sup>

Viral and buzz marketing are an important way to attract a huge customer base through suspense. Vasile, T, et al. (2010) comments that marketing role has drastically changed in recent times as a results of social web. Through the use of viral and buzz marketing, companies can benefit from the low cost of promotion and, more so, enhance the adoption speed of their products to their consumer base. Indeed, viral and buzz marketing helps companies receive international exposure, increased traffic, and more so positive attention to the products, which in turn leads to better and improved sales revenue (Tomîța et al., 2010). This change has greatly been enabled because of social media. <sup>[10]</sup>

Followers are potential market opportunities, which is why many businesses have integrated the use of celebrities or influencers in advertisement and promotion. Influencer advertisement is a new change in advertisement and promotion that incorporates endorsement of individuals who have a huge fan base and are considered experts in their field. Marketers and companies tend to tap into the trust their followers have in them to boost their brands to potential customers. Biaudet (2017) notes that digitalization or increased use of social media has created competition in the advertisement and promotion market, and thus more and more businesses are accommodating the use of influencers to take advantage of the already built-in trust between the influencers and their followers.<sup>[11]</sup> A good example of an Instagram influencer is a football player Cristiano Ronaldo who has a huge follower totalling 254 million-plus. As a result of massive followers, companies use him to advertise and promote their products. He has been involved in advertising and promoting products from Nike. This partnership between Cristiano Ronaldo and Nike is valued at \$1 billion (Badenhausen, 2016). Nowadays, it is easier for the young generation to trust influencer’s perceptions of certain products, and thus this alters their purchasing behaviours. Influencer marketing has taken control of most of the online marketing as the company’s rushes to contract people with a huge follower on Instagram, YouTube, Tik Tok, and Facebook to market their products. <sup>[12]</sup>

Digital media around the world offers business a platform where they can advertise and promote brands, services, and products through various digital channels the business has created and thus can interact with their followers and customers. Rowley (2008) argues that digital content marketing is an important approach as it seeks to address customer value in a digital marketplace. It involves a series of creative and distributions of important, interesting, and consistent content that aims to attract the audience (Rowley, 2008).<sup>[13]</sup> Some of these methods are particularly concentrated in the promotion of a new product. Multinational corporations tend to use their huge following in social media to channel their campaigns to market their products. A good example has been Coca-Cola through its numerous campaigns that attract huge sales and customer base. In 2014 Coca-Cola launched an innovative marketing technique which was named the “Share a Coke” campaign. Share a Coke campaign followed a personalization strategy in which coke bottles were replaced by names of their customers, and thus customers were motivated to find a bottle that had their names in it. (Nguyen and Nguyen, 2015). <sup>[14]</sup>After finding the bottle, customers were also encouraged to share the coke with friends and engage in a social media campaign to tweet the hashtag #shareaCoke. The aftermath of this digital content campaign saw 500,000 photos being shared online, and in countries such as Australia, the coke consumption increased by 7%. In the United States, where the consumption of coke had gone down for more than a decade, the “Share a Coke” campaign was able to boost coke consumption by 2% (Donoghue, 2015). Advertisement and promotion of the products do not only involve the direct sales of the product in the media but also customer engagement. <sup>[15]</sup> Beckers, Van Doorn, and Verhoef (2017) argue that creating an active engagement between consumers and the company can be a strong substitute for advertisement. A good example is McDonald’s Question Time, which aimed to answer questions the consumer had about their product (Beckers, Van Doorn, and Verhoef, 2017). Therefore, it is evident that digital content is also an important tool used in promotion and advertisements. <sup>[16]</sup>

### **4. Changes brought by digital media to advertising and promotion**

It is evident from the above discussion on changes brought by digital media in advertisement and promotion that, indeed, the world of promotion and advertisement has been affected or altered altogether. The digital age has altered almost everything, even the traditional methods of advertisement, which, even though they are still in use, are not as famous as they used. One element of advertisement that has been impacted greatly by the digital age has been the target audience. The audience is the sole reason why companies make ads since they want to attract them. Southgate (2017) confirms that the digital age has been greatly influenced by generation z, especially due to their modern taste and preferences (Southgate, 2017). <sup>[17]</sup>In any promotion, there exist five promotional mix elements that have been traditionally followed. Mangold and Faulds (2009) note these promotional mixes as advertising, public relations, direct marketing, personal selling, and sales promotion. However, it is quite evident that some promotional mix such as

personal selling has been hindered or bypassed by the digital age. Personal selling has not been fully integrated due to the social media platforms offering an online platform rather than a personal one. <sup>[18]</sup>Even though this element has been hindered, it has also been positively improved since internet-based social media can enable a salesperson to communicate with thousands of people around the world while answering questions regarding the company's products and services (Mangold and Faulds, 2009). In a clear manner, the digital age has indeed enhanced customer engagement than the traditional elements of personal sales. However, it is worth noting that digital marketing has not really disrupted the traditional marketing channels; but instead, it offers an avenue where new channels can be integrated and messages delivered to the intended audiences. These channels include social media platforms such as YouTube and other forms of advertisement such as using influencers.<sup>[19]</sup>

Lastly, marketers and companies around the world can utilize any delivery methods to reach their target audience. However, the digital age delivery methods such as cookies and personalized ads can be manipulated by the 3<sup>rd</sup> parties to collect personal information about the user. The traditional marketing elements did not experience privacy breaches (Tucker, 2013). In a nutshell, it is evident that the digital age has indeed impacted some elements of advertisement and promotion negatively. Others like personal sales have been altered, but all in all, these are changes, and they have their better side and drawbacks.<sup>[20]</sup>

## 5. Conclusion

The world of advertisement and promotion is changing. New changes are being experienced as a result of the digital age. Social media has brought with it more than 4 billion users and marketers can channel new innovations. One of the changes has been the issue of personalized ads, which track user's behaviour in an app and personalize their experience with their taste and preference and thus make their buying easier. <sup>[21]</sup>More so, cookies have been integral tools that can recognize a person's interaction with an app and thus help to tailor ads, disabling them, and more so, analyzing the effectiveness of an ad. More so, the viral and buzz advertisement has increased recently as marketers tap into customer curiosity and suspense in their product and letting that suspense be an important tool that helps bring traffic and market their product. Besides, influencer marketing has also been a change that is taking advantage of the trust followers have in celebrities, bloggers, and people with a huge fan base. By using their platforms, companies can reach millions of audiences that would have been otherwise challenging if traditional methods were applied. As seen in the essay, some like persona sales have been affected while at the same time being improved on an online avenue. All in all, these changes will take an important place in international marketing and will shape how companies prevail under the existing competition and, more so, whether businesses are susceptible to alter their operating models and integrating new and better advertisement and promotions ways.

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