

An overview of website promotional strategies

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ABSTRACT

The present paper discusses about the website promotion and its strategies. A thorough literature survey was conducted in which various strategies used for promotion of any product or service were identified. Based on the nature they were categorized into three categories viz., online promotional strategy, offline promotional strategy, miscellaneous strategy. Promotion of a website can be an online and offline activity. Online promotion includes search engine visibility, brand visibility and getting high public relation links from other sites etc. Offline means using traditional media such as print and broadcast or speaking at conferences, etc. Each type of promotional strategies has its merits and demerits. One has to choose deliberately which strategy or combinations of strategy have to be implemented.

Keywords: website promotion, online marketing, offline marketing,

Promotions refer to the entire set of activities, which communicate the product, or service to the user. The idea is to make people aware, attract and induce to use the service in preference over others. The possible objectives of marketing promotions include building awareness, creating interest, providing information, stimulating demand, and reinforcing the brand. Many people believe if they build a portal or site someone will find it and their website will be at number one position all over the internet. It does not happen automatically and overnight. In order to rank at first position and to reach as many people as possible one need to promote the web portal then only people will know about its existence; otherwise all the hard work of developing web portal or site will go into vain. Web portal promotion should be the continuing process of webmasters to promote and bring more visitors to a portal. One's efforts and hard work will not produce results, unless one can attract targeted traffic to the web portal.

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Website promotional strategies

Website promotional strategies are the deliberately planned activities of web portal owner to make his site/portal visible in the Google's top ten Search Engine Result Pages (SERPs) and make its target audience aware of its presence over the internet. Webmaster has to go through various strategies available to him and select suitable one for his web portal's promotion so that he will be able to attract maximum traffic.

There are various types of promotional strategies which one can use to promote his/her products or services. Basically these promotional strategies were divided into two broad categories online and offline mode. Online mode includes all strategies which require online presence or internet connectivity to operate and offline mode includes all those strategies which do not require internet connection or somewhat traditional promotional strategies [1]. Examples for online promotional strategies include email marketing, e newsletters, search engine marketing, pay per click, social media marketing etc. Offline promotion refers to using communications tools such as advertising and PR delivered by traditional media such as TV, radio and print in order to direct visitors to an online presence. Keeping in view the pros and consequences, the promotional strategies are to be chosen.

Promotion of a website can be an online and offline activity. Online promotion includes search engine visibility, brand visibility and getting high public relation links from other sites etc. Offline means using traditional media such as print and broadcast or speaking at conferences, etc. Online, offline and other miscellaneous strategies which were used to increase the different categories of traffic i.e. visitors, users and contributors to a portal were summarized here under.

1. Online promotional strategies

Online marketing, which is also called internet marketing or online advertising, is like a tool, strategy or method of getting the company name out to the public [2]. The advertisements can take many different forms and some strategies focus on subtle messages rather than clear-cut advertisements.

i) Search Engine Optimization

Research suggests that most online users who look for a product or service via search engine will look no further than the first three pages of the links that come up during a search. That means if company's web page isn't somewhere in the first three pages, it will lose the opportunity to attract many hurried customers. Search engine marketing uses keyword placement on site as well as crawlers or spiders to guide searchers to site by getting in the first three pages of links. The search engines seem to be one of the most dynamic and newest online promotion channels, as they are a prime source for getting more and more online customers [3,4]. SEO is a structured approach used to increase the position of a company or its products/ services in search engine's natural or organic results listings for selected keywords/ phrases. In simple words, SEO is method of archiving higher ranking and faster indexing in different search engines. The term organic search refers to results from a keyword or key phrase search. Thus, the higher ranking websites have higher chance of getting traffic from an organic search [5].

ii) Pay Per Click

Pay Per Click (PPC) advertising is different, from other online in terms of viewing. The advertisement could be seen thousands of times by plenty of different people, but unless someone actually clicks on it, even a cent won't be paid for the privilege. It is sometimes referred to as paid search advertising or search marketing, PPC is a method of online advertising used by internet search engines, networks and content sites, such as blogs, in which businesses can display ads that appear alongside the results of internet searches [6].

PPC is a relevant text ad with link to a company page, which was displayed when the users of a search engine types a specific phrase. The search engines, for example Google, only get paid when internet users click on any link under sponsored links category on the right hand side of search result page. Pay per click advertising has made other forms of online advertising, such as CPM, banners and classified ads, pale in comparison. While they still have their place, it is possible to spend money on these types of adverts and not see a single response in exchange.

iii) Banner advertisement

A banner advertisement is a form of a graphic image that runs across the top of an internet web page or in a margin or other space reserved for ads. Banner ads are usually GIF images. Different types of banners can be created, such as static, animated or interactive banner. Many consumers find banner advertising intrusive and annoying. Banners are now commonplace on the internet and new formats, such as video ads are needed to draw attention and generate clicks. Layer and leader boards in contrast have a high reminder potential even beyond the web.

iv) Link Exchange

Link exchange is getting website put on the links of related websites. Moreover, link building is an extremely important part of SEO [7]. The search engines will look at the amount of links that come into the site as well as the status of the sites that linked to the promoting site, the amount of traffic those sites get. Although the search engines look more favorably on links that are not reciprocal, exchanging links is a great place for promotion of websites. But one should obtain permission from the host to get linked. However many sites will include link for free and there are even sites which can distribute link on a massive scale. It is a free form of advertising. The major task in this strategy is finding for perfect matching website to link. Linking to such sites is a key way to attract new visitors and keep traffic coming.

v) Email marketing

Email marketing is a form of direct marketing that uses electronic mail as a means of communicating commercial or fundraising messages to an audience. Over half of all internet users check or send email on a typical day. Advertisers can reach substantial numbers of email subscribers who have opted in to receive email communications on subjects of interest to them. It allows marketers to reach out to consumers with personalized, relevant, dynamic messages. However there is a disadvantage, due to rejection/spam rate of the emails by the consumers' email program, negatively affecting the delivery rate of the emails. This has somewhat been eliminated with the idea of "Opt-in" emailing, where the consumer consents to receiving the emails and therefore eliminates the idea of receiving unsolicited emails. Email marketing has become an essential tool for business ever since the introduction of the internet to the world; however some campaigns make it through to inboxes. To make the audience to read it, he proposed a mnemonic **CRITICAL** to follow while designing email template- Creative, Relevance, Incentive, Timing, Integration, Copy, Attribute and landing page [8].

vi) Social Media Marketing

Social media marketing (SMM) is a process of gaining website traffic or attention through social media sites. Social media marketing programs usually centered on efforts to create content that attracts attention and encourages readers to share it with their social networks [9]. The base for any media to succeed is to make conversation impactful. SMM is the new method of marketing, which is based on the common principle of word of mouth. SMM is the latest innovation in the marketing world [10].

An internet analytics company found that India is the world's 7th largest internet market growing at 11.2%. It also found some other interesting facts like, 21 million people in India visit social media sites regularly, which is 60.3% of the total active Indian internet audience and more than 90% of Indian online users belong to 18 -45 age group, which has high purchase power and high disposable income. A typical social media site visitor in India spends 110.4 minutes on the site and makes 10.4 visits per month to a social network. In a nutshell, the social media websites in India are growing by almost 100% year after year, due to tremendous growth in social media sites [11].

vii) Interruption marketing

The term interruption marketing describe tactics that work only if they interrupt the audience to get their attention [12]. The calls that interrupt while busy with work, the print ad in morning newspaper, or the flashy booth at a tradeshow are the best examples. In each example, the marketer knows the buyer doesn't want to pay attention to the advertisement. But his job is to create a call script, ad copy, or booth gimmick that will make people pay attention. Later he promoted concept of permissive marketing in which permission of audience has been taken to send messages. Some of the common forms of interruption marketing include TV/Radio advertisements, print advertising, E-mail spam, direct Mail, and telemarketing. All the other marketers are also fighting to get the buyer's attention, and so the battle escalates. The result is a "tragedy of the commons" – when everyone tries to get the customer's attention, the customer tunes it all out and nobody wins [13].

viii) Online Classifieds

Online classifieds were first introduced in USA in the 1990s, at the time when internet usage had started becoming more popular. The drive behind this emergence was that traditional offline classifieds were perceived to be cash cows for print publications all over the world, so it was prudent to extend the concept wider. In many other parts of the world, the most popular sections in the online classifieds are recruitment, automobiles, real estate, education and other miscellaneous ads. Online advertising has three primary categories, namely search advertising, display advertising and classified. Classified portals cater to various categories like job listings, real estate listings, automotive listings, yellow pages and some even cater to multiple categories [14].

2. Offline promotional strategies

With the rise in popularity of online marketing, many proven offline methods are simply forgotten when marketing campaigns are planned. Of course, online marketing is hugely important in today's Internet-connected world, but offline engagement with customers still has unique and distinct value that shouldn't be forgotten [15].

i) Word of Mouth Marketing

Social Software Developer Company conducted a study and revealed that word of mouth marketing is, at its heart, using happy customers to promote business [16]. The aim in word of mouth marketing is to provide customers with such an unbelievably amazing, life-affirming product or service that they can't help but share their experience with friends, family, co-workers, and the random dude who sits at the bus stop every day with his exotic parrot. WOM is an effective method of promotion that creates a highly qualified prospect to buy product or service. WOM is a social phenomenon concerning people of different ages. It also spreads to elder people that are hardly reached online. The most obvious free advertising is word of mouth. "You tell everyone you see and everyone you know about your product or service", is the premise of this strategy. If one has a quality product or service which can generate real excitement, this form of advertising can be quite effective [17].

ii) URL on Stationery, visiting cards, and Literature

Another offline format of promoting website can be through mentioning website address or URL address on various stationeries, pamphlets, folders, visiting cards, flyers, calendar etc.

Flyer are best for small scale marketing, or when have a small region to cover. Further it is comparatively a cheap way to get information out to a large number of people [18]. Distributing pamphlets wouldn't cost much and one can mention website's URL and Facebook Page Link so that people could visit store online. So, that there will be two benefits with single action- people would know about the product and service as well as online address gets promoted [19]. All business cards, stationery, brochures, and literature should contain company's URL, but should be printed with adequate clarity [20].

iii) Newspaper

With more and more businesses relying solely on the internet for their advertising needs, the decline of print publication can actually be used as a marketing advantage. There is something about print that gives a sense of legitimacy. The saturation of pop ups and banner ads on the web can be overwhelming and the fear of spam and viruses is enough make people weary of clicking. There is no imminent danger in a print ad. Advertising in local newspaper would cost higher as compared to online strategies but the chances of return of investment is higher. But advertising in weekly newspaper would be economical so one can make an inquiry and select the best one. Research evidenced that at least four people browse through a printed magazine/newspaper in its life time. The print media which includes newspapers, journals and magazines, as another avenue where URL could be exposed for everyone to see. It's best first to start advertising your products, services and URL in local newspapers and then if successful continue onto regional and national publications [21].

iv) Short Message Service Marketing

SMS is mobile marketing service, where the target audience is communicated short, but crisp messages. Mobile marketing had a great importance in increasing the interactivity between the consumers and their favorite brands [22]. It changed the way of communication between the customers and the companies being intimate, immediate, intelligent and innovative. Text messaging is an inexpensive mode of communication that can be easily repeated; repetition leads to a greater change in knowledge and behavior [23]. A link could lead to a facebook page, a twitter account, or a blog where the participants or patients can comfortably and anonymously ask questions, post their concerns, and discuss issues among people with similar issues. Therefore, a text message intervention can reach out to a variety of populations due to the fact that the average person is already subscribed to a wireless network and a text message is not invasive or annoying.

v) Television

Television is always a favorite medium for all the companies who wish to become a brand. It is a very popular medium of entertainment and has always been favorite for audiences of every age group. Television may well appear to be financially out of reach of all but the biggest websites with very large advertising budgets. In fact, the local cable television advertising is much more feasible and effective for the more ordinary website. This type of advertising appears to be very reasonably priced and is particularly effective if product or service is oriented toward a specific geographic target market. They can simply advertise company and URL on a local channel.

vi) Radio

Radio advertising can be very effective in advertising URL, provided if domain name is short, catchy and easy to remember. Creative webmasters could develop short scripts themselves whereby their ad incorporates their slogan which in turn incorporates the benefits of visiting their URL. Radio advertising as a good option, if business is aimed at certain social group like teenagers, housewives, drivers, etc. This is also a relatively inexpensive way of delivering the message to a certain community or locality [24].

vii) Outdoor advertising

Outdoor advertising with billboards, posters, etc. are effective way of reaching out to a certain neighborhood [25]. Since the exposure rate of billboards is very high, people often take the same route to work, it is a great medium to create brand recognition. Poster advertising is highly prominent and does not require the consumer to do anything to access it. At the same time, most people regard it as less intrusive than other methods of promotion. Indeed, a lot of outdoor advertising engages the consumer, providing color, humor and insight. Advertising on buses, trains, trams, taxis and at airports are all highly visible. One of the key advantages of these positions is that they can put the advert in front of a captive audience.

viii) Press releases

Press releases or news releases sometimes known are newsworthy stories about the business that is send to various sections of the media. Newsworthy stories are which readers of the media publications might be interested in. If the journalist reads and likes them, he or she may publish it or some of its contents in his or her publication. If this happens it is an achievement, because the public in general are much more responsive to a news story than a plain advertisement. The main idea of a press release is to grab attention from a news editor so that he writes a story on the subject. When promoting a company, business cards can be an effective form of marketing that improves the legitimacy of your company, especially if the card stands out. The design of the card quickly communicates what your company is about, and piques the interest of people who see it [26]. Business cards are relatively inexpensive, making them a cost effective marketing tool for small businesses on a tight budget [27]. For starters, logo must be simple and symbolic to company's services and the industry that is associated with. Placing URL and email is a must. People will be searching for a website where to look for more information about business and also for an email if they want to contact.

3. Miscellaneous promotional strategies

The definition of miscellaneous is people or things that are varied or mixed and cannot easily be categorized or grouped. Certain promotion strategies which neither online nor offline are categorized as miscellaneous.

i) Promotional Items

Give away items such as pens, coffee mugs, key chains, coasters, calendars, sticky notes, etc. should have company logo and web address [28]. Apart from building brand, it works as a daily reminder for users of these items.

ii) Quiz

Quiz is one means of keeping audience on the website for a long time productively [29]. Unlike static content like a blog post, quizzes encourage visitors to engage on site. The main engagement lies in taking the quiz. Around 96 % of users complete sponsored quizzes, proving that this engagement is quality time spent on site [30]. Quizzes encourages commenting, decreases the bounce rate by keeping visitors on the site longer and due to increased time on site, increased chance of clicking on other content.

iii) Incentives

Coupons, exclusive memberships, e-books etc., are crowd sourcing tactics and these are all can be miscellaneous promotional strategies [31]. Creating a membership package for best customers or users, result in great landing page for signing up.

Conclusion

Hence each type of promotional strategies has its merits and demerits. One has to choose deliberately which strategy or combinations of strategy have to be implemented. Advantages of online promotion include results of the campaign or marketing much more measurable. Data and results are available immediately through analytics software, whether paid or free tools. The software has the ability to drill down into demographics to accurately. Whereas it is difficult to access reach of offline strategies until and unless website does not ask the visitor about source of information of website. But offline strategies produce more effective results, such as word of mouth and visiting cards.

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