EXPLORING INDIA'S DIGITAL MARKETING LANDSCAPE

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Introduction

For startups and young companies with limited marketing budgets, digital marketing is perhaps the only cost-effective method to get their message out there and build a consumer base. Barriers to entry and scaling up are miniscule compared to traditional media. In short – if it's done right, you can achieve a whole lot on a limited budget, which means it has levelled the playing field between big and small companies. The challenge, however, is knowing how to do it right.

The space itself, at least in India, is relatively young, so there are limited "role models" to emulate. Add to that the different strategies that work (or don't) for B2B and B2C firms, rapidly evolving technologies and methodologies, and it is only natural that there is no single path that startups can take to achieve complete success with their digital marketing strategies.

For many young companies trying digital marketing for the first time, it is much like the elephant examined by six men in the dark – one states that an elephant is like a rope because it has held the animal's tail. Another thinks it is like a tree branch because it has felt the elephant's trunk. Others liken it to a fan (ears), or a wall (torso), or a plough (tusks).

For the time being, digital marketing faces a deficit of practical, usable information, clear communication of learnings, the right talent, and the need to acknowledge different perspectives.

The Kstart Digital Marketing Summit, held on 13 May 2016, had over 100 attendees trying to understand these problems better and exploring ways to fix them. Expert speakers included Rajan Anandan, VP & MD of Google Southeast Asia and India; Jan Metzger, MD & Head of APAC Telecommunications, Media & Technology, Citi Corporate & Investment Banking; Neeraj Kakkar, Co-founder, Paper Boat; Ram Seshadri, Director – Solution Consulting, India, Adobe; Arjun Kolady, Head of E-commerce, Local, and Travel, Facebook India; Sanjay Gupta, Chief Marketing Officer, Urban Ladder; and Arunabh Kumar, Founder & Group CEO, The Viral Fever & TVF Media Labs. Their sessions covered the entire gamut of challenges dotting the landscape and provided the audience an insider's view into disruptive digital marketing strategies.

The Digital Marketing Survey, launched at the event, was aimed at taking the discussion to the larger startup ecosystem and exploring their perceptions, preferences and challenges. What is encouraging is our respondents' belief that digital will go mainstream (and there is no doubt it will). At the same time, startups – and indeed large companies too – are still trying to figure out what works best in terms of budgets, methods, and metrics to use to measure effectiveness. From the summit and the survey findings, one thing is clear: everybody wants to know how best to leverage digital marketing methods. But nobody is quite sure how that will happen. The destination is clear; the route is not.

The articles that follow, authored by digital marketing experts and practitioners, aim to provide some guidance on how best to leverage digital marketing and what's in store in this rapidly evolving landscape.

After all, the internet is the biggest disrupter of our age, and there is no reason why digital marketing will not disrupt traditional marketing just as extensively.

What the survey results tell us

FOR STARTUPS, digital marketing is a more viable option than traditional media because even with a small budget, businesses can test the effectiveness of their marketing strategy, control costs, and reach out to targeted prospects. It's why every type of business (big and small, old and new) is recognising the importance of leveraging digital marketing. Not surprising then, that the digital media industry is growing at 40% y/y growth when other industries are struggling at 5% or 6%.
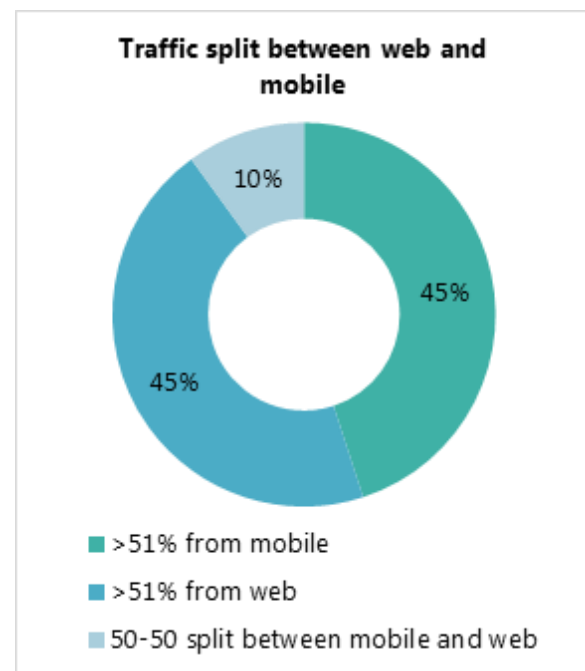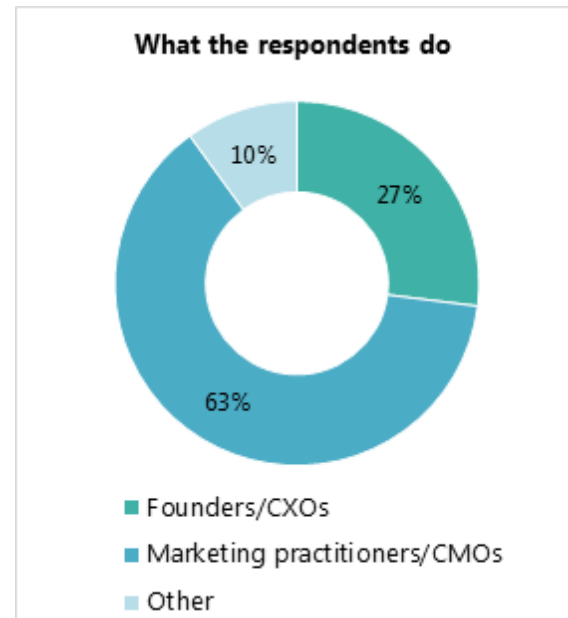
According to [Digital India 2016](#), a report by Octane Research, 80% of Indian marketers believe that integrated campaigns (email, social, and mobile) can result in moderate-to-significant increases in conversion rates. And for 58% of marketers, customer acquisition is the primary focus area for this year.

So depending on what a startup wants to achieve, its digital strategy can involve a zillion permutations and combinations across search engine optimisation (SEO), integrated marketing, content marketing, lead nurturing, etc. This means businesses need a digital marketing strategy that is in sync with ever-evolving trends and the changing needs of the organisation, making it all the more challenging.

Against this backdrop, the **Kstart Survey on Digital Marketing** was rolled out with the intention of trying to understand what India's startups are looking to achieve via digital marketing, what they struggle with, and why, and what might be the way forward.

The Kstart Survey on Digital Marketing

The survey, aimed at marketing professionals in the startup ecosystem, received 129 responses; 63% of responses came from marketing and digital marketing practitioners and CMOs, while 27% came from founders/co-founders and CXOs.

What the respondents do

- 27% Founders/CXOs
- 63% Marketing practitioners/CMOs
- 10% Other

Traffic split between web and mobile

- 45% >51% from mobile
- 45% >51% from web
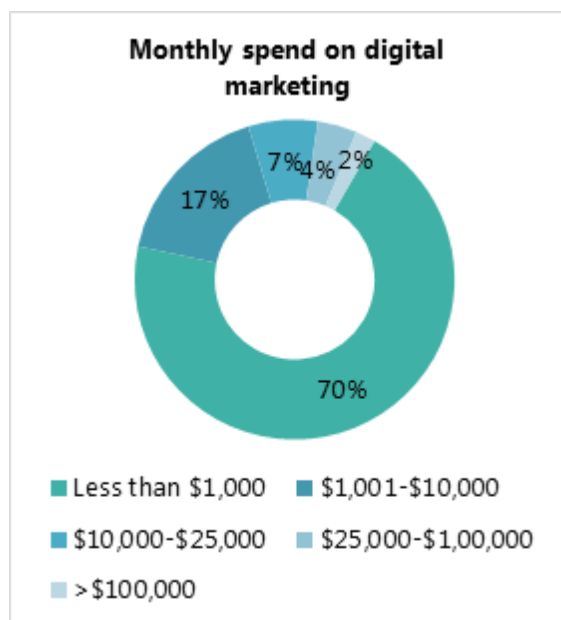- 10% 50-50 split between mobile and web

Among those surveyed, 45% said that >51% of their traffic comes from mobile, while an equal number said that >51% of their traffic comes from the web. About 10% said their online traffic was equally split between mobile and web.

Digital marketing spend

With increasing mobile and internet penetration and the rise of a tech-savvy generation of consumers, digital media is seen as a potent tool to disseminate information and engage a target audience. Even though digital marketing is still in a nascent stage, both large and small organisations are looking to execute digital marketing campaigns with greater intensity.
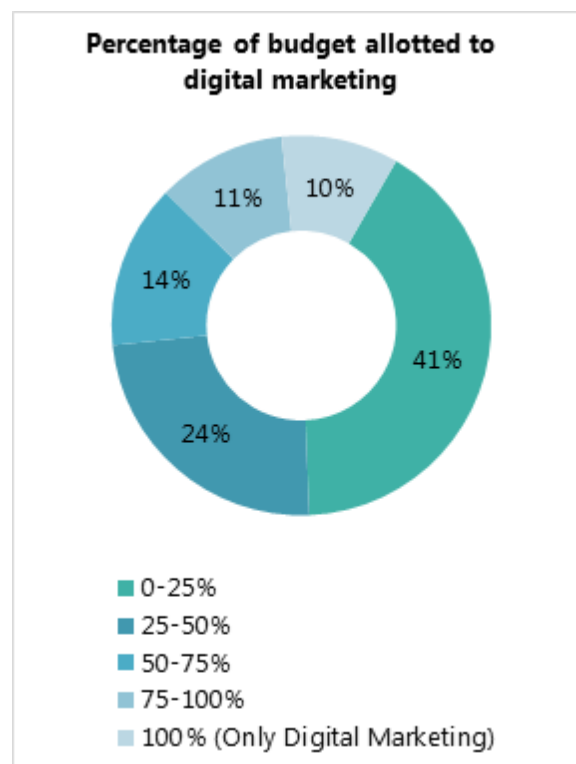
Nearly 70% of our respondents still spend less than $1,000 per month on digital marketing. Only about 16% spend between $1,000 and $10,000 a month, and not surprisingly, just 2% spend over $100,000, each month.

Monthly spend on digital marketing

This is likely to change, though. Digital marketing experts and numerous market reports expect that digital marketing spend, on average, will account for up to 21% of their total marketing spend in the Indian market during 2016. The survey findings echoed this sentiment. About 57% of respondents indicated that their digital marketing budget would go up by at least 25% next year: 42% of respondents said their budget was likely to increase by 25%, while 15% felt it could go up by 50%. About 31% (not an insignificant number) believed that the hike would be limited to 10%.

According to 41% respondents, digital marketing accounts for one-fourth of their total marketing spend. Another 24% said that digital marketing spends accounted for 25% to 50% of their total marketing budget.

It is interesting to note that just 10% said their marketing spend was digital-only, indicating that reliance on other traditional media for marketing continues.

Percentage of budget allotted to digital marketing

Asked to rank in order of spend on digital marketing, predictably enough, 30% of respondents ranked Google as their top spend, followed closely by Facebook (27%), with ad networks a distant third (19%). This reflects a trend discovered in a recent RBC Capital report surveying 2,000 top marketers, which found that 31% planned to spend more than 30% of their budgets on Google ads because it still gives the best return on investment (ROI) compared to other platforms. Here too, Facebook finished a close second.

This doesn't come as a surprise, with people across generations – from the millennial consumers to the octogenarian – engaging on smartphones and using e-gadgets for daily communication and networking. From information to opinion to shopping, digital

media is becoming the first choice for a large section of the population in India today. And this development is what is driving the spend

Spend on digital marketing

- Ad networks 19%
- Email 11%
- Google 30%
- Facebook 27%
- LinkedIn 7%
- Twitter 6%

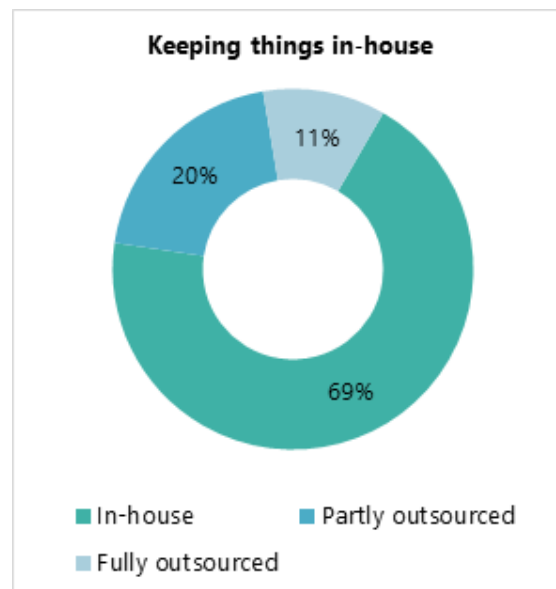on digital marketing and companies' commitment to making it work.

To outsource or not to outsource – that is (still) the question

Much like IT a couple of decades ago, business owners are experimenting with figuring out what mode works best with digital marketing. Whether and when to outsource, or rely on in-house talent, are questions that organisations continue to ask. And helping to reach a decision are key factors such as cost and quality of talent.
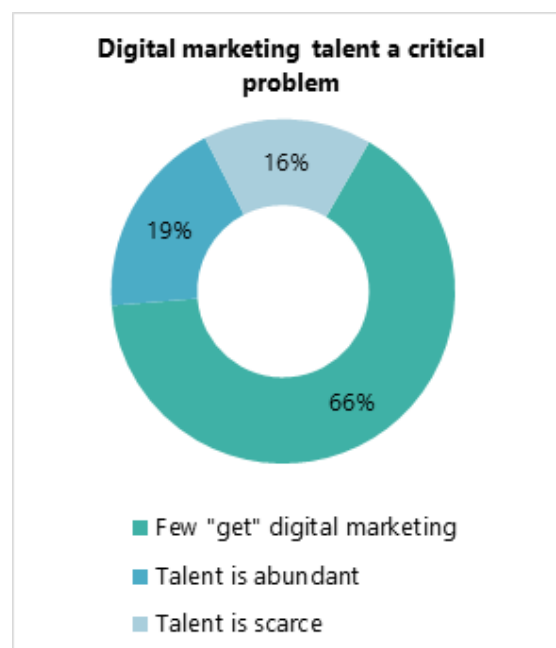
An additional factor that comes into play is: what, or how much, to outsource? While there are certain 'always-on' digital marketing activities – content marketing, SEO, social media, email-related marketing – that need ongoing visibility and engagement, there are others that are specialised activities and are needed only for a short burst, such as display advertising, and native video ads.

Depending on what suits their business needs, organisations opt for one of the three options: keeping everything in-house, outsourcing some activities, or fully outsourcing the execution of their digital marketing strategy.

A majority of respondents (69%) said they manage their digital marketing activities in-house, with only 11% completely outsourcing it and 20% outsourcing partly.

Keeping things in-house

- In-house 69%
- Partly outsourced 20%
- Fully outsourced 11%

While the majority were keen on working with in-house talent, 66% of respondents believed that finding good talent was a major bottleneck, because "very few people 'get' digital marketing". Nearly 16% felt there wasn't enough talent in the market, though 19% felt otherwise.

Digital marketing talent a critical problem

- Few "get" digital marketing 66%
- Talent is abundant 19%
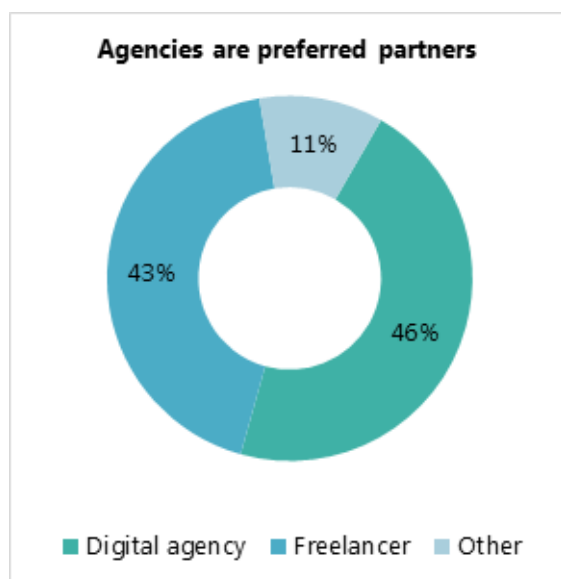- Talent is scarce 16%

Among those who keep digital marketing in-house, 45% of respondents said their companies had digital marketing teams of 2-5

people, while 43% said they had just one person in this role. This indicates companies' keenness on having at least one expert on board who understands the brand's vision, strength, immediate goals, and can help voice it through marketing outreach campaigns, irrespective of whether they are designed and executed by in-house or external teams.

Digital agencies vs freelancers

Another question that organisations continue to grapple with regarding ideating and executing digital media campaigns, is whether to outsource it to the big agencies or to freelancers. The survey findings make it clear that the jury is still out on that one. Survey results showed that 46% work with digital agencies to execute their marketing strategies, and an almost equal number (43%) work with freelancers.

Agencies are preferred partners

11%
43%
46%

■ Digital agency ■ Freelancer ■ Other

While digital agencies' advantage is that they have worked with different brands, stayed on top of industry trends, know the ins-and-outs of the marketing business, and have the industry connections to take the campaign to success, they also come at a steep cost. Agencies often charge monthly retainer fees in addition to the project cost if it is for an extended period of time.

On the other hand, freelancers who come with industry experience and insights service clients on a project-based fee model, a key advantage

for organisations looking at executing a marketing campaign without burning huge amounts of cash. However, one drawback here is that it sometimes gets difficult to execute a 360-degree digital marketing campaign using only freelancers as they may not always have the connections or the network needed to execute it exactly the way an organisation needs. Another key difference is that agencies can boast successful campaigns for big names with national and international coverage, while freelancers often work with startups and small- and medium-scale businesses focused on hyperlocal or local markets.

Either way, 55% of respondents said they were completely satisfied with the services provided by agencies, while 45% said they were not. And yet, moving everything in-house is not an option for many. To be able to keep everything in-house, a company needs to have a strategy as well as programme planning and execution capabilities in-house. If it doesn't, and most startups do not, it would need to outsource to an agency.

Asked to describe what digital media service providers and agencies could do better, most respondents zeroed in on the following:

1. Provide clear KPIs and how to measure them proactively

2. Ensure a better ROI (without diluting the brand)

3. Gain a better understanding of the client's needs/the big picture, including devising strategies based on what stage a company is at

4. Improve communication and partnership with clients in implementing the strategy

Traditional vs new-age media

In an age when people use Twitter rather than the newspaper for the latest updates, digital media is overpowering traditional media in many ways. Things are no different when it comes to marketing, where businesses are leveraging the advantage of new-age media solutions to enhance business impact and build their brand. Today, paid media (e.g. TV, radio

or print commercials) are not seen as being on par with earned media (e.g. third-party blog posts, etc.) or owned media (e.g. company websites). A solid 61% of respondents felt traditional media such as the TV had no place in a digital marketing strategy, while 23% felt it was 'somewhat important' and only 16% felt it was 'very important'. Email, on the other hand, is seen as a critical part of digital marketing, with 40% rating it as 'very important' and another 45% rating it as 'somewhat important'. Email marketing, then, seems alive and well despite the fact that Gmail segregates promotional content out of the primary inbox, taking the audience one step further away from the brand.

Given the success of digital and social media platforms, these media are no longer considered 'path-breaking'; rather, they are now seen as 'standard' marketing channels. So it wasn't surprising – when asked about what role traditional marketing media would play in the future – nearly 30% of our respondents said that its influence would dwindle. One went as far as saying that traditional marketing would survive only "as a historical reference". While the thought is no doubt anchored in optimism, it does contrast with the finding that a majority of our respondents are still spending <$1,000 per month on digital marketing.
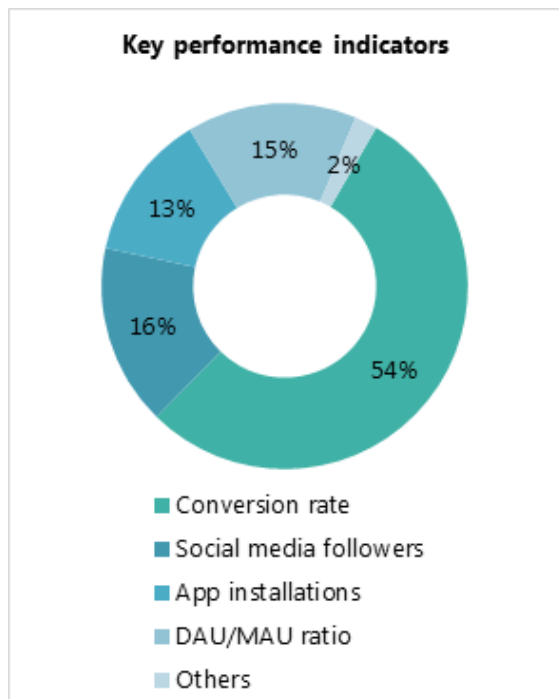
Exuberance aside, it is still far too early to start scripting a eulogy for traditional marketing methods, especially in India, where internet penetration remains low (<35%) despite the fact that we now have the world's second-largest population of internet users.

A PWC report estimated that while internet advertising in India is expected to grow at a compounded annual growth rate of 20% over 2014-2018 to an impressive $862 million, TV advertising (growing at 12.8% and slated to hit $5 billion) is 6x as big. Newspaper advertising in India too is expected to grow 7.7% to $3.6 billion, 4x more than digital.

Many of our respondents were in sync with these trends. Several said that while expenditure on traditional media would decline, it would remain complementary to digital. Others pointed out that as long as broadband penetration in India remains low, digital marketing would only serve as a supplement to traditional marketing. Apart from reaching offline audiences, many respondents felt that traditional methods would still have a key role to play in reaching audiences that do not rely only on online methods in all aspects of their life.

Digital marketing performance indicators

There are at least 50+ key performance indicators (KPIs) that are used to measure the success of digital marketing campaigns, ranging from search engine rankings and conversion rates to opt-in registrations and cost of customer acquisition. These KPIs help to see the larger picture and gauge the effectiveness of a digital marketing strategy. KPIs also help to understand aspects such as brand engagement, influencer response, sales, and related factors, and ensure that the company's investment isn't going down the drain.

Key performance indicators

- Conversion rate
- Social media followers
- App installations
- DAU/MAU ratio
- Others

Tracking the **right** KPIs is as important as tracking KPIs to achieve what you want, or making timely changes to your strategy.
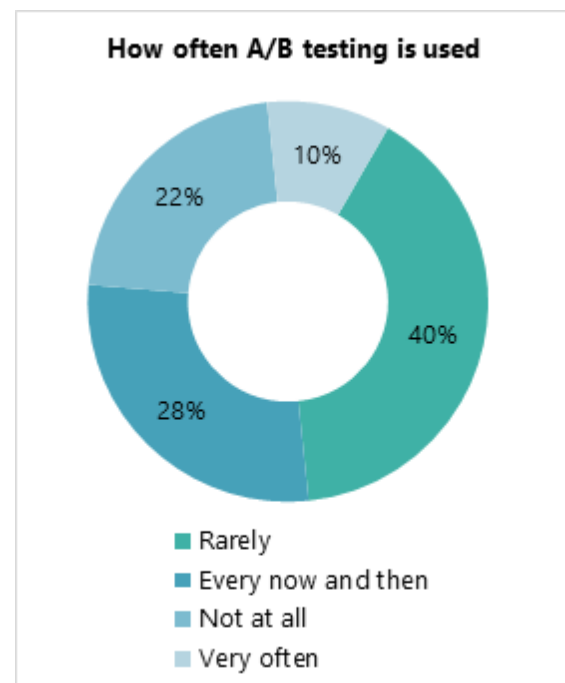
For 54% of respondents, 'conversion rate' was the top KPI in consideration. The number of visitors to the website who action the conversion they require – ranging from buying a product to signing up for their programme – was heralded as the single-most important KPI. This was followed by social media followers, daily active users/monthly active users (DAU/MAU) ratio (15%). Only 13% rated app installations as the most important KPI.

A/B testing and cohort analysis

Given that the majority of our respondents consider conversion rates as their top KPI, it was suprising to see that most of them rarely use techniques involving testing and analysis to improve these rates.
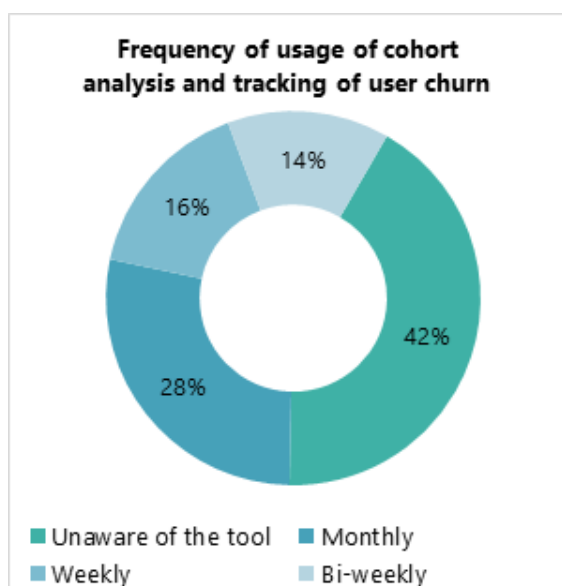
A/B testing, for instance, seems misunderstood or isn't well known enough. (A/B testing involves comparing two versions of a web page to see which performs better. The two web pages are compared by showing the two variants to similar visitors at the same time, and the one that has a better conversion rate is the winner.)

It has been associated with descriptions such as 'must-have digital marketing tool', 'a fantastic method.', etc. Its proponents say it gives marketers the information they need to make accurate, data-driven decisions. However, it would seem that A/B testing isn't fully understood, and it does require marketers to make the effort to run the test, due to which its adoption in India remains limited. Many think it is an expensive proposition (though free tools are available). At any rate, 22% of respondents said they **never** use A/B testing, while 40% said they 'rarely' used it, and 28% said they use it every now and then. Only 10% said they carry out A/B testing very often.

How often A/B testing is used

- Rarely
- Every now and then
- Not at all
- Very often

Another technique that is not leveraged enough is cohort analysis. Why is it important? Well, depending on what your KPIs are, cohort analysis helps companies gain critical insights from data. What it does is break down users into related groups (i.e. cohorts) for analysis. This, in turn, shows how user behaviour patterns evolve over time, thus providing insights into customer retention and the site's overall performance.
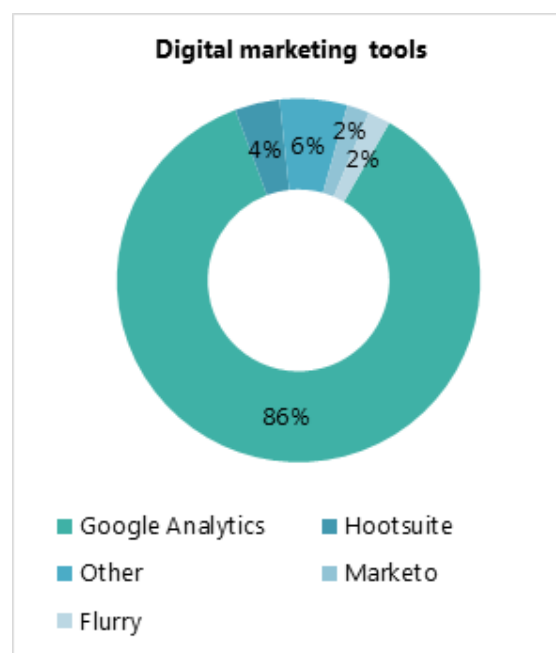
However, as per the survey results, only 28% of respondents use cohort analysis on a monthly basis to track user churn, while a whopping 42% didn't know what cohort analysis was!

Frequency of usage of cohort analysis and tracking of user churn

- 42%
- 28%
- 16%
- 14%

■ Unaware of the tool   ■ Monthly
■ Weekly   ■ Bi-weekly

Digital marketing tools

- 86%
- 4%
- 6%
- 2%
- 2%

■ Google Analytics   ■ Hootsuite
■ Other   ■ Marketo
■ Flurry

Technology as a key component

Digital marketing is no longer limited to powerful narratives of what brands have to offer, i.e. what is broadcast on digital media channels and platforms. With consumers engaging with brands in real time, the technology, the data, the digital engineering, analytics – all of these come into play in executing a successful digital marketing campaign.

Today, aspects such as responsive web design, marketing automation, and big data are not merely talking points at conferences, boardroom pitches or articles, they are being translated into action. In the survey, when asked to rate how critical technology is as an enabler for digital marketing on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 being highest) the average rating was 4.01, clearly indicating the important role it plays. Technology is an immersive part of digital marketing, and practitioners (as well as those associated with this field) felt that technology is changing the way we see digital marketing at a speed that is difficult to keep up with. And that has much to do with how the efficacy of digital marketing is measured, analysed, and improved upon thereafter.

Google Analytics as a popular digital marketing tool

There are a number of SEO and digital marketing tools that help businesses grow. But Google Analytics is not only the first tool that is used to set the foundation, but according to many, it is often the only tool they need to use for many of their marketing campaigns. Populated with features that can be leveraged at many stages – from targeting to campaign measurement to optimisation, it is easy to reason why it is so popular. And, among those who were surveyed, 86% users said Google Analytics remains the most popular digital marketing tool. Other tools like Hootsuite, Marketo and Flurry did not make it beyond the 4% mark.

The biggest challenges in digital marketing

What are some of the biggest challenges in digital marketing? Looking for the answers to this question is akin to opening a Pandora's box. The answers range from meeting customer expectations to managing digital disruption.

According to 32% of respondents, the biggest hurdle in executing digital marketing campaigns is the lack of clear metrics to measure the efficacy of such a campaign. This is followed by a lack of understanding of how digital marketing actually works (28%). Another 22% of respondents cited lack of sufficient budgets as a constraint; 16% blamed the lack of right resources.

39% of respondents believe that a better understanding of how digital marketing tools really work will help improve the efficacy of their digital marketing strategies. 32% felt a better strategy would solve this problem, while 25% felt there was a need for more experienced digital marketing practitioners. 20% wanted better tools. (Note: respondents stack-ranked choices so the total is >100%.)

Asked to share their learnings/give one piece of advice related to digital marketing, the focus was overwhelmingly on analytics.

Three broad pieces of advice emerged:

1. Customise content for your target audience

2. Review often – data may disappoint, but it never lies

3. Measure return on investment, evaluate, modify and implement

One respondent summed up this process and advised: Think, execute, repeat. Others were not so sure, and stated clearly that they had no insights to provide as they were still learning. Much like the overall industry, it would seem.

Conclusion

The use of digital marketing and spends on it are only going to increase exponentially in the coming years as India's internet user base expands and a growing number of newer, younger consumers come online.

It is clear that while companies understand the importance of digital marketing, they are struggling to come to terms with how to make it more effective. There is a lot more to experiment with and learn from in the near future.

We hope that the following series of articles by digital media practitioners will provide deeper insights into a variety of critical topics and shed some light on the way forward.

Vani Kola, MD, Kalaari Capital, in conversation with Rajan Anandan, VP & MD, Google South East Asia & India, at the Kstart Digital Marketing Summit held in Bangalore on 13 May 2016.

TRENDS IN DIGITAL MARKETING AMONG STARTUPS IN INDIA

Five hacks to help you choose the right digital marketing channels

PRIYANKA GILL & NAMRATA BOSTROM, FOUNDERS – POPXO

OVER the past two years, we've built POPxo, a platform for fashion, beauty and lifestyle, into a content business with millions of monthly users across the web and our apps. We've driven growth primarily through digital marketing. Much of our success boils down to choosing and optimising the right digital channels for our brand.

POPxo produces over 500 articles and video content every month. We are a women-focused brand that specifically caters to millennials. This means we need to find ways to reach our users where they spend most of their time – on their mobile phones.

Here are our guiding principles.

1. Understand 'whom you own', 'whom you attract' and 'whom you accept'

Not all your users are equally valuable to you, and this is a helpful way to segment them, because it tells who your true fans are. For POPxo, the first group of users are college girls in metros. We see our highest engagement from this group and they also end up being the early adopters of any new product we launch. The second is working women between the ages of 21 and 30 and those in Tier II and III cities. The last group is our non-core users, i.e., users our product doesn't specifically cater to (such as men!).

When making digital marketing decisions, we focus primarily on the first group and, to a lesser extent, the second group.

2. The right channels are not just where users spend most of their time, but also where they will be most receptive to your message

College girls, for example, spend most of their time on their phones on Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram (and, increasingly, Snapchat). Facebook and Instagram are platforms where users are looking for entertainment and updates from their friends and the brands they follow. As a lifestyle and entertainment brand, POPxo is the perfect marketing platform targeting these users. In fact, we have a dedicated team building our page and presence on Facebook and Instagram, and it is our primary customer acquisition channel.

While these channels work very well for POPxo, they are likely to be less effective for a brand targeting other user groups. For example, for startups targeting working professionals, news and content aggregation apps could be an effective tool for content marketing (besides email and even Facebook). SEO may be at the top of your list, but it's likely to be effective if your product solves something specific that people tend to search for (e.g. local food delivery).

3. Ranking your channels is essential, but also say NO to channels that don't work for you

We took a conscious decision to limit our use of Twitter and email marketing when it came to reaching our users. The first decision came as

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an outcome of research we ran with our user base that suggested that only a small percentage of millennial Indian women actively used Twitter (most ranked it fourth or fifth among social media apps, or mentioned having an account that they never used).

The decision to stop email marketing was tougher. Most of our users used it, especially our user group of working women. However, most (over 90%) had signed up with Gmail. Sometime in 2015, we started seeing dramatic falls in the open rate. Gmail's automated segregation of the inbox had effectively killed this channel as emails from POPxo were never making it to their 'Primary Inbox'. The other thing we noticed (in user interviews) was how most associated email with work, and not as a place they would naturally look for POPxo content!

4. Tailor your marketing message, or, resist the temptation to use automated services that blast the same message to four social media platforms at once

Marketing on every channel needs to be optimised for frequency, type of content, and format. One way to learn this is to find a brand that you feel uses a channel well and try and adopt what it does. For us, Facebook is the marquee channel where our content reaches ~30 million users every month. We post between 15 and 25 pieces on our Facebook page every day, and they're a mix of articles, native videos, memes and quotes (all developed in-house). It's the social media team's job to thoroughly understand the Facebook Newsfeed algorithm and the changes introduced to it every three months. Facebook tends to favour different types of content at different points in time: in 2014 it was link posts, in 2015 it was video, in 2016 (so far), it seems to be live video. It's important your brand understands the changes early on before everyone else jumps on the bandwagon.

Services that allow you to schedule the same story or message on every marketing channel

at once can seem tempting, but they are a blunt tool and you should use them sparingly at best.

> Gmail's automated segregation of the inbox had effectively killed this channel, as emails from POPxo were never making it to their 'Primary Inbox'.
> The other thing we noticed was how most associated email with work, and not as a place they would naturally look for POPxo content!

5. Set goals for every channel and choose metrics that match your business goals (and avoid vanity metrics!)

Set a goal for every channel early on, and make sure it's related to what you're ultimately trying to achieve, i.e., sign-ups on your website, downloads for your app, participation in a campaign you've launched and the like. For us, the goal for the Facebook page was to drive click-throughs to our articles and videos on the POPxo website. For Instagram, it was purely to provide visibility to events and special campaigns POPxo launched or covered.

To understand how effective we were in achieving these goals, we defined a few key success metrics for every channel. For Facebook, it was unique users reached every month (as a measure of reach), shares per day (as a measure of engagement) and sessions driven via Facebook per month (as a measure of our ultimate goal). For Instagram, we tracked total follower count but also the percentage of users engaged each day.

Although we have a lot of Facebook fans, we don't focus on that as our primary metric. Over time, we realised that fan numbers had a weak

relationship to both engagement and the number of sessions it drove to our website. Vanity metrics (like number of fans) are popular because they are easy to track and easy to compare to that of your competitors; however, they don't really tell you much about whether you're actually successful with your digital marketing.

PRIYANKA GILL & NAMRATA BOSTROM, FOUNDERS – POPXO

Fashion, food, technology and style are Priyanka's long-abiding passions. She has spent years researching, experiencing and documenting the very best out there. If there is anyone who embodies the word 'multi-tasker' it's her. Entrepreneur, gourmet cook and digital media genius, Namrata was a management consultant at the Boston Consulting Group and a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford University before co-founding POPxo.

The audience at the Kstart Digital Marketing Summit.

Brand and performance marketing:
A tango for tangible benefits

MEETA MALHOTRA, BRAND EXPERT, EX-RAY+KESHAVAN

AS A CONSULTANT for large companies in the offline world, I usually prepare myself for the inevitable ongoing war between the sales and marketing departments. From FMCG to IT, the issues are more or less the same, regardless of sector. Marketing folk see salespeople as myopic and transactional – foot soldiers executing a strategy they had no part in. Sales complains that marketing blames them when things go wrong but are quick to take the credit for all successes. Marketing spends ridiculous amounts of money on fuzzy initiatives without accountability, while sales teams are held to hard targets.

The more things change…

Fast-forward to today's online, tech-enabled companies and, surprise, surprise, the clash continues. Only this time, the warring teams are called Brand and Performance Marketing. Here's a conversation that I hear often:

Brand team: *You have to put the brand message into the ads. We've just spent so much time and money figuring out what the brand stands for. You have to stop running those offer/discount/product ads.*

Performance team: *Yeah, right. You get the CEO to lower our targets and we'll run whatever ads you want. (Muttering under breath: If they'd given us half that time and money, we would have met our targets and got our bonuses.)*

> The truth is, given the nascent tech-enabled sector in India, there are too few people who understand both: fundamental brand marketing as well as its new digital avatar.

In most young companies with an eye on the figures needed for the next investor meeting, performance teams usually win this battle. It is very hard to sacrifice today's sales/clicks/ installs for some nebulous future advantage. At best, the team tests different sets of ads but almost always comes back to say that the tactical, 'instant gratification' ads perform better. If the company has the budget, brand marketing will retreat to its un-breachable bastion – the TV commercial (which causes even more derisive mutterings amongst performance teams).

Coded into the DNA

The genesis of this situation can be traced to the way the organisation structure of a startup evolves. In the early days, other than the founders' vision, very little time and effort was spent on fleshing out the brand. All available resources went into performance marketing to chase the holy grail of growth. As the company scales (and funding follows), brand folk are usually recruited through lateral hiring. The truth is, given the nascent tech-enabled sector in India, there are too few people who understand both: fundamental brand marketing as well as its new digital avatar.

Most hires from traditional FMCG backgrounds are disconcerted by a culture that demands tangible evidence of success on a daily basis. On the other hand, hires from other tech-enabled companies typically lack experience in implementing holistic brand frameworks.

Sadly, this divide is mirrored in the agency world, making it hard to seek professional help to rectify the situation. In fact, tall claims notwithstanding, the agency world is even more fractured. Brand consultants can give you a big idea but can't show you the path to execution. Advertising agencies can only make ads. And digital agencies can supplement your

content creation and distribution efforts, but do little else.

The problem with swim lanes

One could argue that if this divide between sales/performance and marketing/brand has always existed, then perhaps it is the natural order of things and there is no point trying to fix it. The truth, however, is that operating in these silos is likely to wreak even greater havoc on young, tech-enabled companies than it did for their older, offline counterparts.

Much has been written about the evolution of the customer decision journey. For years, this journey was viewed as a funnel through which customers advanced from awareness to consideration, then from familiarity to purchase, and finally to loyalty. This was true of a world where there were limited touchpoints for customers and brands to interact with. Today, people form impressions about brands continuously, based on interactions with multiple touchpoints. The sum total of these impressions comes into play at every stage of the journey, which itself has evolved from a linear path to a circular one.

> The agency world is fractured.
>
> Brand consultants can give you a big idea but can't show you the path to execution.
>
> Advertising agencies can only make ads.
>
> And digital agencies can supplement your content creation and distribution efforts, but do little else.

It is not rocket science to figure out which team controls the bulk of touchpoints in the customer journey today. Try this simple exercise:

- Create an ink sketch of your customer
- Map a typical day in her life
- Identify the points at which she is likely to encounter your brand
- Identify the teams that control those touchpoints, and therefore the impression your customer has of you

If your performance marketing team controls the bulk of your customer touchpoints and the only messages it chooses to send are price or feature-related, then be prepared for these fallouts:

- Low customer loyalty and cohort retention
- Stagnating net promoter score (NPS)
- Inability to create aspirational offerings

All of the above are manifestations of customer loyalty; remember, customers are loyal to strong brands, not commodities.

A journey of a thousand miles...

The solution, as everyone knows, lies in closer integration of the brand and performance marketing teams. The challenge is how to do this without breaking momentum or sacrificing growth. The trick lies in taking multiple small steps that bring the teams closer until they finally integrate in the true sense of the word. Here are a few easy-to-implement ideas.

1. Bring the customer to life

Everyone in the organisation needs to understand who the customer is, regardless of whether the business is B2B or B2C. Create a programme where every single person in the organisation, including those in performance marketing teams, mandatorily interacts with real-life customers.

2. Understand your brand

Start thinking about why your customer chooses you and what differentiates you from

the others. This does not need to be an expensive exercise (http://bit.ly/1UUBvSz). Include the performance marketing team in this initiative.

3. Start at the top

Founders and senior leadership must stress the importance of brand at every step. All teams, especially in a startup, are sensitive to CXO priorities and pick up cues very quickly. If leadership shows its commitment to brand, everyone else will follow.

4. Rotate people through brand and performance teams

Allow each team to understand the challenges faced by the other. A complete marketer, in any case, must understand both worlds and, I promise you, the teams will end up enjoying this exercise.

5. Develop your own set of melded key metrics

Create a set of melded metrics for brand and performance marketing teams. Involve both teams in the decision-making on these metrics. Create a dashboard that they can all access and review.

6. Treat them as one team

Do planning and team reviews together. Have similar appraisal and reward processes. Have them report to one CMO.

Take the long-term view

For young companies already groaning under pressure, all this is bound to seem like very hard work with no immediate return. Unfortunately, there is no other way to prevent erosion of competitive advantage, so you must take the long-term view.

Once initial processes are in place, you will find the integration of brand and performance marketing taking on a momentum of its own and delivering a significant and tangible multiplier effect to the top and bottom line. The earlier you start, the more substantial the benefit.

MEETA MALHOTRA, BRAND EXPERT, EX-RAY+KESHAVAN

Meeta was one of two partners at Ray+Keshavan, India's premium brand and design consultancy. During her 15-year stint, Meeta has helped build several successful Indian and global brands across diverse industries. She is now an angel investor and mentor to new-generation companies and focuses on the the intersection of brand, technology and design. Meeta brings a practitioner's perspective to startups, having co-founded and exited two companies and now working on her third.

Social and content marketing for the Indian marketer

NIKHIL RASTOGI, HEAD – MARKETING & DIGITAL SALES, CITIBANK INDIA

THESE are transformative times where consumer and technology intersect daily in several 'micro-moments', reinventing the relationship between brands and customers. The ascent of the connected consumer and social purchase path journeys has ushered in a new era for marketers, bringing increased attention on social and content marketing strategies.

Social media and content marketing are closely related and may seem interchangeable; hence it is critical to understand the difference and the interdependence. Through a broad lens, the easiest way to understand their relationship is that content is necessary to drive social media, while social media is essential to distribute content, interact with your audiences, and listen to what they care about.

Social is mainstream

Social media marketing is not the next big thing: it is mainstream.

Consumers are consumed by social in India, especially in urban areas with high internet penetration. There are presently 134 million social media users in India, up by a huge 26% from last year. Social media accounts for more than half the time spent online, with users spending 26% more time engaging with their network than watching television.

Mobile is increasingly becoming the go-to device for consumers, whether for communicating, consuming content, or online shopping. Smartphone penetration is the catalyst, with 72% of India's social media users logging in via mobiles; this is predicted to accelerate further. The younger generation of consumers (16-to-24-year-olds) has already surpassed this tipping point of social media access via mobiles.

The numbers on Facebook also reflect the social mobile wave, with more than 80% of users accessing the largest social platform on earth via their phones. This has big implications for advertisers, wherein we need to move from mobile optimisation to designing for the mobile first.

Harness the uniqueness of social

Having established that it is a pervasive part of daily living, let us now look at the unique value that social media can deliver as compared to other marketing channels.

1.   **Enables two-way conversation**

Social is powered by interactions. Nurturing regular interaction with audiences generates a strong, long-term relationship, spelling profitable business results.

2.   **Real-time listening, feedback, and dialogue**

Social enables following in real time what customers are saying, extending this to engaging with them, responding, and delivering marketing messages and offers even as these conversations take place.

3.   **One-to-one interactivity**

Social platforms conceive audiences as empowered networks and enable a vast number of interactivity features, coupled with the ability to personalise the interaction.

4.   **Collaboration and crowdsourcing**

Social opens a dialogue with multiple users, at the same time empowering an ecosystem of collaboration and crowdsourcing of ideas. For example, Citi uses social crowdsourcing for consumer recommendations on ATM locations and offers.

5. Butterfly effect

With consumer-to-consumer sharing, reach can go beyond your targeted demographic market. People's friends, families, and networks go beyond their own demographic – paving the way for new channels to generate leads or sales – if they share your content on these networks.

6. Targeted messaging

Creates value and delight in the right context. On social, you can reach specific target audience profiles with advanced targeting options such as geo-targeting and behavioural, socio-psychographic targeting. This can be made more potent with customised messages for various profiles. For example, reach users following a rival brand with a competitive offer message.

7. A low-cost medium

Popular social networks are free to join and relatively cheaper than traditional channels. While the cost of reaching and interacting with audiences varies according to individual social platforms, the industry average shows that social is relatively more cost-effective than other marketing channels.

8. Mobile

Social platforms are mobile-first by design, making them the preferred channel in a mobile-skewed world. Unlike digital media, ads on this medium are free from ad blocks.

9. Measurement

Allows for detailed analysis and reporting. These are not projections but absolute numbers.

10. Drives all business objectives, including commerce

Social can drive last-mile conversation for businesses, right from driving awareness, building preference and engagement to nurturing leads, finally affecting commerce.

Social for business

Social drives business goals for brands across customer lifecycle.

Awareness	More likely to find new products/services on social than other digital platforms[4]
Recall	Yahoo reported that almost half of social media users could recall seeing branded content in the previous 30 days [5]
Consideration	30% consumers influenced by positive or negative comments on social [6] 90% of consumers trust recommendations from someone they know; only 14% trust an ad [10]
Preference	Brand with high social engagement saw 330 bps rise in net promoter score (NPS) [7]
Acquisition and cross-sell	Customers who engage with companies through social media spend 20 to 40% more on their products and services [8]
Usage and translation into delivery	Social is second only to search engines to research a potential purchase [9]
Customer care and listening	43% of consumers use social media for customer service [9]

Here are a few use cases that give the complete picture.

Awareness and recall

Use case 1: Influencer marketing

- Leverage social influencer's credibility and following to extend reach and build relevance among key audiences. The influencers bring to life the brand experience from a consumer's perspective. For example, leveraging the influencers of Zomato, India's largest dining-out content platform, to promote Citi Sunday Brunch proposition

- Invite influencers to events for real-time, on-site live tweeting: e.g. a product launch

- Nurture 'always-on' influencer strategy and choose relevant influencers: quality over quantity

Consideration and preference

Use case 2: PR amplification and reputation management

- Build consideration through amplification of content with industry-firsts such as the Citi App on Apple

- Real-time, always-on monitoring of brand health and competitors (volume and sentiment of conversations) to curtail negative commentary with pre-set triggers

- Surprise and delight brand advocates by responding in real time

Acquisition and cross-sell

Use case 3: NTB acquisition using lookalikes

- Reach high-value targeted 'lookalike' prospects with accuracy on social platforms with specific offers. Add variables to improve targeting. E.g., LinkedIn (new) allows lookalike-targeting and helps sequence relevant messaging based on the profile and onsite behaviour of prospects across internal and 3P external networks.

Use case 4: Member-get-member referrals

- Leverage the existing customer base to generate high-quality leads and incentivise referrers to reach out to their social graph

- Enable easy sharing and personalisation to target specific messages for specific recipients.

Usage and transaction delivery

Use case 5: Audience matching for targeted offer delivery

- Drive usage by sharing offers or relevant feature awareness to a matched audience by leveraging social behaviour and add intelligence by overlapping internal customer data. E.g., promote golf access to prestige members with interest in the sport

- Curate relevant content to embed information: 70% prefer reading articles than ads, especially in high-involvement categories like wealth management

- Enabler: Library of content to create a knowledge hub for curated content

- Financial players can extend this further by enabling clients to link a social media account (Twitter, Foursquare, TripAdvisor) to a payment platform such as credit cards, wallets, etc.

Use case 6: Ecommerce purchase path integration

- Players like Pinterest, Facebook, Google, YouTube have launched one-click buy buttons for payments on ecommerce platforms via mobile payments (such as Apple Pay) or by syncing social and card accounts

- Deliver relevant offers at critical 'moments that matter' in a contextually relevant way

Use case 7: Messenger-based service delivery

- Deliver services in environments where consumers are spending time by providing more choice for how they bank. Messenger/apps have a lower cost of servicing compared with SMS and phone

- Example of services: Push offers/real-time alerts/location-based offers/e-chat support

- Enabler: API integration and data matching

Customer care and listening

Use case 8: Complaint/query management

- Choice for customers to connect on an alternative channel – complaints, queries, praise, feedback, job opportunities, etc. – are fast becoming industry standard

- Provide response on social in near-real-time speed to create delight and rip negative threads

- Provide opportunity to turn social detractors into brand promoters, enabling you to amplify positive experiences from brand advocates

Use case 9: Social listening

- Social listening can generate insights to support product development, brand health, and promotion and detraction drivers

- Always-on monitoring of brand health and of competitors – identify negative commentary and offset pre-set triggers. Convert detractors into advocates by responding in real-time

- Sprinklr is currently being used by Citi for always-on monitoring. There are other tools such as Netbase that allow sentiment accuracy, emotion analysis, theme detection, visualisations, and language coverage

Use case 10: Crowdsource user feedback

- Engage with customers and prospects to co-create value propositions and partner with merchants' offers to increase relevance, and hence, usage. It is critical to close the loop with announcement of the execution based on customer feedback

- Instil deep association and pride for the brand with the engaged set of social users

- E.g., find the nearest ATM location, CWP offer, select products for festive offers

- This can also be used as a quick feedback channel on new launches/offers

Social content marketing case study

This is a story of how a bank brand overcame the challenge of being just a transaction enabler to a social co-conspirer in the life of a foodie.

Insight

Ambassadors of the foodie movement: 21-to-38-year-old, urban dwellers. A major chunk of their food conversations takes place on social media – planning meet-ups, check-ins, sharing pictures, status updates, and restaurant reviews. *Being seen as a foodie is a social marker of how exciting and interesting you are. Great food conversation is the new identity-maker*.

The big idea

When you look at someone's plate, you get a sneak peek into their world: let your plate speak for itself. Citi kicked off with the *provocative social expression, #WhatsOnYourPlate*.

Execution

Use the 3-C model to spark off conversations and influence decisions.

Create Content → Engage Community → Build Commerce

1. **Create Content**

Induced an urge to dine with IMMERSIVE CINEMAGRAPHS

Food is about chocolate sauce oozing seductively and cheese melting sinfully; hence, we moved from static creatives to cinemagraphs across touch points such as Facebook, Twitter, outdoor, and digital.

2. **Engage Community**

Built advocacy by ENGAGING FOODIES ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Socially crowdsourced food trail: Engaged Delhi and Mumbai, India's two largest metros, in a foodie faceoff. Citi partnered with an interesting dining influencer pair – contrasting personalities, but with a shared passion for

food: Maria Goretti and Kunal Vijayakar – sparking the conversation, with a video asking foodies to come up with the best dining-out options.

Recommendations poured in on Facebook and Twitter, with foodies standing up for their respective cities. Even celebrities joined in. Next, Maria and Kunal dined at the restaurants recommended by the foodies, culminating in a socially crowdsourced food trail.

3. **Build Commerce**

For the last-mile pull before selecting a restaurant. WEEKEND OFFERS ON FACEBOOK USING CUSTOM AUDIENCE

Most dining-out plans materialise on weekends. To leverage this window, Citi reached out to existing Citi customers on Facebook using 'custom audience' with targeted dining offers on the weekends.

Results

Foodies lived up to their food quotient and Citi breached the highest-ever brand, social engagement and business benchmarks. Having notched up over 100 million impressions, reflecting a 43% increase in daily transaction volumes and a 29% increase in daily spends, Citi India cards' preference jumped to the highest-ever score of 70 to join the league of the best preferred globally.

Content is the key to social

Social is a nexus of engagement and disruption. A robust and consistent content strategy is crucial for brands to win in the long run in such a dynamic environment.

Rethink content design, development and distribution process to win in social

- **Be mobile-first**: Move from mobile optimisation to design for mobile first

- **Personalise the experience**: Use smart audience targeting and custom content to deliver great one-to-one messages
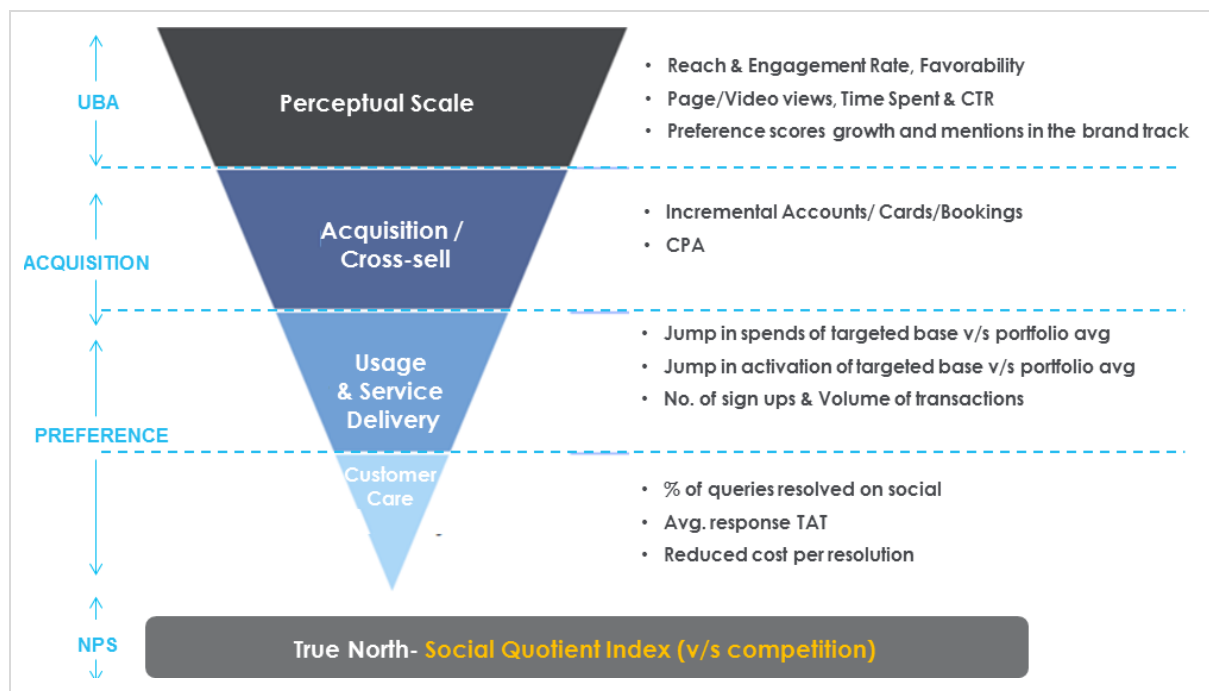
- **Tailor content to platform and device**: Use internal and external data to understand what formats (text, photo, video) work for which platforms

- **Be contextual**: Ensure the tone, duration and frequency of content are contextually compatible

- **Be human and responsive**: Engage, and not just sell, on social media. Adopt an always-on approach. Close the loop for all conversations

- **Design for action**: Design for responding, liking and sharing. Give a reason to respond

In social content, innovation starts with the visual. Here are key content formats that brands should invest in:

- **Immersive content**: Content formats such as *cinemagraphs and 360 videos* deliver up to 3x jump in engagement and help break clutter on social. Both are mobile-first formats, with 360-degree videos, taking the mobile experience to a new league. The key here lies in execution: leverage content across touchpoints.

- **Interactive and attention-grabbing formats**: Social platforms are investing in building clutter-breaking formats to advertisers. For example, Facebook, the largest social platform, has released formats such as Facebook Live, Carousels, and vertical ads.

- **Video consumption**: Videos help brands live a storytelling message. A staggering statistic such as Facebook being the number two video site after YouTube illustrates the rising consumption of online videos. Brands investing in video have reported a higher recall and conversions on social.

Measurement

While social measurement involves unique metrics, these correspond to broader business objectives.

Here's an example of a social measurement framework for a financial brand:

NIKHIL RASTOGI, HEAD OF MARKETING AND DIGITAL SALES, CITIBANK INDIA

Nikhil has over 15 years of marketing experiences across banking and FMCG (consumer products). He is passionate about customer centricity and is currently working on branding "experiences" and using new media and digital marketing to drive customer preferences, build digital acquisition and create sustainable differentiation from the competition.

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Five ways to make your brand voice-search-ready

SNEH SHARMA & THE ITTISA TEAM

Did you know that 50% of the world's population [will be connected to the internet by mid-to-late-2016](#)? With 15% internet penetration in India, and with an average user spending around 4 hours and 25 minutes a day online, digital marketers now have immense opportunities that they can explore and employ.

Multiple devices, platforms, and social channels keep both the consumer and marketer engaged. '*Voice Search*' is one such technology that is vying for marketers' attention. So, what is 'Voice Search'? Depending on the personal device you use, you have digital assistants like Siri, Cortana, and Google Now, which you access via voice commands to help you with most or all of your digital activities from social media to shopping!

Digital assistants are already being used to answer and act on basic commands, and they have now established themselves as credible search authorities. While earlier versions did not reflect much promise, newer versions are cleaner, more sophisticated, and have become almost indispensable in our daily lives.

Wishing on birthdays and buying bouquets!

These technologies work at nearly every step of a buying process, from assessing your needs, searching for information, evaluating the results, and then making suggestions; however, they don't make automated purchases...not for now, at least.

For example, if it's a friend's birthday tomorrow, you can simply say "I need a bouquet of white lilies and a cake saying 'Happy Birthday, Neha' to be delivered by 3 pm tomorrow." Your digital assistant will come up with a suggestion that exactly matches your need. Thus, digital assistants will begin to heavily influence purchase decisions; for

marketers, this means highly targeted personalised advertising.

According to Gartner, within the next two years, autonomous mobile assistant purchasing is set to reach $2 billion annually.

What does it mean for marketers?

With all the buzz around Voice Search and digital assistants, what does it really mean for the brands and marketers?

Voice search is taking over keyword search, making natural language processing a challenge in this field. The advantage with a digital-assistant-based search is that it is much easier and quicker, not to mention more personalised. Brands will need to get on digital assistant shortlists in order to come into the tech-absorbed millennial's focus.

It means, now, as a marketer, you have to look beyond the keyboard and the type pad and ensure that your SEO is optimised for voice-based searches. Your content will have to be more conversational than anything else. It also means that your brand should be compatible with voice search and for any related query or command, it should be making its way to the top of search results and get selected.

Here is a list of five things that you can do to keep your brand Voice Search ready:

1. Use natural language content

'How' do you think when you're searching for something? You don't think in keywords. For instance, if you are searching for nearby restaurants, you won't say 'Nearby Restaurants', you would say, 'Which are the restaurants near me?' This is the type of question people ask when doing a voice search – it is going to answer all the 'who, what, where, how, and why' questions and not just look for a teeny, tiny keyword.

Make sure that you are delivering valuable content and not just focusing on optimising your keywords.

2. Longer tail keywords

You would probably have guessed this already. As search terms become longer, so do the answers, and this means that you should start targeting those longer tail keywords already. If your site is going to answer all the basic question of 'who, what, where, how, and why' clearly and concisely, you would be on the Iron Throne in the 'Game of Voice Search'.

3. Robot no more

If you have been writing for robots and looking just at keyword stuffing, it's time to move beyond that. The age of robots and keywords will soon be over and you'll be required to create answers for conversational search queries.

4. Understand your buyer's journey

As the first step, you would need to understand your buyer's journey, and if he is landing on your site through a digital assistant. The tech-focused millennial is not someone who is going to wait around for your responsiveness to kick in if he has landed on your mobile site and you are not able to answer his need.

5. Be geographically relevant

People consult their digital assistant when there is an immediate need, and this will pose tremendous opportunities for local businesses. By scouring through geographically relevant content, a digital assistant will pull out the most relevant option, and if there is an incentive attached to it, it will certainly rank higher. Just look for ideas, that will make the digital assistant choose you over your competitor, and you'll be fine.

Voice search is set to revolutionise the social media and search engine marketing landscape over the next year. Marketers have to be agile and nimble to make sure that they make the most of this challenge. From your website, blog to all your social media channels. Everything will need attention to be able to cater to the needs of voice search. By being prepared, you will have a handle on the situation and stay ahead of the curve in 2016.

SNEH SHARMA & THE TEAM AT ITTISA

Sneh Sharma is founder of Ittisa, the first ever 'all girls' digital media agency. Ittisa mainly focuses on design, digital and analytics, along with technology. It utilizes the advertising space to help businesses ease into the list of the most easily recognizable brands. All its projects are creatively inspired and technically and analytically empowered.

Ram Seshadri, Director – Solution Consulting – Adobe India, speaking at the Kstart Digital Marketing Summit. Seshadri stressed the need to harness the power of earned media (publicity gained through promotional efforts) rather than relying on paid media or advertising.

Stay ahead of the ever-changing SEO curve

DINESH KHANDELWAL – DIGITAL MARKETING CONSULTANT

The Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) landscape has changed dramatically over the last couple of years. In this report, we give you current and future trends, which will help you maximise your investments in SEO.

- Think Q & A

- Keyword analysis with a twist

- Don't forget local

- Size matters, so does speed

- Shut shop if you are not on mobile

- Search is social

- Search assistants

Think Q & A

Right from Day One, Google's ultimate objective was to instantly deliver the right information to a user on the basis of his/her search query. It has done this either through Rich Answers (as displayed above, which does not always require the user to click through to a webpage), and through results displayed on the Search Engine Results Pages (SERP). If your page fulfils these criteria, and you are answering users' queries, this is valued very highly by Google, and your authority and rankings will rise.

Important points:

- Google currently returns Rich Answers to 35% of search queries.

- Click-through rate (CTR) for clickable Rich Answers is ~2x better than that for the #1 ranking page on a SERP with no Rich Answer.

- Getting featured in Rich Answers is possible even if your site's authority is not very high yet

- Identify frequently searched questions in your area of operation.

- Structure your content so that it can feature in Rich Answers.

- Don't limit your content to the point. Give some additional information related to the topic.

Keyword Analysis with a Twist

- The way Google understands and interprets keywords has changed a lot post the Hummingbird algorithm update. It is not about the exact match keyword anymore, but more about the context of a search query, which eventually helps them understand the intent of the user doing the search.

- Keyword research should still be the foundation of your SEO and content marketing campaigns. However, Google's Hummingbird update shifts our focus from researching separate keywords to researching groups of related terms and synonyms.

- Think long-tail keywords, which are three or four phrases that are relevant to what you are selling. Add more and more of these terms.

- Don't force exact match keywords in your content. Think 'contextual', and you will rank for all the relevant keywords within your copy. You don't need to force keywords like "best hotels" in your content. You can instead use keywords like "great accommodation experiences" and Google will understand the related search queries.
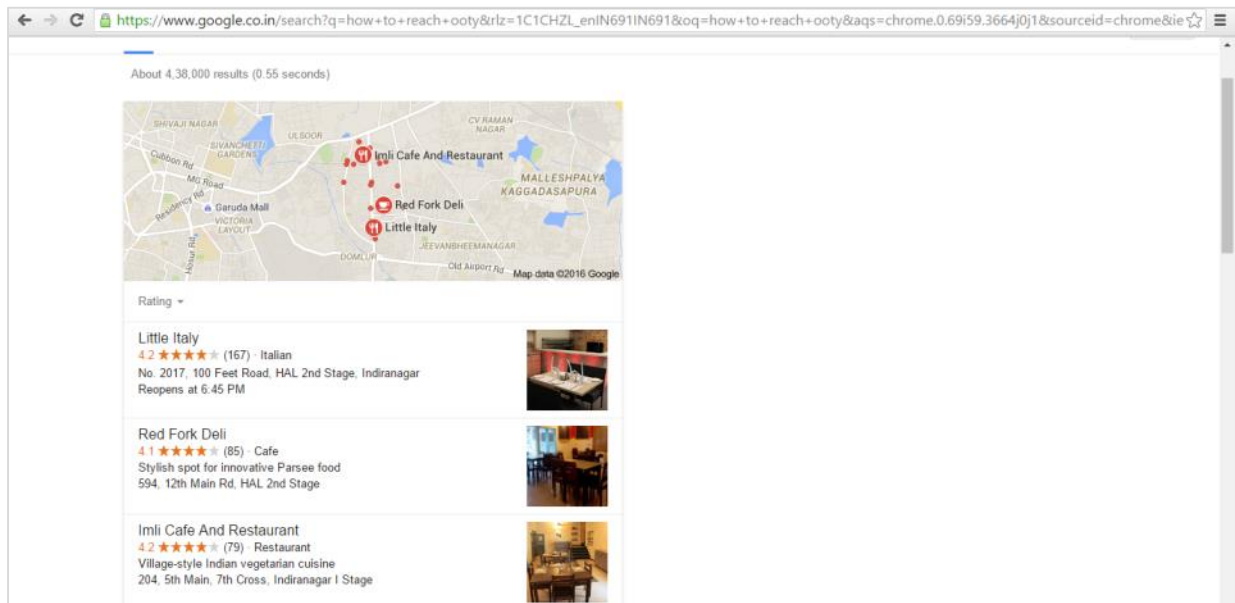
Don't forget local

- Google tracks our location and search history which plays a very important role in the search results we see for our search queries.

- Since Google's "Pigeon" update, SEO is pushing local businesses and marketers. So ensure you have location-specific keywords and personalise your content based on your target audiences' location to create a better impact.

- Local searches lead 50% of mobile visitors to visit stores within a day. (Source: Searchengineland.com)

- More than 60% consumers have used local information in ads. (Source: Business2community.com)

- 50% mobile searches are conducted in the hope of finding local results. (Source: Business2community.com)

- Your entry in the local pages can surge customer engagement with your business.

Size matters, so does speed

Size

- 300-500 words used to be considered long and performed better on search engines

about 2-3 years ago. There is a clear shift now. Content ranging from 1,200 to1,500 words performs far better now.

- Longer articles rank better on SEO. Why? If you relate longer content with Hummingbird, you will understand that longer content will be able to give better context on the overall topic. The use of synonyms and keyword variations, with a very decent keyword proximity and prominence will all help you rank better.

- It will also boost rankings if you segment the longer articles into sub-headings, Images, infographics, and videos.

Speed

- Page speed is an important ranking factor.

- A site that loads quicker will beat competing sites if all other ranking signals are at par.

- You will not just be annoying users if your site loads slowly, but also the Google Bot. You will be limiting the crawl rate, and hence reducing the number of pages indexed. Just remember crawling is the first step towards Google SEO rankings.

- 40% of visitors will abandon a site if loading takes longer than three seconds.

- Half of all visitors expect a site to load in two seconds or less.

- A one-second increase in loading time decreases conversion by 7%.

So, optimise your website for better load time. Improve the server response time, and time to first byte. Optimise Image, CSS, and JS and improve your code to text ratio.

Shut shop if you are not on mobile

- 4 out of 5 consumers use smartphones to shop. (Source: Convinceandconvert.com)

- 70% of mobile searches lead to online action within an hour. (Source: Socialmediatoday.com)

- Over 1.2 billion people access the Web from their mobile devices. (Source: Mobify.com)

- Global mobile traffic now accounts for 15% of all internet traffic. (Source: Newtarget.com)

- 95% smartphone users have searched for local info.
  (Source: Adwords.blogspot.com)

- 50% of Google searches today happen on mobile devices. (Source: Adwords.blogspot.com)

- Ranking signal

  - Mobile optimisation is a strong SEO ranking factor.

  - This will also hamper your desktop rankings

  - Most importantly, you will not be able to reach out to potential customers who are searching on mobile devices.

Search is social

- Your content and the performance of your content on Social Platforms plays a significant role in your SEO rankings.

- Google now shows real-time trending topics and relevant content on the search results pages from social platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn.

- Your content on social platforms will help the Google crawler gauge the authority of your website.

- Search engines can get a lot of knowledge graph data from social platforms. This again helps with better SEO rankings and a better share of voice on Search Results Pages on Google.

Jan Metzger, Head of Citi TMT, Asia, addressing the audience at the Kstart Digital Marketing Summit. He spoke about how cultural differences impact businesses and investors, with examples from across the world. Metzger also highlighted how digital growth is bringing about a change in people's behaviour, thereby giving companies and startups an opportunity to connect and sell offline and online.

Search assistants

- As more and more people browse on mobile devices, the way they browse or request data has also changed. Voice search assistants are definitely adding a lot of value to users who are looking for something on search engines or want to perform any action on their mobile devises.

- Google, Apple, and Microsoft have made these voice assistants very popular with Google Now, Siri, and Cortana, respectively.

- A Google study is showing some very positive trends in terms of user-acceptance of search assistants:

  - The Google study showed that people mostly used voice to ask for directions.

  - According to marketingland.com, teens used voice search the most while watching TV (59%) and while with friends (57%) .

  - Adults used voice search the most while watching TV (36%), followed by when with friends (24%) and while cooking (23%).

- With the number of people using voice searches and smart assistants increasing, the overall search query pattern will change. The way we use keywords will change when we use Voice Search.

  - E.g. "restaurants near me" instead of "restaurants in Bangalore"

DINESH KHANDELWAL – DIGITAL MARKETING CONSULTANT

Dinesh Khandelwal is a digital marketing consultant with 13 years' experience in planning and implementing digital marketing campaigns. He has worked on both the client- and agency-side business on world-renowned brands such as IBM, Volvo and Expedia. He was voted among the 50 most influential digital media professionals for 2015 by the World Marketing Congresss. He is passionate about advertising, branding, digital marketing and emerging media. To learn new things every day, Dinesh has started working with various startups such as Commonfloor, TaxiForSure, BankBazaar and Holiday IQ.

Neeraj Kakkar, Co-founder, Paper Boat, addressing the audience at the Kstart Digital Marketing Summit. His key message was that a brand must live up to the authenticity it promises.

Lessons on viral marketing

AASHISH CHOPRA – HEAD OF CONTENT MARKETING AT IXIGO

In February 2014, I made a video that documented the last day of the infamous Gurgaon toll plaza. The video was about creating a happy memory, and so I decided to pay the toll for the person behind me and capture this random act of kindness in a video. That day, I discovered two things: It costs just Rs 21 to make someone smile, and that if content is topical, newsworthy, and inspires action, it could go viral. That video was shared across Reddit and featured on Storypick, NDTV, IBN Live, Buzzfeed and put me on the radio the next day. Even today, more than two years later, a search for 'Gurgaon Toll Surprise' on Google throws up links to the video across the first two pages.

Before this, a viral video to me was nothing but a 'happy accident', when the stars were in line, your luck was shining bright, and you had the blessings of a guru. That one video started my journey in learning the method to the madness in viral videos. And as I kept going, I kept recording the learnings on the notes app on my phone. The learnings from the first, I applied to the next video, which again went viral. I conducted some experiments, and another went viral, and went so big that it blew my mind. A video made in August of that same year, clocked seven million views in a few months, was shared by 3.5 lakh people and reached 25% of Facebook's internet user base in India! The same video became Asia's most shared branded Facebook post and went on to win awards. The notes in my phone kept increasing, and I knew at the back of my mind that the day these virals stop, that's the day I'll be done, back to the rat race. So learnings and experimenting became an obsession. In a span of one year, multiple videos went viral, hit millions of views, and some even went far beyond our borders and went viral in China!

Today, these videos have garnered over 130 million views, and have been shared by over 3 million people. Venturing into content marketing was a natural evolution after years spent in social media and website development. I realised that everything revolves around remarkable content, to the point that every brand today has become a media company.

So what makes great content? I have a five-point checklist from two years of research. To make a share-worthy video, the ideas should be inspirational, useful, topical, celebrate the viewer's life, or change the world. If the content falls into these buckets it's a go, otherwise I trash it. I believe virality can happen as long as there's compelling share-worthy content. Piggybacking on Internet trends is one way to increase the chances your content will go viral. News jacking gets your content super-fast reach and engagement when done right.

> Focus on the user! Make their life easy and they will come in millions looking for you, downloading your apps and becoming your evangelists.

Content marketing 101

Content marketing is like a rocket ship, you need fuel every day for it to go further and sometimes you need nuclear fuel to take it light years ahead! Start with images as everyday content and invest time and resources for the nuclear video once in a while. It's true that videos offer a more immersive experience, but if your resources are limited, it's best to stick to memes and images. Your top priority should be kick-ass storytelling. Don't worry about production value since most of your content would be consumed on mobile devices and you don't need fancy production to make an impact on that tiny screen.

It is crucial to gain initial traction when you release your content: we target 100 shares in

the first 10 minutes. It gives the content a jump start. One way is to reach out to blogs and news sites to pick it up. Cultivate relationships with blogs. If one focuses on creating kick-ass industry-leading content, they will seek you out. Remember: be so good that they can't ignore you.

The magical metric for viral content

In January 2016, we launched a video for ixigo, which became so big, it almost broke the internet. It was a video experiment using images and it hit 50 million views in a few weeks, was shared by 1.3 million people and sky-rocketed app installs for ixigo, the elusive ROI we're all after. We replicated that success in multiple videos and crossed the 10 million-mark. It proved my belief that powerful content can catapult a brand and give it the reach of a TV ad on ridiculously low budgets. And when the ROI baby starts to dance, it's a good day for everyone. :)

The magical metric I use is to track its shares and then reach. Success for a viral video is decided by these two factors, in my experience. Also, the game just got tougher; now, only if a video hits a million it's considered a hit; last year it was just 100,000.

Tracking 'shares' on Facebook is easy, but when we share it on WhatsApp there's no way to find out how far it went. Until we get analytics for WhatsApp, I use the old-school formula to test whether the content has gone viral. The only way to track WhatsApp is to share something in a user group first, say your company group. If it comes back to you from your family or peers, then consider it a hit.

I do not subscribe to the view that incentivising viewers will increase virality. Your content should be compelling enough for people to share it. In my experience, incentivising hasn't worked. The real goal must be to have you 'share' out of choice, not by a mail from your boss or arm-twisting by a friend.

Choosing the right platform

The more you re-package and distribute your content, the better. Blogs, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Tumblr, Slideshare, mailers…build an

audience base wherever you can, and remember, the rules are different for each.

Success on YouTube requires a solid subscriber base, which will take months or years to build. However, when Facebook opened up to video content, it opened the floodgates for distribution, since many brands already had a fan base on their pages. Also, I feel Facebook has sharing in its DNA; YouTube not so much. Right now, Facebook is dominating the videos space and is injecting more videos in your newsfeeds; it makes sense to experiment with video and reach millions organically. 'Shares', in my experience, make or break a video.

LinkedIn can also be a platform to generate more views for your content. Super value content with actionable insights is widely shared on Pulse, LinkedIn's version of the newsfeed. At the bottom of your article, create an option for people to subscribe for more via email. This way, you're collecting users from LinkedIn only. As you start building that list and distributing content, you start getting shares in the LinkedIn ecospace, and it attracts more views and shares.

In the end, pick a platform that makes sense for your business, where your users hang out most. If you're in the B2B space, think Slideshare or LinkedIn. For anything B2C, kill it on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, and now the rapidly growing Snapchat.

Future of video content in India

It's raining videos everywhere – from Facebook news-feeds to family groups on WhatsApp. More than 50% mobile traffic is already dominated by videos. Also, with 4G expected to become mainstream in 2016-2017, Facebook will start injecting more videos in news-feeds (as it does in other countries). In the coming years, I see videos taking over in a big way, replacing local language content in India with more visual storytelling.

There's an incredible growth happening in India right now: mobile numbers are sky-rocketing. And it's not just Mumbai, Bangalore, and Delhi, but tier II cities that have maximum momentum. An entire generation of users has completely

skipped the desktop era and is experiencing the internet for the first time on their mobile devices. We have seen mobile native videos work best, and videos that add value to their lives – not blatant ads – get shared by peer groups. Until the early '90s, there was just one TV channel and the idea of a remote control didn't exist, but when multiple channels came on the scene, the BS radars in our minds evolved and we switched as soon as we saw ads. Users today have BS radars so evolved that as soon as there is a hint of an ad, they bounce off to the many options available. When the videos are authentic, add value, respect users' time and attention and engage in the first 3-6 seconds, and are native to tiny mobile screens...that's when the magic happens.

Startup tip: How to make it fast, cheap and viral

There are three surefire ways to market your video content effectively. First, pick kick-ass topics.

Research and curate, and use the five buckets of picking share-worthy topics. Second, find a video/content that comes close to what you want in terms of sensibility, so you have a creative yardstick. Third, either get your video guys to shoot or hire filmmaking students. They are skilled and passionate, and you give them direction, in terms of ideas and sensibility. This keeps the costs low, ensures good quality, and has potential to be shared like crazy. Do 10 such experiments, and two will work, just like movie studios.

We have two teams in our office: one that spends money and gets results, and then there's us who get results without spends. To me, spending is easy, but getting there organically is startup swag!

My number one growth hack is simple: Focus on the user! Make their life easy and they will come in millions looking for you, downloading your apps and becoming your evangelists.

(Copy credits: Anisha Abraham, Growth Hacks India)

AASHISH CHOPRA, HEAD OF CONTENT MARKETING AT IXIGO

Aashish Chopra is Head of Content Marketing at ixigo. He was named DMAi Content Marketer of the Year, at the Direct Marketing Association India (DMAi) Awards in February 2016. He recently was part of the 'Ask Me Anything on Facebook' event hosted by Growth Hacking India where he answered questions on everything from creating viral content and choosing the right platform to marketing content effectively. He blogs at http://www.aashishchopra.com/

Sunil Rao, Country Head - Strategic Partner Development - VCs and Startups, Google, in conversation with Arjun Kolady, Head of E-commerce, Local, and Travel, Facebook India, at the Kstart Digital Marketing Summit.

Buzzing trends and predictions of digital marketing

NIKHIL MAKWANA, DIGITAL MARKETING CONSULTANT

Interactive content, and influencer marketing set to grab eyeballs

The digital space is a wide expanse to explore and find countless marketing opportunities. The more you explore, the more you find avenues to market your product or service.

Consequently, the digital marketing industry is complex and unstable. Every day, new software, new hardware devices, new entities and new users' experiences are introduced, which either get adopted or ignored by brands or marketers. Early adopters of the right strategy are the ones acing the competition, emerging as the best brands and industry experts while the laggards and Luddites miss out on crucial opportunities.

The year 2016 looks good for digital marketing, and I believe we can bring tremendous results by putting ourselves out there. Some key activities are related to:
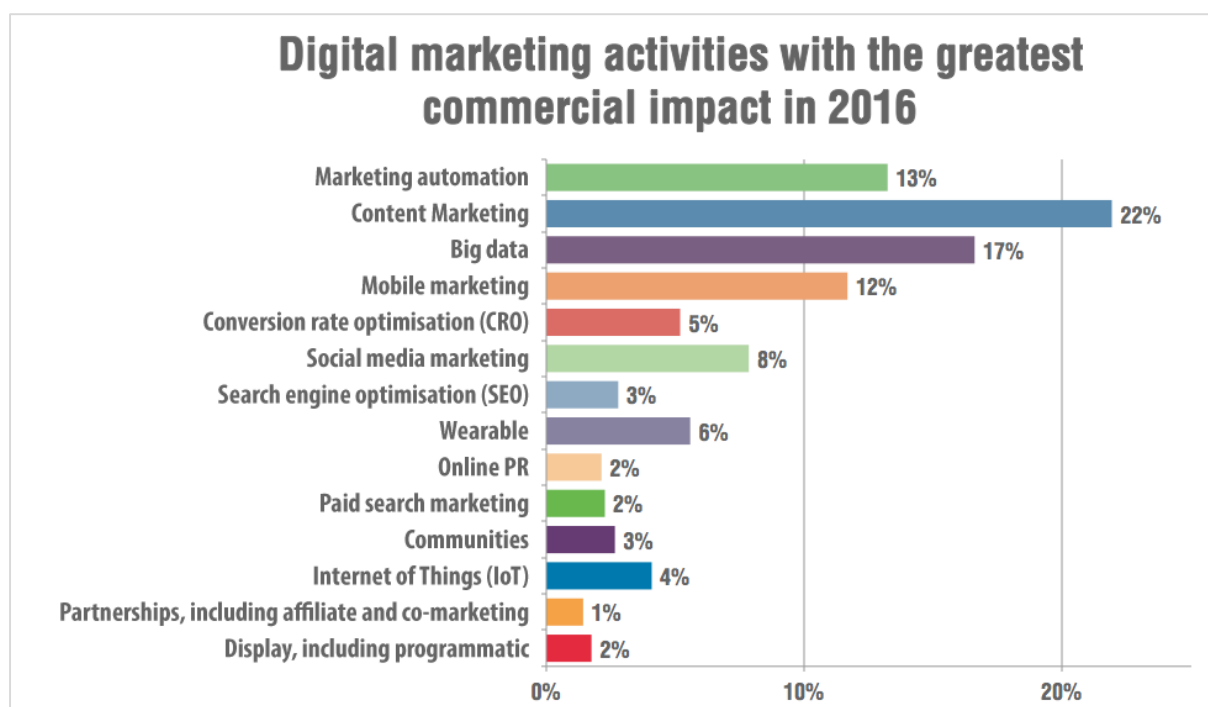
- **Big data** (including market and customer awareness and predictive analytics)

- **Communities** (brand-specific or vertical communities)

- **Display ads** (banners at a publisher's space; ad networks and social media, including retargeting and programmatic)

- **Internet of Things** (IoT), marketing applications, marketing automation (including CRM, interactive email marketing, and web personalisation)

- **Online PR and influencer outreach**

- **Partnerships including affiliate and co-marketing**

- **Social media marketing** (including social CRM and social customer care)

- **Wearables**

A section of the audience at the Kstart Digital Marketing Summit.

Take a look at the graph from the survey, 'Digital marketing activities with the greatest commercial impact in the year 2016:

Digital marketing activities with the greatest commercial impact in 2016

Activity	Percentage
Marketing automation	13%
Content Marketing	22%
Big data	17%
Mobile marketing	12%
Conversion rate optimisation (CRO)	5%
Social media marketing	8%
Search engine optimisation (SEO)	3%
Wearable	6%
Online PR	2%
Paid search marketing	2%
Communities	3%
Internet of Things (IoT)	4%
Partnerships, including affiliate and co-marketing	1%
Display, including programmatic	2%

Source: Survey by smartinsights.com

Brands and marketers believe that content, mobile, wearables, big data, and marketing automation tools are the more trusted and promising digital marketing activities of 2016.

Every year, brands and marketers face new challenges and have more opportunities to explore and augment their ongoing digital marketing campaigns. They invest in best-practice activities, in a bid to get ahead of competition. Through all this, have they ever thought about or predicted the future of digital marketing? And, more crucially, what can they expect from the industry and how will current trends change?

There are always any number of predictions for the latest digital marketing technologies and trends, including what's new and what's next. So let me also take a shot at the future.

Five predictions

1. Fewer articles but more interactive content = win-win situation

Content marketing will be the focus in upcoming digital marketing strategies. Currently, brands and marketers are focusing more on articles rather than creating more interactive content. Significantly, content such as podcasts, infographics, videos, slideshows and quizzes generally take far more time to produce compared to a perfectly curated article. This is why the internet is flooded with billions of articles.

However, from the users' point of view, most would rather watch an engaging video than read a 1,500-2,000-word article.

If brands and marketers want to position themselves advantageously and beat competition, they should focus more on creating interactive content. A few years back, creating such content was cumbersome and time-consuming. Not anymore. Today, it is a piece of cake with the availability of online and offline tools. I also foresee the introduction of more such tools and online platforms to enhance productivity in this field.

> If brands and marketers want to position themselves to beat the competition, they should focus more on creating interactive content.

2.   Influencer marketing will be *de rigueur*

Today's users are more interested in posting viral videos, funny status updates, quotes, images, and other visual statements. They also obsess over trending topics and what's happening in their social networks and groups. Therefore, to reach targeted users and promote a brand is tough thanks to all this noise and clutter.

So how about reaching them via their own network? Generally, in each and every network or group, there are always a few people who are more popular or have a dedicated following. These social media celebs or personal brands are more engaged with big platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and so on.

Influencer marketing is all about partnering with such celebs, roping them in to spread brand awareness amongst the targeted audience. This could be achieved with financial compensation in return for some serious, result-oriented plugging of the service or product to build the brand.

3.   Non-digital ads will die

It's curtains for non-digital platforms like billboards and print as far as ads are concerned. Looking at the dizzy expansion of the internet, we can predict that eventually, traditional advertising will vanish and will find

space in digital ads such as pop-up ads, push notifications, in-app ads, and the like.

4.   Relying heavily on Google may be a big, big mistake

Time was when marketers, with very little effort, could easily bring their website to the first page of a Google search. But going by the recent changes in Google's algorithm, it is now increasingly difficult to get a higher search ranking to drive more traffic to a website.

I am not suggesting that marketers stop executing all those amazing SEO strategies, or give up their efforts on optimising their website and content for search engines. No way. But the truth is, relying more on Google after its recent algorithm updates and changes in search results can be fatal. Just keep in mind that anyone can find their traffic halved, or worse, with Google's next change. I would recommend focusing on traffic acquisition from multiple channels or groups to ensure a degree of reliability and control.

5.   Less cluttered market

Algorithms and machine learning systems are expanding to optimise the process of marketing material production. As I mentioned earlier, those who run with the ball first will be the best brands and industry experts. And it will be these select fleet-footed, quick-witted trend-spotters who will accept, adapt, and gain from the dynamic environment. Though these are a cut above the rest, they will necessarily have to work hard to stay ahead.

These predictions are somewhat general, based on recent changes and are open to discussion. What emerges can differ and end up surprising digital marketing strategists: we'll just have to wait and see how things plays out.

NIKHIL MAKWANA, DIGITAL MARKETING CONSULTANT

Nikhil Makwana is a digital marketing consultant and full-time blogger. He loves to roam in the world of digital marketing, and explore countless destinations to enhance his skills. Usually, you can catch him at the most happening food joints in Ahmedabad and also on **Facebook**, **Twitter**, **Instagram,** and **LinkedIn**.

A guide to the good, the bad and the ugly of programmatic advertising

DEEPAN SIDDHU, GROUP HEAD – DIGITAL STRATEGY, WEBENZA

Remember when your browsing was cluttered with those annoying pop-up ads for products you would never consider buying? Gone are the days where brands were forced to buy bulk space blindly, resulting in people who would never want to buy their products/services being shown their ads.

Today, programmatic advertising ensures that digital advertisers are able to target their audience, based not just on their demographics and devices, but also their online behaviour. Today, a user is shown ads in real time even based on the weather of the city he/she lives in. Today's technology allows advertisers to synchronise live television commercials with pre-roll digital video ads across computers, laptops, and mobile devices.

For example, if you are an avid reader of Mashable and an equally enthusiastic reader of a local food blog, it makes more sense for an advertiser to reach you through the comparatively less expensive placement of ads on the food blog rather than Mashable.

Business Insider Intelligence predicts that in the US alone, close to $15 billion will be spent this year on programmatic advertising. So what is programmatic advertising? It quite simply means automatic. A lot of people confuse programmatic advertising to buying ads through auctions, otherwise known as real-time bidding; but that's only one of the many ways you could buy ads programmatically.

Programmatic is often described by experts as the future of online advertising. While doing your research on the subject, you might have stumbled across jargon such as supply-side platforms, demand-side platforms, real-time bidding engines, and ad exchanges. I will try and simplify each of these terms to help those of you who are new to this subject.

Ad inventory: Ad inventory is the amount of ad space a publisher has available to sell to an advertiser.

Programmatic RTB: It's like Google AdWords, only it's for display and not for search results. To understand more about RTB, please watch this video by Google Small Business.

Ad exchange: As a webpage loads, if it has ad space for real-time bidding, information about the user viewing that particular webpage is passed on to an ad exchange. An ad exchange is an open marketplace that facilitates the selling and buying of online ads. With a robust auction process in place, the ad space will be given to the highest bidder and then the ad is served to the user. Ad exchanges include companies like OpenX, Microsoft Ad Exchange, and AppNexus.

Ad network: An ad network helps a publisher package and monetise inventory that is unsold. This is different from an ad exchange, as ad exchanges collect info from several publishers and auction it off in an RTB environment at the impression level. Ad networks include companies like AdSense, Infolinks, and Tribal Fusion.

Ad server: It is a computer, typically run by a third party, which tracks and delivers online ads independent of the website it's being displayed on. An ad server is usually deployed to establish the trust between publisher and advertiser, as all the statistics are maintained by a third party. Ad servers include companies like Atlas (now acquired by Facebook), DoubleClick by Google, and Pointroll.

SSP (supply side platform) & DSP (demand side platform): Publishers use SSP to sell inventory and advertisers use DSP to buy inventory. This removes the need for a sales
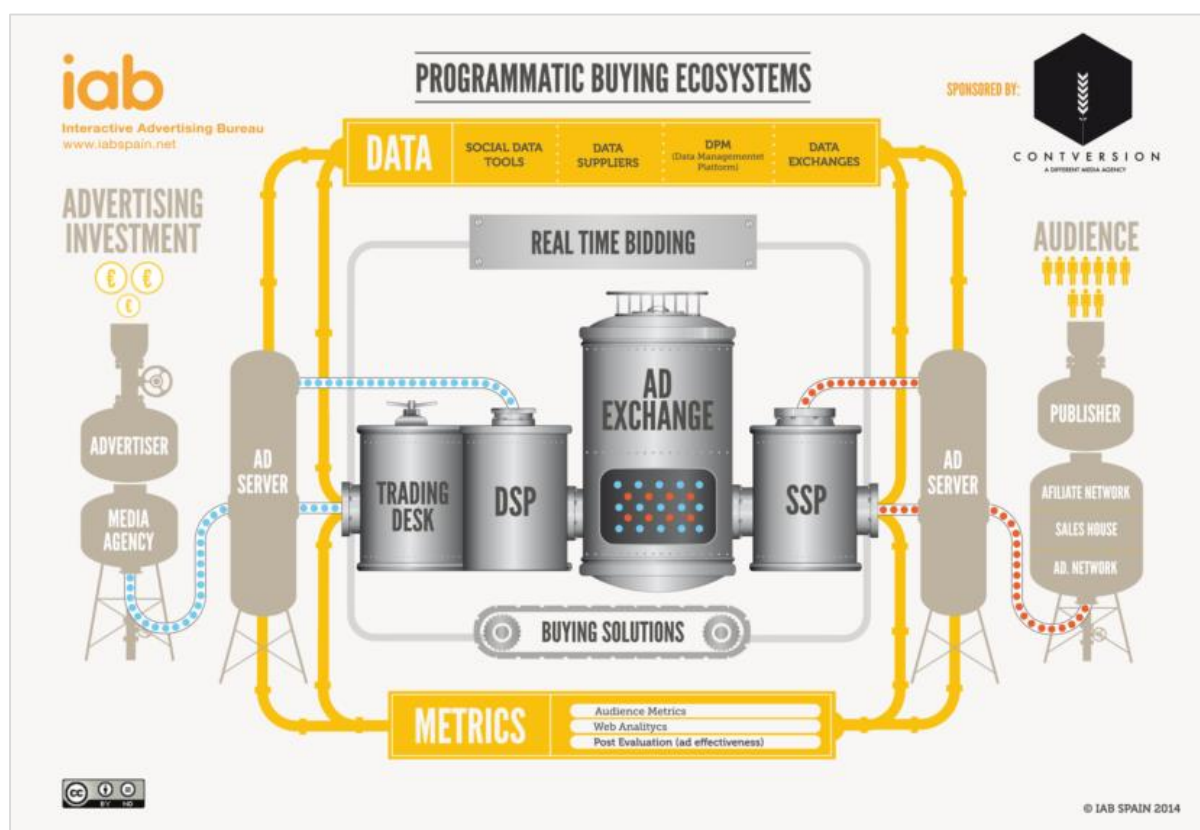
force and a huge amount of time as the decision to bid on an impression is made almost immediately and the highest bidder wins the inventory. SSPs include companies such as OpenX, Smaato, Rubicon, and DSPs include companies such as MediaMath, Invite Media and Dataxu. Some DSPs are focused only on channels such as mobile or video.

Agency trading desks (ATD): A trading desk is usually set up to benefit an agency and its clients. It works on the lines of a stock exchange, only it buys and resells media in large volumes. Marketers make use of inventory obtained through ATD and optimise

it using DSP when there's a need for retargeting. All the major holding companies such as Omnicom, Havas, and WPP have agency trading desks.

Programmatic direct: This is also known as programmatic premium, automated guaranteed, and programmatic guaranteed. This is an automated process of buying guaranteed ad space without an auction. Companies like PubMatic offer programmatic direct services for buyers.

The diagram below shows how the entire programmatic ecosystem works. (Credit and thanks to IAB for the diagram below.)
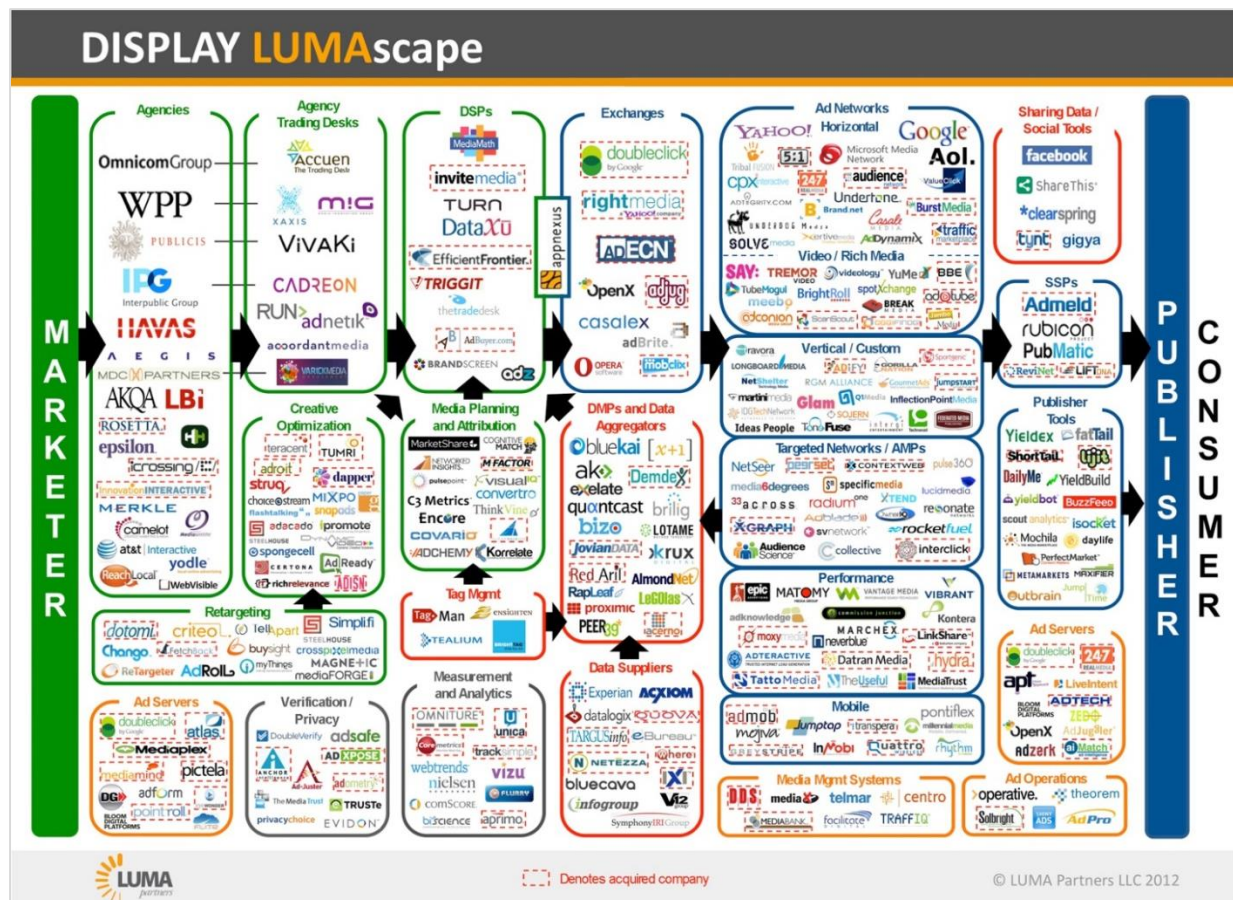

While there are ad tech companies that provide bundled programmatic buying services, there are companies who specialise in specific areas. Some of these companies have even gone on to expand their capabilities to other aspects of the programmatic ecosystem; however, this is where they started. This

LUMAscape graphic on the following page helps understand the ecosystem better.

LUMAscape also has an interesting compilation of graphics on searches, video, mobile, social, and a lot more here.

DISPLAY LUMAscape

Let's take a look at how a few brands have successfully adopted programmatic advertising.

P&O Cruises and their 60% CTR: Using a combination of XML real-time feed and dynamic retargeting, consumers were shown the most up-to-date information on cruises they had previously viewed on the brand's website. The Sizmek tag manager helped the brand build distinct retargeting pools based on destinations, holiday types, home income, and several other parameters. Using dynamic creative retargeting, the campaign generated a staggering 60% CTR compared to 0.05% CTR from a static campaign in 2015, and 0.08% in 2016. You can read more about the case study here.

Nike's phenomenal shot: Nike has always been known for pushing the boundaries in advertising. This time, the brand has decided to capture the excitement and energy of the FIFA World Cup. Within moments of a memorable
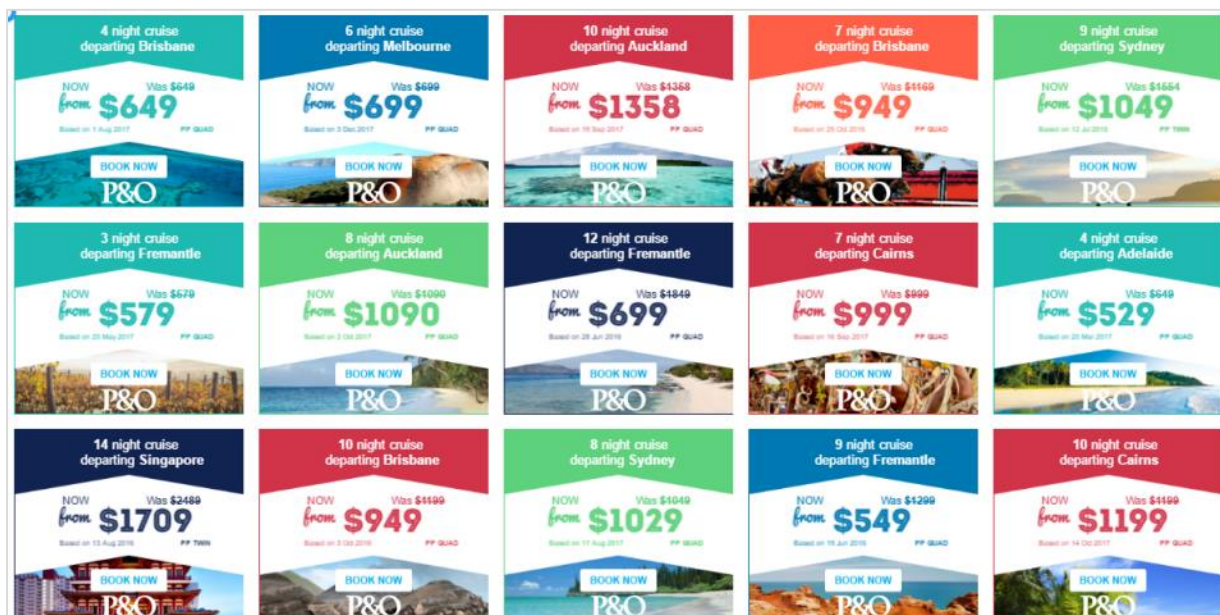
match, Nike delivered 3D display ads across apps and sites in 15 countries. Taking it a notch higher, fans were allowed to interact with these moments, make them their own and also share them on their social channels. Programmatic made it possible for Nike to deliver a mobile rich experience resulting in over 2 million engagements. Watch this case study.

KLM increased its ROI 200%: KLM has been an early adopter of programmatic buying. The brand used Google's DoubleClick digital marketing to build its brand, attract new audiences, and drive sales. The transparency in costs, control over spending, an easy campaign setup, and the ability to monitor results in real-time, helped KLM reduce its CPA by 50% and increase ROI by 200%. Here's how they did it.

Lego and their $5 CPA: Targeting users with a strong intent to purchase, targeting highly qualified prospects within FBX (Facebook exchange) helped Lego achieve 65% conversions within the first five days of the

campaign at a CPA of $5. A superb example of how a motivating and engaging campaign, coupled with the strong analytical approach, can result in high conversions. Read more about the case study [here](#).

The Good

- **Audience-driven placements**: The process usually begins with retargeted and targeted impressions. Hence, the programmatic advertising process is generally more audience-driven than media driven. With ultra-precision targeting, the advertiser avoids paying for the wrong kind of impressions.

- **Multiscreen experience**: For a long time now, programmatic advertising has been perceived as a direct response medium, relying on remnant publisher inventory. The technology has matured so much that it's now possible for brands to deliver large-scale branding campaigns across premium inventory on multiple screens backed up by audience data and supported by robust metrics. Brands like Kellogg & Nike have proven it time and again.

- **Real-time visibility**: Programmatic uses real-time data to give advertisers the visibility of how consumers are interacting with their communication across multiple platforms and devices. This helps brands come up with more appropriate and targeted messaging that will resonate well with the different segments of their target audience, thereby achieving the desired marketing objective.

- **One at a time**: Programmatic advertising enables the advertiser to serve one specific ad to one consumer in a single context. It goes to the extent where an advertiser decides which consumer gets to see what ad and when.

- **Pay for performance**: Advertisers will only be billed if the ads are served to their desired target audience.

> People confuse programmatic advertising to buying ads through auctions (real-time bidding), but that's only one of the many ways you could buy ads programmatically.

The Bad

- **Take my leftovers:** A majority of publishers across the world are primarily focused on selling ad spaces via traditional means, and only opening up the leftover inventory to the programmatic landscape. The premium placements, including home page takeovers, interstitials, and above-the-fold placements are not usually up for the ad exchanges or DSPs to bid for.

- **My dear publishers:** ☹ Indian publishers are already late to the programmatic party. The publishers/media houses that I personally work with are so behind, they call their multi-screen offerings their programmatic advertising offerings. Many of them clearly don't have a clue about who their audience is and have failed to segment them. Dear publishers, if you clearly know who your audience is, you wouldn't need a sales team to sell your inventories.

- **Not often at the right time**: Most often, ads are shown to the users for something they might have been interested in a week ago. Users might have already made the buying decision by the time the ad was shown. This may impact the brand negatively from the user's perspective because they might be conceived as too slow.

- **The sense of intrusion**: Several online users are not comfortable with companies profiling them based on their demographics, buying history, and literally tracking their every move on the internet. This is clearly a concern for marketers and advertisers, as it could affect the process of gaining the trust of potential customers.

> Technology promises to make the media-buying process cheaper, more transparent, and even more efficient.

The Ugly

- **Do I have control over placements:** Since it's all done automatically, the digital strategist or the marketer doesn't usually have a clear visibility of where their ads are placed, unless the proper analytic tagging and negative category markings are in place. The issues mostly come from sites, also referred to as bad actors, which claim to have significant traffic, while not providing audiences with useful content or information and are only focused on getting traffic by deploying black hat techniques. We call it different names including fraudulent impressions, bot traffic, suspicious traffic, etc. It not only affects advertisers, but also the entire programmatic ecosystem.

- **Game of metrics:** Across open marketplaces, it has become seemingly easy for fraudsters to game metrics such as click-through rates and view-through conversions. Usually, the media partners who recorded the last view or the conversion event are often rewarded. In some cases, such rewards lead the programmatic optimisation towards sites that generate suspicious traffic, thereby creating higher conversions in the dashboard. But in the end, the results essentially boil down to zero brand exposure and no actual consumer responses.

- **Did anyone see my ad:** While the industry has given the green light for media sellers and buyers to transact based on viewability, the difference in measurement of viewability between different vendors hinders the transparency layer. Several surveys indicate that ads served directly by the publishers to brands are more viewable than those delivered through programmatic deals.

A few may claim that programmatic advertising will eventually replace human beings. Technology is being deployed to replace some of the most painful tasks such as insertion orders and ad tags, but human beings are still

required to strategize and optimise campaigns. With programmatic in place, advertisers, agencies, and publishers will spend their valuable time customising campaigns and achieving desired marketing objectives over getting caught down with mindless paperwork. Technology promises to make the media buying process cheaper, more transparent, and even more efficient. The behavioural targeting capabilities of technology majorly rely on

tracking cookies, and hence, can prove ineffective on mobile devices. The industry is also conquering challenges such as poor inventory quality, URL masking and not-so-accurate cross-device targeting. However, looking at the numbers and success stories so far, I can only conclude that programmatic advertising coupled with data-driven creatives can deliver highly effective digital advertising campaigns, and that it's here to stay.

DEEPAN SIDDHU, GROUP HEAD – DIGITAL STRATEGY, WEBENZA

Deepan Siddhu heads digital strategy & performance marketing at Webenza, one of the leading digital marketing firms in India. He has helped global brands like Intuit, Infosys, ZipDial (Acquired by Twitter), WNS, Prestige Group, Wella, Bajaj Allianz Life, among 50+ other brands with their most successful social media, digital and performance marketing, content & influencer marketing campaigns. He is certified by HubSpot, IAMAI, Google and Cambridge on various educational disciplines. Deepan has also authored a book on inbound marketing.

Arunabh Kumar, Founder & Group CEO, The Viral Fever & TVF Media Labs, at the Kstart Digital Marketing Summit. In his session, he said that the key to popularity and acceptance was to tell authentic Indian stories: "If you are serious about anything, then be sincere. Stick to the obvious truth."

ABOUT KSTART

Kstart is a unique seed program designed for the next generation of Indian entrepreneurs. Our singular focus is to enable these visionary founders to build game-changing businesses. Kstart provides an integrated platform with all the essential components for success – fair capital, industry leading technology partners, mentoring from best catalysts, networks, and office space where our portfolio companies can share and learn. For more information, please visit kstart.in

Apply to Kstart – kstart.in/apply

Refer companies to Kstart – team@kstartcapital.com