
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Effective Digital Marketing Strategies Used by MSMEs in NCR Under New Normal

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| ABSTRACT

The changes in our daily lives, or, which have been called the "new normal," have an implication in the shifting of tradition to online business activities. This study aims to explore how effective search engine marketing, content marketing, influential marketing, social media marketing, and email marketing as strategies in digital marketing used by different MSMEs operating in NCR under the new normal and if these strategies can give a long-term gain in businesses. The study was conducted through a survey questionnaire by MSMEs owners in NCR. The study results found that Social Media Marketing is very effective as a Digital Marketing strategy and has a significantly low positive relationship with Digital Content and Influencer Marketing. The study will contribute to identifying the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies that will benefit the businesses under the new normal in terms of increasing their sales and in the future, as people get accustomed to the activities under the new normal.

| KEYWORDS

New Normal, Search Engine Marketing, Content Marketing, Influential Marketing, Social Media Marketing, Email Marketing, Digital Marketing, MSMEs

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1. Introduction

The circumstances brought by the new normal influences changes in purchasing a product virtually. Numerous brands had already shifted to using online platforms in selling their products. Digital marketing continues to be a popular strategy in promoting products and brands of different businesses. Many companies use different kinds of techniques such as search engine marketing, digital content marketing, social media marketing, influencer marketing, and email marketing. The importance of digital marketing is the access of individuals to certain information about the products and brands. Filipino business owners have made the most of their income from brick-and-mortar stores in the past years. However, under the new normal many MSMEs considered growing their business through e-commerce because, after the extended home quarantine, Filipinos were left with no choice but to buy products online.

In addition, in conducting this study, the global market research firm Ipsos surveyed 500 Filipinos, and 94% of them expressed extremely worried about contracting COVID19. This 94% of Filipinos think it will take them some time to return to their pre-COVID19 routines. Filipinos will continue to engage in online shopping and deliveries rather than going to a physical store. Moreover, restrictions in movement held by the government pave the way in patronizing online activities.

The researchers wish to focus on the different digital marketing strategies and how effective they are under the environmental constraints due to the pandemic. Addressing this kind of research will bring other lessons to different businesses; as they say, awareness of changes can lead to various opportunities. Determining the effectiveness of each digital marketing strategy on MSMEs under the new normal will contribute mainly to different businesses that are still operating or wish to run amid the pandemic. The researchers aim for MSMEs business owners to identify the effectiveness of practising digital marketing strategies on influencing consumers' purchase intention, leading to increased sales.

2. Literature Review

Hoekstra & Leefang (2020) have mentioned the significant challenges that marketing faces: how do we get the products to buyers? While taking into account that distribution is limited and many retail stores are forced to close temporarily. Multichannel companies are at an advantage because they are operating online and offline. In this paper, the researchers will explore the different marketing strategies that micro small and medium business owners utilize to survive and the most effective strategies. It is crucial to investigate related literature regarding digital marketing strategies, the strategies, and how effective this is. Sources from this study are easily available and readily gathered through the internet alone, primarily published research papers.

2.1 Search Engine Marketing

A search engine is a web-based tool that helps users find the information they are looking for. According to Prajapati Kishan (2020), Search engine marketing refers to any activity that increases a user's website rank in any search engine. The two types of search engine marketing are- paid search, which involves paying to be visible within search engine results, and search engine optimization, which consists in earning visibility within search engine results.

According to Ankita Puri and Naveen Kumari (2020), in the search engine marketing approach, marketers offer various keywords that the users might look at for specific products or services on the search engines that provide the chance to marketers to show up their ads. They also added that search engine marketing is essential as many consumers prefer to buy online shopping. It is a relatively efficient and fastest method to drive traffic to a website.

2.2 Digital Content Marketing

Digital Content marketing is a digital marketing strategy that enables businesses to create valuable and relevant content to attract potential customers and retain current customers. Dash and Chakraborty (2021) observed that content marketing is more helpful than traditional marketing because it creates customer purchase intention.

Marketers and business owners impose adapting and expanding online marketing strategies as consumers confine themselves at home (Enberg (2020). According to Dias et al. (2020), brands are challenged to rethink their strategies to remain relevant for their consumers. In addition, influencers of certain products and brands faced the challenge of creating organic and authentic content in promoting their products (Enberg (2020).

Pinariya et al. (2020) suggested the creation of viral content marketing. An example of this is their cartoon approach to Indonesian heritage. Moreover, the essential thing in content marketing is finding more attractive ways to make trends and consider the targeted audience.

2.3 Influencer Marketing

Influencer marketing is the ability to gain the trust and connection that influencers have built with their followers. Influencers are just ordinary people and not celebrities, who have just gained many followers on their social media sites, Argyris et al. (2020).

This term also refers to people who promote products or services through their online reviews and recommendations. It is often associated with a certain type of person, such as influencers.

Vinerean (2017) mentioned that sharing online content is vital for consumers' modern life. Furthermore, people tend to send news and interesting articles, share YouTube videos, and read reviews. Consumer-to-consumer interactions in both online and offline environments result in an attitude, preferences, and people's buying behaviour (Berger and Milkman (2012).

2.4 Social Media Marketing

Social media marketing is one of the most critical media in digital marketing in the current era. It is the fastest-growing digital channel and the most crucial tool in building brand loyalty. Social media marketing is the process of gaining traffic or sites through social media sites.

Puspaningrum, A. (2020) cited in his study that According to Jackson (2011) and Akhtar (2011), Social Media Marketing is a tool that helps companies communicate with consumers in building brand loyalty outside of traditional methods. Companies can promote products and services, provide support, and create an online community of brand fans through social media such as social networking sites, blogs, online games, microblogging, and many more According to Zarella (2010); Kaplan & Haenlein (2009); Weinberg, (2009).

Furthermore, as cited by Puspaningrum, A. (2020) William (2000), social media marketing is an intelligent business marketing strategy part of an online network. Social media is also a strategic way of interacting with customers and finding what customers want. With social media, customers can show that they like a product or content through votes and comments, and through social media, consumers can get attention and provide social action.

2.5 Email Marketing

According to Prajapati Kishan (2020), when a message is sent through email about any product or service to any potential customer, it is known as email marketing. It is a simple digital marketing channel to understand. Email marketing sells a product using discounts and event ads, increases brand awareness, and directs people to their business websites.

As cited in Zhang Xi, Kumar V, Cosguner Koray (2017) study, there are several reasons for email marketing's popularity. First, email enables marketers to send messages to their customers at a meager cost. Second, email messaging requires less preparation and execution time. Third, emails typically generate faster responses and create opportunities for interactive communication with customers.

Prajapati Kishan (2020) also added that the most significant advantage of email marketing is that it is very cheap compared to other marketing mediums. Email marketing is generally used to build loyalty among existing customers rather than gaining new customers: businesses and linking product images to the website.

2.6 Digital Marketing

According to Lodhi & Shoaib (2017), digital marketing can attract many consumers, let businesses communicate effectively online, and guide them to purchase. Moreover, it also strengthens the brand's value because it can eliminate misunderstandings by exchanging information about the products and services from the consumer (Tham et al., 2019).

Digital marketing comprises different strategies with a wide range of interaction channels for closer communication with their customers. Silva et al. (2019), as cited in Taiminen & Karjaluoto (2015), Digital marketing is a tool to promote the company efficiently and should be understood effectively to identify and select efficient marketing tactics and strategies.

2.7 Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises

According to DTI, there are two criteria in defining MSMEs- employment and asset. Micro enterprises have less than 10 employees. Small enterprises have 10-99 employees. And medium enterprises have 100-199 employees. In the National Capital Region, the total number of MSMEs is 201,123 as of 2020

Out of the reviews in this study, the researchers found that many individuals are investing more in online content in this time of the COVID-19 pandemic. The ability to use various digital marketing channels is necessary for businesses since all physical and social activities are limited. These reviews help the researchers to recognize the use, capabilities, and effectiveness of each digital marketing channel. Other studies indicate that the use of digital marketing has a positive effect on the performance of MSMEs, especially in customer relationships, productivity, creativity, and increasing sales. Recent studies have also shown that digital marketing channels such as social media marketing is workable instruments that can help attract customers. However, the adoption rates by MSMEs remained low due to a lack of knowledge on how to utilize the benefits of technology. However, most of the findings presented that during the COVID-19 pandemic, the use of digital marketing channels is one of the most effective ways to improve the performance of MSMEs and is also recommended since consumers are more inclined now towards online buying.

3. Methodology

This study identifies effective digital marketing strategies that can benefit and help businesses under the new normal. It explores how effective search engine marketing, digital content marketing, Influencer marketing, email marketing, and social media marketing are under environmental constraints due to the pandemic and aims to contribute in the future as people get accustomed to the activities under the new normal.

3.1 Research Design

The study would be quantitative research. The researchers will use data gathering methods such as online surveys (web, mobile, and email), direct mail surveys, or telephone surveys. The data collected will be analyzed, tallied, interpreted, and presented after collecting the survey questionnaire with MSMEs owners in the National Capital Region.

3.2 Subjects and Study Sites

The study subjects are MSMEs business owners located in the National Capital Region; the MSMEs are the Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises, with an estimated asset size of less than 100 million and less than 200 employees; the same targets are respondents of the survey questionnaire. The sample population of 300 respondents is stratified randomly.

3.3 Ethical Considerations

The study that will be conducted will be subject to specific ethical issues. A letter of consent will be sent to the said participants for participants. Also, the researchers will include in the letter if they want to share their identity or stay anonymous, following the privacy act. Moreover, a letter of withdrawal will be accepted from any point in time and for any reason - to reassure that their participation in the study is voluntary.

3.4 Research Instrument

The instrument used by the researchers in this study is a survey questionnaire to gather the needed data. The draft of the survey questionnaire was drawn out based on the previous studies, the researcher's readings, and professional literature. The questions prepared by the researchers are about the five variables- search engine marketing, digital content marketing, influencer marketing, social media marketing, email marketing, and the effect of sales. In this way, the researchers will obtain and assess valid responses about the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies from their respondents.

3.5 Data Gathering Procedure

The study will be conducted during the First Semester of the school year 2021-2022. The study will execute the following procedure:

1. The survey will be administered to 300 MSMEs owners in NCR. It uses the Likert scale and is grouped into six- search engine marketing, content marketing, social media marketing, email marketing, and effect of digital marketing strategies on sales.
2. Tabulation of data will be done for presentation, analysis, and interpretation of data.
3. The researchers present, analyze, and interpret the data.

3.6 Mathematical or Statistical Treatment of Data

1. Regression. This will analyze and understand the relationship between two or more variables of interest.
2. Mean and Standard Deviation. This will describe the respondents' profiles and determine the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies under new normal.
3. Correlation. This will show the relationship between the variables and is expressed numerically by the correlation coefficient.

4. Results and Discussion

Table 1. What Influence do digital marketing strategies have on MSMEs owners in NCR under the new normal?

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.573	.203		7.754	.000
Search Engine	-.076	.037	-.142	-2.067	.040
Digital Content	.052	.031	.087	1.665	.097
Influencer	.076	.028	.131	2.695	.007
Social Media	.499	.049	.507	10.092	.000
Email	.003	.038	.006	.084	.933

Multiple regression was calculated to predict the Influence of various digital marketing strategies on sales. A significant regression equation was found ($F(5, 324) = 36.906, p < 0.00$), with adjusted R^2 of 0.353. The respondents' predicted sales perception of MSMEs owners under the new normal is equal to $1.573 - 0.076SE + 0.076I + 0.499SM$, where SE is a search engine, I is influencer marketing, and SM is social media. Digital content and email marketing were found to be insignificant to the sales perception of MSMEs owners under the new normal. Surprisingly, this means that the predicted sales perception of MSMEs owners decreases by 0.076 for every one unit increase in search engine marketing. Additionally, the predicted sales perception of MSMEs owners increases by 0.076 for every one unit increase in influencer marketing and 0.499 for every one unit increase in social media marketing.

Table 2. Which digital marketing strategies were seen as effective and valuable by MSME business owners in NCR?

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
Search Engine	2.40	.8937	Somewhat effective
Digital Content	3.07	.8040	Effective
Influencer	3.20	.8261	Effective
Social Media	3.83	.4849	Very effective
Email	2.23	.8265	Somewhat effective

Table 3. Do various digital marketing strategies have a relationship under the new normal?

		Digital Content	Influencer	Social Media	Email
Search Engine		.413**	.212**	-.222**	.714**
Digital Content	.413**		.271**	.217**	.234**
Influencer	.212**	.271**		.179**	.271**
Social Media	-.222**	.217**	.179**		-.273**
Email	.714**	.234**	.271**	-.273**	

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Search Engine Marketing was found to have a significant low to a moderate positive relationship with the influencer and digital content marketing, respectively. It has a significant low negative relationship with social media marketing and a significantly high positive relationship with email marketing.

Digital content marketing was found to have a significant low to moderate positive relationship with the other four marketing strategies.

Influencer marketing was found to have a significant low positive relationship with the other four marketing strategies.

Social media marketing has a significant low negative relationship with search engine and email marketing. It has a significant low positive relationship with digital content and influencer marketing.

Email marketing has a significant low positive relationship with digital content and influencer marketing. It has a significant low negative relationship with social media marketing and a significantly high positive relationship with search engine marketing.

4.1 Discussion

Social Media Marketing has appeared as a very effective digital marketing strategy used by MSMEs in the National Capital Region. As the literature states, social media marketing is the fastest-growing digital channel. This research found that social media marketing is the most effective, followed by influencer and digital content marketing. Additionally, social media marketing is considered capable of increasing sales. It can give a long-term gain for MSME owners as consumers switch to buying products on

e-commerce platforms because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Social Media Marketing also has a positive relationship with Digital Content Marketing and Influencer Marketing under the new normal.

4.2 Limitations and Future Research

This study has limitations that future researchers can address for future research. The first limitation is having only one kind of data gathering instrument: the distribution of survey questionnaires. Conducting an interview or focus group discussion can be done for future research to find more information and make this study comparable. Second, given our current situation where things should do online, it is challenging to conduct due to the limited collection of data and the ability of the respondents to respond appropriately in the given survey. Lastly, future research may also consider extending the study to a broader geographical area

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