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Qualitative Analysis about Future of Business to Business Marketing in Pakistan

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Abstract: e-Marketing is a substantial unit of the improved e-Commerce industry. Today, e-Commerce highly depends on e-Marketing as it includes commercial transactions on online platforms. Similarly, it also offers mutual benefits for all the involved parties. In this regard, the current research focuses on examining the future of Online Business to Business Marketing in Pakistan. The researcher selected a sample of $n=15$ employees of advertising agencies working in three major cities. Supported by Media System Dependency Theory, results indicated a brighter future of Online B2B Marketing Pakistan. The participants consider Online Business to Business Marketing having a relative advantage due to greater accessibility, cost-effectiveness, accessibility, and other relevant characteristics. Thus, the researcher concluded that, internet can be a greater choice for the manufactures to expand their visibility and generate more revenue in Pakistan. Bridging the gap between agents and customers regarding the internet concept can help to identify potential opportunities and challenges. Moreover, the expanding advertising opportunities on digital platforms, overall digital marketing can be further improved in a broader context.

1. Background:

Digital media enabled marketers to keep pace with the modern trends (Alnaser et al., 2020). Due to immense possibilities and advantages of social media marketing, business researcher and critics are much focusing on exploring the impacts of social media based marketing. According to Habes et al., (2020), digital media have greatly revolutionized the business arenas. Today marketers can access the target audience, increase their exposure to a product/service, and convince them effectively. As traditional marketing was limited, expensive and

comparatively less accessible, digital marketing is accessible, less expensive and provides exposure for the larger number of audience worldwide (Kutler, 2003). In this context, the concept of digital advertising was first represented in 1953 by Neil Pardon as he proposed some digital tactics in advertising process. Later, the emergence of new media also impacted the advertising, marketing and business arenas (Drewry, 1929). After several modifications and adaptation of useful tactics, digital media is now one of the most influential advertising tool. Due to social media platforms, companies are expanding their approaches, which is positively affecting their business growth and development process (Mirzaei et al., 2012). As noted by Jolly, A., Skiles, B., Cousins, L., Grobbel, W., Sandoz, A., Williams, (2020), digital marketing is a successful fusion of existing marketing goals and new marketing patterns. Here the goals are enabling the larger number of audience to access, connect directly with the suppliers, and make the relevant decisions (M. Ali & Yousaf, 2021).

Consequently, ecommerce is making remarkable progress since the year 2012. As back in 2012, the total ecommerce sale was 1.337 USD. Later in 2018, this sale increased to 2271 USD. Policymakers and stakeholders also predicted that if global sales sustain this pace, the overall sale will be reached to 5 billion USD till the end of 2021 (IAB Europe, 2012). Particularly, Business to Business Marketing is a prominent concept in advertising and ecommerce arenas. As in the Business to Business Marketing, the seller and buyer belong to a larger enterprise and represent mutual business interests (LaPlaca, 2013). As further noted by LaPlaca, (2013), personal sales are the best Business to Business Marketing tactic to build relationships as is one of the most effective strategy in growing robust relationship both with the seller and the potential customer. Similarly, affordability is another major tactic in a successful Business to Business Marketing. As customers can directly contact through phone or email, which also saves their time and provide them cost effective services (Chang, 2014). Likewise, Online Business to Business Marketing in Pakistan can also contribute to increase the outcomes of ecommerce. As companies look for clearer images, they also search for reliable sellers and partners, that can also enhance the overall reputation of their business enterprise. As now social networking platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, LinkedIn, and others are well capable of changing the customers' attitudes, they also revolutionized the persuasion process for commercial purposes. Therefore, this persuasion is done through examining and affirming the potential of advertising resources. If Business to Business Marketing aims to increase customer knowledge and meet their demands, we can expect brighter future of digital advertising in Pakistan (Bala & Verma, 2018).

Thus, by keeping in view, the significance of Business to Business Marketing in a global context, the current qualitative research also focuses on exploring and highlighting the importance of Online Business to Business Marketing in Pakistan. For this purpose, the first section discusses the importance of online Business to Business Marketing in the global scenario. In this **second section**, the researcher cited some relevant studies witnessing and supporting the Online Business to Business Marketing. In the third section, the researcher discussed the main theory supporting the primary propositions of current investigation. The **fourth section** contains methodology of the study, the **fifth section**

highlighted the results. Eventually, in the **sixth section**, the researcher discussed the results and made the conclusions accordingly.

2. Literature Review:

2.1 Internet as a Promotional Tool

Today, digital media is one of the most preferred pathway for companies to market their products. A survey conducted by Internet Stats (2014) indicated that, out of all the internet users worldwide, 47.5% of users are from Asia. Due to increased population in China, Indonesia, Pakistan, and India, the number of social media users will increase in future leading to even more exposure to online advertising (Constantinides, 2014). The social media usage has briskly increased during the last few years, especially in the developing regions, however, the developed countries are also increasing worldwide (Riches, 2011). Ease of access, higher availability and visibility are some of the main prominent characteristics leading to an increased digital media usage. As result, more users prefer digital platforms for communication and information gathering purposes (Turban et al., 2018).

According to Javed & Amjad, (2015), the greater exposure and availability positively fulfils the digital marketing objectives. Here marketers not only meet the individual customers, also the companies meet with the sellers to expand their sales and revenue. It also helps the marketers and buyers to build relationships that also facilitate the commercial interests in future. Internet enables the marketers to communicate with customers and even allows marketers to “sell each other”, which was very limited in earlier times (Bostanshirin, 2016). Likewise, from the business perspective, digital marketing has significant impacts on both large and small enterprise. The direct communication with the sellers, also allows the manufacturers to increase their productivity. However, the use of internet marketing in developing regions is comparatively slow and less considered by the stakeholders. Despite, developing countries have an increased number of internet users, a less attention towards internet marketing is a thought provoking phenomenon (Rotich & Mukhongo, 2015). A reason behind less consideration towards online marketing is the reluctance towards adopting digital advertising. For many companies it can result into their financial loss, as the fear is about trying and adopting new technology which might be a risky shift especially for the small level marketers (Urbonavičius et al., 2006).

2.2 Online Public Relations

Social media platforms have a strong potential to attract and persuade a large number of audience worldwide (Latif et al., 2014). As Kirat, (2007) believed that when blog writers tend to share their personal opinion about a product, more people likely to experience the relevant product, which not only increases the sale also, it helps to increase the brand loyalty. Here marketers also want to build and sustain good relationship with heir potential customers to increase the brand loyalty in future as well. In this context, social networking platforms are briskly important for the online marketers and sellers. For instance, Expat Global actively runs a Twitter account form more than 65% of the global enterprise including both small and large level trading companies. Expat

Global also has a Facebook fan page of 54%, a YouTube video channel of 50%, and a corporate blog of 33% global companies.

Moreover, more than three-quarters (79%) of the top 100 companies use at least one online platform to stay engaged with their customers from all over the world. Likewise, companies also search for highly visible blogs where as more social media users attract to use these blogs, leading to greater exposure to online marketing advertisements. These companies also keep their messages under consideration as they believe that smaller yet rational marketing advertisements are 80% more likely to attract the customers (Kirat, 2007). A study conducted by Bhargava, (2010) also supports the notion that online connections with the customers is one of the leading reason behind increased brand loyalty and revenue. Here the advertiser also avails certain financial benefits as when the clients click the advertisements, the company pays standard click-rates to the website owner.

2.23 Prospects of Online Marketing for Advertising Agencies:

Internet advertising involves using digital resources to inform audience about the available products and services (Habes, 2020). Popular marketing techniques and gateway regarding internet advertising involve: Electronic mail, social media, search engine optimization, search ads and others. Internet marketing aims to recruit leads by reading, researching, buying, or spending social time with potential clients. The "Personal and Business Online Use Opportunity" is offered by several new platforms for marketing purposes (Lee & Cho, 2020).

According to (Ohajionu & Mathews, 2015), there are many benefits and challenges for the internet marketing. However, the perceived benefits weigh more than the challenges. Here online marketers resort to digital pathways to attract and persuade the virtual audience. In this context, online differs from conventional advertising as traditional advertising mainly involve a limited audience, infinite exposure and some specific outcomes. Before the emergence of internet technology, the cost of marketing and campaign designs was much higher than today. Nevertheless, today companies can design and run the campaigns even on their own. They cautiously evaluate the internet users and their feedback concerning specific goods or products, and provide their customers with improved quality services/products (Alghizzawi et al., 2019).

3. Theoretical Background:

Media System Dependency Theory is based upon Public Relations that exhibit the long-term impact of mass media on one's life. The principle notion of this theory postulates the more an individual uses media, the more he becomes reliant upon it, and thus leading to greater influence on his life (Ball-Rokeach, 2010). In this context, there is a strong association between Media System Dependency Theory and Internet Marketing, which asserts dependency relations between internet users and online digital networks (Jung, 2017). The relationship between online advertisements and Media Dependency Theory is a debatable topic, as today users are more reliant upon online platforms to attain information and awareness (S. Ali, 2018). As noted by

(Loveless, 2008), users' increased reliance on social networking platforms is an explicit witness of digital media dependency. Especially, for gathering information and make the profitable decisions, internet is an important component. Here this increased dependency is also due to the ease of access and higher availability, that further motivate the users to depend on internet(Cho, 2009). Business organizations consider digital media as a strong platform to enhance their recognition and attract loyal customers. As a result, they achieve a significant brand awareness and generate even a higher revenue (Luo, 2018). Thus, the strategic use of social networking sites provides a greater opportunity to increase sales and attract millions of individuals from all over the world. As today, more people are upturning towards internet, they also have a greater exposure to online advertisements, that further reinforce a positive buying behavior among them ((M. Ali & Yousaf, 2021).

4. Methodology:

The current study is descriptive qualitative analysis as it is aimed at investigating the prospects of online Business Marketing in Pakistan. For this purpose, the researcher adopted convenient sampling method for the qualitative gathering process (Etikan, 2016;Sedgwick, 2013). The researcher focused on the perceptions of advertising agencies' owners and employees about implementation of online marketing strategies in the Business to Business Marketing context. For the data gathering purpose, the researcher selected a sample of $n= 15$ employees of advertising agencies currently working in Islamabad, Lahore, and Karachi. The purpose was to avail primary data without any further requirements, and advertising stakeholders were conveniently accessible. In this regard, field interviews provide a direct and thoughtful explanation of research queries. Instead of obtaining the responses in percentages and frequencies, interviews help provide an in-depth understanding of research queries(Ryan et al., 2009). Thus, the researcher conducted field interviews were conducted to explore participants' perceptions and experiences in applying different online strategies to deeply understand the phenomena. Here it is notable that, all the respondents were given free will to quit the interview process at any time so the response rate remained 100%.

5. Results&Discussion:

Regarding the perceptions of advertising agencies, participants believed that their firms are concerned about online advertising nowadays. Internet is one of most effective marketing tool having interactive capabilities allow advertisers and online users to organize and customize ads according to their needs. Online advertising is now an important part of the marketing strategies however, still it requires strong policies strategies and innovative ideas. Thus, the respondents indicated that:

5.1 Advantageous:

Respondents believed that online advertising uses all five elements in the promotion mix to meet all promotional goals from awareness to action. The Internet offers a more selective, expansion, cost-effective, model than any other medium. Today, the Internet is becoming the mainstream local media,

representative office or store in any country. Positioning allows the use of internet-specific systems to generate potential consumer patterns. It also prohibits advertisements from uninterested members. Furthermore, it provides text, graphics, motion, audio, and video users with multiple model situations.

5.6 Ease of Communication:

According to the study respondents, Companies rely on new media to communicate with customers and communicate with them through brands or purchasing. The relationship between them can stimulate or accelerate their purchasing behavior through various procurement processes. These options are essential for marketing in general but are related to developing personal marketing activities and managing customer relationships for individual users, especially online advertising agency employees.

5.7 Flexibility:

The Internet has become a popular advertising platform, as marketers have found that the Internet has greater flexibility and control over advertising content. Since the Internet can be a useful communication tool for marketing, the advertisers and professionals are interested in understanding how to get the most out of this relationship. The participants also claimed that the online advertising market could not be ignored, as more than two billion people worldwide use the Internet. By placing advertising content on significant portals, ads can work collaboratively with potential clients nationwide.

5.8 Tribalism:

Tribalism is another aspect of internet marketing. Indeed, "Internet marketing is one of its biggest assets" (Participant 3). The Internet can measure everything that happens to it. Therefore, it is easy to measure clicks and web traffic for a specific promotional movie. In this way, marketers can attract visitors to their website and understand their behavior.

5.9 Durability:

According to the participants, HTML files are easy to edit, advertisers can change web pages or ads at any time. There is no more media comparison. The lead time for a newspaper ad is at least one day, while the lead time for a magazine is 1-2 months, but the Internet has no such disadvantage.

5.10 Availability:

Online information availability is another major benefit of using online advertising. Most companies are now developing CGI scripts that allow users to access data stored in a database. Users' demographic and psychological information can be beneficial in identifying product markets. However, the main advantage is that users can get a list of people interested in their products or services.

6. Discussion:

Findings of this investigation are consistent with the research conducted by Raval et al., (2014) as, they also brighter posits of Business to Business Marketing in India. Also, the respondents of the same study (Raval et al., 2014) also demanded for further consideration regarding Business to Business

Marketing in India. The respondents also indicated that they consider Online Marketing as a major transition towards integrating digital trends. The current investigation also affirms the findings of previous studies anticipating Online Business to Business Marketing as a future of ecommerce. As findings of a survey conducted by Forrester Research, revealed comparatively less cost and higher revenue in 2006, raised from Online Business to Business Marketing (Alghizzawi, 2018).

Online advertising is briskly growing as now it has reached to 60% of total marketing revenue, indicating an unusual progress in marketing and ecommerce industry. Initially, the online advertising originated as an interactive channel to entice online customers, it now faces the edge of becoming other 'push' modes (Za & Tricahyadinata, 2017). This development is following an Integrated Marketing Communications (IMCs). IMC coordinates marketing campaigns to communicate goals with stakeholders, which means valuing customer engagement and user preferences. Consequently, bilateral coordination with consumers becomes a central objective of marketing communication efforts. This perspective is also visible in affiliate marketing, as clients engage in the marketing process, increase brand awareness and leads to greater customer loyalty (Gu, 2014).

Similarly, online Business to Business Marketing offers equal advantages to all the involved parties in Pakistan. Customers, sellers and marketers, all avail equal benefits. When customers enjoy better quality products, they also prefer to stay connected with the same brand, leading to generate even more revenue (Akber et al., 2013). As a result, sellers consider Online Marketing as source of enhancing their brand awareness and loyalty among customers. Although, many companies prefer traditional marketing, they utilize both new and traditional media for marketing purposes (Khan & Siddiqui, 2013). For this purpose, Online Marketers in Pakistan use different techniques such as popup ads, banner ads, and all other methods to facilitate the manufacturers (Soomro et al., 2012).

Especially, in the Online Business to Business Marketing, manufacturers demand for expertise for technological persuasion purposes. Here advertising agencies resort to marketing communication, as online platforms also provide us with web-based communication and interaction facilities. Ease of communication also makes digital advertising better than traditional advertising (Povolná, 2018).

Thus, the internet availability and users' dependence on digital platforms, reflect several prospects for Online Business to Business Marketing in Pakistan. For instance, Atlas Copco and Tetra Pack are two renowned companies also rely on Online Business to Business Marketing. As a result, these industries are today, having a distinguished position in e-commerce also increasing the annual GDP of Pakistan (Azhar, 2015; Ali et al., 2020).

6.1 Theoretical Relevance:

An important aspect of current investigation was to examine the gaps between the advertising industry and consumers. While exploring this phenomenon, it was found that a majority of the respondents believed that adoption and integration of ICT is undoubtedly one of the most critical developments that influenced global marketing in the present era. Here Media Dependency Theory fits nicely with the current study as people prefer social media to meet their

daily needs, such as communication, interaction, knowledge, and information. This shows an increased dependency on online media platforms. Similarly, when marketing, Media System Dependency Theory also fits well as marketers and customers rely on the Internet for marketing and advertising purposes (Koliouka et al., 2013). Thus, as a medium of communication, the Internet is providing competitive arena for advertising. Respondents also revealed that, advertising agencies should reorganize their infrastructure, services, technology and organizational policies. Now, agents motivating their clients to consider expanding their services. Similarly, advertising agencies should also invest in building and maintaining valuable customer relationships to maintain customer loyalty and brand awareness.

6.2 Conclusion:

The current research assessed the perceptions of advertising agencies regarding the Business to Business Marketing in Pakistan. The researcher used qualitative research method for data gathering purposes. The study examined the gap between the expectations of agents about the Internet's as a medium of advertising. The results indicated that the internet provides a healthy and reliability pathway for the Business to Business Marketing in Pakistan. There are several factors adding to Internet's value such as cost-effectiveness, reliability, rapid growth, ease of access, greater availability, and others. As a result, internet can be a greater choice for the manufactures to expand their visibility and generate more revenue in future. In this regard, bridging the gap between agents and customers regarding the internet concept can help to identify potential opportunities and challenges. moreover, the expanding advertising opportunities on digital platforms, overall digital marketing can be further improved in a broader context.

Limitations of Study:

Despite Online Business to Business Marketing is a less explored phenomenon in Pakistan and the current study highlights it in a better possible manner, it also contains two primary limitations. First, the sample size of only $n= 15$ individuals from advising agencies limits the scope of this research. Second, the study involves qualitative data, which has its own certain limitations as compared to quantitative data. However, the researcher recommends more studies examining the perceptions of advertising agencies regarding Online Business to Business Marketing in Pakistan. Especially for the medium and small size enterprise, exploring the different aspects concerning Online Business to Business Marketing will dig out even more in-depth findings.

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