

From Traditional to Digital: The Evolution of the Business Environment – A Case of Marketing Dynamics

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Abstract: The business environment has shifted over the last few years. Indeed, more consumers of various products and services are utilizing online resources for answers to their needs. Products and services including entertainment and consumer products are increasingly being sought through online sources. This was evident in the surge of the use of social networks to gather information on products and services, interact with reviews on the same to ultimately make the decision on whether to purchase or subscribe to the said products and services. With further evolution of the internet, consumers of products and services started to utilize the online space for answers to needs. The year 2019 brought a global pandemic and this came with closure of face-to-face business interactions in several industries. With the effect of the macro environment and further, the digital evolution, businesses have had to cope with a shift on how to present their proposals to the users they seek to target, and this has led to a definite change from the use of traditional to use of digital approaches by businesses. This paper seeks to discuss the shift from traditional to digital. The paper intends to highlight discussions on the requirement for various businesses to adapt to the current prominent digital landscape presenting various cases in different industries that showcase this agility. The paper further seeks to highlight the marketing mix and the implication of this model to businesses in a digital context. The paper will then connect this to the postmodernism theory of globalization presenting the connection between the postmodern era and the marketing mix.

Keywords: business evolution, digital marketing, marketing mix, postmodernism.

1. Introduction

The business macro environment has evolved quite evidently over the period of 2019 to 2023. This has been characterized by global pandemics and wars that have changed the business landscape. These events have necessitated the use of ingenious means to be able to continue to thrive in an altered marketplace. Businesses have evolved into making use of online platforms to communicate on their product proposals, engage consumers and convince them to try their assortment. Further, businesses then need to provide an online means to make payment for the said products and ensure delivery of the same once purchase is completed. This inadvertently means that businesses have been forced to learn how to close transactions via the online spaces.

It also means that businesses have had to learn how to target, deliver proposals, and ensure consumer conversion within a limited attention window (Maryville University, 2023).

The more traditional means of marketing communication had to be converted to suit the online space and to also capture the targeted consumer's attention within a span of seconds. The liberty to be coy and clever with communication has evolved into the necessity to ensure message delivery and close of sale within a span of seconds. Within businesses communication to internal stakeholders also evolved. The more leisurely phone calls or corporate gatherings were limited, and the interactions became largely online. This necessitated an evolution in how to ensure attention to communication by stakeholders faced with numerous online meetings in a day. Productivity as well as delivery is still key for businesses and hence the need to ensure clear concise communication with internal teams that will ensure continued operations and delivery of strategy and targets (Maryville University, 2023).

That the marketing mix is one of the most fundamental models that focus on critical business aspects is evident. In the marketing mix as considered in the traditional aspect, the place of delivery is largely brick and mortar while promotion was largely done on mainstream media including television and print. The onset of digitalization brought a move of product offers to a more digital savvy aspect. With further development of digitalization, places of product delivery moved to online platforms with the promotion taking a more digital perspective. This indeed necessitated the evolution of businesses to a more digital savvy aspect with a different delivery of marketing dynamics where key models like the marketing mix are concerned (Bittu, 2022).

2. Empirical Review

In different industries, digital marketing has been embraced. The digital space has grown tremendously since the advent of emails to current inventions including augmented reality, artificial intelligence, and social media. The engagement with different options on digital platforms is easily done allowing for communication as well as transactions to be effected. Within

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the Covid-19 pandemic era between 2019 to 2022 there was an increase in the use of digital spaces and indeed this then spurred inventions in these spaces as the need from potential users continued to evolve.

Whitler and Narula (2020) indicated that Covid-19 brought about the need for organizations to find different ways to continue to communicate with their customers and maintain their loyalty. They present the evolution of email communication during the period characterized by decreased face-to-face interactions and increased online engagement. They state that while at the beginning of the pandemic, email content indicated a need to reassure customers of the organizations' continued business, it evolved to adaptation to the pandemic, communicating on value to customers, amid a surge in communication from different players, and finally a back to regular communication. It also addressed the role of organization leaders in participating in these communications where these leaders were quite crucial to the same. This presented a good footing for the evolution of email communication and ideally how this transpired during different stages of the pandemic. It however does not provide a direct link of the same to the customer and how this possibly moved them to choose products or services from organizations that constantly sent out messages during the pandemic. It also does not provide a footing for how these organizations evolved to include a more digital savvy means of delivering product for their customers.

Colang (2022) provided a link that allowed for an inspection of marketing dynamics as a factor of postmodernism and globalization. The discussion provided for the evolution of marketing dynamics in the postmodern era, indeed detailing that the dynamic of postmodernism and globalization so allowed less face to face interactions and more digital access for engagement of businesses to customers hence linking customers from different regions of the world through different digital means. This however did not explain the enhancement of this online interactions in a world recently plagued by a pandemic where this mode of interaction was indeed quite apt.

Shevchenko *et al.*, (2022) detail the shift in the dynamism of a globalized market. They link marketing communications to digitalization and provide that this has indeed led to more opportunities for entities to scale their operations. This however does not detail the relevance of the marketing mix in a global business environment and the effect of this on the decision to globalize entities.

Akter and Sultana (2020) underscore the availability of different gadgets across the generational divide. Indeed, the different types of gadgets in use by different individuals has steadily increased. Further, the adaptability of different platforms to these gadgets has been improved. During the pandemic, it was common for individuals to seek news on their available means and the available means was the gadgets. They further interacted with the same where purchase intentions were concerned. In Bangladesh, the beauty industry exploded to target these individuals with an increase of product placement during the Covid-19 pandemic period. This further involved enhancement of the digital platforms to include purchase ability

and selection of delivery to ensure the customer closed the sale and received the items. While this case study presented a good footing for the exploration of digital technologies for businesses, it does not allude to the marketing mix model and how this came into play in the selection of beauty products as well as final purchase and delivery of the same.

Emeri and Olabiyi, (2022) detail the shift in dimensions post Covid-19. In a study that provided for the different dimensions that shifted including social, cultural and academic, the pair included the distinct shift in operations for businesses. This study slightly infers to globalization but does not delve into the detail of this concept to allow for an inference to postmodernism to be included. The study however mentions digital enhancements of businesses making it possible therefore for continuity of operations during the pandemic period.

Afifi and Hayiranti (2021) present the evolution of marketing and communications in private schools in Indonesia. They discuss that communication is needed to maintain relationships and that this is necessary to ensure a continuous stream of clients. The study investigated the impact of relationship marketing in maintaining an interest in the institutions from prospective clients during the Covid-19 pandemic period. The delivery of this communication was a constant stream of online messages across different platforms targeting different stakeholders who would influence the enrolment of students in the institution. While the study presented a key aspect of marketing, it did not align this to the marketing mix model where other factors apart from relationship marketing indeed influence customer choice of products or services.

Bittu (2022) highlights the evolution from traditional to digital. This study allows us to appreciate evolution of businesses as a factor of the marketing mix. It provides for clarity on the placement of the marketing mix and a comparison of the same covering traditional approaches and therefore the more digital approaches. The study does not however provide for a link between the postmodern era and globalization characterized by more digital efforts that were implemented due to the advent of the internet which brought the world closer.

In a different dimension to marketing and the use of digital or online platforms, Farmaki *et al.*, (2020) discuss the impact of customer perceptions and its contribution to their engagement with companies. Indeed, bringing in the aspect of CSR during the Covid-19 pandemic, they underscore that companies built loyalty to their brands and were able to increase conversions due to their activities during the Covid-19 period and their showcase of the same. This showcase was achieved through digital platforms as the method of delivery and had a broad impact of endearing the companies to customers in international markets. This study does not provide the detail of the opportunity for global visibility for these entities, where engagements with international customers from the showcase of their CSR activities by digital means would then increase their reach and scale, opening up new business for them.

Navarro and Joy (2022) highlight the postmodern era in terms of the business environment. Their study details that indeed businesses in this era are characterized by more marketing efforts to develop enterprises. This study allows us

to appreciate the evolution of the business environment within the postmodernism context and hence introducing the globalization aspect of business. This presented the idea of digital means of market driven efforts to build businesses and hence the onset of the digital era for businesses. It concludes that indeed the postmodern era is one where a shift in marketing efforts to include more bold approaches allowed businesses to be forefront in the quests for customers but lacks the link to the marketing mix as a key aspect of business enterprises and hence how this evolved during the postmodern business era.

3. Traditional to Digital

Bittu (2022) discusses that the marketing mix is one of the most fundamental models that focus on critical business aspects. These business aspects are; product being the item being provided to the market, price being the compensation for the product, promotion being the information provided to the market on the product and, place being the site of delivery of the product to the market. In the marketing mix as considered in the traditional aspect, the place of delivery is largely brick and mortar while promotion was largely done on mainstream media including television and print.

The onset of digitalization brought a move of product offers to a more digital savvy aspect. With further development of digitalization, places of product delivery moved to online platforms with the promotion taking a more digital perspective. These were widely available to customers with companies providing various options. The price of these products-maintained considerations of lower overheads and was therefore more affordable and varied at different price levels for those with digital means to access these products (Akter & Sultana, 2020)

Inspecting Bittu (2022) allows us to understand the evolution of the marketing mix from the traditional to the digital era. The study presents clear development of the marketing mix aspects that were directly affected by the shift to digital and how this was essentially effected. It is quite clear that while place and promotion were largely shifted to more digital savvy delivery, price and product were enhanced to ensure that the delivery over digital platforms was relevant and suitably priced for the customer.

A. Evolution of the Business Environment

Navarro and Joy (2022) discuss that the postmodern era is characterized by shifts in social and business environments. In business, this era is characterized by marketing driven efforts in order to build enterprises. While anchored in modernist premises of product development, businesses in the postmodern era implemented different approaches to reaching out to customers in order to promote and grow their businesses.

As earlier alluded, the growth of the internet spaces led to globalization of businesses due to access to different regions of the world. Communication due to enhanced technology development was seamless and this moved businesses to interactions with customers in different continents. This led to demand being created that needed to be satisfied and hence the need to adopt to means to supply to customers far and wide.

With the enhancement of digital spaces, businesses that could now communicate with customers in different regions began to seek means to satisfy these customers. Enterprises grew their adoption to technology in order to meet this need. With more interactions of businesses to consumers and vice versa, globalization took centre stage with the postmodern era being very key to globalization (Whitler & Narula, 2020)

In their study on the evolution of the business environment post Covid-19, Emeri and Olabiyi, (2022) discuss that this environment has indeed shifted. The policies that were implemented due to the advent of the pandemic indeed brought the world closer together. The business environment shifted drastically with the need to implement systems that allowed for continuity of operations. With the increased placement of digital systems, globalization heightened. This opened opportunities for entities to deliver their offering to different markets from those of their placement.

4. Marketing Dynamics

According to Colang (2022), postmodernism and globalization indeed brought about the shift that is eminent in marketing dynamics. While previously the marketing mix alluded to face to face interactions and brick and mortar delivery of products, postmodernism and globalization enhanced by the digital technology development shifted specific marketing dynamics. This is evident as follows: a) marketing communication moved largely to online spaces with social media growing tenfold b) product development shifted largely to products that can be delivered through online interactions which led to more service based products c) the price of products was much more varied with specific options tiered to suit different customers.

Shevchenko et al., (2022) detail that globalization has increased opportunities for entities with adequate marketing efforts to communicate and service these customers on a global front. They state that indeed marketing has shifted in a more postmodern world, and this has opened up more opportunities for businesses to tap into in order to scale. The study allows for a relation between postmodernism, digitalization and globalization and the interplay of the three for businesses seeking to thrive in a dynamic marketplace that has brought players closer together.

5. Discussion

The digital space has evolved significantly with the availability of different platforms to be used in different ways. The Covid-19 pandemic brought about further evolution of the digital space with ingenious ways to reach different target audiences. The pandemic necessitated businesses to adapt accordingly in order to continue to reach their target market. The period between 2019-2022 brought about significant use of digital means by businesses (Whitler & Narula, 2020).

The effect of the increased use of digital platforms for business delivery impacted innovation, leading to the discovery of ingenious digital options for businesses to further reach their audiences and markets. Indeed, the period between 2021-2022

was characterized with an increase in options for organizations to implement in order to continue to operate optimally (Musembi, 2020).

Further than the pandemic, other macroeconomic factors have impacted the business landscape necessitating ingenuity when targeting different markets. Businesses are forced to look beyond their borders in order to sustain their operations. This has increased the need for adaptation to digital means of identifying and tapping into available opportunities (Sharma et al., 2020).

The adaptation to different digital models in Kenya has increased significantly. In her article, Musembi (2020) detailed different technologies that were emerging and available in the country including cloud computing, e-commerce, online advertising and payment services. These different digital business models were clearly available for businesses to explore in-order to enhance their operations. In a further study, Leposo, (2019) while studying the effect of digital technologies on firm revenues in Kenya, reported positive findings where the impact of deploying technologies directly increased revenues.

In Nigeria, the impact of digital platforms on small to medium enterprises (SMEs) is also quite significant. Ashiru et al., (2022), detail that emerging digital communication technologies kept SMEs operational during the Covid-19 period and have continued to grow in use during periods following the pandemic.

6. Conclusion

The business environment has shifted significantly since the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic. The digital prowess of organizations will therefore set them apart. The global business environment has evolved significantly necessitating some level of digital capacity to allow entities to operate optimally (Leposo, 2019). Companies seeking to increase their revenue generation will need to reach more audiences with the offer they are delivering. This necessitates for increased capacity to reach more people within specific budgets. There is also a need to ensure they stand out from other entities by operating seamlessly. Digital platforms allow for this (Leposo, 2019).

Entities seeking to move beyond their current borders will also need to utilize effective means to target different sets of markets and communicate effectively on their offering. We find that digital platforms allow for this to be achieved. Operational aspects of businesses will also set them apart in a dynamic

market. Ensuring sufficient and efficient production, promoting products and services, communication, and delivery of the same will take an incorporation of digital platforms to ensure operational efficiency (Sharma et al., 2020).

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