

Understanding Digital Marketing

Understanding Digital Marketing

A complete guide to engaging customers and implementing successful digital campaigns

5TH EDITION

Damian Ryan



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PREFACE

Donald Trump knows what you did last summer....

A few months before C19 and lockdown was upon us I went to a ‘TED Talk workshop’, where the instructors reminded me of the importance of a snappy headline to improve my chances of engaging an audience. Did it work? Did my headline get your attention? Did it make you want to read the rest of this preface?

I hope so, because aside from the sensationalism of the title, I’m attempting (perhaps clumsily) to describe what’s really going on with digital and what’s really happening with our beloved Internet.

For years I have espoused the joys of an open Internet, a free web enabling all comers to access information, education and entertainment as well as myriad business and consumer services to make our lives easier and bring the world together on to the same page.

This now seems more and more unlikely. The reality is a continuous barrage of hacking shadowed by a general under-investment in cybersecurity, accompanied by a plummeting trust in content, outright abuse of personal data (as evidenced by the Cambridge Analytica scandal) and now clear government direction away from technical globalization for the first time in decades. Where will this lead us?

What are the implications for digital marketers now and in the future?

This book will help digital marketers deal with current issues and hopefully empower a new generation of practitioners too, but as for the future, I believe we are in danger of going headlong into a highly fragmented world consisting of several ‘internets’, enabled by the breaking down of protections such as net neutrality, each setting their own rules of access and conduct while offering safe and secure online marketplaces in exchange for the mighty dollar.

These new internets may be stratified by price (safe content at a cost) geography (eg China only) or exclusivity (members only).

Will we see tolls in place to access certain internets? You betcha!

So for all those aspiring digital marketers out there, enjoy the relatively simple fare of these times because I believe it's soon going to become a lot more complicated and require significantly more investment to run successful, global online campaigns – at least that's the conclusion I have come to as I sit here in mid-2020.

But enough of my ramblings, let's stay here in the present.

The desire for digital marketing has, in my opinion, forsaken the fundamental objective of digital marketing... to engage our digital generation in an appropriate, mutually agreeable and profitable manner, whereby the consumer feels loved and has received value for money and value for their time.

This IS the marketplace. If you are an agency or brand and are not prepared to subscribe to this objective, well then, be under no illusion, your days are numbered.

Is it any wonder that adblocking has become such a major issue for publishers and brands? Is it any surprise that marketers struggle to maintain audience and engender loyalty? The consumers have been left out of the conversation for too long and it will now start to show.

Some say digital marketing is dead... digital marketing is not dead – BAD digital marketing is dead and bad digital marketers and their bad agencies are dead too.

Disrespecting privacy, irritating consumers and making the mistake of copying what you do online with what you do offline is dead.

Being intrusive, awkward, inconsistent, with crappy online forms that don't scroll down properly and archaic interfaces that wouldn't know UX or CX even if it bit them in the BX... you're dead too!

Simply put, if your friends spoke to you the way some digital marketers speak to you then you would probably punch them in the face or leave them waiting outside in the rain.

If marketers want to be part of this brave, new and exciting landscape then we have to get our act together and start being more inclusive and empathetic towards the interests of consumers – marketers in the coming years will be judged on the experience they provide for their customers. We used to talk about the four Ps of marketing: price, place, promotion and product. E Jerome McCarthy, the originator of the four Ps, sadly passed away a few years ago. He wasn't wrong about the four Ps – it is just what we knew and understood at that time.

I have rewritten the four Ps to apply to our current generation of stakeholders. Please consider the 10 Ps:

- 1 **PERFORMANCE:** how is your activity measured against objectives and against competitors? The internet has shrunk the world but massively grown the available number of service and product providers. How you perform in relation to digital engagement consigns you to success or failure.
- 2 **PRESENCE:** how is yours? Online, mobile, search engines, social media? Are you there? Do you look good? Is it working?
- 3 **PLEASURE:** how do your customers rate their user and customer experience with you versus your competitors? Who does this better than anyone? If you know that answer then **BE LIKE THEM...** do not settle for second best.
- 4 **PROXIMITY:** are you there when your customers need you? Are you on hand 24/7? This generation wants it all and wants it now.
- 5 **PERTINENT:** are you relevant? Are your marketing and outreach relevant to their needs at this time? Do you know? Well if you don't then go and find out – ask them, they won't bite!
- 6 **PROCESS:** how is this working out for your customers? How you engage is one thing but the actual process of delivery and payment (another P?) is not to be overlooked.
- 7 **PERSONAL:** not sure why I just thought of this but used I fly to Dublin every 10 days or so (before lockdown of course) and there's a guy on passport control who checks my passport and says, 'Thanks, Damian'. It makes me smile and I like him. That is what we need online – not Mrs Ryan or Dear Sir... when used in the right way, personalization is very powerful.
- 8 **PREFERENCES:** and if your customers don't want to go too personal then provide them with preferences so you can all learn and all get the best from your relationship.
- 9 **PROFIT:** weirdly this was not part of the original four Ps but it should have been. Everything you do should be measurable and return on investment (ROI) is often a crucial part of this measurement.
- 10 **PEOPLE:** ones and zeroes are all very useful but let's not forget we are dealing with people – ignore this at your peril!

The past, the current and the future are and always have been about the customer. Never lose sight of that fact. Regardless of technology, competition, media... now is the time to engage with customers on their terms, to

listen and show that you love them – and if digital media can help to achieve that then digital marketing is very much alive and well.

In the pages that follow I take you on a journey into the world of digital marketing. I will show you how it all started, how it got to where it is today, and where thought leaders in the industry believe it is heading in the future. Most importantly of all, I'll show you – in a practical, no-nonsense way – how you can harness the burgeoning power of digital media to engage with consumers, drive your business to the crest of this digital marketing wave, and keep it there.

This book will:

- help you and your business to understand that digital marketing is all about people – the customers that your business relies on for success and the people in your team who are responsible for engaging and delighting these customers by understanding that the new currency is EXPERIENCE;
- help you and your business to choose online advertising and marketing channels that will get your ideas, products and services to a massive and ever-expanding market;
- give you that elusive competitive edge that will keep you ahead of the pack;
- future-proof your business by helping you to understand the origins of digital marketing and the trends that are shaping its future;
- give you a concept of the scale of the online marketplace, the unfolding opportunities and the digital service providers who will help your business to capitalize on them;
- provide practical, real-world examples of digital marketing successes – including leading brands that have become household names in a relatively short space of time;
- offer insight through interviews, analysis and contributions from digital marketing experts;
- ... ultimately, give you the tools you need to harness the power of the internet in order to take your business wherever you want it to go.

As you travel into this digital world the book will reveal how leading marketers in sectors as diverse as travel, retail, gambling and adult entertainment have stumbled on incredibly effective techniques to turn people on to doing business online, reaping literally millions as a result. The book will

show you how to apply their experience to transform your own digital enterprise.

Whether you are looking to start up your own home-based internet business, work for a large multinational or are anywhere in between, if you want to connect with your customers today and into the future, you need digital channels as part of your marketing mix.

The internet has become the medium of choice for a generation of consumers: the first generation to have grown up taking for granted instant access to digital information. This generation integrates digital media into every facet of its daily life, in ways we could never have conceived in even the recent past. Today this generation of digital natives is entering the workplace and is spending like never before. This is the mass market of tomorrow, and for business people and marketers the challenge is to become fluent in this new digital language so that we can talk effectively to our target audience.

Television froze a generation of consumers to the couch for years, now digital media is engaging consumers and customers in ways that the early architects of the technology could never have dreamed. The advent of ‘two-screen’ or even ‘three-screen’ marketing is now becoming a real consideration – just look at how our own lives are changing and how we soak up data... How many of us regularly sit in front of the television with our laptops, tablets and mobile phones all on the go at the same time?!

When the Apple Mac came along it opened up the art of publishing and, as a result, print media boomed. Today the same thing is happening online, through the phenomenon of user-generated content (UGC) and social networking: ordinary people are becoming the directors, producers, editors and distributors of their own media-rich content – the content that they, their friends and the world want to see. But that is only the start.

Prime-time television audiences are falling, print media is coming under increasing pressure to address dropping circulation figures – and while the old school sits on the sidelines, bloated and slowly atrophying, digital media has transformed itself into a finely tuned engine delivering more power, opportunity and control than any other form of media could dream of.

In other words – it’s time to follow the smart money!

Over the last 28 years I have had the absolute pleasure of working at the coalface of this burgeoning and insistent new media. I have met lots of smart people and spoken to literally hundreds of organizations with massively diverse and challenging agendas. The one common factor was a hunger for

data and knowledge: anything that would give their particular brand that elusive competitive edge.

When putting this book together I wanted to make it as informative and practical as possible. Each chapter begins with a summary of its content, so you can easily browse through the chapters and select the one that addresses the topic you're interested in. I've purposely left out the jargon – and where technical terms have been absolutely necessary I've supplied a clear definition in the text. The result, I hope, is a book that is clear, informative and entertaining, even for the complete digital novice.

The book has morphed since the first edition, which was published in 2009. Then the book was more focused on very basic techniques with a lathering of common sense. I feel the second edition was quite similar in many ways but succeeded in demonstrating more points of proof by incorporating some really exciting and provocative case studies. In 2016 I finished the fourth edition and in doing so realized that I was no longer an expert in digital marketing – Marshall McLuhan, the inspiration behind my work, once famously said: 'I'm not here to explain, I am here to explore.' This has been one of the most influential quotes governing not just that fourth edition but the previous three editions of *Understanding Digital Marketing*. We cannot dwell for very long on what we don't know because it will become irrelevant or obscure – the best we can hope for is to gain an understanding and be able to apply that understanding to our everyday challenges.

The techniques were becoming so complex and technology was moving so fast that I had to pull together a group of real experts to help me provide you – the reader – with the best possible content. And now it is the fifth edition, or 5.0 (which sounds cooler) – so what's different?

Lots!

Every chapter has been updated with the latest advances in technology, campaigns and media, and we have also included brand new case studies to support each of the chapters.

So you hold in your hands what marketers around the world have been crying out for: a book that shows you how to successfully use the internet to sell your products or services. It begins with the origins of the medium and takes you through the various disciplines of digital marketing campaigns. The book travels around the world collecting facts, figures, comment and opinion from acknowledged experts, brands and organizations in different fields, getting them to spill the beans on how the internet delivered the goods for them.

And remember... digital marketing is NOT dead – BAD digital marketing IS dead. Welcome to the book and welcome to a world where your customers expect to have a positive and rewarding experience!

Damian Ryan
London July 2020

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Damian Ryan started writing about ‘advertising’ at the age of 15. A career in media, journalism and publishing followed, until one day in 1993, while visiting Chicago, he first witnessed the internet. Convinced of its potential, he moved out of publishing and in 1996 established ICAN, the first digital advertising business of its kind. Ryan built and sold ICAN and then repeated the process with two other digital businesses, before embarking on a career in corporate finance in 2006.

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Damian Ryan