

State of play of digital marketing and digital transformation

الحالة الراهنة للتسويق الرقمي والتحول الرقمي

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Abstract:

Marketing functions and tools are evolving tremendously since the last decade, mainly because of the progress of the internet and its related technologies. Customers are more attracted by interactive websites, applications and social media, and it is time for Algerian companies to evaluate so they can reach their customers everywhere anytime using digital marketing. In this article we will highlight digital marketing importance and its operating mechanisms, we will show the dysfunctions of digital marketing practices in some Algerian companies through an investigation based on feedbacks given by specialists who accompanied some Algerian companies during their digital transformation phase in 2015.

The results have shown that there is still a lot of work to do to perform a good digital transformation. It is easy to see gaps between offline marketing and digital marketing specialists; the digital cultural mindset is not really a priority for Algerian companies managers.

Keywords: Digital Marketing; Digital transformation; Algeria.

JEL Classification Codes: M310, M130, M150

ملخص:

تتطور وظائف وأدوات التسويق بشكل كبير منذ العقد الماضي ويرجع ذلك أساساً إلى تقدم الإنترنت والتقنيات المرتبطة بها. حالياً يجذب العملاء أكثر فأكثر إلى المواقع الإلكترونية والتطبيقات ووسائل التواصل الاجتماعي، وقد حان الوقت للشركات الجزائرية لأن ترقى هي الأخرى حتى تصبح قادرة على الوصول إلى زبائنهم في كل مكان وفي أي وقت باستخدام التسويق الرقمي.

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في هذا المقال، سنسلط الضوء على أهمية التسويق الرقمي وآليات التشغيل الخاصة به، وسنعرض اختلالات ممارسات التسويق الرقمي في بعض الشركات الجزائرية من خلال تحقيق قائم على تعليقات قدمها مختصون رافقوا بعض الشركات الجزائرية خلال مرحلة التحول الرقمي في عام 2015. أظهرت النتائج أنه لا يزال هناك الكثير من العمل الذي يتعين القيام به لإجراء تحول رقمي جيد. من السهل رؤية ثغرات بين المتخصصين في التسويق الكلاسيكي والمتخصصين في التسويق الرقمي. على الرغم من أن التحول الرقمي يمثل أولوية اقتصادية حيوية عالمية، من الواضح أن الأمر ليس بعد بهذه الأهمية بالنسبة للشركات الجزائرية.

كلمات مفتاحية: التسويق الرقمي، التحول الرقمي، الجزائر.

1. INTRODUCTION

With the advent of web 2.0 the quick growth in the number of Internet users made the web go from a restricted network to a global one. The numbers are still growing in terms of access to the Internet with more than 4 billion people, or 57% of the world's population (We Are Social Ltd, 2019). Internet in Algeria is also witnessing this phenomenon according to a report published in 2018 by the same source, there are 21 million internet users which means 50% of Algerian population is connected to the internet.

As users are taking the lead to new behaviour related to internet technologies, Algerian digital experts believe that it is time for E-commerce to be considered by Algerian companies as a serious new online sales channel and maybe even the only way to insure their future growth.

Currently, there are very few real e-commerce websites in Algeria, as they cannot really let users perform an online payment transaction, it is only allowed by Algerian government to some public companies such as AirAlgerie, Sonelgaz. Algerian users can perform a complete online transaction worldwide only if they have an international credit card.

It is obvious that Algerian companies will, sooner or later, have to be at the same level as their targets, but before arriving at the creation of an e-commerce website, companies must quickly master basics of digital marketing to be able, first of all, to understand this new virtual behavior.

Our main question in this article is to know what is the actual state of play of digital marketing practices and digital transformation in Algeria.

To answer to this question, we will highlight the fundamentals of digital marketing, and how companies must change through digital transformation (Solis, What's the Future of Business?., 2013), we will present the results of an investigation made with Algerian digital experts in 2015 who had the mission to assist some famous Algerian companies in their digital transformation. The results of this work is of prime importance because it represents the beginnings of the digital transformation experience in Algeria with its obstacles and catalysts and therefore it is a unique historical source for all those who want to study the evolving of Algerian companies digital behavior.

2. Definition of concepts related to digital marketing

First, it is essential to identify some of the most important concepts in order to build a solid foundation for understanding digital practices. In the space of a decade, terms such as digital marketing, e-marketing, Webmarketing or, more recently, social media marketing, etc., were born. This would never happen without the evolution of the Web to Web 2.0 (Solis, The Past, Present And Future Of Social Media, 2017). We will start this part by defining these new types of marketing.

According to (Scheid, De Montaigne, & Vaillant, 2012), Online Marketing is composed of 3 nested elements, there is firstly Digital Marketing which includes Internet Marketing and Web Marketing.

2.1. Digital marketing

According to the same authors, Digital marketing also known as E-marketing, is the set of an organization's marketing activities conducted via digital channels (websites, social networks, email, connected TV, mobile tablets, game consoles, etc.).

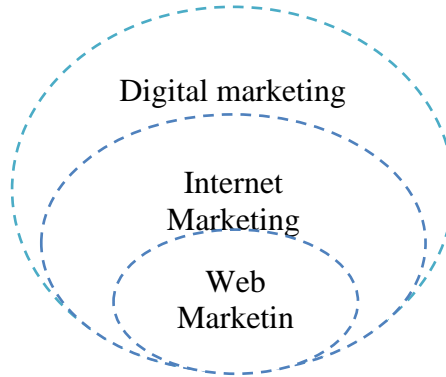
2.2. Internet marketing

It is a set of marketing activities carried out via the internet channel. Internet being presented as the use of the Web, emails, file sharing protocols and newsgroups.

2.3. Web Marketing:

It is all marketing activities carried out exclusively on the Web. From these three definitions, we note that digital marketing (e marketing or digital) encompasses all the actions carried out by internet marketing and web marketing, as shown in the following Figure:

Fig.1. Digital marketing, Internet marketing & Web marketing



Source : Scheid, De Montaigu, & Vaillant, 2012, page 4

Other more recent works define digital marketing differently by adding a social parameter introduced the advent of social media. Thus, according to an article published on www.socialreflex.fr (THOMAS, 2017) Digital Marketing is the fusion between web marketing and social media marketing. In this case, web marketing is merged with what the previous authors have called Internet marketing, thus considering both types of marketing as homogeneous and therefore easy to assimilate in a single type.

2.4. Social media marketing

It involves initiating and participating in conversations with online communities. In his book 'Tribes', Seth Godin Said: "before the Internet, coordinating and leading a tribe was difficult. It was difficult to get the word out, difficult to coordinate action, difficult to grow quickly." (Godin, Tribes: We Need You to Lead Us , 2008). Social media marketing aims to listen to the community, to dialogue with it, to establish a lasting relationship. This is where notions such as community management come into play, as it focus on brand awareness on communities to perform customer loyalty.

Offline marketing is not dissociated from what we said, on the contrary, digital marketing specialists such as Seth Godin defines modern marketing as the merging between offline marketing with digital marketing under the

name of inbound marketing (Godin, Permission Marketing, 1999). It is the integration of all digital tools into the global strategy of marketing in order to establish commercial durability by all possible means.

Fig.1. The three poles of Digital Marketing in 2017



Source: Thomas, 2017, <http://socialreflex.fr/definition-digital-marketing.html>

The figure above shows how the different types of marketing are linked, when a company does not use neither internet tools nor social networks, its marketing is Offline. When a company uses web tools only, it tends to perform web marketing. If its use is limited, for example, on managing a Facebook page this means performing social media marketing, and finally, using both web and social at the same time, means that this company is performing digital marketing. Marketing encompasses all the concepts of the figure.

After a brief presentation of the literature on the general context of the advent of digital marketing, we will, in the next section, highlight the specificities of digital marketing and its different impacts on businesses.

3. Digital marketing, specificities and impacts

Scheid, Vaillant et de Montaigne present 4 major specificities of Digital Marketing (Scheid, De Montaigne, & Vaillant, 2012) :

3.1. Multiplicity and additivity of actions:

On the internet, a site with its content, its design, its domain name is a communication medium in its own right. Search engines are another support,

third-party sites that display banners, a platform for video sharing, a page on a social network are all also supports.

Marketing on the internet opens the way to multiple and varied actions that do not replace one another but fit together. For example, "Search Engine Optimization" is one of the oldest digital practices and still essential until today, no digital marketing specialist will recommend its substitution by a campaign on social networks, he will recommend for a multiplicity of channels to catalyze the power of all digital tools.

3.2. A fast evolution

In the digital world, the evolution of uses should lead to the appearance of new practices in marketing; there is a strong interweaving between technologies, use and marketing. This interweaving is relatively complex, but demonstrates the dominance of technology on marketing. Indeed, it is above all the increasing speed technological evolutions linked to the "Internet" ecosystem which influences users behavior, and, thus, allows or forces business to evolve and implement new practices in their marketing.

Some authors such as Brian Solis are formal, there is a growing gap between generations and companies have to cross the gap to reach all its costumers. We are talking about "Digital Darwinism" (Solis, 2011) a time where technology and society are evolving faster than businesses and in which obsolescence can be blindly programmed if companies do not adapt to its environnement.

3.3. A "hyper measurable" channel

The digital channel offers multiple measurement possibilities, much more than other media. For example, every message broadcasted on the internet via an advertising banner or a post on a social network is tracked. Thus, the web tools track and record in real time all the interactions between the audience and the message, each action, each click is calculated and quantified with details (Geolocations, ages, sex, specific behaviors to the message, etc. Needless to say how important these data are to Marketing specialists, on the conventional media, it is very difficult to obtain the same information after broadcasting an advertisement on television.

3.4. An interactive marketing

The term interactive marketing exists to distinguish marketing techniques that are specific to the Internet. It is the only platform that allows instant interaction through clicks on any item on a web page.

The Web 2.0 allowed the user to produce information while it was only consuming it, it has given consumers the power to write opinions about brands and their consumption, to post reviews and to engage conversation in forums, rate products, leave comments on social media, give ideas, and most importantly to protest. The Web 2.0 has equipped businesses with powerful real-time analytics tools that track every consumer action from clicks and purchases to preferences and tastes. E-marketers have now the opportunity to change and adapt their marketing campaigns in real time so he can give satisfaction for users. The term interactive marketing is being replaced by digital marketing.

Since 2000 we are witnessing a mass extinction in the corporate world at a global scale, 52% companies in the fortune 500 have disappeared from the planet, they've either been merged or they've gone bankrupt, Westinghouse, Kodak Toys 'R Us, Sears Roebuck are a solid exemple about that. (Siebel, 2019). The same author says in video (Siebel, Digital Transformation with Tom Siebel, 2019) : "new companies are emerging with new DNA, companies Uber for exemple, have no cars, no drivers, and they're completely upending the transportation business. The same fact with Amazon until recently: no stores, and they're just rolling the retail market.

There are big changes going on at an accelerated rate, digital transformation shows how executives and organizations can survive and thrive in this new economy, companies that do will continue to grow and succeed and those that don't will be acquired."

4. The impact of digital transformation on businesses

4.1. Digital marketing imposes new rules

A study conducted by «Club des annonceurs¹» with 400 Marketing Directors (Baradat, 2011), Communication directors and general managers to discover the new challenges of digital marketing has identified some issues

¹ Club des annonceurs is an association of more than 120 big brands

that companies cannot easily resolve. Some statistics below show the tendencies:

- 49% of managers say that brand advice and recommendation have become an important issue;
- 56% say that Internet users put pressure on brands and ask for personalized and individual relationship;
- 57% attest that the power of Internet users is growing day by day because they master ICTs;
- 61% see that "generation X"² et la "generation Y"³ dominates the web but it the generation Y which represent the biggest stake for brands, because they are a native digital generation and so they volatile and hard to understand ;
- 62% suffer from hyper-segmentation of population problem and on this point Bernard Gassiat says on the same study that a good speech is no longer good enough; it has to be strong with a resonance while allowing to target wisely.
- 63% find that consumers are looking for much more than the physical aspect of the product, they want emotion, and they remain faithful to the offers they empathize with;
- 72% find that the most difficult to manage is customer loyalty.

It is amazing to see how marketing executives of these companies feel overwhelmed by the advent of digital and especially how Internet users master their virtual environment. At this level of the article, it is important to understand the levers to update so that companies can successfully complete their digital transition. It is essential to take into account internal issues to define a project and objectives, which will be achievable. The questions to be asked concern human, financial and technological resources as well as the strategic and marketing vision.

4.2. Digital transformation must be a company project

In her book (Herbert, 2017) defines digital transformation as “the ability to a company to react and successfully use new technologies and procedures now and in the future”. It is important to be aware that going digital should not be considered as a simple extension, but as a business project. From the

²Generation of people born between 1960 and 1979.

³Generation of People born between 1980 and 1995.

general manager to the assistant, everyone must join the project because all services will be impacted. Therefore, it takes a vision carried by a powerful ambassador, if possible the general manager who's role is to go beyond existing silos.

The issue that arises is the integration within the organization and this can be resolved with one of the two approaches below:

- Involve all the staff is the best way of making digital a shared reality, but a real challenge to raise all the teams in competence and in particular to integrate with them new employees having a web experience;
- The constitution of a team attached directly to the general management, easier to set up, especially through recruitment, but with a challenge when it comes to avoid a silo approach.

4.3 A real deficit of human resources

Companies embarking on digital technology very often do so with a significant qualitative and quantitative deficit in terms of human resources. Companies have trouble projecting in terms of need because the level of activity is unknown, this is added to the ignorance of digital professions does not help human resources managers to size a team.

It is also difficult for them to write job descriptions because digital business standards are still evolving enormously. For the same title, the operational reality is very different from a company to another.

The other problem encountered is the multitude of new expertise to be grouped together to achieve success. For example, setting up an e-commerce activity requires expertise divided into fifteen or so new skills and professions. : E-merchandiser, developer, graphist, integrator, traffic analyst, web manager, web analyst, e-CRM manager, technical and functional project manager, e-shop manager, technical manager, e-commerce manager, customer relations manager, etc. It is possible to outsource some of these competencies by relying on digital agencies or other service providers.

According to (Barabel, Lamri, Meier, & Sirbey, 2018) the skills needed for professional success are no longer the same before. While the subject is reserved for hyper-specialists in Europe, thousands of schools around the world have already adapted their model to focus on teaching these new skills.

One of the possible solutions is to train internally and help people to convert. The task is not obvious as learning a new digital is a big challenge. In general, it is necessary to train the entire company so they go digital, but to successfully convert a department manager into an e-merchandise is not an easy thing.

4.4. Financial means involved

It is necessary to be able to give the teams the means to the displayed ambitions. A site can cost a few thousand euros a year or several hundreds of thousands of euros a year; this is the difference between wages while you have excellent senior developer or a junior developer.

A Google Adwords campaign can cost a few euros a day or a few thousand euros a day. Going digital becomes a business project because it will mobilize significant capital that will not be assigned to other projects. Some companies borrow or raise funds to have a chance to carry out their digital project.

Digital transformation is a complex process that requires a perfect understanding of web technologies, as well as its tools, which leads to an organizational transformation affecting the entire management of the company. To do so, some companies use digital transition coaching agencies, some use expert recruitment and some hire consultants.

In the following section, we will present a review of the experience of some experts who have been responsible in 2015 for this digital transformation in large Algerian companies such as Mobilis, Condor, SEAL or Hamoud Boualem.

We will try, in the next part of this article, to relate as clearly as possible the experience of digital marketing specialists in Algeria. They allowed us to discuss with them and gave us elements about the obstacles and catalysts in digital behavior of Algerian companies.

5. Study of the obstacles and the catalysts related to the digital professions in Algerian companies

We will present the results of a qualitative study carried out with people in charge of digital missions, the objective is to understand if the environment in which they worked was favorable to their activities.

5.1. Conduct of the investigation:

Our investigation took place during the month of February 2015 and was based on 6 open questions addressed to specialists working on a digital project that includes digital marketing managers, community managers and others. The interviews were held by phone and reached 8 active digital specialists who has worked with multiple companies.

5.2. Investigation results :

Question 1: What are the difficulties / facilities you find in carrying out your duties within Algerian companies?

Table 1. Obstacles and catalysts related to the exercise
of the function of the company

Difficulties	Facilities
There is no precise budget, which creates frustration	Finding smart and less expensive solutions
The market is not ready to go digital.	
Sometimes the customer does not understand the digital approach.	
The hard part is managing the misunderstanding of customers	Some customers are more open and let us master our media social strategies
Lack of initiative and risk taking by some brands	
a weak digital culture	
Small budgets dedicated to digital	The chance to work with professionals
The misunderstanding of our profession	
The unavailability of possible content solutions (photos, the different product sheets ..) and of course internet	
Content problems and Internet speed	
Individual brakes like working without being declared.	Working conditions in the sense that we are well equipped in general
If someone commits you to something, it would be better if he knew what he wanted first.	

Source: Study results, Djalal Nizar Adnani, 2015

Analysis:

The opinions are not far from the elements mentioned earlier in this article and it is easy to see that at this level there are more obstacles than catalysts. First, there are the internal obstacles: budget restrictions, fear of risk, difficulty in having good content, brands that do not dare to let digital specialists express themselves and demonstrate their creativity, businesses want digital but do not really know how.

Then there are the external obstacles: an amputated online payment market, a different digital culture and customers not on the same wavelength.

Digital culture is learnt with success stories, but most of these stories that inspire digital specialists in Algeria come from a different culture that does not really fit with the local audience. It may be necessary to work more on the profile of Algerian users to strengthen its argument and negotiate substantial budgets.

Question 2: What can you tell about the acceptability of the digital professions in local businesses?

Table 2. The accessibility of digital skills to companies

Positive	Negative
It is progressing fast, 3 years ago community managers were very rare	for many digital is just a fashion effect
Companies that accept and value the digital business are telecommunications, Food industries and automotive companies	Investment in this area remains small compared to the rest of the world.
	The acceptability of the profession in other directorates and company heads.
	Companies still struggle to admit the importance of the power of digital in Algeria
	Many goes digital because their competitors are, without a coherent web media plan

Source: Study results, Djamel Nizar Adnani, 2015

Analysis:

According to these digital specialists, there are glimmers of hope for

the future but companies are willing to venture into the digital world without a lot of conviction. They do it mainly in order to follow the competitors. In digital marketing the more we invest the more we progress in the strategic sense of the term.

Question 3: How do you rate this same parameter with the marketing direction?

Table 3. Digital professions and marketing departement

Positive	Negative
	I think it is time that some marketing departments start to digitize
I would say that marketing managers have no choice	
	I would say that marketing management remains weak.
	people classical marketing are a little suspicious, sometimes feel threatened, some reject the idea and others want to appropriate it so that it becomes a part of their domain
	they quickly realize that it's growing that they can not ignore
	a domain with its own specificities and specialists that they can not make it a sub-domain of marketing

Source: Study results, Djalal Nizar Adnani, 2015

Analysis:

The big revelation of this investigation is the gap between digital marketing specialists and marketing specialists. The two disciplines are complementary and one does not work without the other especially in recent years. It is important to have a digital culture and to be convinced that it is a hybrid discipline between marketing and IT that has given rise to a multitude of tools and means that, when mastered, become a real competitive advantage of big caliber. It is time that the different disciplines make a reason to come together and implement digital strategies as part of a healthy corporate culture.

Question 4: We noticed on Linkedin that there is a great volatility of specialists in the digital business, what motivates your departure?

Table 4. Digital specialists' volatility reasons

Advantages	disadvantages
some are motivated by money	
agencies that have recently converted to digital must have some advantages if they want to attract veterans	
some change jobs as soon as they feel they have enough skills to go to larger companies	
I think it's due to salaries,	the rate of rotation is therefore greater at the expense of quality
	There is also the fact that some companies (especially advertisers) promise a lot of things (department - tools - process ..) and that at the end the reality is quite different
the people who have experience, however small it is, are few, agencies and companies do their best to have them	The working conditions are not satisfactory, it could be a reason to consider the departure
Our booster is creativity, innovation is what attracts us in this area but it's often something that our employers and our customers do not understand	Without this element (creativity), our job becomes routine and boring.
The environment is not yet favorable (salary, status, advantage) and especially the consideration	
The salary in my opinion, or the prestige that a company can have	

Source: Study results, Djalal Nizar Adnani, 2015

Analysis:

Two main reasons motivate the departure of digital specialists towards new horizons:

- Salary
- The frustration caused by lack of budget or a boss who does not take a risk and turns a digital marketer into a simple webmaster for example.

Question 5: the companies in which you worked, are they aware of the power of digital? Are they ready to invest more? What would motivate them to do it according to you?

Table 5. Corporate awareness about the importance of digital transformation

Yes	No
I worked in a Digital Agency and a Brand Content Agency, so yes	
Yes the domain exists	
I would say that big companies are conscious and start to invest more and more	
Their motivations lie in the number of prospects and / or customers they can reach through social media.	
Wherever I worked, they are aware of the power of digital	
they are ready to invest in it and what motivates them is the return on investment	There are many cases where the company is not looking for any results, it just wants to be on the web, look cool and trendy, and sometimes it's just the need to have a presence.
	No, they are limited to Facebook, a website and a solution to rebrand.
Companies are aware of this, and invests heavily in team training	I think it is time other companies follow

Source: Study results, Djalal Nizar Adnani, 2015

Analysis:

It seems that companies are quite aware of the benefits of digital marketing but remain a little hesitant and become restrictive because they do not want to be the first to try risky digital experiments, although it is necessary before building an irreproachable reputation.

Question 6: You were responsible for how much fonctions during your taking office ?

Table 6. Extra tasks entrusted to digital marketing staff

Fonctions	Number
Community Manager, content creation, I evolved into Account Manager, I always did the CM but I also managed the client and his relations with other departments	4
Social Media Manager, content creation	3
Community manager for many brands	4
Community manager, Traffic Manager, Account Manager	4
Community manager, Media planner	2
Community manager, social media manager, content manger, web mastering,	4
Digital manager, Community manager, Social Media Manager,	3
Social Media, Analyste, Community manager, Formation	4

Source: Study results, Djamel Nizar Adnani, 2015

Analysis:

All the people we interviewed have several functions. Working in the digital world means being able to perform several tasks at any time. We believe that the biggest obstacle they will always have is to deal with the frustration of being stopped when their work gets started.

This study presents an important finding that lies in the absence of a decisive strategy to digitize, indeed the observation and testimonies of digital specialists presented in this article indicate the existence of a desire to go further but with restrictions that not only prevent practices from being consistent but also frustrate digital specialists.

It also shown that there was a resistance from marketing to digitize its techniques, while digital marketing has no purpose to overshadow marketing with its classic tools but it is another tool oriented towards a digital audience to multiply channels and impacts.

6. CONCLUSION

The whole world is going digital, there is no contestation, the most

powerful companies are deeply digital, Google, Amazon, Facebook, Apple; and so are doing all companies which understand the impact of digital practices on their costumers first and then on their own management behavior.

We have seen in this article, how relevant is to consider digital transformation as a serious long term company project, and as project are not so easy to manage, we have mentioned the challenges companies have to take so they can succed in their digital transition. We have underlined the necessity to build a digital transformation strategy regarding to company global objectives, then insure the right financial means and human skills empowered by a clever and up to date digital culture inspired by targeted users.

Digital practices of companies in Algeria in 2015 were under exploited, it is enough to realize that they did not give importance to the data which they could collect and develop a global strategy which will feed both traditional practices and digital practices. In 2019 the practices of Algerian companies have evolved a lot thanks to the emergence of specialized agencies but also thanks to the birth of startups very mush involved in digital culture. However the digital practices remain limited mainly in Algeria because of the constant blockages of electronic payments.

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