

A CLASSIC FRAMEWORK OF ONLINE MARKETING TOOLS

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Abstract: *The present paper starts from the assumption that there is a tendency, especially among practitioners, to largely overlap concepts of online marketing and online advertising, thus considering that most online marketing tools aim at the aspect of value communication and promotion. This observation prompted us to try to delineate the categories of online marketing tools according to the traditional areas of marketing activity. Therefore, the paper aims to present the online marketing tools based on a different vision than the literature identified so far. Thus, it was intended to group the online marketing tools on the key components of the marketing activity and the presentation, for each, of certain software tools that support that. The way in which the analysis of online marketing tools was addressed is new and could be useful for defining a structured vision on the field. The paper aims both to analyze concepts specific to online marketing, and especially to carry out a delineation of categories of online marketing tools based on the key areas of marketing such as value creation, value delivery, value communication / promotion, customer relationship management and marketing research. To achieve the goal set for this paper we considered useful to address the issue from a dual perspective: from the perspective of the academic literature - books, studies found in scientific databases - which deal with the topic of online marketing and online marketing tools; and from the perspective of practitioners - studies posted on the Internet by the specialists in the field, respectively the analysis of websites of companies providing online marketing services. The intention was to combine the vision specific to theorists to that of practitioners in tackling the field specific to online marketing and online marketing tools. In order to synthesize the information presented in this paper, we also conducted a visual representation of the categories of online marketing tools.*

Keywords: Online marketing; Internet marketing; online marketing tools, online marketing research; Search Engine Marketing; affiliate marketing.

JEL classification: M30, M31.

1. Premises. Essential Concepts

There are some clear premises considered essential to substantiate the basis of this work. First, it is clear that the Internet has a major impact on all areas related to marketing activity (Schibrowsky et al., 2007: 730). The concept of online marketing is a highly fashionable concept at the moment. It is, however, a concept which is defined in different ways in the literature - relatively similar concepts on the field are not yet clearly defined and delimited (including Internet marketing, digital marketing, e-marketing, web marketing, etc.). Online marketing is also a new concept emerged in the debate in the academic literature, as evidenced by the fact that 68.5% of the studies dealing with topics ranging from online marketing have been published in the last 8 years (Pomirleanu et al., 2013), and the specific topic of online marketing tools and their effectiveness is less debated in the academic literature (Teo, 2005: 204). Another premise from which we start in this work is the fact that the online marketing concept is not intended to alter in any way the intrinsic essence of the classical concept of marketing.

In one of the definitions released by the prestigious American Marketing Association (AMA, 2008) marketing is presented as a set of processes for creating, communicating and delivering value to customers and for managing customer relationships in ways that benefit both the organization and the groups interested in its functioning. Therefore, we believe that online marketing has the role to enrich the classic marketing concept by identifying and implementing new ways for organizations to create, deliver and communicate value to customers and manage, in beneficial ways, relationships with them and other business partners.

The idea of this paper starts from the observation that often those who are not familiar with the essence of the marketing concept tend to overlap this concept on only one of its dimensions – the communication of value, in particular the promotion. The concept of online marketing also seems to be subject to this incomplete interpretation, often the concept of online marketing being considered synonymous with online promotion. This is probably because the part targeting value communication / promotion is more easily visible. Indeed most of the and the most sophisticated online marketing tools revolve around the dimension specific to value communication, however, this paper aims to describe the overview of the concept of online marketing and tries to define several categories of online marketing tools specific to the classical vision of the concept.

To create the prerequisites for a better understanding of the concepts, we begin by analyzing them in detail. Therefore, the first question is: *What does online mean?* According to Gay, Charlesworth and Esen (2007: 528), online is "the term for when a computer is connected to the Internet. Commonly used generically to describe any internet related function, i.e. online marketing". Therefore, the online term makes us think of the Internet. Being connected to the Internet means being online and not being connected to the Internet means to be offline. Hence the synonymy of online marketing and Internet marketing concepts. The fact that an Internet connection requires the use of electronic devices has led to the concept of electronic marketing or e-marketing, yet, according to El-Gohary (2010: p. 216) it is a broader concept than that of Internet marketing, including this one. And so a multitude of other concepts came out that have the same common core (web marketing, digital marketing, etc.).

Another way in which we tried capturing how the use of concepts *online marketing*, *Internet marketing* and *digital marketing* evolved over time has been made by using the online application Google Trends. The results are shown in the image below:



Figure 1: The evolution of the use of the terms Internet marketing, Online Marketing, Digital Marketing, worldwide, in the period 2004-2015

Source: own representation using Google Trends

The situation remains the same in terms of trends when performing the same search for locations such as the US, UK or Japan.

On the other hand, performing a search in several scientific databases, for the three aforementioned terms, the search results are as follows (Table 1):

Table 1: Situation showing the number of items found in scientific databases designed according to the concept sought (April 2015)

Name of scientific database	Term sought	Number of items found
ScienceDirect	Online marketing	888
	Internet marketing	1322
	Digital marketing	337
JSTOR (Journals)	Online marketing	356
	Internet marketing	605
	Digital marketing	105
ProQuest (Conference Papers & Proceedings; Dissertations & Theses)	Online marketing	393
	Internet marketing	599
	Digital marketing	86
Emerald	Online marketing	473
	Internet marketing	667
	Digital marketing	156
Scopus	Online marketing	556
	Internet marketing	3470
	Digital marketing	168

Source: own research

It can be noted that whatever the scientific database searched, the concept that enjoys the greatest popularity among theorists, of the three, is "Internet Marketing", the second being "online marketing". Correlating these data with the data mentioned above, we can say that, if among the practitioners the concept of "online marketing" is the most popular of the three, the most popular concept among the theorists is "Internet Marketing".

2. Categories of online marketing tools based on key marketing areas

Correlating, on one hand, the issues outlined above and, on the other hand, a classical definition of marketing offered by the American Marketing Association, we propose to define categories of online marketing tools based on the idea that they are all online tools designed to contribute to the achievement of marketing objectives aiming to create, deliver, and communicate/promote value to customers, and also to manage relationships with them.

2.1. Contributions of online tools to value creation in marketing

From a strategic perspective, the main focus of the marketing activity is to create superior value for customers in a more effective way than the competitors. From an operational perspective, this goal translates into developing components of the marketing mix. The literature provides numerous ways in which the product is viewed from the perspective of specific marketing thinking. One of the most interesting is that offered by Philip Kotler and Gary Armstrong (2012: 225-226) that describe the product having in view 3 levels, as follows:

- *Core customer value* - "What does the client really buy?"
- *Actual product* - elements that directly affect the basic advantage, being directly associated with it (quality, attributes / features, brand, packaging, design etc.) - cannot be separated from the basic product
- *Augmented product* - additional benefits added to the core value and the actual product, but which can be separated by them (delivery terms, guarantee, installation and after-sales service).

It should be noted that regarding *value* in terms of the thinking presented above, it is more than the basic advantage. Therefore, depending on the nature of the product / service, we believe that online tools can help create value in any of the 3 levels. For example, a video file posted on the company's website, a video showing the installation of a device, is part of the value offered to the customer, in terms of the levels presented above being part of the augmented product.

The Internet and new information technologies associated to it came to help marketers in their desire to turn consumers into active partners in the process of value creation (Fuciu, Luncean and Dumitrescu, 2011: 129). Between the online marketing tools we also find categories of instruments making contributions in creating value in marketing, among which we may include *certain functional aspects of websites* as well as *content marketing* specific activities. Due to the complexity of Web pages and multitude of functions they can perform, at this point they can no longer be treated as a whole in terms of marketing activity. According to Gabriel Nechita (2013) content marketing *is the creation of valuable content and its dissemination (distribution) for marketing purposes*. The same author identifies the following possible objectives content marketing might target: educating customers/prospects regarding the product or service provided, product positioning, dissemination of information relevant to the field, entertainment, guides / tutorials, consulting, and as examples of contents the author identifies: whitepapers, video files, articles, webinars, presentations, infographics, eBooks, blog posts, etc. A more complex definition of this concept is provided by Joe Pulizzi (2014: 5-6), whereby content marketing is a marketing and business process that aims at creating and distributing valuable and compelling content to attract, retain and engage a well known and defined market segment, in order to generate profitable customer actions. Applications like Infogr.am, Scoop.it or those used to organize webinars can be useful in content marketing.

2.2. Delivering value online

The scale recorded by the use of the Internet and its effect on the business field has its mark on the way in which the marketing strategy addresses the delivery of value by finding new distribution channels. The handiest examples in this view are the numerous *online stores*. In addition, the concept of *affiliate marketing* has become increasingly popular among professionals. Affiliate marketing is an arrangement where a website redirects clients to another website charging a fee or a percentage of any subsequent sales (Gay, Charlesworth and Esen, 2007, p. 519). An important advantage that the system specific to affiliate marketing gives is that the affiliates are paid the commission only when the product/service has been purchased by the customer (Chaffey et al., 2006).

2.3. Communicating and promoting value online

Communicating and promoting value is the most visible component of the marketing activity. According to the observations made, in this area of marketing activity there are the most and the most discussed online marketing tools.

Social media marketing. One of the biggest changes aimed at human interaction was generated by the dynamics, in terms of interest and usability, recorded by online social networks - they succeeded to significantly change the nature of human activities, the context in which they are carried out, respectively the interaction between people (Tiago

and Verissimo, 2013). Constantinides (2014, p. 40) suggests two possible marketing strategies specific to social media: a passive approach in which social networks are seen as a means of analyzing customer reactions, namely of marketing environment analysis, and a second active approach, where social media is used as a direct marketing and public relations channel, as a tool for customizing the products offered and, not in the least, as a platform facilitating the cooperation with clients to create value and generate new ideas for the development and improvement of products provided. From this approach we can draw the conclusion that social media, as a marketing tool, can be used both for the communication and promotion of value, as well as the creation of value, respectively in the marketing research.

Email marketing - is one of the most popular online marketing techniques - a study carried out by the DMA in 2011 showed that 79% of direct marketing campaigns use electronic mail (e-mail) (Kotler and Armstrong, 2012, p. 517). However, due to the large number of unsolicited emails (spam), email marketing lies on the border between providing value to customers and being annoying, which is why the concept of permission-based email marketing appeared (Kotler and Armstrong, 2012, p. 517). Specialists in the field believe that an efficient and coherent email marketing program is that which is able to help create relationships between the organization and the clients or potential clients (Chaffey and Smith, 2013, p. 454; Ellis-Chadwick and Doherty, 2012, p. 843). MailChimp, Aweber, Exact Target, Campaign Monitor offer useful applications for developing efficient email marketing campaigns.

Search engine marketing (SEM). Search engine marketing is defined as the organization's efforts materialized in two main directions: search engine optimization (SEO) and pay per click advertising (PPC) (Nabout et al., 2012, p. 68), efforts intended to improve the site classification in the organic list (using SEO), or by purchasing paid listings (using PPC) - or a combination of both. The importance the identification of the best keywords and their use in the search engine marketing activity is highlighted by a research of Yahoo and OMD (Optimum Media Direction) in the United States (Lerma, 2006 cited by Fuciu, Luncean and Dumitrescu, 2011, p. 131). Targeting the consumer behavior, this research showed that the most important influence of the Internet is manifested in activities like *searching for information* and *identification of alternatives*. Useful applications for this field could be: Google Keyword Planner, Keyword Multiplier Tool, Wordstream Free Keyword Tool, Google AdWords, SEM Rush, WordStream and many more.

Viral marketing. The new context created with the advent of the Internet and associated information technologies have created an environment conducive to the emergence of a specific form of marketing communication, known as viral marketing (Ho and Dempsey, 2010, p. 1000). Viral marketing is defined as a marketing strategy through which customers are motivated to deliver a marketing message to friends and colleagues (Gay, Charlesworth and Esen, 2009, p. 527). Regarding this area of marketing, it is interesting to note that although viral marketing has taken a large spread lately, the critical factors that determine the effectiveness of viral marketing campaigns remain largely unknown for both academics and practitioners (Ho and Dempsey, 2010, p. 1000).

Other online marketing tools included in this category are those regarding *online PR*. Useful tools for these activities are those aiming to manage and monitor online press releases.

2.4. Online marketing tools for customer relationship management

In this category of online marketing tools we try to identify those tools which, used in the online environment, can contribute to creating, maintaining and developing beneficial

relationships between the organization and customers/prospects. Any organization that recognizes the superiority of the business philosophy that places the customer at the center of its activities is aware that it is not sufficient to get punctual successes, but understands the importance of creating, maintaining and developing long-term customer relationships. In this way it is created the framework in which the customers have the potential to become active partners in achieving the primary objective of marketing, to create value for customers. According to some experts, customer relationship management has three main components underlying its essence (Buttle, 2004: 3-9): *the strategic component* - the "top-down" perspective of the MRC, aiming at the implementation of customer-oriented business philosophy; *the operational component* - allows the operationalization in terms of interaction with customers; *the analytical component* – the "bottom-up" perspective of the MRC, which focuses on achieving depth analysis of customer data. Whether we refer the analytical or operational component of the concept, the online environment provided the context for the design and use of certain tools meant to improve the operationalization of CRM specific processes. Here we included tools aimed at: providing online assistance to customers (ex. TeamSupport, eAssistance Pro live chat tool, Live2Support), online CRM application type (Zoho CRM), web pages customized for clients and user accounts, etc.

2.5. Online marketing research

Online Marketing research has significantly grown in recent years, the Internet having a remarkable potential as a tool in marketing research (Proctor and Jamieson, 2012, p. 25). Starting from the classical definitions of marketing research, we can say that online marketing research involves the use of Internet and online information technology, both as a medium for conducting research and as a toolkit used in every stage of the research process. Alvin Burns and Ronald Bush (2010: 77) define online research as being the process in which are used the computer networks, including the Internet, to assist in any phase of the marketing research process, including here also problem definition, research design, data collection, data analysis and reporting.

Another interesting definition which has the merit of indicating research methods influenced by online tools is that provided by Philip Kotler and Gary Armstrong (2012: 112): online marketing research is to collect primary data online through Internet surveys, focus groups conducted online, Web-based experiments, or monitoring the online behavior of consumers. Therefore, an important benefit of the Internet and information technology in the context of marketing activity of organizations is the one targeting the marketing research activity. Whether we refer to exploratory, descriptive or causal, each of these types of research benefits from the advantages of online tools that allow both the possibility of conducting research in the virtual environment, as well as new and spectacular opportunities of data collection and analysis. In this category we included tools concerning: online surveys (Google Forms, clicktools, SurveyMonkey), online focus groups/interviews (Google Hangout), website activity analysis (Google Analytics, KISSmetrics, Heatmaps - www.crazyegg.com, www.clicktale.com, Alexa.com), content analysis conducted in the online environment (Google Alerts, Google Trends, permanent monitoring of talks on the social networks – Radian6), *competitor's website monitoring* (Compete.com, Alexa.com), etc.

3. CONCLUSIONS

Undoubtedly, the Internet and its associated information technology have the merit to substantially improve the activity of marketing specialists by offering a variety of new tools that allow them to achieve their objectives in a more creative and efficient manner. This paper aims to present the online marketing tools based on a different vision than the literature identified so far. Thus, it was intended to group the online marketing tools on the

key components of the marketing activity and the presentation, for each, of certain software tools that support that. In carrying out the work, it was aimed to combine the vision of the theorists with that of practitioners in treating the field specific to online marketing and online marketing tools. It is interesting to note that one of the results of research conducted shows that, if among the theorists the "Internet marketing" concept is more popular, more practitioners use the concept of "online marketing". As we assumed, the online marketing tools theme is a much more debated topic among practitioners than in the academic world, the number of studies written by practitioners on "online marketing tools" is much higher than the number of studies written on this subject found in the international scientific databases.

The way in which the analysis of online marketing tools was addressed is new and could be useful for defining a structured vision on the field. The research carried out has resulted in achieving a classification of online marketing tools according to key areas of marketing activity. Undoubtedly, this classification can be developed and improved, yet we consider it is a starting point to conduct further research, able to deal with each of these categories of tools in a more complete manner. To synthesize the information presented in this paper, we also conducted a visual representation of the categories of online marketing tools in Figure 2.



Figure 2: A classic framework of online marketing tools
Source: own representation

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