

An Overview on Inbound Marketing

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Abstract: *Inbound marketing is a customer-centric approach to digital marketing that focuses on attracting, engaging, and delighting potential customers through valuable content and experiences. It involves a combination of strategies, including content marketing, SEO, social media, and email marketing, to create a seamless and personalized customer journey. By providing relevant and helpful information, inbound marketing seeks to build trust and establish lasting relationships with customers, ultimately driving brand awareness, lead generation, and customer loyalty. This approach contrasts with traditional outbound marketing, which relies on interruptive techniques like cold calling and direct mail. Inbound marketing not only aligns with changing consumer preferences but also leverages technology to deliver a more effective and measurable marketing strategy. Its success is contingent on understanding your target audience, creating high-quality content, and continually optimizing your approach to adapt to evolving customer needs and preferences. Overall, inbound marketing represents a paradigm shift in the way businesses connect with their audience, fostering a more authentic and value-driven interaction that can lead to sustainable growth and success.*

Keywords: Inbound marketing, traditional marketing, trend, review

I. INTRODUCTION

Today's businesses are experiencing a revolutionary shift observing the dramatic changes in consumer behaviour. This change mostly implies the transformation of how people shop and buy, and what they now expect from the products and services. (Ryan 2016 – as cited in Popova, 2019). These days, people make purchase decisions online. Hence, the marketing of products and services has also shifted online. In this paper, we will review studies which explore the concept of Inbound Marketing in detail.

Inbound marketing is a strategic approach to marketing that focuses on attracting, engaging, and delighting customers through relevant and valuable content. This methodology aims to pull in potential customers organically, rather than interrupting them with traditional advertising methods. Inbound marketing involves creating and sharing content that addresses the needs and interests of the target audience, ultimately leading to increased brand awareness, customer loyalty, and business growth. This research will explore the principles, strategies, and effectiveness of inbound marketing in the digital age, shedding light on its impact on businesses and its role in shaping the future of marketing practices.

Inbound marketing is a dynamic and transformative approach to contemporary marketing strategies. It represents a departure from traditional outbound methods that interrupt consumers with advertisements and, instead, seeks to engage and nurture them through relevant, valuable, and educational content. At its core, inbound marketing is about creating a connection between a brand and its audience by addressing their specific needs and interests. This approach often leverages digital channels like social media, blogs, SEO, and email marketing to attract potential customers organically.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

According to Patrutiu-Baltes (2016), traditional marketing is connected with outbound marketing, which means that the marketing strategy pushes the products to the customers, while digital marketing is identical to inbound marketing, which mainly aims to win the target interest.

Outbound marketing aims to promote products and services to the audience directly, while inbound marketing helps to highlight goods and services indirectly where the consumers identify themselves as the company target.

According to Patrutiu- Baltés (2016) Inbound Marketing is mainly a content marketing as it is the element that can capture the consumer's attention, pushing it towards the purchase. That's why, "the entire strategy of marketing is becoming a content marketing strategy and the lack of quality content inevitably leads to the failure of the company's digital marketing strategy" (Patrutiu-Baltés, 2016). Therefore, in inbound marketing, identifying the target and adapting the communication to its needs, expectations and interest play a vital role.

"Outbound marketing is an invasive form of marketing, while inbound marketing is a permissive one, since the consumer agrees to be identified and targeted, and he is not disturbed by the company's communication to him" (Patrutiu- Baltés, 2016).

Newsletters, social networks (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn), webinars, etc. involve voluntary subscription. According to Patrutiu-Baltés (2016), inbound marketing efficiency is superior to the outbound marketing efficiency because it allows a better targeting of the audience and a better adaptation of the company's communication to it. For example, if persons have subscribed to the newsletter, the conversion rate is 750% higher than the newsletter addressed to people who haven't shown an interest in the company or its products / services (Gregg, 2015– as cited in Patrutiu-Baltés, 2016).

- **Inbound Marketing Methodology:** Researchers have extensively discussed the methodology of inbound marketing, which typically involves four stages: Attract, Convert, Close, and Delight. This methodology aims to turn strangers into promoters of a brand.
- **Content Marketing:** Content is a central theme in inbound marketing. Researchers have explored the types of content that are most effective in attracting and engaging audiences, including blog posts, videos, and social media content.
- **SEO and Keywords:** Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is crucial in inbound marketing. Literature often covers the importance of keyword research and optimization to improve a website's visibility in search engines.
- **Social Media Marketing:** Inbound marketing literature also delves into the role of social media platforms in attracting and engaging audiences. It discusses strategies for using platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn effectively.
- **Email Marketing:** Email is a vital component of inbound marketing. Researchers have examined best practices for building email lists, creating compelling email content, and nurturing leads through email campaigns.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is based on Secondary data. Secondary data collected from various books, journal, internet, etc.

IV. FINDINGS

According to Nedaei, Khanzadi, Majidi, & Movaghar (2018), a substantial portion of the traditional business environment has been shifting online for the last decade, with the company website being the new business environment. In the online environment, marketing is undergoing a transformation, as businesses can no longer rely only on traditional marketing tactics and campaigns to attract customers (Opreana & Vinerean, 2015). According to Bezhovski (2015), the Inbound Marketing, as an Internet marketing concept or a strategy, has its origin in permission marketing and content marketing. As a holistic approach it also comprises other accredited online marketing techniques like search engine optimization (SEO), social media marketing, e-mail marketing, CRM, web automation etc. The primary idea behind Inbound Marketing is to attract visitors to a website by "creating and distributing useful content, convert those visitors into leads, earn their trust and then turn them into loyal customers" (Bezhovski, 2015). This approach is targeted on pull marketing techniques rather than push techniques that interrupt the internet users with an advertising message (Bezhovski, 2015)

Components of Digital Inbound Marketing

a. Content Marketing

Content is the foundation of digital inbound marketing. According to Opreana & Vinerean (2015), "organizations can attract potential customers, retain existing once, and transform aspirational consumers by developing various forms of

content that prospectconsider valuable and will use the created content in order to access a website to learn more or come into contact with a marketing offer”. Basically, the aim of content marketing is to attract and retain customers by constantly creating pertinent, valuable content with the intention to change or reinforce consumer behavior. This is an ongoing process that is best integrated into the overall marketing strategy and focuses on media ownership, not media lending (Flanagan, 2015 – Opreana & Vinerean, 2015). There arevarious forms of content such as video, image, text, blogs, ebooks, infographics, slideshow presentations, interactive content, etc.

b. Search Engine Optimization

According to Opreana & Vinerean (2015), Search Engine Optimization or SEO is a online marketing tool that refers to building a website and inbound links to a particularwebsite to optimize the position in search engine results’ pages. This tool simplifies it for prospective customers to find an organization’s content. After content marketing, SEO helps increase the visibility and discoverability of content on search engines. Search engine optimisation (SEO)is a tactic and a marketing approach for improving theonline findability of a website and the content on it (Ledford, 2015 – as cited in Saarinen,2019). This is a relevant part of inbound marketing because to make sure a company reaches the right people with their content, the targeted audience needs to be able to find the content (Saarinen, 2019).

c. Social Media Marketing

According to Opreana & Vinerean (2015), online social networks have greatly altered the spread of information by making it incredibly simple to share information on the internet. Social media amplifies the impact of an organization’s content. A business can both distribute content across various social networks and consolidate its brand by creating its business page on such networks. Sharing content across social networks makes it appearreliable, while creating business pages offers a business more opportunities to make its content known. “Social interaction in the digital world in which consumers communicateand interact in real time, can be used to create connections with clients in order to provide and receive information from prospects” (Tikkanen et al., 2009 – as cited in Opreana & Vinerean, 2015). Peer communication through social media, which is a new form of consumer socialization, has deep influences on consumer decision making and thus, even marketing strategies. “Social media, especially social networking sites, provide a virtualspace for people to communicate through the Internet, which also might be an important agent of consumer socialization” (Opreana & Vinerean, 2015).

In their study, Opreana & Vinerean (2015) say that social media marketing represents such a huge effective opportunity for marketers who wish to start a dialogue withtheir customers in order to get an insight into their preferences. Social network sites such as Facebook, Instagram, Youtube, and Twitter, just aggregate an abundance of information. Another significant aspect of social media and its impact on marketing is the opportunity it provides for collaboration on products and campaigns with consumers (Opreana & Vinerean, 2015). This way, online marketers can improve the company’s profitability, revenue streams, and even increase the loyalty of customers who may become brand advocates in online settings (Opreana & Vinerean, 2015).

V. CONCLUSION

In this paper, we have reviewed papers which have explored the concept of Inbound Marketing. Over the past decade, traditional marketing has been relegated to the background, as the new concept of Inbound Marketing has gradually taken its place. From the review of the available studies on the subject, it was highlighted that Inbound Marketing has slowly replaced traditional marketing strategies. Authors have talked about the evolution of Inbound Marketing, and have proposed definitions for the same. Authors have also talked about the disadvantages of traditional marketing, a comparison of inbound and outbound marketing, and digital inbound marketing.

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