Performance of Internet Marketing As A Marketing Strategy For Private Colleges In Mombasa County

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Abstract

The research examined the performance of internet marketing as marketing strategies in private colleges in Mombasa. Initially accessing the internet was the biggest challenge but this challenge has since been eliminated, since the penetration of hand held devices that can access the internet has really improved. If the online products can be tailor made to appeal to specific target segment then there is untapped potential in internet marketing, this is because the value propositions of products and services offered in the physical world are essentially limited "point solutions" that meet only part of a consumer's need or want while in the internet world the target market can be met on a one to one basis at a lower cost. Despite the increased literacy level in the country, reducing cost of internet services, and the penetration of handheld devices that can access internet, there has been low adoption of internet marketing by Private Colleges in Mombasa. It is against this background that the researcher aimed at assessing the performance of internet as a marketing strategy in Private Colleges in Mombasa County.The researcher aimed at exploring the performance of internet marketing as a marketing strategy in Private Colleges in Mombasa County. Descriptive research design was used. The data collection was undertaken through the use of questionnaires and interviews. Samples from the targeted institutions were picked to extract a representative data. In total four Private Colleges were surveyed to ascertain the performance of internet marketing as a marketing strategy in private colleges in Mombasa County. The data collected by the researcher was analyzed using statistical package for social sciences; this software was able to compute the frequencies and regression analysis required by the researcher. At the initial stage data was captured using excel then later exported to SPSS for analysis. This data was presented using tables and graphs. It is expected that several factors are likely to be found to influence performance of internet marketing in the aforementioned institutions of higher learning. The factors included connectivity to the internet, demographic issues such as education level, attitude towards internet by the stakeholders, cost of implementing such systems and resistance by institutions and user to change from conventional media to internet plat forms and government policies.

Keywords: Marketing strategy, Internet marketing performance, competitiveness.

1. Introduction

Since the use of the Internet in higher education is still in its early stages especially in developing countries like Kenya, many issues regarding its adoption, diffusion, infusion and use have not been fully addressed. According to Kamlesh (2009), he says that the organization of the twenty first is expected to be a learning organization with completely decentralized methods of working and an empowered workforce with totally new reengineered work process. This can be made possible through extensive use of global communication networks. This study will be conducted to provide a better understanding of how ICTs particularly the Internet are adopted, diffused, infused and used in institutions of higher learning in Kenya for marketing purposes. According to Kotler (2006), marketing is typically seen as the task of creating, promoting and delivering goods and services to consumers and businesses; it is defined as a societal process by which individuals and groups obtain what they need and want through creating, offering and freely exchanging products and services of value with others. One of the secrets to effective internet marketing is to get other people talking about you and your website, and one of the ways to do that is to appeal to specialist publications through the submission of a press release, this is according to David (2012). Thus, marketing is based on some key concepts that drive products across the market.

Mombasa Island has experienced a tremendous growth in education sector especially in higher learning. This has come along with challenges especially that of raising visibility in the market at low cost. Many institutions seem to be concentrating so much on advertising using the traditional methods such as newspapers, radio, and television and bill boards. While these seems to be a better option it is expensive and most struggling Private Colleges may soon be unable to afford the cost that goes along with such services.

Several studies have shown that the importance of the Internet in higher education has continued to rise over the past decade Miller (2005). However, researchers and practitioners have shown that resistance to end-user systems by users such as students is a widespread problem. This phenomenon has created the need to better predict, explain and increase user acceptance of technology in higher education. To fulfill this need, the understanding of the factors that encourage or hinder Internet use in learning, marketing, teaching, research and university management function has become critical in modern times.

The greatest challenge being faced by institutions of higher learning is that there is an increasing number of internet user especially the students, however despite the use of internet by college going students, staff and administrators, there has been poor targeting of the market making the performance of internet marketing rank dismally than other modes of marketing used by private colleges. Maybe the products designs meant to suit the target market has not been able to meet the exact specification for this population.

While Smith and Chaffey (2005) defines it as: "Achieving marketing objectives through applying digital technologies", Strauss and Frost (2001) define it as, "The use of electronic data and applications for planning and executing the conception, distribution and pricing of ideas, goods and services to create exchanges that satisfy individual and organizational objectives. This implies that institutions need to leverage their marketing efforts on this platform to be able to cope with the changing trends. The diffusion of innovation theory holds that a new idea or a communication idea begins at its point of origin and spreads through the surrounding geographic areas or from person to person within a specific area (Littlejohn, 1996). Research show that the impact of information and communication technology (ICT) on marketing information Systems (MkIS) effectiveness has been drastic. The modern marketing concept (Houston, 1986) unites two meanings and stresses that marketing encompasses the range of organizational functions and processes that seek to determine the needs of target markets and deliver products and services to customers and other key stakeholders such as employees and financial institutions. Increasingly the importance of marketing is being recognized both as a vital function and as a guiding management philosophy within organisations. Marketing has to be seen as the essential focus of all activities within an organisation (Valentin, 1996). Modern marketing requires organisations to be committed to a market/customer orientation (Jaworski and Kohli, 1993).

According to the Kenya ICT Board report (2011), the ICT sector directly employs an estimated 27,000 professionals, of the total IT employment in Kenya. Over 14 million Kenyans have access to the internet and their use is mostly for communication and entertainment and some for work. Small local businesses are also increasing their use of ICT in the workplace. Therefore from these findings it becomes logical to launch investigations to ascertain the reasons for such a trend. This is because it is clear that the Internet can be applied by companies as an integral part of the modern marketing concept. Digital marketers should care about the consumer's online experiences for the simple reason that all of them good, bad, or indifferent influence consumer perceptions of a product or a brand. The web offers companies' ownership and control of all interactions with customers and thus creates both the ability and the need to improve their overall experience.

Organizations need to strategize on several areas of the internet marketing to be able to sustain traffic towards the products they offer on the internet. These days internet plays very important role in marketing because everyone can use internet whether he/she belongs to third world country or top. Day by bay, internet users are increasing even shopping on internet is getting popularity gradually. Internet is the cheapest way of marketing in the world and only way through which your product or voice can go all over the world. Using internet, companies can provide their information to customers through websites, search engines can be used to coordinate the consumers and producers, customers can used the e. mails to connect to the producers.

Customers and consumers not only acquire information through internet but also can make online purchases by placing orders to desired producers, it provides convenience and time saving for both consumers and producers. Companies can reduce their need of inventory stocks by using the inventory systems. Conducting business in the new digital age will call for a new model for marketing strategy and practice. The internet is revolutionizing how companies create value for customers and build relationships. The digital age has fundamentally changed customers' notion of convenience, speed price, product information and service. Thus today's marketing requires new thinking and action. Companies need to retain most of the skills and practices that have worked in the past. But they will also need to add major new competencies and practices if they hope to grow and prosper in the new environment.

2.Marketing performance

Marketing activities undertaken by learning institutions need to be able to deliver on its objectives to the organizations, given the fact that a firm's survival depends on its capacity to create value, and value is defined by customers (Day, 1990), marketing makes a fundamental contribution to long-term business success. But despite the importance of measuring business performance there is a little research on the measures used to evaluate marketing performance and effectiveness. On the other hand, when looking to the marketing performance and success measures it is noticed that there are many measures. Recently, in an attempt to organize performance measures Kokkinaki and Ambler (1999) were able to summarize it and established four categories for marketing performance and success measures which were financial measures, Competitive market measures, Consumer behavior measures, Consumer intermediate measures**.**

2.1 Importance of Strategic marketing concept

A modification of a definition of marketing is made by Doyle,(2000) he suggests that marketing is the

management process that seeks to maximize returns to shareholders by creating a competitive advantage in providing, communicating and delivering value to customers thereby developing a long-term relationship with them. This definition clearly defines the objectives of marketing and how its performance should be evaluated. The specific contribution of marketing in the organization lies in the formulation of strategies to choose the right customer, build relationships of trust with them and create a competitive advantage Doyle,(2000). Marketing Strategy consists of an internally integrated but externally focused set of choices about how the organization addresses its customers in the context of a competitive environment. As per Hambrick and Fredrickson, (2001) a strategy has five elements, it deals with where the organization plans to be active; how it will get there; how it will succeed in the marketplace, what the speed and sequence of moves will be, and how the organization will obtain profits .The organization must identify the problem that its customers use its products and services to solve. It is also necessary to identify the benefits customers seek from using a product or service available in the market**.**

Search Engine Marketing

Internet marketing strategies have been implemented on several platforms, according to Kenneth & Carol (2008); they argue that the most significant change in online marketing in the past five years has been the explosive growth in search engine marketing. More than any form of online advertising, search engine marketing has altered the entire marketing communication industry.Search Engine Marketing basically refers to the practice of getting a website to show up in Google and other search engines for relevant keywords. Most students are searching online when looking for colleges and institutions, institutions can leverage this by targeting keyword phrases on their websites. It's suggested that getting in touch with website developer and evaluating the knowledge of SEO (Search engine optimization) may help so much. Search engine optimization consulting can provide the secrets to gaining and keeping that momentum? The momentum that will not only allow a company to compete within a niche, but it will allow it to conquer and control a niche. This will insure search engine rankings that will translate into profits. Search engine optimization consulting can provide the secrets to gaining and keeping that momentum. It is vital for businesses to have a web presence that allows prospective customers to find their website easily in order to purchase their products and services. More recently companies have been buying the rights to key words on search engines in order to appear earlier on the result list than their competitors ,Mack (2000). Along with improving the ability of search engines to find sites, marketers have focused on the numbers of people using search engines.

Social Media Marketing

Social media marketing is based on social networking. Most students spend more than half their lives online, and a great portion of this time is spent on Facebook and Twitter. There are many ways to market institutions on facebook, but organizations need to make sure that they cover the main areas which will help them interact with students and potential clients to enhance value creation within organizations services. Social networking is the use of internet to enable individuals to find others with common interest and allow them to meet online. It has been around as long as internet itself. It has taken various forms; some of the most popular in the 1980 include bulletin board services, such as Fido Net, and the rise of popular online service, e.g. Prodigy and CompuServe, each of which developed forum in which their members could reach one another (Graham et al 2008). This is a marketing method which many institutions do understand is important, but may not know how to implement it. According to Evans (2010), he says that Social media is important to understand because it forms the basis of social business. What the social feedback loop really represents is the way in which Internet based publishing and social technology has connected people around business or business like activities. This new social connectivity applies between a business and its customers or between other businesses, between customers themselves, as is the case in support communities and similar social applications, and just as well between employees.

Email Marketing

Achieving measurable RO I (return on investment) is one of the challenges that marketing professionals face in the land of email marketing. In other words, it's difficult for them to connect the dots between the messages they send out to prospective customers and the moment when these subscribers get further engaged and turn into customers, Magdalene (2011). A great way to connect with potential students is to set up a newsletter. By doing this, institutions can automatically stay in contact with students who are considering to join such institutions. Marketing managers set messages to automatically be sent out at specific intervals, or send messages to the list of target clients all at once. Email marketing is so popular because: sending email is much cheaper than most other forms of communication, email lets you deliver your message to the people (unlike a website, where the people have to come to your message). Email marketing has proven very successful for those who do it right. Therefore it's important for marketers to lay down strategies on proper targeting just like in any other form of marketing**.**

Blogs

The word blog originates as an accepted shortening of "web log," which in layman's terms is a place online for

someone to keep a daily log of whatever they like (Macpickren 2011). The owner of the blog can take this chance to share their feelings and reactions to what they encounter in their life, both online and offline, or choose to discuss a specific subject or hobby that they are passionate about. Since blogs are free to make and easy to find, anyone with an internet connection can create one, Wright (2005). Many of these blogs eventually gather online communities dedicated to visiting and interacting with people similar to themselves. Depending on the popularity level achieved, the "blogger" may become quite influential and even make money from their blog via merchandising, ads, etc. Advertising networks that specialize in blogs provide some efficiency in placing advertisements, as do blog networks, which are collections of small number of popular blogs, coordinated by central management team, and which can deliver a large audience to advertiser, (Kenneth, 2008).

There is no law that states a blog must be run by one person and one person only, and blogs are so popular that it would be impossible to count them, with more coming every day. To survive in today's business world, it is vital that a company put one together, and there are multiple reasons as to why this is true. The benefit of blogs is that one can receive feedback from their customers instantly. Through blogs students will realize that they are reachable, and this may lead to respect and brand loyalty. In fact, many popular sites, such as Twitter and Blogger, have adopted their own blogs and in doing so have only added to their success (MacPickren, 2011).

2.2 Empirical Review
Recent studies have shown that consumers are accessing information on the internet before making major life decisions. One in three consumers relies heavily on the internet to gather information about choosing a school, buying a car, finding a job, dealing with major illness, or making investment decisions (Kotler, 2006). As a result to be competitive in today's new market place, companies must adopt internet technology or risk being left behind. Today, almost majority of youths surf the internet either from home through laptops connected to modems or through internet enabled phones. As more and more people find their way onto the web, the cyberspace population is becoming more mainstream and diverse. Most organizations try to meet their customer online through different channels. Institutions of higher learning worldwide are undergoing unprecedented change and confronting multiple challenges brought about by vast complex processes of globalization and liberalization; this is according to Claudine (1998). Economic development is correlated with the development of higher education. Enrollment ratio in higher education averages over 50 percent for the developed countries compared to 21 percent in the middle income countries and six percent in low income countries Elkhawas (1998). These efforts have been executed by several institutions based on internet based tools as search engines, social media, email and blogs which shall be explored in this study.

According to Veronis (2007), he postulates that Internet advertising will be the number one advertising medium in most middle income countries in just four years, he continues to say that advertisers will spend more money on the Internet than on newspapers. The shift of local consumer internet advertising to TV, radio, and local magazine web sites also bears out that conventional media are quickly realigning themselves to stamp their authority on the internet marketing platform. In this information age, clients look for something and would want it immediately, for instance in the newspaper the page may not have enough information except maybe the contact and the name of the product, this may also apply to bill boards, they are usually large but customers are unable to get more information at that particular time. When such a medium is compared to internet, the use of a website is appropriate since all the information can be accessed instantly. On the Internet, it is usually a customer who initiates contact and is seeking information on a web site this becomes a 'pull' mechanism unless e-mail is used.

According to Deighton,(1996), he identified certain characteristics that are inherent to digital medium that makes internet marketing suitable for the current dynamic market, the characteristics include customer initiative, the customer is seeking information, it is a high intensity medium in that the marketer will have a hundred percent of the individual's attention when he or she is viewing a web site and an institution can gather and store the response of the individual, assess their needs which can be taken into account in future dialogues. According to Shukla (2010), Organizations are now in the dilemma in which way to go traditional or modern; they are trying to find out the perfect balance between the above the line and below the line communication strategies. Below-the-line promotions include any marketing communication containing a reward, either economic or experiential, which motivates a specific action by the target audience during a defined time period. It provides the 'reason to buy now' and, is increasingly becoming important part of the integrated communications mix of many companies.

The government of Kenya has moved a step further in instituting legislations that recognize electronic documents such as emails; this gives confidence to users of such media while negotiating in business. On the upside, for businesses who have always been frustrated by the courts over unenforceability of email contracts and other electronic forms of documentation, the new law gives a reprieve: For the first time in Kenya, and many years after the internet revolutionalised the conduct of business, the law for the first time amends the Penal Code

and the Evidence Act and allows for electronic records to be adduced in court, this is according to Kenya Communications Amendment Act (2009). This creates a basis for e-commerce in Kenya and gives internet based transactions more legitimacy and avenues to grow. Indeed, it has been argued that online purchasing and selling of goods and services in Kenya was operating in a legal vacuum. Before this new law, online business transactions had no legal backing in Kenyan courts and transactions were done purely on trust and, if matters went wrong, the different parties had to make use of archaic, outdated laws in court to argue their case. Emails, for example, were not admissible in a Kenyan court of law. Previously, even though still recognizing the now defunct telegrams, Kenyan courts did not recognize anything to do with electronic records or emails. This becomes an important component in this study since a simple regulation can kill or revive this sector fully. The government comes in handy to try and prevent cyber-crimes which make it unfavorable for users. According to Fahmida (2011), there are more kinds of malware and online threats and cyber-criminals are becoming more sophisticated, industry experts told congressional lawmakers at the May 25 hearing by the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee's National Security, Homeland Defense and Foreign Operations Subcommittee. While cyber-security should be a high priority for the government, the industry should be responsible for securing itself. These regulations and policies brought up by the government may either encourage or discourage the performance of internet marketing in institutions, for instance a government regulation to zero rate the importation of information technology equipment increases the uptake of technology country wide which will have a spiraling effect to other sectors like the education sector.

There are several risks associated with internet marketing, for a party under conditions requiring to use internet for marketing there has to be trust in that system. Considering that risk is a function of the probability that a hazard arises and the consequences of the hazard, Schneider, (1998), asserts that an individual's trusting behavior depends on the nature of the consequences. In the context of high consequence systems such as internet, risk avoidance behavior may arise. The behavior is what will prevent the acceptance of this mode of marketing. According to Chris (2009) he advices any business person who wants to engage in internet marketing to be equipped with fraud identification and prevention techniques and also to avoid signing contracts that are not well elaborate, which at the end may swindle them money as a result of fraudulent leads generated. The risks consumers perceive while shopping online include financial risk (i.e., fear of the economic loss in the result of purchase), social risk (i.e., fear of social rejection against the online-purchased product), performance risk (i.e., fear of the performance failure of an online purchased product), personal risk (i.e., uncertainty of the stability of the online shopping process), and privacy risk (i.e., fear of the exposure of personal information). Previous research conducted by Miyazaki and Fernandez (2001), shows a negative relationship between perceived risk of Internet shopping and purchase rate. The first prediction in consumer behavior literature in regards of perceived risk Bauer (1960) states that consumers make purchase decisions that minimize perceived risk in the relevant situation. In an institutional context this can be viewed when students are able to get information online such as admission requirements and being able to pay for registration through online forms that help capture information concerning the potential student. Based on the students perceived risks or real risks facing the students while using the internet it's going to affect how internet performs as a marketing strategy especially by the private Colleges in Mombasa County. According to Kenneth (2008), the overall size of internet crime is unclear at this time, cyber-crime against users on sites is growing rapidly, the amount of losses is growing, and the management of e- commerce sites must prepare for a variety of criminal assaults, the key dimensions of internet security includes, integrity, nonrepudiation, authenticity and confidentiality.

Sample Data Analysis
Correlations

		What internet is utilized for	To what extent is Exposure to ponography a risk on the internet
What internet is utilized for	Pearson Correlation	1	.067
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.380
	N	175	175
To what extent is Exposure to ponography a risk on the internet	Pearson Correlation	.067	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.380	
	N	175	175

This analysis showed clearly that a majority of students and teaching staff use the internet for various purposes and this makes it a good target for internet marketing. There was general consensus that although there is internet utilization at high rate, there was lack of value proposition, this is because marketing is supposed to

be an integrated activity therefore requiring the input of various stakeholders. The activities that ranked the list are the most important in creating a sustainable web based customer interaction.

On assessing the extent to which respondents perceived various factors while using internet as challenges, the respondents of this questionnaire therefore acknowledged the hypothetical value of internet marketing, this was seen from the attitude the respondents had towards various internet challenges which showed the respondents willingness and interest in using internet for marketing purposes.

Attitudes and perceptions of respondents were also explored, a set of questions were asked to ascertain the respondent's perception towards internet risk or information security of a person or organization. Risk does not necessarily result in harm, especially when it comes to internet usage, it could be something that makes one feel uncomfortable, upset, or feel that they shouldn't have seen it. Findings varied by program (e.g. certificate, diploma, degree o administrator). The results of the questions that were asked have been displayed, basically the fear of letting out confidential information while using internet for marketing purposes was perceived as a major risk. There was a huge percentage of respondents who were not sure whether credit card information stealing is a factor, this can be attributed to the fact that, credit cards on the internet are not widely used in Kenya and therefore its implication was not clear to respondents.

The second part was looking at respondents opinion based on whether they think supplying of personal information is a risky issues on the internet, there was an overwhelming opinion, it is not surprising that a majority of the group was skeptical about supplying personal information, a 21.% of respondents strongly agreed and 37.3 % agreed. This makes up a 58.9 percentage of people who agreed to this view.17.6% disagreed and 23.5 % were not sure. This implies that for one to conduct a successful marketing across the internet, there is need to minimize the amount of information a user is supposed to disclose online and preserve such a moment for a one on one session as it nears the completion of the deal. This implies that a majority of respondents still value the traditional brick and mortar approach to way of doing business, this calls for internet marketer to ensure they provide a sense of their presence in their marketing efforts, this can be done through communication and assuring he students that should they need to be attended to, physically the institutions administrators should be available and accessible From these results, it is inferred that the majority of respondents understand the risks associated with internet use and thus for any internet strategies to work they must be seen to address the security concerns of internet users

When setting up of ICT centers was correlated with internet utilization especially in internet marketing, it was found that there was a correlation coefficient of 0.813; this indicates a high correlation between internet utilization and setting up of ICT centers. This means the more ICT centers are set by the government then it has the capability of driving internet marketing in private colleges in Mombasa County, this should be replicated across the entire country.

When a correlation was done between internet utilization and the extent to which exposure to pornography may discourage internet marketing, there was a weak correlation of 0.380 between the two variables. This can be attributed to the fact that although most respondents ranked this as the greatest risk in internet marketing but the correlation shows that this is a factor that can not be able to discourage the use of internet for marketing of courses in private colleges. Partly the assumption made here is that majority of the respondents fell below the age of 25 and thus such exposures wouldn't be such a bother to them.

3. Conclusion

As reflected in the research findings, respondents are of the opinion that internet is a potential media of communication and most of them a currently using it and therefore its performance is great but the marketers need to adjust their strategies to fit the culture that has been introduced and is highly thriving in the internet. This attitude and perception indicated that respondents comprehend the possible value that may be drawn from internet marketing. There was a great correlation between the internet performances, (which was measured by looking at how many individuals utilized internet for marketing purposes other than any activity) against setting up of ICT centers as a government policy. The implication it bears is that setting up such centers enhances computer literacy which will at the end influence searching of information via internet and thus enhance internet marketing.

Recommendations

Therefore the research found that internet marketing has the potential to positively affect the performance of private institutions, this would happen if a locus of control is inherent to these institutions to be able to overcome the various challenges that have been highlighted. Therefore academic staffs and management of various institutions should take internet marketing seriously more than the conventional media.

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