

Digital Marketing Trends Transforming Marketing. Digital Marketing to Patients

Ioan Matei PURCĂREA

Abstract

Keeping up with the ever-evolving digital marketing trends is the right attitude today, and marketers are running with new vehicles of innovation to meet the high expectations of today's smarter customers expressed across all the digital interactions, by providing a superior and seamless CX across their customer journey. Digital marketers are aware of the role of CX in advancing digital transformation and are challenged to create experiences which resonate in the current distracted age. They are also aware that we are all patients evolving from care recipients to active participants, that digital marketing is facing healthcare's reshaping in multiple ways determined including by how the patient segments access healthcare, and that digital marketing must increase brand awareness and foster brand loyalty. That is why digital marketers need to implement adequate healthcare marketing strategies so as to improve patient experience in the new healthcare world. There is no doubt that marketers need to be truly digital customer focused and to build deep digital customer relationships accordingly.

Keywords: Digital Marketing Trends; Digital Experience (DX); Digital CX; Healthcare Digital Marketing; Digital Customer Relationships

JEL Classification: D83; I10; L86; M15; M31; M37; O33

Enabling the future of marketing

Keeping up with the ever-evolving digital marketing trends is the right attitude today, businesses trying to thrive needing to adapt to these faster evolving changes and to act accordingly. Artificial Intelligence (AI, with its ability of analyzing consumer behavior and search patterns, and of utilizing data from greatly impressed of social media platforms and blog posts), Mobilification (the prospective and current customers' engagement by using a mobile strategy is already an usual thing for digital marketers), Personalized Content (going beyond the standard, and targeting prospective customers), Chatbots (ensuring instant gratification), More Video (a true boom), Pansexual Marketing (gender neutral digital marketing), are such digital marketing trends we can't omit. (TFC Marketing, 2019) Other opinions underlined, for instance, that: among millennials, Instagram is going to dominate Facebook which is still the no. 1 social media platform; LinkedIn will continue to be helpful for B2B marketers, driving social traffic to their websites and blogs; Micro-influencers (with social media following fewer than 10000 people) are trusted and cost-effective influencers, delivering engagement and driving social buzz, being brand relevant and advocating for it; Search engine optimization(SEO) is continuing to help in the long run as the best source of traffic; Pay-Per-Click (PPC), an important tool for

every digital marketer, is benefitting from many updates and will continue to help increase the conversion rate; Email marketing will continue to remain a sustainable platform to reach customers; Personalization of content will continue to attract more customers (user experience being key); Voice Search trend is challenging SEO marketers to start prepare their websites accordingly; the evolution of Programmatic advertising will reduce the cost of campaigns, saving also a lot of time etc. (Digital Vimal, 2019)

Coming back to the first highlighted digital marketing trend we can't omit, allow us to show that on June 6, this year, we received an email from eMarketer Marketing Technology (eMarketer, New York) having this subject: "How AI Is Transforming Marketing". The key role played by AI in both integrating data and generating insight was underlined here, enabling marketers to scale limitlessly while never losing an insight. We were invited to download a whitepaper from Datorama, A Salesforce Company, in order to learn: *"How AI is enabling the future of marketing. Key ways AI drives growth by enhancing performance, impact, and customer loyalty. Why machine learning and AI are extremely complementary to marketing"*. On the other hand, at the beginning of this year, the Drift's (the Conversational Marketing Platform) 2018 State of Chatbots Report attracted our attention, by underlining, among other aspects, the following: (Drift, 2019) in order to simulate how humans communicate many chatbots (computer programs designed to simulate conversation with human users, to a great extent over the internet) rely on AI (machine learning and NLP); *the predicted use cases for Chatbots* identified by respondents to their survey were as follows: getting a quick answer in an emergency (37%), resolving a complaint or problem (35%), getting detailed answers or explanations (35%), finding a human customer service assistant (34%), making a reservation (e.g. restaurant or hotel; 33%), paying a bill (29%), buying a basic item (27%), getting ideas and inspiration for purchases (22%), adding yourself to a mailing list or news service (22%), communicating with multiple brands using one program (18%), none of these things (13%), buying an expensive item (14%); *the potential benefits of Chatbots expected by customers to enjoy*: 24 hour service (64%), getting an instant response (55%), answers to simple questions (55%), easy communication (51%), complaints resolved quickly (43%), a good customer experience (43%), detailed / expert answers (37%), answers to complex questions (35%), friendliness and approachability (32%), none of these (8%); *the potential blockers to using Chatbots*: I'd prefer to deal with a real-life assistant (43%), I'd worry about it making a mistake (30%), If I could only access it through Facebook (27%), I'd prefer to use a normal website (26%), If it wasn't able to "chat" in a friendly manner (24%), Nothing would stop me from using a chatbot (15%), Other (3%). We can see the benefits (beyond their limitations) of using Chatbots (which are providing the real-time, on-demand approach, also opening the way of delivering a better online CX) in communicating with customers and potential customers, businesses having this opportunity to deliver a level of real-time service with the help of Chatbots in combination with online chat (which scored in the above mentioned survey the first-highest when it came to those respondents expecting instant responses). Without forgetting to also mention that according to this report Chatbots have outperformed apps in five benefits

categories (quick answers to simple questions, getting 24-hour service, quick answers to complex questions, ability to easily register a complaint, getting detailed / expert answers).

At the beginning of March this year, on the Blog of Hubspot it was argued that AI-powered Chatbots (by leveraging machine learning and NLP) can respond to customers' questions in a human way, not only by understanding the intent behind their requests, but also by accounting for each customer's entire conversation history when it interacts with them. Within this framework a list of the best AI chatbots for this year (Watson Assistant; Bold360; Rulai; LivePerson; Inbenta; Ada; Vergic) was advanced, recommendable for a company wanting to upgrade the currently used standard Chatbot. (Chi, 2019)

There is no doubt that AI – as confirmed by the latest Salesforce Research (which surveyed 7,037 global consumers and business buyers) introduced in their “State of the Connected Customer” report – is one of the new vehicles of innovation (together with mobile and cloud platforms) sought continually by companies competing for winning today's smarter customers created by the connected world. As Simon Mulcahy, Salesforce CMO, highlighted from the very beginning: “... *customers, consumers, patients, and citizens are supremely empowered with more information and choice than ever before, making it an even greater endeavor to sustain loyalty*”. And with regard to patients we recall that an article published by Health Tech Insider at the end of 2017 and entitled “AI detects disease from smartphone behavior” revealed that by using machine learning and AI a company like Mindstrong Health has a measurement approach called “digital phenotyping” (using three kinds of signals from a smartphone) and makes assessments based on smartphone use. (Houston, 2017) But we will refer later at healthcare digital marketing.

Developing an adequate understanding of the digital experience (DX)

Recognized as a customer-need driven initiative, the digital experience (DX being provided by mobile apps, websites and smart devices) uses digital technologies and provides a specific interaction between a single user (customer, partner or employee) and an organization. On the other hand, the sum of all digital interactions which a person has with an organization represents a customer digital experience (DCX) going beyond individual touchpoints and considering an improvement (of the user interface, of the mobile responsiveness and design, of the communication methods, of delivering real time data etc.) across all these digital interactions. (Liferay, N.D.)

Five years ago, in the major report of Cognizant's Center for the Future of Work in partnership with leading market research firm Oxford Economics (which surveyed 300 senior executives with responsibility for consumer data and analytics in April 2014) it was underlined that: to survive and thrive in digital terra incognita it is necessary to take stark strategic decisions; CX is most of the time an experience at all hardly; there is a clearly focus on product and service innovation, enabled by digital interactions and Code Halo-style approaches; in five

or 10 years (2019-2024) customers' expectations are going to be quite unlike those of today (November 2014); to compete in this new Code Halo era it is of great importance to interact digitally with customers and prospects. Also in November 2014, a FitForCommerce White Paper made possible by the support of Oracle Retail argued that the total digital customer experience is driven by the collision of marketing and commerce disciplines, five key components making up this experience: content and commerce; customers and context; digital and physical convergence; brand and commerce convergence; scalability. A year later, in September 2015, A Trend Study for Germany, France and the UK – made by Pierre Audoin Consultants (PAC), A CXP Group Company, Sponsor of the study being Adobe – and entitled “Holistic Customer Experience in the Digital Age” revealed (as a part of the analyst conclusion - Nicole Dufft, Independent Vice President, Digital Enterprise) among other aspects that in this age of the empowered customer (the digital age) companies must be able to provide a superior and seamless CX across all touchpoints.

In October last year, on the occasion of a podcast for Worthix, the reputed digital analyst Brian Solis argued that the number one driver for advanced digital transformation is CX, defined by him as “the sum of all engagements a customer has with your company throughout the life cycle” (considering all the moments, not just one; from here the importance of recreating click paths with regard to the way of getting someone from A to B), where experience is “an emotional/sensory reaction to a moment” (which can be measured by customer's reaction and take away with him). (Solis, 2018) Very recently, on the occasion of a SAP's Tech Unknown podcast, Solis showed that – within the context of digital distraction affecting employees, customers, and business leaders – we're all human beings, having a human emotional and physical reaction to a moment (including those offered with the help of: Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, Pinterest etc.), accelerating our brains and becoming narcissistic, much more demanding, anxious, and impatient, trying to run through our journey (which is needing to compensate for delivering value, relief, and utility) as best we can, but needing to be in control of our life. (Solis, 2018) And businesses are challenged accordingly to create CX which attract, earn and reward attention, creating experiences which resonate in the current distracted age, all these on the basis of the significant data available.

And all these also make us recall another article published by Health Tech Insider in October 2017 and entitled “Emotion-aware AI enhances digital interaction”, which concluded that: “advances in emotion-aware digital tech have exciting potentials for medicine and healthcare”. (Brown, 2017)

Digital Marketing to Patients... We are all Patients

Last year, a Privcap Media Report (Q1 2018, sponsored by Ernst & Young) entitled “The Consumerization of Healthcare” started from the fact that U.S. healthcare system is taking a page from retail: *“The U.S. healthcare system is undergoing consumerization – a fundamental move toward a value-based market in which providers are more responsive to their patients. In this*

evolving market, healthcare “products” are delivered directly to patients, and patients are evolving from care recipients to participants who play an active role in managing their own health”. This Report revealed among other aspects that: “Marketing to patients is more about modifying behavior than selling services... It’s more about messaging – conveying information to patients that will modify their behavior and bring a better outcome, for them and the provider”.

It is largely recognized McKinsey & Company’s preoccupation for Healthcare Systems and Services Practice. Twelve years ago, in 2007 McKinsey inaugurated its annual Consumer Health Insights (CHI) Survey, which provides not only information on the opinions, preferences, and behaviors of thousands of US consumers, but also on the environmental factors influencing these consumers’ healthcare choices. The 2018 McKinsey CHI Survey (which identified six consumer segments with differing needs: healthy convenience seeker, disadvantaged disconnected user, busy convenience user, loyal informed consumer, engaged traditionalist, and constrained chronic care consumer) revealed, for example, that: there are three areas considered by respondents as especially important – claims submissions, cost information, and provider performance data – many of them reporting low satisfaction levels; consumers continue to use emergency rooms for nonemergency conditions, while fewer consumers are visiting primary care physicians; consumers want digital solutions, those interested in primary care physicians leveraging digital more; consumers are also seeking greater value and convenience; there is an increased use of digital tools (online medical visits, activity trackers, electronic health records, online scheduling, digital appointment reminders etc.), what confirms consumers’ openness to innovation. (Cordina et al., 2019) The context is clear: healthcare is reshaped today in multiple ways (by emerging technologies such as: connected and cognitive devices, electroceuticals, targeted and personalized medicine, robotics, 3D printing, big data and analytics, artificial intelligence, blockchain, and robotic process automation) determined by how the above mentioned consumers segments access healthcare, how and which providers deliver it, and what health outcomes it achieves. (Singhal and Carlton, 2019)

One way to make the difference in a brand’s success is through emotional connection, but as the emotional connection and impetus to act may manifest differently for different people, it is important to find out the right balance of rational information with emotional impact. (Asbaty, 2019) As marketing was defined by Philip Kotler as the art of brand building, there is no doubt about the continuous evolution of the healthcare marketing on the way of achieving brand’s success.

The challenge of increased patient choice is driving the opportunity for brand in healthcare, health systems’ brands needing to be broader and more purpose-oriented, better understanding their audience, knowing what patients want from them, permeating every facet of the experience (patients and employees), and impacting both digital and physical experiences, implementing a brand strategy with forward-leaning orientation, looking at the future of healthcare. (Lagasse, 2018) Today, between the healthcare services offered by similar brands

there are no so big differences within the context of shifting performance metrics to value-based assessments like patient satisfaction, and of putting emphasis on prevention over treatment, healthcare brands struggling to align with their customers' needs and expectations by focusing on: adequately positioning (so as to create a unique impression in patient's mind); refreshing their visual identity; compelling, engaging, and useful content; digital marketing, as one of the most valuable ways of engaging with their audience and improve patients' engagement, increasing brand awareness and fostering brand loyalty; a consistent and cohesive across every touchpoint customer experience (CX). (Lischer, N.D.)

Healthcare digital marketing experts recommend healthcare marketing strategies such as: generating educational content (by infusing targeted keyword into the content, using informational blogs or articles posted on social media sites etc.); making analytics a top priority (so as to generate more patient leads and higher ROMI); investing in targeted marketing strategies (by better segmenting, targeting and positioning, including with the help of the proper digital platforms); enhancing the user experience (making it convenient and seamless by ensuring patients' access to the information they need in order to make informed decisions and having their questions quick and adequately answered); innovating (by helping patients' online searches, for instance ensuring voice search capabilities) etc. (Mine Health, 2018) As an improved patient experience is considered today as being key to successful healthcare business, healthcare providers are increasing the adoption of digital tactics for healthcare marketing: website optimization for local searches, rich content based on patient driven data, capturing local prospects using social media, proactive online reputation management (being well-known the impact of online reviews), optimizing ROI by regular data tracking etc. (Prasad, 2019)

Conclusions

In our last issue we underlined marketers' need of better understanding customers' behaviors and of optimizing content and CX, using innovations in digital media, technology, and data. We also highlighted companies' need of adapting continuously their digital strategy in accordance with the evolution of today's digital landscape. (Purcarea, 2019)

The Beryl Institute defines the patient experience as “the sum of all interactions, shaped by an organization's culture, that influence patient perceptions across the continuum of care”. Three years ago, the President of this reputed institute, Jason A. Wolf, PhD, argued that: “in a new healthcare world, technology does not equate to complexity, but rather accessibility, immediacy, choice, well-being, sustainability and ultimately viability”. (Wolf, 2016)

Starting from these above mentioned aspects allow us to end by paraphrasing four reputed experts:

- with the advent of new technology, to be effective, digital marketing strategies must spell out what the target markets are, how they are segmented and what the value proposition is for each key segment – paraphrasing Professor Malcolm McDonald; (McDonald, 2017)

- to be truly digital customer focused, digital marketers need to center on the most fundamental elements of a firm: decision-making power, digital marketing performance metrics and brand promise – paraphrasing John Hagel, Co-Chairman for Deloitte LLP’s Center for the Edge; (Hagel, 2017)

- to build deep digital customer relationships, digital marketers need to provide competitively differentiating digital CX that deliver value at the critical points in the digital customer’s relationship with the brand – paraphrasing Ernan Roman, President of ERDM Corp, and Scott Emmons, former Head of the Innovation Lab at the Neiman Marcus Group. (Roman and Emmons, 2019)

References

- Asbaty, C. (2019). Helping a Health Brand Matter By Creating Emotion, OgilvyHealth, May 23. Retrieved from <https://www.ogilvy.com/feed/helping-a-health-brand-matter-by-creating-emotion/>
- Brown, B. (2017). Emotion-Aware AI Enhances Digital Interaction, Health Tech Insider, October 27. Retrieved from <https://healthtechinsider.com/2017/10/27/emotion-aware-ai-enhances-digital-interaction/>
- Chi, C. (2019). 7 of the Best AI Chatbots for 2019, Hubspot, March 04. Retrieved from <https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/best-ai-chatbot>
- Cordina, J., Qian, M. and Sanfilippo, L. (2019). Healthcare consumerism today: Accelerating the consumer experience, Executive Summary, McKinsey & Company, April. Retrieved from <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/healthcare-systems-and-services/our-insights/healthcare-consumerism-today-accelerating-the-consumer-experience>
- Hagel, J. (2017). Tests for Customer Focused Companies, The Marketing Journal, February 23. Retrieved from <http://www.marketingjournal.org/tests-for-customer-focused-companies-john-hagel/>
- Houston, K. (2017). AI Detects Disease from Smartphone Behavior, Health Tech Insider, December 13. Retrieved from <https://healthtechinsider.com/2017/12/13/ai-detects-disease-smartphone-behavior/>
- Lagasse, J. (2018). Why branding in healthcare is more important than ever, and how to connect with consumers, Healthcare Finance News, Nov 08. Retrieved from <https://www.healthcarefinancenews.com/news/why-branding-healthcare-more-important-ever-and-how-connect-consumers>
- Lischer, B. (N.D.). Healthcare Branding: 5 Ways to Make Your Company Stand Out, Ignite Branding. Retrieved from <http://www.ignitebrands.com/healthcare-branding-ways-to-stand-out/>
- McDonald, M. (2017). Market Segmentation: Still the Bedrock of Commercial Success, The Marketing Journal, October 11. Retrieved from <http://www.marketingjournal.org/market-segmentation-still-the-bedrock-of-commercial-success-malcolm-mcdonald/>
- Prasad, A. (2019). 5 Best Healthcare Digital Marketing Practices That Assure Success, GMR Web Team, February 5. Retrieved from <https://www.gmrwebteam.com/blog/healthcare-digital-marketing>
- Purcarea, I.M. (2019). Digital Customers, Digital Marketers, and Keeping up with Trends in Today’s Digital World, Holistic Marketing Management, March 2019, Volume 9, Issue 1, pp. 28-37

Roman, E. and Emmons, S. (2019). Achieving Customer Experience Excellence at 7 Critical Life-Cycle Points, The Marketing Journal, March 10. Retrieved from <http://www.marketingjournal.org/achieving-customer-experience-excellence-at-7-critical-life-cycle-points-ernan-roman-and-scott-emmons/>

Singhal, S. and Carlton, S. (2019). The era of exponential improvement in healthcare? Executive Summary, McKinsey & Company, May. Retrieved from <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/healthcare-systems-and-services/our-insights/the-era-of-exponential-improvement-in-healthcare>

Solis, B. (2018). Designing The Future Of Customer Experience, October 11. Retrieved from <https://www.briansolis.com/2018/10/designing-the-future-of-customer-experience/>

Solis, B. (2019). Customer Experience In The Age Of Digital Distraction, June 4. Retrieved from <https://www.briansolis.com/2019/06/customer-experience-in-the-age-of-digital-distraction/>

Wolf, A.J. (2016). The Role of Technology in Patient Experience: Insights and Trends, The Beryl Institute. Retrieved from https://c.ymcdn.com/sites/theberylinstitute.site-ym.com/resource/download/20160317_151727_29530/Technology%20White%20Paper.pdf

*** Digital Marketing Trends You Can't Ignore, TFC Marketing, January 3rd, 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.tfc.marketing/digital-marketing-trends-you-cant-ignore/>

*** 13 Digital marketing trends you must be aware of in 2019, Digital Vimal, Jan 2, 2019. Retrieved from <https://digitalvimal.in/13-digital-marketing-trends-you-must-be-aware-of-in-2019/>

*** The 2018 State of Chatbots Report: How Chatbots Are Reshaping Online Experiences, Drift, SurveyMonkey Audience, Salesforce, & myclever, January, 2019. Retrieved from [2018-state-of-chatbots-report.pdf](#)

*** State of the Connected Customer, Salesforce Research. Retrieved from [state-of-connected-customer.pdf](#)

*** What is a Digital Experience? Liferay. Retrieved from <https://www.liferay.com/resources/l/digital-experience>

*** Putting the Experience in Digital Customer Experience, Cognizant in partnership with Oxford Economics, November 2014. Retrieved from <https://www.cognizant.com/InsightsWhitepapers/putting-the-experience-in-digital-customer-experience-codex1180.pdf>

*** 5 Keys to the Digital Experience Equation: Leveraging customers, context and content to deliver the optimal digital experience, FitForCommerce White Paper Series, Oracle, November 2014. Retrieved from <https://www.oracle.com/assets/retail-5-keys-digital-experience-wp-2397695.pdf>

*** Holistic Customer Experience in the Digital Age, A Trend Study for Germany, France and the UK. PAC, A CXP Group Company, Sponsor of the study: Adobe, September 2015. Retrieved from <https://blogs.adobe.com/digitaleurope/files/2015/09/StudyHolisticCXAdobe.pdf>

*** The Consumerization of Healthcare, Privcap Media Report, Q1 2018, sponsored by Ernst & Young. Retrieved from https://www.privcap.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/2018.Report.EY_.Healthcare.Consumerization.pdf