Digital Marketing and Assessment of HR Practices

Akilan P

(PGDM No.: 12123)
Student, SDMIMD, Mysore
akilan12123@sdmimd.ac.in

J Balaji

Assistant Professor - Quantitative Methods and Business Research Methods
SDMIMD, Mysore
balaji@sdmimd.ac.in

Comments by the Faculty

Online portals are booming nowadays because of the convenience it offers to the consumers. This serves as a huge opportunity for the firms so as to cater to their needs by providing them best features and add value to their own business. In the recent decade, it could be noticed that, the penetration of internet has been tremendous and the consumers have become smarter by gathering insights about the technology and the convenience it could possibly offer. The firms have started capitalising on the need of the consumers which is ultimate service and Ticketgoose serves to be one among the pool of those booming firms that could cater to the consumer's travel needs via an online portal.

Now that the online bus ticketing industry has been occupied by well-established and new entrants, consumer reach has remained the ultimate challenge. The industry is all about attracting the potential consumers and retaining them by providing them with value added service. Consumers always do have demands, but differentiating themselves from the other market players and overcoming the competition is crucial for Ticketgoose. At the same time, the firm is expected to come up with a strategy to cover as many potential consumers not forgetting the cost that needs to be incurred in the process of formulating the strategy.

Apart from expanding in terms of geography, which again is a way of acquiring new consumers, Ticketgoose being an online player, needed to market its service to as many consumers by spending not too much of its capital. One way of achieving the goal was digital marketing because of its trait to provide the consumer reach at a reasonable cost. Also, current trends show that firms are able to spread the brand awareness and hence retain the consumers and keep them well informed about the services that are being provided.

The sole aim of digital marketing in the organisational context, was to "make the service available to all the potential consumers before the competitors do and to retain them by providing quality service". And my SIP focus was on the above theme even if some additional recommendations were made at the end of the project. They include

o Make the service available- Search engine optimisation(SEO)

o Retain consumers by engaging them in social networks like Facebook

SEO tools were studied based on several parameters and then compared. Social network marketing was taken up via a campaign and results were recorded to understand the impact created among consumers and at what cost it could be achieved. Apart from the above objectives, the study included an assessment of HR practices. The study mainly focussed on the real time challenge of Ticketgoose in the HR front which is to retain its talented resources. This part of the project included the objective to identify the possible changes that could be made in the organisation from HR perspectives and make them more productive.

J Balaji

Topic Introduction

Digital Marketing

While older generations will no doubt lament the demise of paper-based newspapers, books, communication methods and traditional TV and radio broadcasts, those who have grown up with the internet and mobile phones as a right, are already embracing the brave new world of digital consumption.

The facts are that digital methods of communication and marketing are faster, more versatile, practical and streamlined, so it is perhaps unsurprising that once the technology became available we began quickly moving into the digital age. The good news is that digital offers just as much potential to marketers as it does to consumers.Below are few of the best possible digital marketing tools that was observed to fit in.

- Websites and SEO content

- Blogs

- Email marketing

- Social media marketing (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.)

- Mobile marketing (SMS, MMS, etc.)

Why Digital Marketing?

First of all, digital marketing is infinitely more affordable than traditional offline marketing methods. An email or social media campaign, for example, can transmit a marketing message to consumers for the merest fraction of the cost of a TV ad or print campaign, and potentially reach a wider audience.

But one of the main benefits of conducting the marketing digitally is the ease with which results can be tracked and monitored. Rather than conducting expensive customer research, we can quickly view customer response rates and measure the success of our marketing campaign in real-time, enabling the firm to plan more effectively for the next one.

Assessment of HR Practices

It is not a surprise that tech start-ups face complex and unique business challenges. The ease by which a company can establish an online presence, coupled with the fierce competition that accompanies such a dynamic business landscape, leads to difficulties in establishing a brand, marketing and selling products and most importantly retaining its employees. Tech start-ups need to specifically consider the methods by which they will create a strong presence for their

brand. At the same time, these companies need to also put their mind to attracting and retaining outstanding employees by promoting a respectful and transparent workplace culture. Tech start-ups seldom have the luxury of waiting for clients to come to them or for employees to simply subscribe to their models and must be creative in establishing an online and offline business strategy for attracting and retaining both customers and employees.

This assessment was basically made to observe the possible challenges that could be faced in developing a HR practice so as to engage the employees and retain them in a long term basis.

SIP Learning / Analysis

Digital Marketing

Framework

After working in the domain, it was observed that a firm deciding to implement digital marketing needs to have a framework that involves the following steps in order to establish itself in the digital world.

1. Define Digital's Mission

2. Select Overall Digital Strategy

3. Interactivity

4. ROI Measurement, Accountability, and Optimization

5. Technology Strategy and Selection

Finally, the use of digital marketing technology should of course be determined by the digital and interactive marketing strategies that are going to be offered after.

Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

Search Engine Optimization is the process of getting traffic from the free, organic or natural listings on search engines. All major search engines such as Google, Yahoo and Bing have such results, where web pages and other content such as videos or local listings are shown and ranked based on what the search engine considers most relevant to users.

In a competitive online world, SEO tools can be the firm's way to the top of the search results. From automation and helpful research tools to campaign tracking and link building, these optimization tools can give them the edge over their competition.

Comparison of SEO Tools

Based on research, there were several SEO tools that were available in the market that were analyzed and compared in order to choose the best suited tool for SEO at ticketgoose.com.

Parameters	Requirements	RAVEN	SEO MOZ	WEB CEO
On page analysis	Broken Links, Duplicate Content	Yes	Yes	No
Link Management	Prospective linking sites, link building outreach	Good Features	No	Yes
Keyword History	Position, Visits	Positions-No, Visits-OK	Yes	Yes
Competitor Analysis	Website quality, Pages, Links	Yes	More Features	No
Report & Tracking	No. of links acquired, No. of keywords	Yes	Yes	Yes
Pricing	Affordable cost and maximum features	99$ / month	99$ - 200$ /month	50$ - 300$ /month

Based on the above parameters, the performance of the SEO tools were compared and the final recommendation was submitted.

Social Media Marketing

The next most important and emerging channel for digital marketing that I happened to work in was Social Media Marketing that included Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest.

Metrics for Social Media Marketing:

There are four main metrics for social media marketing, all of which must be considered to determine the true return of investment.

Awareness: Awareness is the same metric that has been always used in marketing. Asking a random selection of people if they have heard of your product. Asking them if they can attribute any characteristics about your product. If we're doing our job, the answer will be, "Of course I've heard of KFC. It's finger licking good!" We grow awareness through reach and social media lets us reach people we might not otherwise. They are the friends of friends who read the tweet re-tweeted by those we couldn't reach on our own.

Sentiment: Sentiment pertains to how people feel about our brand, our product or even about us. It's great that everybody is blogging about our latest offering, unless they are deriding our efforts, tweeting about our incompetence and posting video satires about the firm on YouTube. Tracking sentiment across competitors and over time allows us to keep a finger on the pulse of the marketplace and divine what's in their hearts and minds.

Response: Response comes in three varieties.

1) Response to the posting in Facebook, Likes for the posts, Blogs about our postings, Retweets etc.

2) Business related response i.e., did the customer visit Ticketgoose.com by coming across the posts in Facebook

3) Relating the social media response with the sales

Value: This mainly depends upon the sale of the online tickets due to social media marketing which is the final target for the firm.

KOI - Know Our India @ Facebook

One among the major initiative that was taken in order to build brand awareness among the customers was the campaign KOI.

KOI – KNOW OUR INDIA campaign was basically aimed to attract Facebook users by focusing on every state of India. It was basically 1 WEEK per STATE during when the offbeat locations, art, culture, food, things to do were focused and the postings were done based on this theme. And the results of the campaign were really encouraging with the considerable number of new likes every day there by achieving the targeted brand awareness.

The most interesting thing that was noted during the campaign was that the competitor of Ticketgoose.com, Redbus.in also started its counter attack by beginning a similar campaign. The post said, "Ready for a journey across the country with us? Introducing The Red Bus Travel Book, a virtual tour of all the magnificent sights, experiences and wonders our country has to offer us." This retaliation by the competitor in a way showed that Ticketgoose.com has been moving in the right direction.

Insights from Facebook:

● Overview-Reach and Engagement for each update, weekly comparison of percentage of likes.

● Page

● Current page likes, Types of likes(Un likes, Organic likes, Paid likes, Net likes), Source of likes (Page suggestions, Page likes)

● Post reach-Type of reach, Total number of likes , Comments and Shares for posts, Total number of hides, Reported as spam and Un likes, Page visits(just visitors and fans),

● Page visits-Page Activity (post mentions) , Offers purchased

● Posts

● Online presence of fans – Day wise/ Time wise

● Best Post Types

● People

● Classification of fans age wise, gender wise, country wise, state wise and language wise

Assessment of HR Practices

What does Ticketgoose.com need from its employees?

Employees are expected to be self-motivated and they are to be molded in such a way that they work for a long term goal rather than shorter ones. They are expected to be patient. They will have to work harder before expecting returns. These expectations need to be satisfied by the start up in order to sustain in the field and to start growing in the midst of the competition.

What employees expect in return?

Even though monetary benefits (reasonable compensation and incentives, periodic rise in salary based on performance, allowances etc…) always seem to be the most important expectation for any employee, there are few more crucial things that they would strive for.

- Recognition of an individual's talents which in turn could provide job satisfaction
- Opportunities that could help the individual bring out his/her talents
- Relevance between the job's nature and the individual's area of interest
- Job security & Promising future that would ensure the individual's career growth

These traits act as incentive for the employees to stay and continue work for the firm.

And now about the challenges that are being faced in maintaining and retaining their talented resources. Gone are the days where the employees no longer had a voice in the firm. Nowadays, they are one of the most important core competencies that cannot be substituted easily. Finding a suitable match to replace an experienced employee is never an easy job for the firm.

- Finding right replacement
- External competition
- Setting up an organizational structure
- Cannot afford too many experiments
- Financial constraint

Recommendations

Digital Marketing

SEO

As described earlier in the analysis part, several parameters were discovered based on which, a suitable SEO tool was chosen among the several other SEO tools that were available in the market. The organization seemed to fit in with "Raven" since the study proved the requirements were very well satisfied by the same. The same has been recommended to the top management.

Social Media Marketing

Social media is one tool where most of the potential customers never forget to use in their day to day life. And creating a presence in the social media helps in creating a *Brand Awareness* that is one status that every online business would love to achieve.

One important suggestion that was stressed to the top management was that, spending in promoting the Facebook profile and achieving inorganic growth (meaning paying for more number of "Facebook likes") could be replaced by promoting the brand with the help of "Facebook campaigns". The results of the campaign "KOI" seemed to be very much promising and it was evident that there was high customer reach when properly handled.

Google Analytics

Google Analytics is a service offered by Google that generates detailed statistics about a website's traffic and traffic sources and measures conversions and sales. It is the most widely used website statistics service. The basic service is free of charge and a premium version is available for a fee. Google Analytics can track visitors from all referrers, including search engines and social networks, direct visits and referring sites. It also displays advertising, pay-per-click networks, email marketing etc.

Ticketgoose.com can very well implement this upcoming technology in order to measure its ROI and keep track of its performance. Google analytics mainly provides detailed updates about the conversion rate of the advertising into sales. Also it serves a strategy making tool based on which the company can decide where to spend and where not.

HR Perspectives

Based on observation, allocation and effective engagement of the employees has been a challenge for the firm. The following are few of the best possible recommendations that could be made in order to overcome the challenges positively.

- Creating diverse opportunities
- Offering scope for learning
- Empowerment
- Creating second-rung leadership
- Being open to suggestions *Employee Recognition Programs*.
- Improving team interaction

Conclusion

Having worked as an employee in a MNC for two years handling operational roles, the Summer Internship Program has been a beautiful learning experience. My views have started capturing the tactical and strategic roles which is the first and foremost reason why I chose to pursue my PGDM as part of my learning career. There has been a reason why a start-up was chosen to do

internship. According to me, an emerging start-up is the best place to learn the real time business. Also, the fact that, the work that was done as part of this internship has its impact over the organization's success, really encouraged me and hopefully this wonderful experience will definitely help me in bringing the best of mine in the future.

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