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Translation of Viral News Topics into Digital Marketing

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of
Lynn University

College of International Communication
by
Eba Diab

September 26th, 2017

Lynn University, Florida

To my family, thank you for always being there for me.

Acknowledgement

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Abstract

In today's digital marketing driven environment, it is essential that organizations understand the strategies behind technology in advertising. Unfortunately, many marketers do not have a strategy when they begin utilizing digital marketing strategies. The purpose of this study is to understand how viral topics translate into digital marketing. The research includes a case study on United Airlines, followed by in-depth interviews with digital marketers, and accompanied by an analysis of the business' digital marketing campaigns. Analysis of the campaigns reveal the different digital marketing strategies organizations use to build and maintain relationships with consumers. The study concludes with a discussion of the lessons learned from the research: the implementation of viral topics in digital marketing increases brand exposure; focusing more on relationships than sales, increases sales; interesting content promotes interaction.

Table of Content

Section	Page Number
CHAPTER 1. Introduction	7
Background	8
Research Question	8
Literature Review	11
Justification	16
Methodology	17
Limitations	20
CHAPTER 2. Primary Research Results	22
Digital Marketing	23
Traditional Marketing	24
Traditional Marketing Vs. Digital Marketing	25
United Airlines' Marketing Department	26
Viral Marketing	28
CHAPTER 3. Secondary Research Results	31
Traditional Marketing	31
Digital Marketing	33
Traditional Marketing Vs. Digital Marketing	35
	36

Viral Marketing	38
Social Media Marketing	39
United Airlines Loss	
Airlines Mock United	40
CHAPTER 4. Discussion	41
Traditional Marketing	42
Digital Marketing	43
Traditional Vs. Digital Marketing	46
Viral Marketing	47
United Airlines Study	48
CHAPTER 5. Limitation	53
Conclusion	55
References	57
Appendixes	61

Introduction:

Traditional marketing such as TV commercials, print advertisements, bulletins, and mailings have all had truly high achievement rates in the past. However, in recent years, the achievement rates for these mediums have been falling, and a way to resolve this problem is to join these traditional strategies with digital advertising methods. Despite being relatively new when contrasted with the historical backdrop of traditional media, digital media can help an organization's image, and help them maintain a good relationship with their clients. Showcasing through web-based social networking, email records or online advertisements is likewise fundamentally more affordable and more quantifiable than traditional media. Whenever consolidated, they make up for each other's shortcomings, and both their advantages can be reaped.

While more up-to-date strategies function well, it may be unwise to allow them to completely replace traditional strategies, particularly since every method resonates with individuals and groups of viewers in ways that others cannot. Consolidating the two strategies is an efficient way of amassing a larger audience.

Digital marketing is a very well-known term and is the direction in which forward thinking companies are headed. Many marketers believe that traditional marketing is fading but that is untrue. In this paper, I will be covering several topics on digital and traditional marketing. I will first define traditional and digital marketing and distinguish between the two. I will explain the benefits of each marketing technique. I will also highlight the relationship between *digital* and *traditional* and their dependence on one another to be effective. This paper will focus on

digital marketing and how viral news stories are implemented by marketers, and will explore why viral news topics translate better in digital marketing. Additionally, the paper will explore the overlooking and misuse of viral news topics in digital marketing by marketers, and the consequences of this. I will do this by describing several marketing campaigns that were a result of a viral news story, and will describe the ways marketers have used these topics in their campaigns.

Research Question:

How do viral media news topics transfer into digital advertising?

Hypothesis:

Current and viral news topics positively impact digital marketers and digital advertising if properly executed.

Background

When faced with decisions around marketing, many independent businesses struggle with choosing between digital or traditional advertising. This is largely because their budget usually can only allow them to take an either/or approach—not both. The choices that must be made are difficult: which strategy for promoting will give the organization the most value for its money? How would the organization know whether its advertising is working? Who can the organization trust with its marketing? Is it better for the organization to run its marketing campaigns without anyone's help? Some may find the responses astonishing.

To clear up the terms, the utilization of print advertisements on daily papers and magazines is a straightforward case of traditional advertising. Different illustrations incorporate flyers that are placed in letter drops, and plugs, both on TV and radio and announcements. Then again, when a business contributes to the building of a site, publicizing the brand name through various online networks (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube), this kind of system is called *digital advertising*. When a business advertises for its product on Facebook or Twitter, this is what most people refer to as *digital marketing*.

The traditional marketing strategies of organizations support digital marketing efforts. The two do not work separately of each other. In any case, companies utilize printed copy advertising materials to additionally reinforce an association with a contact, referral accomplice or customer. Companies do not put resources into TV or radio promotions, for instance, yet, they will offer pamphlets to somebody who is keen on their administrations.

Instead of adopting a win or bust strategy, it creates the impression that a multi-channel approach that uses the one of a kind advantages of paper with the accommodation and availability of technology will perform best. *Multichannel marketing* is the application of a single strategy across multiple channels or platforms, thus expanding chances to cooperate with potential customers. This happens when a company advertises its product on several platforms such as YouTube and Facebook to drive back sales to it.

Marketers have not appropriately studied the effect of the implementation of viral news topics into digital marketing appropriately. Utilization of such topics can have a positive impact on a company if utilized properly, and can affect it negatively if done inappropriately. Topics can be used inappropriately if implemented on an inappropriate platform. For example, a visual news topic would perform better on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube than it would on Twitter. Digital marketers implement viral news topics for a higher return on investment. Social media and email marketing are two very useful tools. Digital marketers use social media, digital advertisements, even email campaigns. Companies who have utilized this strategy effectively have seen a higher return on investment than companies who have used common topics in their digital marketing techniques.

Additionally, there is currently a glut of digital advertising in social media markets that sometimes prompts a response that is the opposite of what was expected; the truth is that many people have a negative response to the advertisements. Some television networks bombard their audience with repetitive advertisements only to create a brand awareness among their viewers. However, these channels can do this without backlash because they are already popular with viewers. The paper will provide some examples to support this claim.

Literature Review

Over the past fifty years, the meaning of advertising has been redefined by scholars and promoting experts, and its acknowledgment is still seen as important in management philosophy. The shortest definition of marketing is the one proposed by Kotler and Keller (2016): “meeting needs profitably” (p.1) . According to Constantinides E. (2006), marketing has been assumed to be an essential part of the American and European market economies, not just by enhancing the efficiency of the distributive arrangement of merchandise and ventures additionally since it has set off a virtuous circle of economic development.

The traditional marketing idea holds that products ought to be made in consideration of the communicated needs and demands of the public, and that this would be the best approach to address the association's own issues, regardless of whether these requirements are budgetary benefits or other non-financial objectives.

There are numerous features of traditional marketing and cases may incorporate substantial things, for example, business cards, print advertisements in daily papers or magazines. It can likewise incorporate notices, plugs on TV and radio, boards and pamphlets. Traditional marketing is anything apart from computerized intends to mark an item or logo. Another neglected method for traditional marketing is when individuals locate a specific business through a referral or a system and in the long run, build a relationship with them. Moving on to digital marketing and its definition: over the last few years, though social media and digital platforms, people have been exposing themselves more than ever before. Advertisers have responded to this essential move by expanding their utilization of digital advertising channels. As of 2017, roughly 33% of worldwide promoting spending is done through computerized channels (eMarketer, 2015). Because of this, it is essential for buyer research to

look at and comprehend customer conduct in computerized situations. According to Yasmin A. Tasneem S. Fatema K. (2015), the fundamental objective of digital promoting is drawing in clients and enabling them to communicate with the brand through technological media. Digital marketing stretches out past online promoting including channels that do not require the utilization of the Internet. It incorporates cell phones (both SMS and MMS), web-based social networking showcasing, show publicizing, web crawler promoting and numerous different types of advanced media. Through computerized media, customers can access data whenever and wherever they need to.

With the availability and accessibility of digital media, consumers do not simply depend on what a company says about their image—they can also rely on the media, peers, and other outside sources. Digital advertising is an expansive term that alludes to different limited time systems set to achieve clients by means of advanced advances. Advanced showcasing typifies a broad determination of administration, item and brand advertising strategies which fundamentally utilize the web as a center distinct medium notwithstanding multipurpose and ordinary TV and radio. Ordinance iMage Gateway enables purchasers to share their innovative photographs with companions on the web. L'Oréal's brand Lancôme utilizes email bulletins to stay in contact with clients and henceforth tries to fortify client mark dependability (Merisavo et al., 2004). Magazine distributors can actuate and drive their clients online with messages and SMS messages to enhance re-membership rate (Merisavo et al., 2004).

As indicated by Chaffey (2011), online networking promoting includes motivating client interaction on an organization's own website or through its online image. Online networking advertising is one critical method in computerized promoting as organizations can utilize web-based social networking structure to convey their messages to their intended interest group

without paying for the distributors or merchant that is the trademark for traditional advertising. Computerized advertising, electronic showcasing, e-promoting and the Internet showcasing are all comparative terms which, basically, allude to marketing on the Internet either via websites, online advertisements, email campaigns, collaborative TV or cell phones (Chaffey and Smith, 2008). Giese and Gote (2000) finds that client data fulfillment (CIS) for advanced showcasing can be conceptualized of full of feeling reaction of shifting force that takes after utilization and is empowered by central parts of offers exercises, data frameworks (sites), computerized items/administrations, client bolster, after-deals administration and organization culture.

The world has transitioned into an exceptionally digital environment. Magazines are not the only medium being computerized; organizations perform a hefty portion of their daily tasks, such as managing accounts on the web, and a considerable amount of their processes is done on tablets. Due to the ascent of the advanced age, it appears to make the most sense to put resources into a computerized format. Even though digital advertising still has a place, it is falling in our carefully based world. For today's organizations, having a site and utilizing the web to connect with a client base is a given. There are some effective traditional marketing techniques, especially on the off chance that one is not contacting a nearby crowd; however, it is important to take advantage of digital marketing to keep up in today's world.

Our traditional marketing methods bolster our digital advertising accomplishments. The two do not work separately from one another. In any case, we utilize printed versions of promotional materials to additionally fortify an association with a contact, referral accomplice or customer. Companies do not put resources into TV or radio advertisements, for instance, however, they could offer handouts to an individual who is occupied with their administrations.

Instead of adopting a win big or bust strategy, it gives the idea that a multi-channel approach that uses the one of a kind advantages of paper with the accommodation and openness of advanced will perform best. According to Dania R. (2016), one imperative perspective is the arrival on the venture (ROI), return on investment, from any digital marketing effort. To comprehend what the ROI is, we must comprehend what the objectives or points of the organization are, what they wish to get from an advanced showcasing effort and, measure these objectives.

There is a consistent discussion on whether digital marketing is overwhelming and outperforming traditional marketing or not. Many experts feel that digital advertising has assumed control and traditional examining has lost its significance. Still, others recognize that traditional advertising is still being utilized, and that computerized advertising is pairing well with it.

A current review directed in 2015 by ZenitOptimedia demonstrates that over the last five years, the utilization of the web has grown significantly, while the utilization of other media has either decreased or marginally developed. The data is as follows: Internet (+105%), Outdoor (+3%), Television (- 8%), Cinema (- 11%), Radio (- 15%), Magazines (- 23), Newspapers (- 31%) (p.5).

A similar study done by ZenitOptimedia discovered that on average, individuals spend more than 490 minutes every day utilizing media; however, the use of television remains impressive, at an astonishing 3 hours daily, while the use of the internet is at second place. In any case, the trend demonstrates decrease in the use of television, and an increase in the use of the internet. The group that accounts for the greatest percentage of internet use is young adults, with

time spent online nearly tripling over the last 10 years. This growth is fueled by expanding utilization of tablets and cell phones. Older individuals continue to appear to favor more conventional media outlets such as like television and radio, and continue to be reliable audience for traditional promoting.

Recently, United Airlines has received feedback—and backlash—from its loyal customers regarding its choice to banish two high school-aged females from boarding a flight because they were wearing leggings, in June. Delta Airlines took advantage of the controversy surrounding its competitor, and posted a message on Twitter which stated *“flying Delta means comfort. (That means you can wear your leggings).”*

Florida-based Spirit Airlines also took advantage of the viral news story, and posted an advertisement proclaiming, *“Let them wear leggings,”* alongside a one-day offer of 75% off on flights to destinations, on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. Clicking the link prompted a message saying, *“Well at least at Spirit, we're united (cough) about letting young girls dress how they want. If you want to fly with us, get your leggings on ladies. Or even gentlemen. No judgments here”*. Immediately after United Airlines’ story went viral, the company Puma, which is known for its athletic apparel, including leggings, posted the following offer on Twitter: *“Present any United Airlines ticket and get 20% off all tights”* [at its stores in the United States].

After the controversial United Airlines incident which saw a traveler forcefully dragged and removed from an overbooked flight, Emirates Airlines openly took the opportunity to ridicule the United Airlines CEO. In what can be viewed as an astounding PR technique, the Dubai-based carrier seized the opportunity to answer to a remark made by United Airlines several months prior.

Viral marketing tends to bring back higher revenues to companies that are implementing it. According to Sukhraj R. (2016), "viral marketing is pretty much what it sounds like—marketing that spreads like a virus" (p.1). As it relates to online activity today, the rule is that any procedure that empowers word-of-mouth can be viewed as viral marketing. Any instance where a message out about a company or its product spreads and garners attention and an audience, can be an example of viral marketing.

Justification

Current and viral news topics greatly impact digital marketers and digital advertising either negatively or positively. However, marketers are either unaware of this or are unable to effectively utilize topics in their marketing techniques. Researchers have proven that digital marketing works best with traditional marketing; however, there is a lack of studies that show digital marketing is more successful when integrated with a well-known news story. There continues to be an open discussion around whether digital marketing is outperforming traditional advertising or not. Many imagine that generally, technological advertising has assumed control and traditional branding scarcely exists, if at all. Digital marketers nowadays focus on viral news topics for engagement and a higher return on investment.

The world has transitioned into an extremely digital world. Not exclusively are magazines going advanced, we perform many our day by day tasks, for example, managing an account on the web and a lot of our perusing is done on tablets. In light of the ascent of the advanced age, it appears logical to put resources into a computerized battle. Even though traditional advertising still has a place, it is lessening in our carefully based world. Today, it is common for companies to have a site and utilize the internet to connect with their consumers. There are some advantages to using traditional promoting techniques, especially when targeting local groups, however, it is vital to exploit digital advertising to keep up with the changing times and trends.

Methodology

The research methods implemented in this research paper are qualitative and quantitative research methods. Qualitative research will involve primary research such as in-depth one-on-one interviews. MyCity Social conducted interviews with its employees to obtain a better understanding of the impact of digital and viral marketing. I received permission to utilize the interview results in my study. In-depth interviews are one-to-one experiences where the researcher utilizes an unstructured or semi-organized arrangement of issues/points to direct the discourse. The purpose of the activities is to investigate and reveal profound situated feelings, inspirations, and states of mind. They are regularly utilized when managing touchy matters and respondents are probably going to give shifty or notwithstanding deceptive answers when straightforwardly addressed. A large portion of the procedures utilized as a part of the direct of profundity meetings has been acquired from the field of analysis. In-depth interviews are normally only effective when led by a well-prepared and exceptionally talented questioner. Interviewing is a way to collect data as well as to gain knowledge from individuals. Kvale (1996) regarded interviews as “an interchange of views between two or more people on a topic of mutual interest, sees the centrality of human interaction for knowledge production, and emphasizes the social situation of research data” (p.14). Interviews are ways for participants to get involved and share their views. Additionally, the participants can discuss their perception and interpretation regarding a given situation—it is their expression from their point of view. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2000) explain that “the interview is not simply concerned with collecting data about life: it is part of life itself, its human embeddedness is inescapable” (p.267).

MyCity Social conducted interviews to benefit and educate the organization on viral marketing. I received permission from the organization to use the results of the interviews in this research study. One key interview was with the Director of Digital Marketing at MyCity Social. MyCity Social specializes in all social media platform and assists companies in choosing the ones that best compliment their unique business and consumer market. They provide monthly newsletters to be sent out to the customer database. Clients of MyCity Social range from organizations in the medical industry to mom and pop shops.

The one-on-one interviews involved in-depth questions that will support the relationship that exists in traditional and digital marketing. These interviews will further support the goal of the paper, which is to explore the effectiveness of viral news topics in digital marketing and how news is translated into digital marketing.

Several researchers point out the importance of traditional marketing and digital marketing, and that one cannot function without the other in today's world. Therefore, for the quantitative research, statistics will be implemented into the research paper supporting the claim on how digital marketing works more effectively alongside traditional marketing. The data will be gathered on revenue generated by transitioning to digital marketing.

Secondary data analysis is an examination of information that was gathered by another person for another main role. The use of this current information gives a suitable choice to scientists who may have constrained time and assets. While secondary data analysis is an adaptable approach and can be used in a few ways, it is additionally an exact exercise with procedural and evaluative strides, similarly as there are in gathering and assessing essential information (Doolan & Froelicher, 2009).

The campaigns that will be highlighted and further discussed offer information on at least two viral news stories. Keep in mind, research will not only be limited to these. The first news story is that of United Airlines and how it banned young girls from boarding a plane because they were wearing leggings. All news platforms spoke and discussed this story, and it went viral on all social media platforms.

The second topic that will be discussed will be the incident which involved a an elderly doctor being forcefully dragged off airplane by force because it was an overbooked flight. These two topics are limited to topics in the United States, however, I will be highlighting how international flights, for example, Emirates Airlines, have used this story in its digital marketing, Facebook, and YouTube, to drive sales to its company. These cases will be further discussed in the paper, and a couple others to talk about the different digital marketing strategies that international airlines and domestic airlines of the United States of America have reached out to.

Limitations

Unfortunately, I will be facing a few limitations when doing my research paper. My focus is digital marketing and how viral news stories are implemented by marketers. I will not be able to control what news topics are viral while doing my paper. We live in a very dynamic world. traditional marketing once was everything companies depended upon and now, digital marketing is regarded as most profitable.

My qualitative research limitation is going to be the interview answers that were provided by way of MyCity Social. While these were interviews with employees of a digital marketing agency, it will not provide me with insight on an entire population of digital marketers. Every marketer is going to have a different point of view on digital marketing, and what strategies perform better for each type of industry.

Another factor limiting my research will be the time assigned to work on the research paper. I would be able to gather more information if I had more time to research and conduct more interviews.

Primary Research Results

Intensive interviews were conducted by MyCity Social to benefit and educate the employees on digital and viral marketing. Researcher received permission to use the results of the interview in this study. It was vital to understand the digital marketer's perspective on viral marketing. It was also beneficial to explore how news topics translate into digital marketing efforts. Interviews were carried out with five digital marketers and the director of MyCity Social, an internet marketing agency that helps businesses excel using innovative digital marketing services at competitive prices. MyCity Social is a leading digital marketing company that creates innovative technology and digital marketing services to increase and maximize exposure and communication between a business and its online audience. The first three chapters of this thesis offered an introduction to the idea of viral marketing and how marketers utilize it, a review of the literature surrounding tradition, digital and viral marketing, and the methodological design that was utilized for this study. This chapter will now present the findings that emerged from the data collected and analyzed using the conceptual framework that was constructed for this study.

The findings will be presented separately from one another within this chapter. The background of the study will be presented, and will be followed by the case study's findings in relation to the research question. All findings presented serve to answer the following research question for this study:

- How do viral media news topics transfer into digital advertising?

Participants were asked about the definition of digital marketing, and were asked to articulate it. The five employees and their director, who were all interviewed, had very similar answers. They defined digital marketing as being a general term that covers marketing practices in the digital or technological spectrum, and they viewed it as being mostly related to the internet, but acknowledged that it could include the uses of technology like smart phones or digital billboards. According to the participants, digital marketing is most commonly used in social media, search engine optimization, email marketing, online ads on social channels, websites, email marketing, and search engines.

The Director of Digital Marketing at MyCity Social stated, “digital marketing is anything but traditional marketing. So, if it can be seen or engaged on through some type of technology or electronic I would consider it to be classified under digital marketing”. The overall response to this question was very expected and the participants shared a common view. All of them defined digital marketing as the process of using digital tools to persuade consumers to engage with a brand or purchase a product.

Digital marketing stretches out past online promoting, and includes channels that do not require the utilization of the Internet. It incorporates cell phones (both SMS and MMS), web-based social networking showcasing, show publicizing, web crawler promoting and numerous different types of advanced media. Through computerized media, customers can access data whenever and wherever they need.

Traditional Marketing

Another question the participants were asked was how they would simply define traditional marketing or put it into words. Participants had a very similar answer as well, as they all have studied communication and were taught traditional marketing in addition to digital marketing. The respondents defined traditional marketing as the old-school practice of marketing or as defined "traditional". It includes print advertisements, mailers, flyers, etc. It uses the basic tools of paper and ink in marketing efforts. They added that traditional marketing can be defined as print based, on-air advertising, grass roots strategies or word of mouth promotion of a product, place or person.

Ellis N. stated, "Traditional Marketing is anything that does not use technology. Collateral material including but not limited to; tabling at events, mailing out paper marketing materials, zip code targeting through direct mail, billboards, store fronts. Radio and television are kinds of hybrids but for the typical millennial that doesn't listen to the radio or watches TV but rather pays a subscription to avoid commercials would be considered traditional".

There are numerous features of traditional marketing, many of which are tangible items such as business cards, print advertisements in daily papers or magazines. It can likewise incorporate notices, plugs on TV and radio, boards and pamphlets. Traditional marketing is anything outside of computerized efforts to mark your item or logo. Another example of neglected method of traditional marketing is when individuals locate a specific business through a referral or a system, and in the long run, the company builds compatibility with them.

Digital Marketing Vs. Traditional Marketing

A question which was vital to the research was asked:

- Which one do you think performs best—digital marketing or traditional marketing?

Answers varied from one interviewee to another, where four out of six subscribed to the idea that digital marketing performs and will continue to perform better than traditional marketing or any sort of marketing.

Brittany Emastica stated: “in this day and age, Digital Marketing all the way! We currently live in a digital world and that means the marketing trends need to keep up with it. The one invention that I think changed the game aside from the Internet is the smartphone. It puts the digital world in the palm of our hand and that is how many marketers are now reaching their customers. Nobody gets the yellow pages delivered to their door anymore or even pays any mind to the advertisements in the newspaper”.

The director’s response reflecting the findings of several researchers: that both digital and traditional marketing have a big impact and huge results. Rather than saying that it performs best, I would classify Digital Marketing as being less costly than Traditional Marketing. Shanna Torres stated: “from my experience as a professional in the publishing and digital advertising industry, I can say confidently that print is on a decline in the U.S. Places outside of the U.S like Europe are a bit behind the curve and are often more likely to see higher revenue and better client KPI's on print campaigns than the U.S, as our domestic marketing industry is continuously eclipsed by digital. In my opinion, digital marketing has a lower barrier of entry and results often outperform the print competition”.

The following question was asked to the participants, and each of them gave a different answer to the situation.

- You've heard of United Airlines viral stories. Do you think United Airlines' marketing department has handled the situations well on social media?

The participants all agreed that United Airlines' marketing department handled the situations poorly in all aspects. United Airlines appeared to neglect to enlist the help of their PR practitioners when it came to responding to such sensitive situations. Respondents agreed that United should have done more to properly address the situation they were in, especially since competing airlines were mocking them. Nickie stated: "I would have put a worldwide campaign out via video commercial reminding people they are not a heartless corporation. Further, I would have blasted it throughout all marketing channels. Then, [I would respond] to all comments in an apologetic manner. They did back up the actions of the employees, but neglected to [acknowledge that] the action taken was out of line. Anytime you have a customer being physically harmed in the name of your company, an apology statement needs to be made immediately". She also stated: "I would have contacted the PR department for a press release right away. I would have had the PR department move forward with responding to all comments and removing any kind of humor, [remarks that appear neglectful], or sarcasm, since this case is very sensitive".

According to the American Marketing Association, United's social sentiment dropped 160% in direct result of how they treated their clients during a difficult situation as well as afterwards. United Airlines failed to respond to their customers with basic customer service. The lack of empathy in their attempt at an apology, and all the poor PR work they have done since, makes for a huge failure on United's part.

Regarding this, Michelle Susan stated: “When people started tweeting about the scene on the airplane, United just kept responding with the same message: ‘this is very concerning, please DM us.’ They said the same thing over and over to people. They should have said something like: ‘We have heard what is going on one of our airplanes and we are very sorry for all those involved! We will get to the bottom of this. Please note this is not tolerable.’ Something along those lines...United needed to show that they were human, not a robot.”

- What do you think of all the campaigns of competing industries, mocking United?

Five out of six participants loved the idea of competitors mocking United Airlines on social media. For example, Brittany said “I loved it! As a consumer, I found it comical that other airlines seized the opportunity to show how they are different and better than United. In my marketing eyes, it was a risky move only if it was done a tasteless manner. Some airlines did it in a witty and fun way, and others ended up getting backlash themselves”. No matter the medium employed (print or digital), competitive marketing is owned by the opportunist. The campaigns mocking United simply took advantage of an opportunity to make their customer experiences seem superior.

The remaining interviewer believed that mocking any company is not right, but it is bound to happen. When it comes to viral news, everyone wants a piece of the pie and companies will say whatever they must to ensure that they get theirs.

Participants were asked what viral marketing was, if they have ever heard of the term before. They have all heard of it and had a very similar definition to each other. According to Brittany, “it is the goal of any digital marketing creating content. It is when customers and followers share your product or service through the internet, it is like free advertising if done right”.

Participants believe that it does not seem like a well-rounded method of marketing, and it is an incomplete strategy without the accompaniment of an Influencer Marketing strategy. Shanna stated: “Virality can be achieved, but the definite means of attaining it remains enigmatic”. Their response was very like Sukhraj R. (2016), who stated: "viral marketing is pretty much what it sounds like -- marketing that spreads like a virus" (p.1). Therefore, any procedure that enhances word-of-mouth can be viewed as viral marketing if utilized correctly. It will encourage crowds of individuals to spread a message about a company and its product, increase audience size, and facilitate quick development for a business, and that is what qualifies it as being viral marketing.

- Would you rather choose a viral topic or a random topic for your marketing strategies?

The response to this question was equally intriguing. Respondents stated that they would choose viral topics for their marketing strategies over a low-engagement topic. They stated that they believed that viral topics will always get more engagement because of their relevance and the sensationalism around them. If a viral story can be used to benefit a business, it seems smart to take advantage of it. On the other hand, businesses must be careful not to use stories—or tactics—that are overplayed, to avoid appearing unoriginal to consumers. Therefore, timing is everything when it comes to implementing a news topic in a marketing strategy. Choosing a viral topic will always give better results because there is a high chance that the audience is already familiar with the story. Moreover, viral topics are also often controversial, which leads to good conversation.

Shanna made the following statement: “choosing a viral topic is obviously the preferred answer, but in all reality, it depends on the campaigns' Key Performance Indicator, KPI. Currently, I work in a niche interest area of the publishing and digital advertising industry. Some topics that qualify as ‘viral’ with our fan base are the world apart from what resonates with other audiences”.

Respondents believe that any business that is not using digital marketing is putting itself at a disadvantage, and behind its competitors. In today’s climate, it is important that companies maintain a social media presence, and, at the very least, that they have a website and can be found on Google. show up on Google, have a website, etc. Companies without a digital presence stand to miss out on opportunities to grow and build credibility among consumers. Digital marketing is not just about being present in the digital world. It is about using all the most

popular forms of marketing, newest social media channels, engaging with others to stay on top of the trend.

Additionally, digital marketing is all about being in the moment. The internet is a key way people stay with the news and look for entertainment and information. When a topic is trending, the best position is to be part of the conversation on social media and in articles, because it suggests that a business is relevant. In such settings, consumers do not want to be told about services and products—they want to be entertained. According to Nickie, marketers should always “create test groups [to] see which campaigns perform the best, then repeat them”. Nickie shared that she constantly advises her employees to “listen to what the client wants, and give it to them within reason. Stay on top of the trend when it comes to creating the visuals and always create a catchy tagline that grabs attention” (p.11).

Secondary Research Results

The purpose of this study is to examine the digital marketer's point of view on viral marketing and how news topics translate into digital marketing. To do so, secondary research was reviewed for an in-depth understanding of traditional and digital marketing and how they work best together. Also, my secondary research findings highlight the importance of social media marketing when viral news topics are utilized.

The first three chapters of this dissertation offer an introduction to the idea of viral marketing and how marketers utilize it, a review of the literature surrounding traditional marketing, digital marketing and viral marketing, and, the methodological design that was utilized for this study. The United Airlines incidents will be highlighted as an example of viral marketing and its translation into digital marketing. This chapter will present the findings that emerged from the data collected and analyzed using peer-reviewed journals and articles that were reviewed for the study.

Traditional Marketing

After World War I and World War II, devastated nations around the world worked to better their economies. Within these nations, organizations struggled to address the concerns of consumers and meet their demands (Durmaz Y. Halil I, 2014). After a few years, the quality of life was enhanced, and nations were financially stable. During this period, with the establishment of television as a staple in western society, the world emerged with a new outlook. Western society's viewpoint began to be centered around new technology, including the introduction of

the television. Because of these new changes in the world of consumerism, attention moved from providers to consumers, and providers began to utilize different tactics to attract customers. This change encouraged clients to question an organization and its product before making an investment (Durmaz Y. Halil I, 2014, p.3). Wildly expanding areas of competition added to the existing ideas of "brand" and "advertisement" while presenting new concepts. Furthermore, this was the point at which the idea of advertising was presented. Results of large scale manufacturing had turned out to be broad. With this new understanding of advertising, organizations needed to change their perspective and place purchasers on the inside to address their issues in the most suitable way. A more efficient way of promoting to meet the demand of customers was discovered.

Organizations which embrace the understanding of traditional promoting focus more on their clients as opposed to themselves (Durmaz Y. Halil I, 2014). The benefit of this type of advertising from the clients' perspective can be found in the positive distinction between the advantage given to the clients when they devour items and the troubles they confront meanwhile. This gave a path to the development of customer fulfillment (Durmaz Y. Halil I, 2014).

The point of traditional advertising is to give time, place and ownership utility. Along these lines, the path of promoting includes creating an incentive for clients to inspire them to purchase a product. With this, the intention is to change the view of clients.

Digital Marketing

Recently, with the increased accessibility and speed of internet service, the speed of access to shopping platforms has also increased. Because of this progress, organizations inevitably became computerized. While correspondence rules change, meaning of advertising—and the field itself—changes as well. With the advancement of IT, traditional marketing techniques have changed over the years. Organizations which incorporate new innovations can directly connect with customers.

The greatest preferred standpoint of digital promoting is achieving the intended interest group in the right path with utilizing online networking and web engines efficiently. This investigation tries to clarify digital advertising periods and focal points important similarities and distinction amongst traditional and digital marketing.

Durmaz Y. Halil I (2014) states: "development, pricing, promotion and distribution of goods are also done online. The benefits that digital marketing provides can be considered as a revolution in the marketing world, social network marketing, mobile marketing, viral marketing and revenue partnership" (p.5). One type of digital marketing is email marketing that is utilized by marketers to drive higher ROI. Durmaz Y. Halil I (2014) stated, "E-mail marketing is a type of marketing in which customers are contacted via emails to be given information about certain products and services" (p.3). The length and the subject of the email with the pictures utilized are critical components in this type of promotion.

Social networks have been a popular channel of advertising. Advertisers are likewise keen on these systems which include individual data about clients. According to De Vries, L., Gensler, S., & LeeFlang, P. S. (2012), "Social network marketing is the process of attracting customers to related websites by using social media items. The main purpose of this type of marketing is to create advertisements of the brands, products, and services by having the opinions and suggestions of customers" (p.84).

Appendix 3 is a graph chart that demonstrates a forecast of digital marketing spending in the United States from 2014 to 2019. The source anticipated that the spending would rise from 57.29 billion U.S. dollars in 2014 to 103.37 billion U.S. dollars in 2019.

Common digital marketing applications

- Social media vs. digital marketing

Social networks are shared online platforms on which individuals can express their thoughts and experiences with one another. These platforms are also ideal for computerized promoting (Durmaz Y. Halil I, 2014, p.4). Through social media networks, sites may garner attention for their brands, diminish correspondence regions, and create new partnerships.

Social relations are likewise an important element of online networking. Individuals join the circles in which others share similar views to them. Because of online communities like Facebook, Google +, Instagram, Twitter and Pinterest, the daily lives of individuals can be documented and shared. Individuals now share the things they would have only shared with those closest to them just 10 years ago (Durmaz Y. Halil I, 2014.)

Traditional Marketing Vs. Digital Marketing

U.S. advertisers' estimate that the spending on technological advertising will hit \$103 billion in 2019 to represent 36% of all advertisement spending, as indicated by Forrester's most recent appraisals. "U.S. publicists will burn through \$85.8 billion on TV advertisements in 2019, which will parallel 30% of general promotion spending that year, as indicated by Forrester" (Peterson T, 2014, p.1). Still, digital advertising will not take over television simply because of the presence of large brand promoters YouTube and Facebook. There will be some decreasing of TV spending plans; however, the greater contributing component will be a deluge of new cash devoted to technology because advertisers can demonstrate that digital advertising works. The Forrester examiner, Shar VanBoskirk states: "We've landed at a more mature state with digital than we were even in our last forecast where people were still wildly experimental. Now for the same reason [marketers] have proven data to grow their budgets, they also have proven data to not overspend" (p.2).

The capacity to measure a digital ads' efficiency is the reason the chain of command of digital advertisement diverts will not change in the following five years, even with an expansion in versatile promotion spending. Forrester anticipates that “publicists will burn through \$46 billion on mobile advertisements in 2019, yet spread that sum among advanced umbrella channels with the goal that a portable standard purchase considers show, for instance. Portable will drive 66% of the development in computerized promotion spending throughout the following five years, yet those smaller-screen dollars will be heading off to an indistinguishable advanced channel from desktop dollars” (Peterson T, 2014, p.7).

Viral Marketing

Organizations are reacting to the changing patterns of buyer data acquisition and yearning for social and individual encounters through online networking advances. One such innovation that organizations are currently utilizing to connect with the consumer is viral advertising. Viral marketing depends on user-created communities and word-of-mouth to advance brand mindfulness and to create a client base. An investigation and understanding of viral marketing are basic stepping stones to the building of an effective coordinated advertising and correspondence system.

Viral marketing is defined by Datta, et al., (2005) as “marketing techniques that seek to exploit pre-existing social networks to produce exponential increases in brand awareness, through processes like the spread of an epidemic” (p. 72). Viral marketing can roughly be translated as “network-enhanced word-of-mouth” (Datta, et al., 2005, p. 72). Viral marketing

occurs through many online mediums, including “posted reviews, web-based opinion platforms, boycott web sites, news groups, mail bags, discussion forums, personal e-mails, chat rooms” and other formats including blogs and social networking sites (Datta, et al., 2005, p. 73). Viral marketing is the regeneration of word-of-mouth advertising, buzz generation, and communication strategies. Additionally, viral marketing performs best when a newsworthy topic is being implemented in the marketing strategy to create a buzz around a product or service. "Viral marketing works because friends are better at target marketing than any database" (Bulkeley, 2002, p. 25).

Traditionally, word-of-mouth marketing has been regarded as being most efficient for achieving a customer base and bolstering sales (Datta, et al., 2005). According to Ferguson (2008), "viral marketing has become the defining marketing trend of the decade" (p. 179). Viral marketing takes on the behavior of a spreading virus. This spread be a positive sharing of information to others within a network. "The key difference between a viral and a TV ad is that a viral is something you will seek out, take pleasure in finding, and send on for someone else to enjoy" (Clifford-Marsh, 2009, p. 51). Viral promoting takes the conventional underlying foundations of informal showcasing and exponentially extends the compass through interpersonal organizations, online journals, and other mechanical mediums (Datta, et al., 2005).

- *Viral Applications*

Not every person's Internet utilization is like that of another. Viral advertising has two parts, which are called *low* and *high* support systems. An example of a *low support* procedure would be the clients' use of the links that are including beneath an article so that it can be shared. High support techniques include more proactive approaches like the utilization of interpersonal organizations like Facebook or Twitter (Ünal S, 2011). Viral advertising, sometimes referred to as *word-of-mouth marketing*, depends on impulsive or sensational sharing about specific products or services. The beginning stage is a spreading of a message online.

Social Media Marketing

At this point, most organizations understand that they depend on client encounters. What is not fully understood is the social goal: online networking is currently a preliminary part of the relationship between company and client.

A current Harvard Business Review Analytic Services Survey found that organizations that completely incorporate web-based social networking and client encounters offer inconceivably more leading customer relationships than competitors do, which converts into more grounded development and prevailing positions in their business sectors (Harvard Business Review Analytics Services, 2016). This means that the better online networking is incorporated into an organization's customer encounters, the higher position they will acquire in their business sector.

A review found that only 34% of respondents felt that their association has the devices and abilities to convey a worthy client experience. Furthermore, the pioneers—involving 12% of the review respondents—were more forceful in their utilization of online networking than different organizations (Harvard Business Review Analytics Services, 2016). Going a long way past marketing or item mindfulness, these organizations concentrate on “online networking endeavors as primary concerns, producing prospective customers and relieving brand and reputational chance” (Christian S, 2017, p.2). This is shown in appendix 5.

United Airlines Loss

According to Imbert F. and Thomas L. (2017), “shares of United Continental fell by 2 percent [on the Tuesday following the incident] as outrage over Dr. David Dao of Kentucky being dragged off an overbooked flight finally caught up to the stock. The shares were among the worst performers in the S&P 500 (p. 1). Recordings of the episode became a web sensation via web-based networking media, and CEO Oscar Munoz apologized for having had to ‘re-accommodate’ clients following a two-hour delay. The encounter occurred on a United Express flight worked by Republic Airways.

Munoz issued a conciliatory sentiment in which he said the following: “[the company] will fix this issue. It's never too late to do the right thing. I have committed to our customers and our employees that we are going to fix what's broken so this never happens again," (Imbert F, Thomas L, 2017, p.3).

Clearer recordings depicting Dao being dragged off the flight, covered in blood, surfaced and further shocked the public, via web-based networking media in China. One of the most popular

viral hashtags surrounding the incident on microblog Weibo—the Chinese equivalent to Twitter— was “*#UnitedAirlinesforcespassengeroffplane*”. "This went to the next level when the CEO and the [United Airlines] executives began to respond," said Andy Swan of LikeFolio, which monitors social media for financial applications (p.3). "They threw gasoline on a fire” (Imbert F, Thomas L, 2017, p.3). Swan pointed out that rather than survey what unfolded on a United plane Sunday evening as a "one-off" occurrence, now United's investors scrutinized the capability of administration in dealing with emergency situations, and that therefore the company’s stock dropped (Imbert F, Thomas L, 2017, p.4). According to Thomson Reuters data, “shares in the group were down around 4 per cent, temporarily wiping close to \$1bn off the company's total market value. Shares recovered somewhat towards the end of the day to close the session 1.15 per cent lower” (Cox J, Rodionova Z, 2017, p. 2)

Airlines Mock United Airlines

It took less than 48 hours for other airlines to start kicking United Airlines while it was down. Public criticism was stern on social media, and this disdain was reflected in the stock market as well. Emirates and Royal Jordanian quickly joined the bandwagon. “Those [Gulf] airlines aren’t airlines,” a 34-second Emirates video ad begins by quoting United CEO Oscar Munoz from March 2. “Well, Mr. Munoz, not only are we a real airline, according to TripAdvisor, the world's largest travel site, we are the best airline," the ad says next. It finishes with "Fly the friendly skies, this time for real," a dig on United Airlines' motto "fly the friendly skies" (Irby K, 2017,

p.4). Appendix 5 and 6 are screenshots of the advertisements run on social media by the different airlines.

Appendix 7 is an advertisement for Southwest that appeared online, and additionally ridiculed United Airlines. After the add went viral, the organization rushed to distance themselves from the story on Twitter, and said the promotion was made by somebody outside the organization.

Discussion

The results of this research paper suggest that viral news topics translate better into digital marketing if used efficiently by digital marketers. This chapter will analyze the findings that emerged from the data collected and analyzed using the conceptual framework that was constructed for this study.

The findings will be discussed separately from one another within this chapter. All findings analyzed served to answer the following research question for this study:

- How do viral media news topic transfer into digital advertising?

Traditional Marketing

Before studying or discussing digital marketing, one should look at the history and the definition of traditional marketing. The findings from the interviews on traditional marketing reflect the findings of the secondary research. The participants defined traditional marketing as the old-school practice of marketing or as defined "traditional", which encompasses the use of print advertisements, mailers, flyers, etc. Traditional marketing uses basic tools, such as paper and ink in marketing efforts. The participants added that traditional marketing can include print-based advertising, on-air advertising, grass roots strategies, or word of mouth promotion of a product, place or person.

Companies that embrace the knowledge of traditional marketing think more about clients than about themselves, and attempt to fulfill clients' needs (Durmaz Y. Halil I, 2014). The benefit of this type of advertising from the consumers' perspective is demonstrated in the consumers' willingness to endure slight inconveniences, if it means that they will be able to acquire a service or product in the end. This approach traces a path to the development of customer fulfillment (Durmaz Y. Halil I, 2014).

There are numerous features of traditional marketing, many of which are tangible items such as business cards, print advertisements in daily papers or magazines. Traditional marketing can likewise incorporate notices, plugs on TV and radio, boards and pamphlets. Traditional marketing is anything outside of computerized efforts to mark an item or logo. Another example of neglected method of traditional marketing is when individuals locate a specific business through a referral or a system, and in the long run, the company builds compatibility with them.

Understanding the concepts discussed above is important, as it will help make the differences between the two terms clearer.

Digital Marketing

Introducing the term digital marketing was the first objective of this research paper. Many are unaware of digital marketing and its endless list of advantages. The findings have served to define digital marketing, and have provided insight on how researchers and common digital marketers define it.

The results of the interviews reflect the results of several studies. Yes, digital marketing for “digital” is marketing done digitally, online or using technology. Organizations which take after innovation can directly connect with customers intelligently. In digital promoting, like in traditional advertising, building a healthy rapport with clients is of paramount importance. The main goal of digital marketing is to correctly and efficiently utilize online networking and the internet.

Primary and secondary research findings highlight different digital marketing practices utilized by companies to drive sales. The most common practices used in digital marketing include the use of social media, search engine optimization, email marketing, the placement of online advertisements on social channels, websites, and email marketing, to name a few. E-mail marketing is one of the most digital marketing tools utilized by digital marketers. Email marketing is utilized by marketers to drive higher return on investment (ROI). Durmaz Y. Halil I (2014) stated: "e-mail marketing is a type of marketing in which customers are contacted via emails to be given information about certain products and services" (p.3). The length and the subject of an email, along with the pictures utilized are critical for this type of promotion

Many assume that digital marketing is only done over the internet—that is incorrect. My findings confirm that digital marketing stretches out past online promoting including channels that do not require the utilization of the Internet. It includes the use of cell phones (both SMS and MMS), web-based social networking showcasing, show publicizing, web crawler promoting and numerous different types of advanced media. Through computerized media, customers can get to data at whatever time and wherever where they need.

The use of social media is a major trend in today's digital marketing world. The secondary research findings of this research paper present the definition of social media and how it is utilized in the world of digital marketing. Social networks have been utilized as promotional platforms frequently. Advertisers are likewise keen on these systems which include individual data about clients. According to De Vries, L., Gensler, S., & Leeflang, P. S. (2012), "social network marketing is the process of attracting customers to related websites by using social media items. The main purpose of this type of marketing is to create advertisements of the brands, products, and services by having the opinions and suggestions of customers" (p.84).

Social networks are online platforms on which individuals can express themselves and share information with one another. These arrangements are additionally great open doors for computerized promoting (Durmaz Y. Halil I, 2014, p.4). Through social media networks, sites may expand the attention to their brands, diminish correspondence regions and create new partnerships. At the end of the day, groups are confirmed to regular interests and needs. Because of online communities like Facebook, Google +, Instagram, Twitter and Pinterest, the daily lives of individuals can be documented and shared. Individuals now share the things they would have only shared with those closest to them just 10 years ago (Durmaz Y. Halil I, 2014)

Appendix 3 is a graph chart that demonstrates a forecast of digital marketing spending in the United States from 2014 to 2019. The source anticipated that the spending would rise from 57.29 billion U.S. dollars in 2014 to 103.37 billion U.S. dollars in 2019. This could be due to the companies adopting new digital marketing strategies or realizing that traditional marketing cannot stand by its own.

Traditional Marketing Vs. Digital Marketing

The study focuses on the difference between digital marketing and why one type of marketing is not effective without the other. Digital and traditional marketing are very impactful. Rather than focusing on which one performs best, the participants classified digital marketing as less costly than traditional marketing. Also, findings prove that U.S. advertisers' estimate that the spending on technological advertising will hit \$103 billion in 2019 to represent 36% of all advertisement spending, as indicated by Forrester's most recent appraisals. According to the study, "U.S. publicists will burn through \$85.8 billion on TV advertisements in 2019, which will parallel 30% of general promotion spending that year, as indicated by Forrester" (Peterson T, 2014, p.1). These numbers are due to companies investing more in digital marketing along traditional marketing since it is proven by many studies that it brings a higher ROI.

Digital advertising will not overtake television because of large brand promoters who take their business cash and divert it toward YouTube and Facebook. There will be a decrease in television spending plans; however, the greater contributing component will be a flood of new cash devoted to technology because advertisers can demonstrate that digital advertising works efficiently.

The primary findings and secondary findings of this research paper conflict with each other. Shanna Torres claimed that "print is on a decline in the U.S. Places outside of the U.S like Europe are a bit behind the curve and are often more likely to see higher revenue and better client KPI's on print campaigns than the U.S as our domestic marketing industry is continuously eclipsed by digital. According to the research, digital marketing has a lower barrier of entry and results often outperform the print competition". This stands in contrast to a study that claimed

that "U.S. publicists will burn through \$85.8 billion on TV advertisements in 2019, which will parallel 30% of general promotion spending that year, as indicated by Forrester" (Peterson T, 2014, p.1).

Viral Marketing

Viral marketing tends to bring back higher revenues to companies that use it (it must be noted that as a rule regarding online action today, any procedure that empowers word-of-mouth can be viewed as viral marketing). The participants' responses were similar the definitions accepted by researchers of this type of marketing. The participants agreed that viral marketing is the goal of many digital marketers creating content. The consensus is that when customers and followers share a company's product or service on the internet, this can be regarded as free advertising.

Viral marketing is defined by Datta, et al., (2005), as "marketing techniques that seek to exploit pre-existing social networks to produce exponential increases in brand awareness, through processes like the spread of an epidemic" (p. 72). Viral marketing tends to be cheaper and more efficient if implemented well by the digital marketer, and motivates large groups of people to spread awareness about a company's product of services.

To implement viral marketing correctly, a digital marketer should aim to take advantage of an already existing high-engagement topic. Viral news topics tend to perform best because of their relevance. Choosing a viral topic over any random topic will provide better results since people are likely to already be familiar with the topic. According to Ferguson (2008), "viral marketing has become the defining marketing trend of the decade" (p. 179).

“The key difference between a viral and a TV ad is that a virus is something you will seek out, take pleasure in finding, and send on for someone else to enjoy” (Clifford-Marsh, 2009, p. 51). Viral promoting takes the conventional underlying foundations of informal showcasing and exponentially extended the compass through interpersonal organizations, online journals, and other mechanical mediums (Datta, et al., 2005).

United Airlines Study

A story many heard of through social media or TV was that of an incident involving United Airlines passengers and its staff. Recently, United Airlines has received feedback—and backlash—from its loyal customers regarding its choice to banish two high school-aged females from boarding a flight because they were wearing leggings, in June. Delta Airlines took advantage of the controversy surrounding its competitor, and posted a message on Twitter which stated “*flying Delta means comfort. (That means you can wear your leggings).*” Viral marketing schemes which took advantage of the story began to make their way around social media. Other competitors jumped on the bandwagon and mocked United Airlines for the way they handled the incident and its aftermath. One such competitor is Florida-based Spirit Airlines, which also took advantage of the viral news story, and posted an advertisement proclaiming, “*Let them wear leggings,*” alongside a one-day offer of 75% off on flights to destinations, on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. Clicking the link prompted a message saying, “*Well at least at Spirit, we're united (cough) about letting young girls dress how they want. If you want to fly with us, get your leggings on ladies. Or even gentlemen. No judgments here*”. (p.1). This was a smart move implemented by Spirit’s digital marketers—utilizing a noteworthy viral news topic generated buzz and drove traffic to their site.

Appendix 8 presents Spirit's promotion that was implemented in their email marketing and sent over to their client base. Spirit was not the only airline to mock United Airlines. Delta threw some shade on United on Twitter as well. Appendix 9 is a screenshot of Delta's Twitter post that went viral, which shows that the tweet received 31,693 shares, 3,106 comments, and 119,140 "likes". This would not have happened if it were not for the implementation of the viral topic.

Another viral newsworthy topic was that of United Airlines staff forcefully dragging and removing a traveler from an overbooked flight. As expected, airlines around the world publicly mocked United Airlines on social media. Emirates Airlines openly took the opportunity to ridicule the United Airlines CEO. In what can be viewed as an astounding PR technique, the Dubai-based carrier seized the opportunity to answer to a remark made by United Airlines several months prior. Emirates Airlines' digital marketers cunningly utilized the story in their digital marketing. On their Twitter page, Emirates used a video to respond to an statement made by United Airlines CEO Oscar Munoz in March of 2017. Munoz had stated, "Those (Gulf) airlines aren't airlines" (p.3). In the newly-released video, Emirates points out that TripAdvisor has them ranked as the best carrier.

According to Petroff A, Public relations experts say the CEO should have quickly offered an unreserved apology after a customer was filmed being forcibly removed from his seat and dragged down an overbooked aircraft's aisle" (Petroff A, 2017, p.2). Rupert Younger, a PR expert and director of the Oxford University Centre for Corporate Reputation, said that "Munoz's initial response was a major disappointment, and that United should have moved much more quickly to limit damage from the video" (Petroff A, 2017, p.2).

Appendix 5 is a screenshot of Emirates Airline's video on Twitter, which shows that 10,520 people shared the tweet and that 15,616 people "*liked*" it. If it were just any other video posted by Emirates on Twitter, it may not have received this much attraction. For example, Appendix 10 is another video screenshot from Emirates Airline's Twitter page. That video received 58 shares and only 261 likes.

Appendix 7 is an advertisement for Southwest that appeared online, and additionally ridiculed United Airlines. After the ad went viral, the organization rushed to distance themselves from the story on Twitter, and said the promotion was made by somebody outside the organization. Appendix 6 is a screenshot of a tweet posted by Royal Jordanian Airlines. The tweet received 7,250 shares by people and 12,611 likes. This tweet received more engagement than any other tweet on their page. Appendix 11 is an example of a promotion posted on their page. Promotions are supposed to perform well and receive high engagement; however, the tweet received only one comment, three shares and 11 likes by people.

From the secondary findings, newsworthy viral topics receive higher engagement than any other topics. Higher engagement topics will in turn generate higher ROI for companies. A current Harvard Business Review Analytic Services Survey found that organizations that completely incorporate web-based social networking and client encounters offer inconceivably more leading customer relationships than competitors do, which converts into more grounded development and prevailing positions in their business sectors (Harvard Business Review Analytics Services, 2016). This means that the better online networking is incorporated into an organization's customer encounters, the higher position they will acquire in their business sector.

The participants all agreed that United Airlines' marketing department handled the situations poorly in all aspects. United Airlines appeared to neglect to enlist the help of their PR

practitioners when it came to responding to such sensitive situations. Respondents agreed that United should have done more to properly address the situation they were in, especially since competing airlines were mocking them.

Reputation management of United Airlines can be related to the theory of Apologia. According to William L, “when an organization has been accused of a misdeed, its reaction to publics is often called *apologia*. it is as one would assume an effort to defend reputation and protect image, but it is not necessarily an apology. The organization’s effort may deny, explain, or apologize for the action through communication discourse” (William L, 1997, p.177). This theory of image restoration address focuses on message options, or in other words what can a corporation say when faced with a crisis.

United Airlines should have addressed their situation similar to The Tylenol Crisis. According to Purdom N, “In October of 1982, Tylenol, the leading pain-killer medicine in the United States at the time, faced a tremendous crisis when seven people in Chicago were reported dead after taking extra-strength Tylenol capsules. It was reported that an unknown suspect/s put 65 milligrams of deadly cyanide into Tylenol capsules, 10,000 more than what is necessary to kill a human” (Purdom N, 2017, p.1). Once the connection was made between the Tylenol capsules and the reported deaths, public announcements were made warning people about the consumption of the product. Johnson & Johnson was faced with the dilemma of the best way to deal with the problem without destroying the reputation of the company and its most profitable product. Although Johnson & Johnson knew they were not responsible for the tampering of the product, they assumed responsibility by ensuring public safety first and recalled all of their capsules from the market. In fact, Purdom N said that, “in February of 1986, when a woman was reported dead from cyanide poisoning in Tylenol capsules, Johnson & Johnson permanently

removed all of the capsules from the market” (Purdom N, 2017, p.4). United Airlines should have handled the situation similarly to Johnson & Johnson, but instead their CEO apologized only for having to re-accommodate their customers.

According to the American Marketing Association, United's social sentiment dropped 160% in direct result of how they treated their clients during a difficult situation as well as afterwards. United Airlines failed to respond to their customers with basic customer service. The lack of empathy in their attempt at an apology, and all the poor PR work they have done since, makes for a huge failure on United's part.

Mocking United Airlines was great for all their competitors—it generated buzz and word-of-mouth around the airlines. It provided comical humor to the viewers, even though it was a high risky move for the airlines. However, marketing is all about taking risks, and the only the strongest, quickest, and most creative survive. No matter the medium employed (print or digital), competitive marketing is owned by the opportunist. The campaigns mocking United simply took advantage of an opportunity to make their customer experiences seem superior.

The importance of social media is highlighted in Appendix 4, where the pie charts present the percentage indicating how important social media is today and how important it will be in three years. According to Harvard Business Review Analytic Services Survey, social media is at 42% importance and will increase to 75% in three years.

My primary findings support the idea that if a company is not utilizing digital marketing, its competitors are ahead. Today, it is important to have a social media presence, show up on Google, and have a website. Companies without a digital presence are missing out on a whole

world of opportunity. It is not just about being present in the digital world. It is about using all the most popular forms of marketing, newest social media channels, engaging with others and staying on top of trends.

The findings highlight the idea that viral news topics translate better in digital marketing realm. Several marketers are unaware of the benefits of taking advantage of viral topics. Another idea is highlighted that if news topics are utilized effectively by marketers they will in return generate higher traffic. Most importantly, when a topic is trending, a company will benefit from being part of the conversation on social media, because it increases the relevancy of the company. An important key concept a marketer should not forget about is that digital marketing would not be able to exist without traditional marketing.

Limitations

I faced a couple of limitations when doing my research. My focus was on digital marketing and how viral news stories are implemented by marketers. I was unable to control what news topics went viral or how these topics impacted digital marketing. We live in a very dynamic world—traditional marketing once was everything companies depended on, and now, digital marketing is regarded as most profitable.

My qualitative research limitation was my access to the interviews of MyCity Social employees. This did not, however, give me insight into the entire population of digital marketers. Every marketer is going to have a different point-of-view on digital marketing and what strategies perform best for each type of industry.

A factor that limited my research was the time allotted to conduct the research. I would have gathered more information if I had more time to conduct the research and interviews. Moreover, a lack of reliable data limited the scope of my analysis and findings. There is a need for continued research on the relationship between viral news topics and digital marketing, and how well they perform together if utilized effectively by digital marketers.

My access was limited to statistics of digital marketing spending in the US. I could include some graphs and pie charts; however, my access to many others that could have helped with my discussion section was restricted. Also, more digital marketing campaigns could have been analyzed in the paper; however, due to the time I was allotted, I was unable to include other campaigns that involved United Airlines and its competitors. More time should have been dedicated to this kind of research to interview more digital marketers and study different

marketing campaigns over the months. The media world is variable, and not one day is like the next; therefore, this kind of research would be more appropriately carried out over month, and not just over an 8-week period.

I struggled to find journal articles or research papers that spoke about the connection between viral news and digital marketing, and this is most likely due to how relatively new digital marketing is. In the future, I would love to find more studies that discuss this topic.

For this kind of study, it would have been ideal to interview more digital marketers of different marketing agencies. By doing so, more insight and a variety of answers might have been included in the research paper. Due the time limit, employees of one agency were interviewed as part of this study.

A major recommendation for a study such as this would be to dedicate more time to carrying it out. Digital marketing is a growing trend, and to be able to study it, one should dedicate a considerable amount of time to research, to gather as much data as possible, and to analyze and process this data.

In the future, I can expand the study and interview more digital marketers to gain a in-depth understanding of digital and viral marketing. I will be able to dedicate more time to the research study to expand on it and include several other digital marketing campaigns carried out by various organizations. This study could help other researchers and even digital marketers gain a better understanding of viral marketing and what translates better in digital marketing.

Conclusion

Traditional marketing such as TV commercials, print advertisements, bulletins, and mailings have all had truly high achievement rates in the past. Nowadays, advertising through web-based social networking, email records or online advertisements is likewise fundamentally more affordable and more quantifiable than traditional media. It may be unwise to allow digital advertising to completely replace traditional advertising. Combining the two strategies is an efficient way of reaching out to a larger client base.

Digital advertising is a very well-known type of marketing, and one that most forward-thinking companies are implementing. Many marketers believe that traditional marketing is fading but this is far from the truth. This paper covered several topics in digital and traditional marketing. The study defined traditional and digital marketing and distinguished between the two terms. Benefits of each marketing strategy were explained in the paper. Furthermore, the study highlighted the relationship between *digital* and *traditional* and their dependence on one another to be effective. The focus of the research was on digital marketing and how viral news stories are implemented by marketers, and the reason why viral news topics translate better in digital marketing was also explored. Additionally, the paper studied the overlooking and misuse of viral news topics in digital marketing by marketers, and the consequences of this. Several marketing campaigns that were a result of a viral news story were explained in the paper.

After conducting the research and obtaining the necessary results, turns out viral news topics do translate better in digital marketing. This was obvious from the results obtained from the international airlines' social media channels.

Marketers have not studied the effect of viral news topics implementation into digital marketing appropriately. Utilization of such topics can have a positive impact on a company if utilized properly, and can affect it negatively if done inappropriately. Companies who have utilized this strategy effectively have seen a higher return on investment than companies who have used common topics in their digital marketing techniques.

United Airlines should study their crisis and understand their mistakes and try to learn from them. United Airlines faced two different situations within one month and they could face another one, but without knowing how to manage their reputation their sales will continue to fall.

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Appendix 1

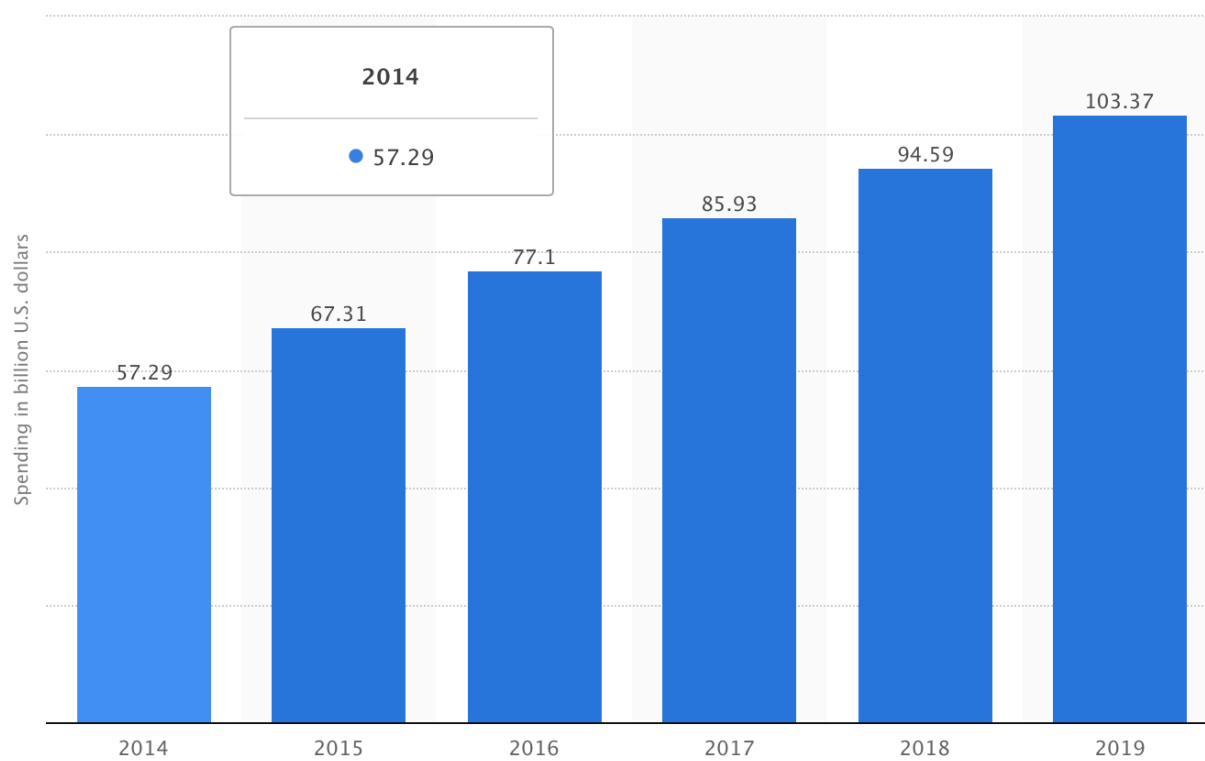
Interview Questions for a Digital Marketing Specialist

1. How would you define Digital Marketing?
2. How would you define Traditional Marketing?
3. Which one do you think performs best: Digital Marketing or Traditional Marketing?
4. You've heard of United Airlines' viral stories. Do you think United Airlines' marketing department has handled the situations well on social media?
5. What do you think of all the campaigns of competing industries, mocking United?
6. Have you heard of viral marketing?
7. Would you rather choose a viral topic or a random topic for your marketing strategies?
8. Would you like to add anything from your digital marketing experience related to the previous questions?

Appendix 2

Interview questions for a Digital Marketing Director

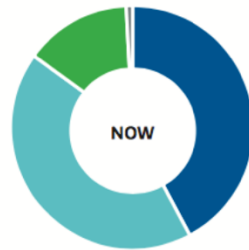
1. Talk about one of your most effective campaigns. What made them so effective?
2. How would you define Digital Marketing?
3. How would you define Traditional Marketing?
4. Which one do you think performs best: digital marketing or traditional marketing?
5. You've heard of United Airlines' viral stories? Do you think United Airlines' marketing department has handled the situations well on social media?
6. What do you think of all the campaigns of competing industries, mocking United Airlines?
7. Have you heard of viral marketing?
8. Would you rather choose a viral topic or a random topic for your marketing strategies?
9. How would you have handled a situation like that of United if you were their Digital Marketing Director?
10. What is one advice you give your employees when working on their digital marketing strategies for the upcoming month?
11. Would you like to add anything from your digital marketing experience related to the previous questions?

*Appendix 3**Digital marketing spending in the United States from 2014 to 2019 (in USD billions)*

Appendix 4

SUCCESSFUL CUSTOMER EXPERIENCES ARE ANCHORED ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Percentage indicating how important social media is today and will be in three years.



EXTREMELY IMPORTANT	42%
SLIGHTLY IMPORTANT	43%
NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT	14%
DON'T KNOW	1%



EXTREMELY IMPORTANT	75%
SLIGHTLY IMPORTANT	19%
NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT	4%
DON'T KNOW	2%

SOURCE HARVARD BUSINESS REVIEW ANALYTIC SERVICES SURVEY, JANUARY 2017

Appendix 5



Emirates airline 
@emirates

 **Follow**

Fly the friendly skies with a real airline.

1:11 PM - 11 Apr 2017

  10,520  15,616

Appendix 6

We would like to remind you that drags on our flights are strictly prohibited by passengers and crew



 *Be Smart. Be Jordanian. Fly Royal Jordanian.*

 **Royal Jordanian** 
@RoyalJordanian 

We are here to keep you #united  Dragging is strictly prohibited

4:04 PM - 10 Apr 2017 · Amman, Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

  7,250  12,611

Appendix 7



Cynthia Johnson  @CynthiaLIVE

11 Apr

I wish - w/everything - this to be real. @SouthwestAir, please tell me this is real? It could just be one of the [#NewUnitedAirlinesMottos](https://pic.twitter.com/y24Qi10hfm) pic.twitter.com/y24Qi10hfm



Southwest Airlines 

@SouthwestAir

 Follow

Not ours, Cynthia; neither is any other asset tied to this event that uses our marks. We're still super hilarious all the time, though. ^BT

2:25 PM - 11 Apr 2017



Appendix 8



Appendix 9



Appendix 10

 **Emirates airline**  @emirates · Jul 28 ▼

Boys on tour! @PSG_inside recently set out from the City of Lights on their Summer Tour.



0:48  

 5  58  261

Appendix 11



Royal Jordanian @RoyalJordanian · Jul 30

#FlyRJ round-trip from Europe for the lowest rates

Valid for sales between 25/7/2017–12/8/2017

Valid for travel between 20/9/2017–15/3/2018

The advertisement features a large red speech bubble containing the text "These fares are not fair!". Below the speech bubble, it says "- RJ Finance Department". The fares are presented in a 2x2 grid of red boxes. The top-left box is for "Jordan" with a fare of "EUR 289". The top-right box is for "Levant (in addition to Athens & Larnaca)" with a fare of "EUR 299" and a blue circular stamp that says "All Inclusive". The bottom-left box is for "Gulf" with a fare of "EUR 349". The bottom-right box is for "Africa" with a fare of "EUR 349". At the bottom left of the advertisement is the Royal Jordanian logo in Arabic and English.

Region	Fare (EUR)
Jordan	289
Levant (in addition to Athens & Larnaca)	299
Gulf	349
Africa	349

1

3

11

