

Digital Marketing

Concept and Meaning

Agribusiness is originally a study of value chains in agriculture. The primary objective of agribusiness is to maximize profit and deliver value to the consumer for agricultural products such as fisheries, forestry, farms food, fiber, and others (Fleet, 2016). There is a direct association of agribusiness with marketing which requires productive marketing channels to promote agricultural products and services to target consumers successfully. In this modern era of technology, digital marketing is an efficient tool to promote agribusiness and educate the target audience about the use of associated products as well.

In Pakistan, agricultural businesses related to vegetable production, agricultural farming, florist business, honey and seeds production, herbs growing, and herbal medicine production (Munawar, 2022), are associated with agricultural business, for vital growth. Agribusiness in Pakistan needs to be grown significantly by using digital media channels in order to reach the mass audience instantly.

The concept of digital marketing addresses the promotions of the brands to build connections with potential customers with the help of using different communication channels such as social media, e-mails, web-based advertising, content marketing, and others (Dara, 2016). This also emphasizes maintaining the required/set quality standards, empowering customers to an independent choices as per their specific needs, value additions, and better presentation of the products. The farmers or farming community organizations have the opportunity to market their products directly without involving a series of market players who make most of the profit on the farmers' efforts and investments.

Digital marketing is a widely-used type of online marketing that is adopted to promote products and services to reach target customers by using different communication channels effectively (Sathya, 2017). By using digital marketing channels, individuals and/or organizations can reach a mass audience instantly and market their products in the ways they can afford easily.

Challenges

There are lots of advantages of digital marketing through which a healthy marketing campaign can be initiated to attract the target audience. On the other hand, there are certain key challenges associated with it such as; management of marketing budget, generating web traffic and leads, effective utilization of digital tools, analysing customer journeys, implementing omnichannel marketing strategies, and most importantly building and maintaining the brand visibility in the marketplace.

According to Overseas Investors Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OICCI) report, the digital market in Pakistan grew by 29% which contributed significantly to overall worldwide growth (OICCI, 2022). However, government regulatory hurdles/impediments; e-commerce taxation, difficulties in the transfer of funds, warehouse management, and political instability act as a barrier and create resistance to the growth of such important digital platforms.

Agriculture is considered as the backbone of Pakistan's economy (Azam, 2017). The farming communities are facing enormous problems in selling/marketing their surplus produce at a reasonable price, which could benefit them to some extent on their nature-risky efforts and investments. In this situation, if the government provides fair, transparent, and easily accessible support to digital platforms, it will play a significant role in maximizing the export of agricultural products globally, especially to those countries to with whom Pakistan has no

trade relation established before. This will also help to address the farmers' issues of low returns from farming, exploitation of existing market flows, lack of access to alternative marketing practices etc., and will substantially expand the volume of export and improve the economic conditions at local as well as national level. Hence, the effective and efficient implementation of digital marketing strategies will be helpful in addressing the above-mentioned problems faced by the agriculture sector. (Shafique, 2017).

Opportunities

Globally, digital advertising and marketing are estimated at \$531 billion in 2022 and it has been projected that the ratio will reach to a revised size of \$1.5 Trillion by the end of 2030 (Finance, 2023). The modern era of digital marketing is growing constantly at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 13.9% over the analysis period 2022-2030 (Analysts, 2022).

Like other countries, Pakistan has a large digital advertising market in which Ad spending is projected to reach \$180.6 million by the end of 2023. This is the largest market in the field of search advertising with a total market volume of \$83.06 million during 2023. Globally, Pakistan is generating most of digital advertising revenue from the United States which is \$271.20 billion during 2023 (Statista, 2022).

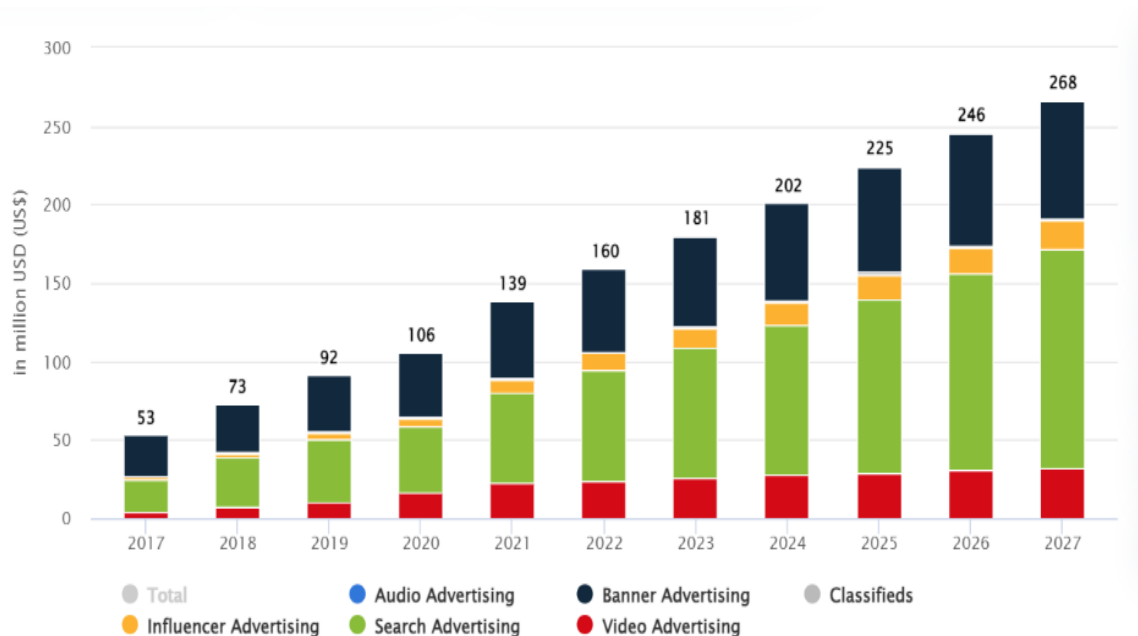


Figure 01: Digital Ad spending in Pakistan

(Statista, 2022)

Agricultural market of Pakistan is a foundation of major exports of rice, cotton, fish, fruits (Mangoes and Oranges) and a range of vegetables (Faridi, 2012). Pakistan carries a crown of Asia's largest camel market, second largest apricot and ghee market, and third-largest market of cotton, onion, and milk market around the globe (Khan, 2022).

Being a major exporter, it is a core responsibility of the country to boost its agricultural market by using digital marketing channels which is a prime source of reaching the mass audience in the shortest possible time. A prime example of different start-ups in Pakistan bringing farming into the digital age such as 'Desi Dera' help farmers to plan better crops

and distribute them at the right time (Citybook, 2022). Likewise, farmers from rural areas see computers for the first time through which they would be able to get accurate weather forecasts as well as latest marketing prices & information, and tips best practices/ guidelines to grow effectively and efficiently (Schreiber, 2022).

Agri-Dunya is another leading and transformational mobile application in Pakistan that helps farmers to understand the agriculture market and keep them updated with timely price, production, and demand fluctuations (Imam, 2022).

Similarly, Bakhbar Kissan, another leading name of the sector is heavily engaged in providing needed guidelines, addressing farmers' day-to-day problems, marketing information, and specifically local area-based metrological information through their installed metrological stations in reporting areas.

Likewise, small and medium-sized start-ups and big agriculture tech companies in Pakistan in collaboration with the government of Pakistan are able to make a digital tech giant that would work in promoting the agricultural products of Pakistan to the world and substantially increase the overall revenue. It could be used in further improvement of the agriculture sector. It will help the country to introduce its renowned agricultural products globally and would be able to get more opportunities to reach in other parts of the world where the country is not currently exporting.

Future Prospects of Digital Marketing in Pakistan

Digital marketing in Pakistan is growing at a rapid pace and people are getting different types of courses to get qualified for this field (Magazine, 2021). The scope of digital marketing is on the rise and it will continue to grow over the span of the next few years (Qureshi & Rehman, 2018). In this period, it is an ideal opportunity for the government of Pakistan to boost SME's digital tech companies, and support entrepreneurs to uplift the overall digital market of the country. SME's is the prime source at the moment to get supported to play a significant role in improving the overall economy of the country and popularise the state in the global digital market effectively (Khan, 2013).

With regard to agriculture, there are a number of mobile applications have already been designed & are operative to educate the farmers and provide support in the production, and marketing of agricultural products. Furthermore, new apps are also being developed as digital marketing is commercialized. Following are a few top agricultural mobile applications currently operating in the country:

| Agricultural Mobile Applications | Availability |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Kissan Pakistani | Website, Google Play |
| Sabzion ki Kasht | Website, Google Play |
| Khushaal Watan | Website, Google Play, AppAgg |
| Kisan Sahulat | Website, Google Play |

| | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Agri Smart | Website, Google Play, iOS |
| Agricultural Extension KP | Website, Google Play, Facebook |
| Plantix – Your Crop Doctor | Website, Google Play, iOS |
| Bakhabar Kissan | Website, Google Play |
| Kisan Sar Zameen | Website, Google Play |
| Ricult Pakistan | Website, Google Play |

Table 01 : Agricultural Mobile Applications Operating in Pakistan (Citybook, 2022)

Together, all digital mobile applications, and websites that are specified for agricultural products can be boosted by choosing digital platforms such as Search Engine Optimisation (SEO), Content Marketing, Affiliate Marketing, Mobile marketing, Pay Per Click (PPC), and most importantly Social Media Marketing. It will assist in the improvement of overall agriculture market, agri-business, agri-entrepreneurship and ultimately act as a prime source through Market-Led Agri-Extension advisory services that could be provided resourcefully.

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