

Forecasting the trend of specialized digital marketing of social media in Iran in 2023

Abstract

This article explores the role of social media as a potent factor in marketing and its impact on organizational structure, with a specific focus on digital marketing. It outlines the components and roadmap for the integration of digital marketing into social media. By presenting tables and graphs illustrating the presence of Iranian companies on popular domestic and foreign social media platforms, the study discusses the significance of these platforms in facilitating business and marketing interactions with the new generation, leading to the establishment of loyal customers. The factors discussed in relation to these media include cost reduction, gaining the trust of the new generation, increasing revenue, and the importance of building the company's brand. The research findings, based on an examination of 15 Persian articles published on reputable websites between 2017 and 2023, reveal a growing trend of users migrating to social networks and their inclination to share their product and service experiences with others. Other consumers place greater importance on these experiences shared on social networks when making purchasing decisions. Simultaneously, the study highlights the significant rise in television advertising costs and traditional forms of advertising (such as billboards) in Iran during 2023. Consequently, Iranian companies exhibit a strong inclination to utilize digital marketing on social networks as a means to promote their products and services. Furthermore, the findings indicate that Iranian companies are actively exploring innovative avenues for digital marketing on social networks, utilizing new tools such as Telegram or Instagram bots.

Keywords: Digital Marketing, Social Media, Instagram, Telegram, Branding

Introduction

Social media refers to online platforms utilized by individuals to disseminate content, profiles, viewpoints, experiences, and reflections. It is important to distinguish social media from social networks, as the former serves as a means to widely transmit or exchange information, whereas the latter facilitates interaction among individuals. Social networks are formed by groups of individuals who share common interests or exhibit similar mindsets, establishing connections through social networking sites. Consequently, social media represents the socialization of an organization and encompasses the engagement of human elements in organizational procedures and philosophies.

Considering the growing significance and impact of social networks and digital marketing within these platforms, it is crucial to devise a social network marketing strategy in 2023, especially for Iranian companies facing challenges such as sanctions, financial crises, and inflation. In general, a comprehensive strategy comprises two essential components. The first component entails the tactical aspect of establishing a presence on social networks, while the second component focuses on formulating a social network marketing strategy specific to

2023. A well-crafted social media strategy holds immense importance in achieving success in advertising and digital marketing endeavors, necessitating careful planning and execution. Social network marketing, a subset of digital marketing, has emerged in response to the proliferation of social networks. Presently, social networks like Instagram, Telegram, Twitter, LinkedIn, as well as domestic platforms such as Yes, Ita, Igap, etc., have become integral aspects of individuals' daily routines.

In order to achieve rapid and targeted growth in social networks, Iranian companies can employ specialized social network services designed for businesses, such as WhatsApp Business or Instagram business accounts tailored for this purpose. Marketers and business owners leverage social platforms to introduce themselves to diverse audiences, making social marketing an incredibly potent tool for promoting available services and products. Utilizing social networks presents an efficient strategy for engaging with potential customers, offering an excellent alternative to traditional methods of promoting services and products. In the past, marketing professionals in the realm of social media held the belief that social network marketing would soon decline due to its novelty. However, since 2004, with the emergence of the social network Facebook, this perspective has shifted, resulting in the widespread formulation of social network marketing strategies in 2022. If Iranian startups, newly established companies, and even established entities, akin to their foreign counterparts, adopt social network marketing strategies in 2023, they can effectively advertise their offerings and introduce themselves to prospective customers.

In 2023, Iranian companies are required to address the following inquiries in order to formulate an effective digital marketing strategy within social networks:

1. Which social platform should be selected for the company, organization, or business institution?
2. What types of content should be shared? Among images, videos, links, and textual content, which ones should be prioritized?

By accurately answering these questions, company policymakers gain a broader perspective and acquire the necessary insights to effectively navigate the intricacies of social network marketing. This knowledge enables them to master marketing techniques within social networks, positioning their company's business to outperform competitors in this realm.

In the current highly competitive and volatile domestic market, Iranian companies must devise a social media marketing strategy for 2023 to thrive in the realm of social media. According to global statistics released in April 2022 regarding social network usage, there are 4.65 billion active social media users worldwide, constituting 58.7% of the global population. This statistic serves as a poignant reminder to Iranian companies, particularly those operating at regional and international levels, that in order to achieve greater success in both domestic and foreign markets, a well-defined "digital marketing strategy" within social networks is imperative for 2023. The first crucial step in strategy development is setting clear goals. Companies should begin by introspecting and determining precisely what they aim to achieve through social networks. Objectives should be established to address all the organization's needs comprehensively. The primary objective that every company or commercial entity should strive for is enhancing customer brand awareness and fostering increased engagement levels.

Based on statistics, a mere 55% of marketers dedicate time to understanding their audience when formulating a social media marketing strategy in 2022. It is paramount to comprehend the composition of the company's target audience, as this knowledge enables the production of compelling content that attracts and converts potential customers. Several factors can assist companies in identifying their target audience, such as determining the primary platform where users are most active, the age demographics, educational attainment, income levels, and occupational backgrounds of users. To develop a successful digital marketing strategy within robust social networks in 2023, companies must also closely monitor their competitors. Who are the company's direct rivals? How do they navigate social networks? Familiarizing oneself with competitors and conducting an in-depth analysis of their performance empowers the company to establish clear organizational structures, prioritize objectives, and foster a more discerning vision for its endeavors.

Literature and research background

The rapid pace of technological advancement has led to the emergence of several cutting-edge trends in the field of marketing. However, since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, businesses have faced increased pressure to prioritize the swift digitalization and automation of their interactions with partners and consumers. While technologies like artificial intelligence and data-driven marketing continue to experience growth, the primary focus is shifting towards people rather than technology. This is because it is the experience economy that ultimately determines the success of today's businesses. Prominent institutions such as Gartner have made predictions regarding the prevailing marketing trends in the months to come and post the global eradication of the Corona epidemic. These trends are anticipated to revolve around customer experience, employee engagement, and content visualization. As a result, the definition of marketing is constantly evolving, extending beyond mere branding and advertising. Marketers are now expected to collaborate with various departments within their organizations to create exceptional customer-centric experiences. They should also employ diverse strategies to encourage customers to stay updated and provide feedback on products (Mohseni et al., 2023).

Prominent corporations such as Amazon have embraced the notion that each new year brings a heightened emphasis on customer-centricity. Statistical data suggests a significant transformation in marketing communication on the horizon. Rather than solely focusing on persuading individuals to purchase their products or utilize their services, organizations are redirecting their primary focus towards providing exceptional customer experiences. This strategic shift aims to foster prolonged engagement between individuals and an organization's offerings. By prioritizing the cultivation of a positive business culture and delivering exemplary service, one can make substantial headway on the arduous marketing journey. In today's landscape, customers not only exhibit impatience but also demand products or services that are free from the customary complexities. Consequently, they anticipate receiving comprehensive post-sales support. This entails personalized messaging that assists them in making informed purchase decisions and a customer-centric atmosphere throughout the entire purchasing process. Customers perpetually seek holistic support from companies and organizations (Taami and Mostowfi, 2019).

In addition to personalized marketing messages, customers increasingly rely on the questions and answers provided by fellow consumers to identify their desired products. Consequently, it is imperative for the digital marketing team to establish seamless coordination with the sales and customer service teams to deliver appropriate services to customers. The proliferation of online content grants consumers an abundance of choices. They no longer expect companies to simply extol the virtues of their products. On the contrary, they venture into the digital realm, conducting research and selecting products based on their findings. Consequently, companies must offer more than mere information. Research indicates that 73% of individuals consider customer experience to be a pivotal factor in their purchasing decisions, yet only 49% of US consumers currently believe that companies provide a satisfactory experience. A superior customer experience places emphasis on efficiency, convenience, knowledgeable and affable service, as well as streamlined payment options.

Social networks exert a significant influence on various aspects of individuals' lives. As such, online social networks have emerged as highly potent platforms for marketing and advertising endeavors. This is primarily due to the persuasive power of peer influence among users. Leveraging word-of-mouth exchanges, also known as viral marketing, within social networks can effectively enhance the acceptance of products. The prevailing notion of digital marketing as a cost-effective, easily implementable, and highly efficient approach has positioned it as a viable alternative to traditional advertising methods. However, recent research indicates that traditional advertisements are losing their impact. Viral marketing, a technique that disseminates advertising information through social networks, has gained prominence. Yet, decentralized viral marketing encounters several challenges, including the proliferation of unreliable information and limited network knowledge. Thus, viral marketing stands as one of the most indispensable and efficacious strategies within social networks (Moayyadi and Estakhriyan, 2021).

Sifouri and Sobhanian (2023) conducted a study examining the influence of social network marketing on customer purchase intentions regarding products offered by energy service companies in Iran. The findings of this research affirmed the impact of social media marketing on variables such as environmental awareness and concern. Moreover, the study confirmed the influence of environmental awareness on consumers' personal software, while no significant relationship was found between customers' environmental concern and their personal preferences. Additionally, the variables of perceived responsibility and effectiveness demonstrated independent positive effects on the formation of individuals' personal skills. The study also identified a positive and significant relationship between personal software variables and green purchase intention, with the mediating role of public policies in moderating this relationship being evaluated as significant.

In their article, Moayyedi and Eshtakhriyan (2021) conducted a study exploring the phenomenon of viral marketing in social networks and social media. Specifically, they examined the concept of viral retargeting, which encompasses contemporary techniques that utilize social media platforms to introduce products, enhance brand promotion, and achieve various marketing objectives. The study employed a combination of brain imaging techniques, cross-validation methods, and real-world data to investigate the relationship between individuals' brain data and their engagement in social networks. The primary aim of the research was to assess the feasibility of predicting the success of viral marketing campaigns for video advertisements based on brain data.

Mohammadi and Mehri (2019) conducted a study aimed at identifying and prioritizing marketing factors for brand value in cellulose industry companies. The research findings can be summarized as follows: Among the various social marketing factors evaluated in terms of brand value, customers' comprehension of the services received yielded positive outcomes. Furthermore, the study examined the influence of social marketing factors on each dimension of brand value, and based on the results of the Ben Feroni test, it was determined that social marketing factors exerted the strongest impact on brand satisfaction while having the least impact on brand loyalty.

Jafari and Mohseni (2019) conducted a study that examined the factors influencing changes in consumer behavior towards domestic goods in the men's clothing industry of Iran, employing the social marketing approach. The research findings revealed six key factors that contribute to the transformation of consumer behavior. These factors include garment industry competitiveness, consumer culture and attitudes, governance background, economic background, scientific background and the role of universities, as well as partnerships with foreign manufacturers and prominent companies. Additionally, the study concludes by presenting a comprehensive model that highlights the roles played by each actor within the domestic garment industry.

Naami and Mostowfi (2019) conducted a study examining the influence of social marketing components on brand equity in companies listed on the Tehran Stock Exchange. The research findings indicated that advertising, favorable behavior, and integrated marketing exerted a more significant and positive impact on brand equity compared to other elements of social marketing. Furthermore, the influence of customer perception of nature and benefits on brand equity was found to be positive but relatively weak. However, no significant relationships were observed between nature and brand awareness, nature and brand association, public relations and brand loyalty, favorable behavior and brand association, marketing mix and brand loyalty, as well as audience benefits and brand awareness.

Agha Mohseni et al. (2018) conducted a study investigating the marketing strategies employed by media organizations through social media platforms. The aim of this research was to identify effective strategies for marketing media organizations via social media. The researchers analyzed the findings, assessed the strengths and weaknesses (internal factors), evaluated the threats and opportunities (external factors), and considered the combinations of strengths and opportunities (SO), weaknesses and opportunities (WO), strengths and threats (ST), as well as weaknesses and threats (WT). Based on this analysis, the study yielded several noteworthy results, which can guide the implementation of social marketing strategies in media organizations. Key findings include the necessity of conducting a comprehensive assessment of Iran's media organizations, reviewing the goals and structures of these organizations, establishing a strategic council for cyberspace and implementing effective strategies, evaluating the human resources framework of Iran's media organizations, enhancing the technical systems employed by these organizations, forming research committees, developing social marketing-oriented content, creating and curating content for social media platforms, fostering collaboration with governmental and non-governmental organizations, and engaging and attracting participants.

Tarshizi and Vaqfi (2017) conducted a study examining the influence of social marketing strategies on brand loyalty, with a specific focus on Asia Insurance, Mashhad, and the

mediating role of brand trust. The research findings indicated that social marketing strategies significantly affect brand loyalty, and this relationship is mediated by brand trust.

Method

This study employs a retrospective research method to forecast the trajectory of specialized digital marketing by companies on social networks in Iran in 2023. The approach involves analyzing articles published in 2023 and preceding years to anticipate the trends in digital marketing on social networks for the same year. Specifically, a review article is utilized, which serves to compile and summarize existing studies while organizing and presenting the research background and theoretical foundations. Review articles possess minimal theoretical synthesis, primarily focusing on conveying past information in a clear and accurate manner. When classifying scientific articles, review articles are juxtaposed with scientific research articles. While review articles rely on library studies, it is important to differentiate them from other meta-studies such as meta-synthesis and meta-analysis methods. Notably, review articles lack a research methodology and data analysis section.

A review article serves as a comprehensive analysis of the background literature pertaining to a specific scientific topic. It involves the summary and evaluation of scientific writings concerning the chosen subject matter. Review articles aim to condense, analyze, and assess information that has already been published, typically excluding novel experimental findings. These articles adopt a well-defined narrative structure, often adopting a critical perspective, while offering theoretical insights and emerging interpretations. A crucial function of review articles is to provide guidance for original scientific research, necessitating the provision of accurate and complete citations. While the content of review articles largely consists of previously published information, reprinting is generally unproblematic due to the clear and accepted nature of their evaluative nature.

This systematic review article aims to address a central research question by providing evidence and conducting analysis. The culmination of this endeavor is derived from a compilation of diverse studies. The primary methodology employed in composing this article is systematic review. To predict the trajectory of digital marketing on social networks in Iran for the year 2023, a total of 15 reputable articles were sourced from prominent websites and domestic article databases spanning the period from 2017 to 2023. The abstracts of these articles were analyzed to extract the authors' perspectives on the present and future trends of Iranian companies' digital marketing on social networks, encompassing the years leading up to 2023. Subsequently, content analysis was employed, employing keywords and codes relevant to the subject matter, which were then identified and recorded in the abstracts of the selected articles. Ultimately, through an analysis of the accumulated codes, a conclusive statement regarding the anticipated digital marketing trends on social networks in Iran for 2023 is presented.

The advent of social networks has resulted in a transformation of market power dynamics. Indications suggest a shift in power and the rise of a novel cohort of discerning and

influential customers who are increasingly challenging to impress, persuade, or retain. Social networks have created a platform for fostering and promoting environmentally conscious behaviors. These endeavors within the realm of social networks are commonly referred to as social network green marketing (Sifouri & Sobhaniyan, 2021).

Table 1. List of websites and databases from which the articles were extracted

Website URL	The title of the site or database	Row
https://www.sid.ir	The central scientific Database of academic jihad	1
https://civilica.com	Civilica website	2
https://garshadma.com/category/digital-marketing	Garshadma digital marketing website	3
https://jtehran.com	Tehran Academic Jihad Organization	4
https://amanjacademy.com	Amanj Academy	5
https://www.yektanet.com	Yektanet	6

Research results and findings

The latter half of 2022 witnessed a confluence of peculiar occurrences and extensive repercussions within the realm of marketing and advertising for both prominent and minor brands. Charting a course for marketing in 2023 has become one of the most challenging endeavors. The implementation of internet filtering and restrictions in September 2021 inflicted severe damage upon the advertising industry, particularly in the domain of digital marketing. For instance, a comparison between Instagram activity levels one month before and after the implementation of filtering manifests a decline exceeding 60%. Consequently, numerous home-based enterprises have experienced a substantial loss in income during this period. Moreover, accessing the internet and social networks has become arduous, leading to widespread layoffs among individuals employed in design and advertising.

While environmental advertising presented a promising opportunity during the World Cup, the prevailing circumstances have cast a shadow over this domain. Over 70% of billboards remained devoid of advertisements, with no demand directed towards them. Furthermore, TV commercials, which typically reach their zenith during the matches, experienced a 40% decline. Notably, individuals themselves contributed to this downturn by boycotting brands featured in TV and billboard advertisements. It is worth mentioning that prior to these incidents and events, the state of advertising and marketing was not as dire as it is presently, and it had been showing progress and resurgence compared to the pre-pandemic years. The trajectory of the marketing landscape in 2023 remains uncertain.

Over time, the landscape of digital and influencer marketing had been showing improvement, as people gradually embraced the community of influencers. Businesses began to approach them, placing their trust in the rapport these influencers had built with the public, and leveraging their platform to promote advertisements. The considerable focus on social media,

particularly Instagram, diminished the significance of website positioning and search engine optimization (SEO) in the eyes of the public, resulting in their neglect of these factors' impact on sales and income growth. However, the occurrence of events and the implementation of social media filtering redirected people's attention towards these aspects, enlightening business owners about their paramount importance.

LinkedIn serves as another social network that offers a conducive environment for businesses to engage and interact with one another. While LinkedIn also endured adverse effects from filtering measures, its activities regained momentum as the situation improved. Advertising on LinkedIn introduced a novel avenue for marketing, attracting attention. These circumstances have once again positioned Iran on the global stage, as it recently ranked second among countries worldwide in terms of internet access restrictions. Anticipating the continuation of filtering in Iran, it becomes imperative to contemplate alternative avenues for marketing and advertising. Similar to the previous year, the focal points of digital marketing in 2023 will revolve around generating exclusive content. Additionally, given the filtering situation in Iran, companies will prioritize website development and search engine optimization.

Aparat is likely to emerge as the most successful local platform in Iran, investing efforts in video advertising, warranting a strategic plan for the upcoming year. The often overlooked aspect of focusing on building or updating Wikipedia holds potential for brands to consider in the new year. Email marketing will also attain a prominent position among the populace. In light of the events that transpired in the latter half of 1401, advertising budget allocation for the following year will prioritize domestic platforms. Advertising on social networks will continue in a limited capacity. Just as a significant number of brand advertisements persisted on Telegram despite filtering measures, a similar trend is expected on Instagram. The landscape of digital marketing will witness a transformation in content strategy in the upcoming year. Content production will adopt novel styles and contexts, actively engaging the audience. Furthermore, content must be designed to remain current and align with the daily needs of the audience or customers.

For the upcoming year, 2023, it would be advisable for companies to concentrate their strategies on two primary areas: firstly, the enhancement and refinement of their infrastructure, and secondly, the implementation of integrated marketing plans on platforms that have received comparatively less attention.

In 2023, short yet captivating video content will prove to be the most impactful form of content, even for B2B enterprises.

The growth of influencer marketing will persist; however, the emphasis will shift towards engaging with content producers rather than advertisers.

Formulating a comprehensive strategy for customer engagement and response on social media platforms is imperative.

Giving brands a human personality is an increasingly favored approach among marketers.

The value of raw data will experience a significant surge, leading marketers to collect it through any available means.

If you are a product or service owner seeking to establish effective communication with your audience, a digital media presence is undoubtedly crucial, particularly in the forthcoming year, 2023.

It should be noted that marketers do not necessarily employ the same type of content to introduce their services.

The foremost marketing objectives for 2023 encompass enhancing profitability and sales, improving user experience, elevating brand awareness, and expanding the reach to new audiences.

Similar to the marketing trends witnessed in 2022, brands will continue to heavily invest in platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram, capitalizing on the power of video content to engage with customers in 2023.

Video remains a preferred medium for storytelling.

The momentum of live streaming is swiftly escalating, enabling brands to forge closer relationships with their audiences and foster heightened trust.

What lies ahead for the future of digital marketing in Iran? The answer to this question hinges on several key factors, including technological advancements, changes in search engine algorithms, shifts in consumer preferences and behaviors, and various other influences. Nevertheless, considering the upward trajectory of the digital marketing industry in Iran over the past few years, a promising outlook can be anticipated. The rapid expansion of the internet landscape and widespread internet usage among the populace have fueled the exponential growth of the digital marketing sector in Iran. This surge in growth signifies that Iranian businesses are actively seeking avenues for online advertising and sales. Additionally, with the proliferation of social media platforms in Iran, digital marketing through these networks has emerged as a prominent advertising method within the country.

Digital marketing entails utilizing online and digital channels to promote and sell products and services. It encompasses a wide array of Internet-based tools, including websites, social media platforms, email, search engine advertisements, video ads, and other online methods, which facilitate communication with customers and facilitate lead generation. Through digital marketing, businesses and brands employ diverse strategies to engage and retain their customer base. For instance, crafting compelling and relevant website content, establishing a robust social media presence, leveraging targeted search engine advertising, and employing other digital tactics contribute to enhancing brand visibility and customer acquisition. Overall, the digital marketing market holds immense promise and efficacy for the future. It empowers companies and brands to execute more impactful marketing campaigns, harnessing novel technologies to reach new customers and entice them effectively.

Conclusions and Discussions

Virtual social networks play a pivotal and indispensable role in shaping our perception of the world. By depicting the intricate web of relationships that govern our lives, they introduce a novel way of existence and thinking to their audience, subsequently influencing their lifestyle. The prominence of digital marketing and its associated risks in product promotion

necessitate significant transformations across various sectors. Among the facets of utilizing information technology, the application of the internet in marketing food and health products emerges as a noteworthy dimension. To achieve relatively rapid and targeted growth on social networks, Iranian companies can leverage specialized business social networking services, such as WhatsApp Business or Instagram business accounts tailored explicitly for this purpose.

In the present scenario, Iranian companies find themselves operating within a fiercely competitive and volatile domestic market. In light of this, it becomes imperative for these companies to formulate an effective social media marketing strategy for the year 2023 to thrive in the realm of social media. As per the global statistics released in April 2022 pertaining to social network usage, the number of social media users worldwide stands at a staggering 4.65 billion. To achieve greater success both domestically and internationally, it is crucial for companies to develop a comprehensive digital marketing strategy tailored specifically for social networks in the upcoming year of 2023.

The latter part of 2022 witnessed a convergence of peculiar occurrences and substantial repercussions in the realm of marketing and advertising, affecting both major and minor brands. Planning for marketing endeavors in 2023 has become an exceedingly challenging task. The implementation of internet filtering and restrictions in September 2020 has inflicted significant harm upon the advertising industry, particularly within the domain of digital marketing. For instance, an analysis of Instagram activity conducted by comparing the pre-filtering and post-filtering periods reveals a staggering decline of over 60%. Consequently, numerous home-based businesses have suffered a loss of income during this duration. Accessibility to the internet and social media platforms has become arduous, leading to a wave of layoffs within the design and advertising profession.

LinkedIn serves as an excellent social networking platform that facilitates meaningful interactions between businesses and individuals. It, too, experienced adverse consequences due to filtering measures; however, with the situation gradually ameliorating, people and brands have resumed their engagement on the platform. In 2023, the priorities for digital marketing remain consistent with the previous year, emphasizing the creation of unique and compelling content. Given the prevailing filtering circumstances in Iran, companies are likely to concentrate on website development and search engine optimization strategies. Among the domestic Iranian platforms, Aparat is poised to emerge as the most successful local network, particularly due to its commitment to video advertising. Accordingly, it would be prudent for businesses to devise a comprehensive plan for video advertising on this platform for the upcoming year.

In light of the considerable potential of the online market and the digital landscape in Iran, it can be inferred that the digital marketing sector in Iran is poised for rapid expansion in the foreseeable future. Businesses should strive to capitalize on this opportunity for their growth and advancement. With the persistent growth of this market and the escalating adoption of technology within Iranian communities, it is anticipated that the future of the digital marketing industry holds substantial growth prospects. Through the implementation of innovative approaches, precise data analysis, and impactful consumer communication, this market has the potential to witness significant expansion and assume a more prominent stature.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that they have no known competing financial interests OR non-financial interests OR personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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