

Marketing Trends of a Clothing Line

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Abstract

This study compares the success of traditional print marketing with that of new-age digital methods. It focuses on determining which advertising strategies are most effective for a clothing company by implementing different marketing collateral into an existing company's marketing plan and then gathering results of how much traffic each method drives in to the company's website. It concludes that while printed advertising still holds a slight advantage over its digital counterpart, the two methods have been successfully implemented in combination, allowing a more diverse marketing plan and capturing consumers from multiple sources.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Statement of Problem

With technology constantly changing, companies must adapt to the newest and greatest trends of the market. Where traditional forms of print advertising such as newspapers, posters, and flyers have succeeded in the past, they are now becoming less popular, being trumped by the online world. Since the invention of the Internet, companies have been introduced to many new ways of reaching their target audience. With the use of computers and smart phones, consumers can easily access information about their favorite brands and products in a matter of seconds. This is not only a much more efficient use of resources, but online marketing is also much quicker to put into action as well. However, traditional print still holds a large influence of how a company is seen by its followers. Printed ads play a big role in sending messages to their audience as well as molding their mission and reputation. Similarly, print acts as a catalyst for consumer knowledge, driving people to find out more by visiting the company's website.

Marketing gives a company the opportunity to progress and succeed by letting the masses know it exists. Creating product or service awareness is vital for the success of most companies who are hoping to sell their goods. But what exactly are the most effective graphic communication strategies for a brand optimization?

Classic Apparel is a small clothing line based out of San Luis Obispo, California. The company's mission is to encourage creativity and establish a culture of self-doers who aren't afraid to defy the norm and express themselves physically and intellectually. This study consists of placing different communication strategies into *Classic Apparel's* marketing plan, testing which were the most effective. Using a website traffic counter, social media insights, and short surveys, data was gathered to better understand consumer response between different advertising strategies.

Significance of Research

It has been known that a good product alone does not guarantee a successful business. The product will rarely sell unless it is properly marketed, putting it on display to prospective consumers. A company may have the best product or service in the entire industry, but without marketing, potential customers would never know about it. And when there are other similar products or services on the market, it becomes increasingly hard for a company to be seen by the masses. Clever marketing campaigns and full-utilization of the different communication methods are not only the best strategies in getting the company's name out there, but also in conveying messages and interacting with fans. Whether it is print or online, proper marketing and efficient knowledge in the graphic communication industry are essential to the success of a clothing brand. Knowing

all the different options for marketing a company can only be helpful in the long run.

Interest in the Study

The researcher is interested in gaining a better understanding of the advertising market, learning more about how consumers respond to different methods, and utilizing the knowledge within a clothing line, entitled *Classic Apparel*. Retail shops, and clothing companies in particular, can greatly benefit from proper marketing and advertising. This study was intended to figure out which advertising methods are most suitable for clothing lines by gathering information on each and testing them out with *Classic Apparel*.

Interviews of similar companies were also conducted to find out which marketing trends are currently the most popular in the industry.

The goal of this project was to use different communication strategies and collateral such as a website, social media, videos, emails, flyers, posters, and stickers for a small clothing line, *Classic Apparel*, while gathering data on the results of each strategy and determining which is the most effective.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Brands have been delivering messages to people since the beginning of time. Over the years, more competition and the addition of new channels made generating awareness more difficult. Disruptive technologies started replacing the past advertising methods, acting as both barriers and new opportunities. Newspapers gave way to radio, radio gave way to television, and so forth. On one side of the spectrum, these disruptive technologies could be seen in a negative fashion since they basically interrupted all or most of the prior marketing progress that a company may have made. On the other hand, the new technologies acted as innovative tools that these companies could now use to maximize market reach. As technology evolved, brands realized that they could drive sales over the phone and by mail. Then, in 1993, the Internet was born. This gave people new places to visit and new ways to communicate, as well as a whole database of information that they could easily search for. The Internet added a huge opportunity for companies to reach their markets through a whole new system, enabling them to interact with more unique audience members than ever before.

The advertising market still sees these as disruptive technologies, and companies are still coming into contact with the challenge of changing their whole marketing plan to better fit the trends of the mass population. With the constantly evolving world of technology, businesses must now find new ways to adapt and learn to capitalize on disruptive technologies. The traditional methods involving print in the advertising field are on a steady decline, and the market is starting to migrate to the web. “The bulk of the shift happened between 2005 and 2007, when print declined from 53.1% to 44.1%, while online increased from 22.1% to 30.2%,” (Media Daily). This large decrease in printed advertising may be due to the fact that these traditional methods are no longer generating the ideal number of sales. As technology advances, so do the communication methods that people use, including business to consumer interactions. On another note, banner ads and direct mail response is down 90 percent, while social media traffic is growing by more than 10 percent each month (Leong). A report from the Society of Digital Agencies found that more than 87 percent of traditional ad agencies and 73 percent of digital marketers said they plan to shift budgets from traditional to online marketing. Interactive technologies now play a major role in connecting customers and businesses. Therefore, businesses that do not adapt to interactive technology advertising are at risk of failure.

SEO

A key factor in a successful implementation of digital marketing lies in how easy it is for people to locate a given webpage. Search engine optimization (SEO) is a beneficial tool for capitalizing on this idea. SEO is the process of improving a website’s visibility on search engines such as Google or Yahoo. The main goal of SEO is to display the most

relevant web pages according to what has been typed into the search, making it easier for the consumer to find what they are looking for. This differs from the sponsored results, as these “organic” or “algorithmic” search results are un-paid. According to WebProNews, “66.3% of searchers will click on organic listings before a sponsored link” (WebProNews). The higher a website ranks in a search result, the greater the chance it has of being visited. In order to achieve a better ranking, the web-designer can try a number of things. SEO takes into account how search engines work, as a text-based medium, meaning that results are read like a newspaper – focusing on content and skipping ads. To benefit from this, describing the website and using specific keywords, as well as tagging the page with useful and relevant words, will make the website more visible to search engines. Another helpful method is to regularly update the site’s content. A page with frequent updates will receive a higher ranking than a page with few updates. A single SEO factor such as this will not, however, guarantee high search engine rankings. Having multiple positive factors will give the business a much higher success rate than implementing only one. Along the same lines as SEO, making a webpage mobile-friendly is also a very beneficial strategy, as the majority of consumers are beginning to use their cell phones to browse pages and purchase goods.

Mobile

Mobile marketing is one of the most recent top marketing trends. According to Search Mobile Computing, mobile marketing is described as “promotional activity designed for delivery to cell phones, smart phones, and other handheld devices, usually as a component of a multi-channel campaign.” Smart phones, or phones with more advanced computing abilities such as the iPhone and Droid, are quickly taking over the cell phone

market, giving companies new ways of reaching their audience. Things such as location-based services (LBS), 2D barcodes, and augmented reality are now all being used by marketing teams. Consumers are fascinated by new technology, and they are also constantly looking for newer and faster ways to get things done. Mobile tools such as 2D barcodes, the most popular being ‘QR Codes,’ enable smart phone owners to simply scan the barcode with their phone, triggering a pre-determined response like browsing to a URL, sending an e-mail, or opening up Google Maps with the wanted location. Users are much more willing to use shortcuts such as these to save time than do it manually. Another online marketing strategy that can be used closely with the mobile movement is the utilization of social media.

Social Media

Viral marketing is one of the most effective ways to reach an audience and create a bigger name for a brand, especially for retail stores or clothing lines. The beauty of social media is that it is simple, free, and quick. Brands can potentially reach thousands of customers across the globe without paying advertising costs. Social media sites, and the traffic that they are generating, are growing exponentially. In 2009, the well-known Facebook had a population that surpassed that of the United States. Just two years later it doubled, making it twice the population of the U.S. According to Social Media Pathways, “for the first time, in 2010, ending a 23 year run, Pepsi Cola pulled out of advertising in the Super Bowl ditching it for Social Media” (Social Media Management). Larger companies are starting to catch on to the idea of creating relationships with their consumers through means of these online communities, and for good reason. Social media marketing has become an essential component in today’s business. If used

correctly, sites like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Tumblr can make a huge difference in just how fast a company grows. However, this form of marketing must be treated differently than traditional marketing. Where traditional marketing focuses on selling a business, social media marketing deals with creating relationships with consumers through different online communities.

Print: The Forgotten Marketing Method

Where online marketing has the opportunity of being viral and seen by hundreds of thousands or even millions through word-of-mouth, printed advertisements are limited to the quantity that were created and distributed. Traditional methods of print also have a short shelf life. Newspapers, magazines, and flyers are designed to be destroyed or thrown away shortly after they are printed. But this does not mean that print should be forgotten altogether. "...print remains a proven, reliable, and cost-effective lead generator for millions of local businesses. Vastly more people still find local businesses via yellow pages than through social media (74% compared to only 32%)" (Kehrer). Many businesses have started replacing the traditional forms of advertising with their online alternatives. However, this strategy may not be as wise as they thought. Printed marketing has proven to be a very successful strategy in the past, and it will most likely continue to thrive. One of the main reasons for this is the generation of baby boomers that did not grow up using online tools. They are much more familiar with print, and learning the new technology can pose as quite a challenge for some. However, incorporating both print and online methods into a company's marketing plan can prove to be a successful move, as they both supplement each other's efforts at generating brand awareness.

Using a multi-channel campaign to advertise a business is becoming the most common strategy for increasing the client base. A multi-channel campaign simply means combining multiple advertising strategies instead of just focusing on one. Combining print with the newer, more technical method could be the way of the new age of advertising. Instead of choosing one or the other, using both marketing platforms can maximize the number viewers and boost sales. Using tools that incorporate both, such as the previously mentioned QR codes, companies can successfully drive new viewers using traditional methods, but with a new age twist.

Chapter 3

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to compare different marketing strategies for a small clothing line to see which were the most effective in the industry. The strategies used in this study include materials from both the online and print segments of advertising. Examples of such are websites, social networking pages, mobile technologies, flyers, posters, and stickers. In order to gather data and understand the marketing trends better, three different research methods were used: elite and specialized interviewing, descriptive research, and content analysis.

Elite and specialized interviewing involves asking individuals who are experts on the topic precise questions about the subject. “In Elite and Specialized interviewing, the informed interviewee becomes part of the research ‘team’ ” (Levenson 26). Multiple local clothing companies with a similar target market were interviewed using this process, and the knowledge acquired was further tested using *Classic Apparel*. More general surveys were also given to members of *Classic Apparel*'s target market, giving a different

perspective of the retail process. The insights gained from the experts contacted as well as the results from the consumer surveys benefited the study by giving a more realistic view of what strategies currently exist and are being used, as well as how to maximize the productivity of each. A list of the most popular marketing methods were composed from these results, providing a good idea of which should be implemented into the *Classic Apparel* marketing plan. For descriptive research, the different marketing methods were then tested using the company's existing website as a final destination, with each directing the consumer to an identical yet separate home page, enabling the traffic to be counted individually. Content analysis was then used to quantify the results of both the interviews and the website.

Elite and Specialized Interviews

Similar clothing companies were interviewed to gather information on which marketing methods are currently being implemented by brands of the same size and status.

Companies interviewed include *[if]* *Skateboard Co.*, *3.0 Clothing*, and *Sticks and Stones*.

The questions asked include the following:

Interview Questions

1. *What is the company mission/philosophy?*
2. *When was the company founded?*
3. *What is the company's target market?*
4. *Are the company's products available in any retail locations?*
5. *What kinds of printed marketing collateral has the company used?*
6. *What kinds of digital marketing collateral has the company used?*

7. *Does the company have an electronic commerce site where products are available for purchase?*
8. *What have been the company's most successful marketing strategies overall?*

Extended Questions

1. *How are consumers driven to the website?*
2. *About what percentage of sales are made through the website?*

Descriptive Research

Similar to the elite interviewing, simple surveys were also given to extract information about how consumers respond to certain marketing methods. These surveys, however, were given to the consumers directly, not to other companies. They were distributed to Facebook users who are “fans” of *Classic Apparel*. The questions included in the survey were more general questions designed to bring out the perspective of the consumers. This descriptive research gives a better insight to which marketing strategies are the most effective in grabbing the viewer’s attention and gaining sales. Questions asked include the following:

Consumer Survey Questions

1. *About how many hours do you spend online in one week?*
2. *How many of those hours are spent on social media?*
3. *How often do you make online purchases?*
4. *Do you own a smart phone that is able to browse the Internet?*
5. *Do well-designed posters and flyers grab your attention?*
6. *What kinds of marketing collateral are you most likely to respond to?*

Once the most popular trends in the industry were determined from the interviews and surveys, *Classic Apparel* was used as a case study by implementing these trends into the marketing plan to further test their effectiveness.

Distribution of Printed Collateral

Different printed collateral was distributed to local concerts and events. Examples of these materials include small flyers*, stickers*, and decals, each with *Classic Apparel's* website URL and a coupon code placed on the back to entice the consumer to visit the page. Each collateral type was distributed separately in a different location, and the success of each was monitored by the number of visitors it directed to the website using an analysis site counter. There were at least two trials for each collateral method, giving a better look at how they were performing.

*See appendix for images

Distribution of Digital Collateral

Digital media such as videos*, social media pages, online advertisements*, and blog posts were created and implemented. They too, were monitored, measuring the amount of visitors or followers they generated. The separate implementation of each was recorded and counted in the content analysis. The digital methods, like the printed methods, also included two separate trials for each.

Content Analysis

Content analysis was then used to quantify the results by tracking, depending on the type of media, either the number of visitors it generated or the number of consumers it directed to the website. Having numerical data for the results of each strategy allowed for a much better comparison, showing the strengths and weaknesses of the different methods. The results were then tallied, and the marketing strategies were ranked by their success.

**See appendix for screenshots*

Chapter 4

Results

[if] Skateboard Co. is a small company based out of Santa Maria, California. Founded in June 2011, their mission is to bring local brands, talent, and youth together to form a positive vibe and a “you can do it” attitude. They have an ample supply of t-shirts and other apparel, however their main focus is on producing custom skateboards. This company is unique from others as it gained much of its popularity through social media sites, most notably Facebook. Other social media that they are currently using include Twitter and Instagram, along with YouTube hosting their plethora of skate videos and advertisements. Along with digital media, *[if] Skateboard Co.* also stresses that their printed marketing campaign draws in many new consumers and drives unique contests to help raise awareness of the brand. For instance, the company has an on-going feed of fans posting pictures of their *[if]* stickers on everything from cars, cell-phones, signs, and many other various places. Their sticker distribution has played a large part in getting the company name out to the public, and their demand for products has greatly increased because of it. Because the company is still young and constantly developing, a full

website has not yet been implemented. However, Cody French, founder of *[if]* says that the site is currently being developed and should be put into place within the next couple of months.

Another company whose products better relate to those of *Classic Apparel*, *3.0 Clothing* strives to be “Above Average.” With this mindset, they push their consumers to better themselves and to keep trying until they reach their goals. Also based out of Santa Maria, California, *3.0 Clothing* was founded in late 2009 to help motivate the younger generations to exceed greatness. The company has had a full website implemented for almost a year, enabling sales via the Internet and increasing profits by eliminating lengthy face-to-face interactions. They have also utilized many different digital as well as printed marketing collateral, with their most successful including social media, the previously mentioned fully-functional website including a blog and online shop, QR codes, flyers, banners, decals, and stickers, not to mention the shirts themselves acting as walking billboards.

One big thing taken from *3.0 Clothing* was the usefulness of the social media mobile app called Instagram. Richard Easton, CEO of *3.0 Clothing* says that Instagram has aided the company in reaching their audience and has brought forth new connections that otherwise would not have been made. Upon the discovery of this new mobile application, an account was immediately made for *Classic Apparel*. Within only a few weeks, *Classic* gained over 200 followers, a fraction being other clothing companies eager to make connections and share ideas. Instagram, which allows users to take photos from their iPhone or Android device and share them with their followers, uses a unique tagging method that groups different photos into unique categories, making photos easy to find and organize. The addition of Instagram to the *Classic Apparel* marketing campaign has

made sharing content between different strategies possible, creating a link between the application, website, QR codes, and other social medias. Photos taken with the Instagram app can now immediately be shared with the other methods, making it visible on all of the possible digital platforms. The application has also extended the company's audience, reaching many new consumers that were otherwise unaware of *Classic Apparel*.

Upon gathering data from the elite interviews, it was also found that JavaScript is a very useful coding tool to make websites more interactive, with most professional websites utilizing it in some form. Thus, some JavaScript features such as image slideshows and mouse-over changes were incorporated into the *Classic Apparel* website, making it look and feel like a higher-end environment. Along with this, the interviews also showed that Search Engine Optimization is indeed one of the most helpful features for maximizing a website's traffic. The JavaScript features along with SEO were implemented before the collateral distribution periods, so as to not disturb the traffic during the separate collateral trials. SEO changes included adding more keywords into the website itself to capture better search engine rankings when those keywords are used, as well as doing link exchanges with other clothing companies. Link exchanges simply mean that each website incorporates a link to the other's page, aiding both sides in receiving more views from the other's audience. As a result of adding SEO, excluding the JavaScript features considering the fact that adding them alone would not draw in more viewers, the website traffic increased by a substantial 21%.

On March 30th, 2012, a consumer survey was sent out and taken by 100 fans of *Classic Apparel* via Facebook. This survey was intended to ask members of the company's target market more general questions about marketing, getting a better understanding of the consumer's point of view. The first question in the survey asked

“How many hours a week do you spend online?” (SurveyMonkey). The results were largely skewed towards spending over 10 hours a week. Figure 1 shows that about 65 of the 100 responses, almost 70%, fell under this category, indicating that digital commerce and entertainment are indeed becoming more and more popular as technology continues to advance.



Figure 1

People are now spending a good amount of their time online, providing not only clothing companies, but all retail companies, with more marketing opportunities. The next question asked, “What percentage of these hours is spent on social media sites?” (SurveyMonkey). Though a little more varied than the previous responses, the majority of the consumers said that they spend somewhere between 25-75% of their online time on social media sites. Thirty-six responses answered 25-50% and 38 answered 50-75%. The next closest response was 75% and up, which 16 surveyers answered. As surprising as these responses were, the data actually corresponds well to what was found from the elite interviews. The owners of the three companies interviewed, [if] Skateboard Co., 3.0 Clothing, and Sticks and Stones, all made it clear that social media was one of their biggest company strengths and that they would not be where there are without it.

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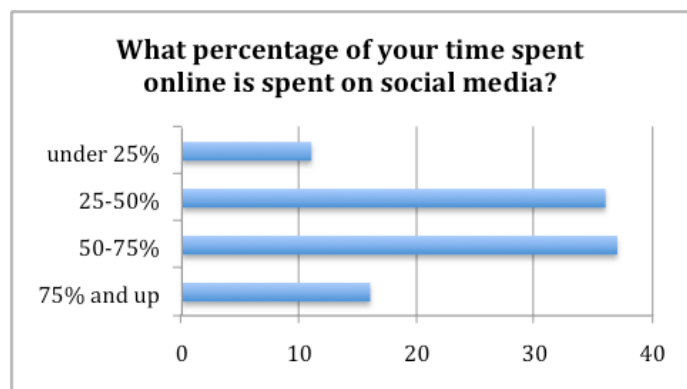


Figure 2

The next question in the

survey asked, “How often do you make online purchases?” (SurveyMonkey). Figure 3 shows that the normal purchasing activity of *Classic Apparel*’s target market is about “once every couple months,” with more than half of the surveyers answering with this response. The next closest response was “once a month,” with 32% of the surveyers



Figure 3

choosing this. Knowing this information helps determine how often consumers of the specific market will be purchasing goods through online sources. The next question simply asked whether the consumer owns a smart phone that is capable of browsing the Internet. 73% of the responses were “yes,” showing that these devices are quickly taking over the mobile market and providing companies with more advanced advertising opportunities. The next question was aimed at the success of printed marketing, and asked, “Do well-designed posters and flyers grab your attention?” (SurveyMonkey). The results would be pleasing to anybody in the printing industry, and shows that this form of advertising is still highly successful when implemented correctly in regards to being well-designed. Just over 40%

of the consumers responded that they always give their attention to well-designed posters and flyers. The other 58% responded “sometimes” to the question. The last question gave

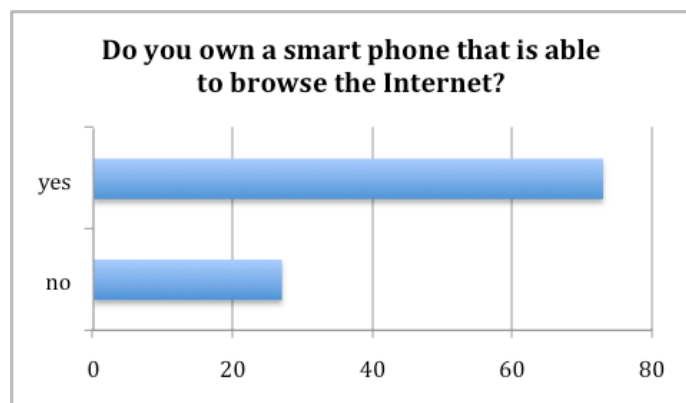


Figure 4

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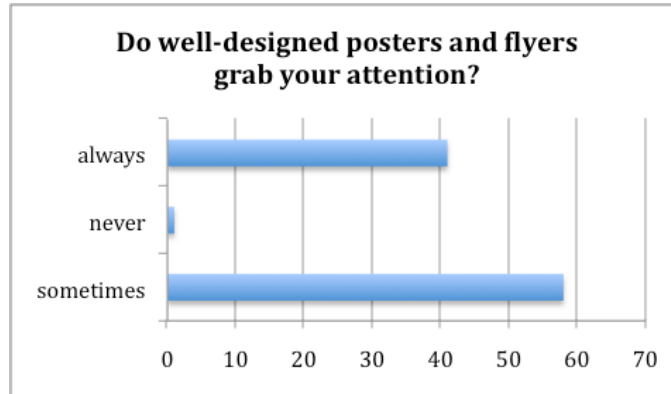


Figure 5

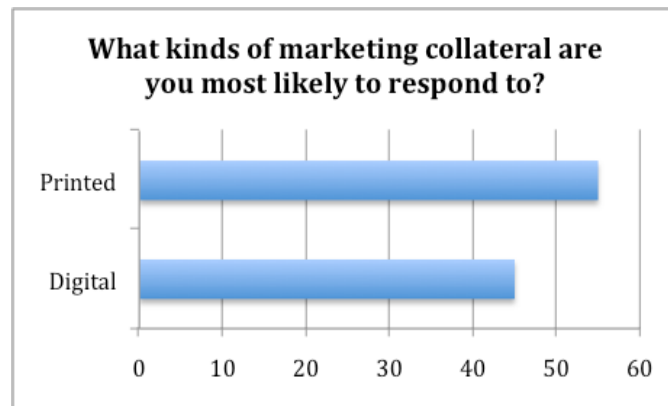


Figure 6

the consumers the choice of either Printed Collateral, as in posters, flyers, stickers, and magazine ads, or Digital Collateral, as in websites, social media, QR barcodes, and other digital materials and platforms. They were asked to choose which they are most likely to respond to. As popular as Internet browsing has become, the results show that printed collateral still holds an edge over digital, but only by a close margin of 10%. Fifty-five of the responses answered “printed” while 45 answered “digital.”

Once traffic had stabilized from the SEO implementation and the consumer survey results had been collected, the different marketing collaterals to be used were chosen and then distributed in separate trials, each trial being implemented after the traffic from the previous trial had died down. Using Google Analytics, visits made to the site were counted for each separate collateral type. The following chart shows the data gathered from these trials.

Printed Collateral				
Name	Trial #	# Distributed	Location	# of Visitors
Stickers	1	75	Farmer's Market	18
Stickers	2	75	SLO Brewery	23
Decals	1	50	Farmer's Market	13
Decals	2	50	SLO Brewery	19
Flyers	1	50	Farmer's Market	9
Flyers	2	50	Irvine, CA	22
Posters	1	10	varied	14
Posters	2	10	varied	16
Digital Collateral				
Name	Trial #	Location	# of Visitors	
Blog Posts	1	Tumblr	8	
Blog Posts	2	Tumblr	6	
Videos	1	YouTube	18*	
Videos	2	YouTube	22*	
Advertisements	1	Facebook	6	
Advertisements	2	Facebook	9	

Chart 1

The results gathered from the distributed collateral matched the results found in the consumer surveys. The traditional method of using printed materials to market the brand came out superior to the digital counterparts. However, one factor that could have attributed to these numbers is the personal contact made between the consumer and the individuals handing out the materials. When a personal interaction like this takes place, the consumer becomes more interested in the message being sent, and thus more likely to look into the company afterwards. Also taking into consideration that while the YouTube videos that were posted only generated a total of 40 website hits,

they were actually viewed more than 600 times combined in just a few weeks. With the help of other social media pages like Facebook and Twitter, the videos have been further spread and continue to generate viewers.

The most successful of the printed collateral was the posters, 10 of which were posted in various locations in San Luis Obispo for each trial. The posters generated a combined 30 website hits for a return rate of 66%, which is a dramatic margin over any of the other methods. However, the posters have the advantage of being seen by far more many eyes than a single flyer or sticker passed out to an individual. The other three printed methods ranked very closely, with decals, flyers, and stickers earning return rates of 32%, 31%, and 27% respectively.

Chapter 5

Conclusions

After studying the success of both printed and digital collateral to promote a company and lead viewers to a website, it seems that printed collateral still holds an advantage. With the aid of the previously mentioned face-to-face contact, flyers and stickers being distributed to individuals spark interest in the company and leads to more consumers taking action. However, with constantly evolving technology, digital commerce is becoming more and more popular, bringing convenience and quick turnarounds for the consumer.

While the digital collateral distributed did not generate as many website hits as the printed collateral, it should be noted that implementing a combination of both into a company's marketing strategy is probably the best way of attracting the most viewers. Doing this allows both inbound and outbound marketing, and gives the company the ability to generate leads from both directions. Where outbound marketing techniques such as distributing flyers and stickers involve pushing a message to consumers, inbound

marketing techniques like Search Engine Optimization and social media pull consumers in by making information more accessible if they chose to look for it. Having both captures consumers from all sides of the spectrum.

A combination of these methods also allows for cross-referencing of each other. For instance, flyers and posters can be distributed to promote not only the company itself, but a specific video or blog post. This helps to send a specific message to consumers, which can be changed at any time. With the use of the most current technology like smart phones and QR codes, this strategy becomes convenient and quick.

In conclusion, while the results show that printed collateral still holds an edge over digital, it is by a very small margin that will mostly likely only get smaller as technology and digital commerce continue to grow. Combining the two different methods is already becoming a popular trend in marketing and it would be safe to say that they will continue to be utilized together even more so as technology continues to advance. It is up to the individual company to decide what degree they should implement each method to in order to best capture their unique target market and maximize brand awareness.


Appendix



Flyer/poster

Sponsored Create an Ad

Classic Apparel



Quality clothing from the California coast.

Facebook advertisement



Video 1



Video 2



Sticker 1



Sticker 2

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