

Digital Marketing 101 for Restaurants

mobivity

Contents



GETTING STARTED

Digital marketing is an exciting ever-evolving landscape where only a few restaurants have achieved dominance. You have the opportunity to be the big cheese.



APPS

One of the latest trends in digital marketing for restaurants trying to create an owned audience.



TEXT CLUBS

Get the message – how text clubs use SMS to help build customer relationships and drive revenue.



ONLINE ADVERTISING

The truth is that online marketing is one of the most powerful means of advertising you have at your fingertips.



EMAIL MARKETING

Email is an important marketing channel for your franchise restaurant, enabling you to communicate with customers and send exclusive offers.



WHAT'S NEXT?

Send personalized messages and well-timed offers, engage potential and current fans, and gather invaluable data for enhancing those interactions. Enhancing those interactions.

Getting Started

DIGITAL MARKETING IS AN EXCITING EVER-EVOLVING LANDSCAPE WHERE ONLY A FEW RESTAURANTS HAVE ACHIEVED DOMINANCE. YOU HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO BE THE BIG CHEESE.

There are few businesses that are tougher than the restaurant industry. Maybe children's party clowns, or secret agents, but they do not often have to deal with the types of challenges you face, such as tight profit margins, ever increasing competition, economic trends, changes in customer preferences, and perhaps the most frightening of them all: word of mouth.

In light of those challenges, you have to be ever-focused on achieving more for your franchise restaurant—more customers, more visits, and driving more revenue with each and every order. And if you're focused on that, it's highly likely your competitors are too.

Every time a new restaurant pops up on the horizon, it gets a little harder to not only attract new customers but also hold onto the ones you have, however faithful they have been over the years (those cursed taste buds always give into sweet, sweet temptation).

It may sound like a kind of war, but it's more of a food fight, only less messy. Regardless, it does require a highly strategic approach to marketing and communicating with all customers, whether current or desired. It also goes without saying, but we'll say it anyway, that any strategy you implement will need to be creative, ongoing, and

affordable. That means that you need to look beyond the tried and true—the newspapers, the billboards, the TV, and the like—and do what you always encourage your customers to do with your changing menu: try something new.

Having said that, digital marketing is not necessarily new, or new to franchise restaurants, but it may be new to you. It is an exciting, ever-evolving landscape where only a few restaurants have truly achieved dominance, which means you have an opportunity to be the big cheese, so to speak, in the markets you serve or the segment where you specialize.





Perhaps the most exciting aspect of digital marketing, and its major advantage over all traditional methods of customer attraction and retention, is that it is a highly personal and infinitely trackable medium. In other words, you can not only reach people where they are, any time of day, but also engage them in conversations about, and drive interest in, your restaurant in ways that were previously impossible. More important, that personalized touch, and the engagement that ensues, offers an opportunity for you to gather more data on your customers, individually and collectively, and that means more insights on what they like or don't like about your restaurant, your offers, and you.

Some of that may hurt, but each interaction is a chance to influence their decisions, to refine your products, and to create a more welcoming experience that has everyone craving more.

This information-driven approach to marketing has further benefits. For one, you can finesse your promotional efforts and offers to the point where you consistently communicate the right message, to the right person, at the right time. It could be meal time. It could be before the big game. Or a cold snack on a hot day. But the key is

how the data you capture will enhance your ability to create a more personalized messaging experience for your customer and earn a favorable response.

As you capture that data, you can also use the information to better determine and manage the costs involved not only to attract new customers—perhaps the most expensive aspect of any marketing initiative—but also to retain and build loyalty with the ones you have, increase guest frequency, and capture more wallet share. That means more revenue, which means more resources at hand to build on that. Success not only has a sweet smell, it tastes really good too.

“With Digital Marketing, you can not only reach people where they are, any time of day, but also engage them in conversations about, and drive interest in, your restaurant in ways that were previously impossible.”



That is not to say you want to ditch your traditional marketing for all digital. After all, what is a burger without fries? Instead, think of digital as complementary—a means of enhancing your ability to reach, build, and deepen customer relationships through:

PERSONALIZATION

Customers today want to have relationships with brands and research shows they are 10 times more likely to buy from a brand they follow or have opted-in to receive messages from. However, with this newfound ability to build relationships comes much higher expectations. They expect these favored brands to know them, provide value, and anticipate their wants to build stronger brand loyalty. Effective data and enhanced digital marketing now enables brands do this effectively (at scale), but if brands “blow-it,” the consequences are more immediate and noticeable – customers tune-out, unfollow, or worse, call brands out for not delivering on their promise.

EFFICIENCY

Unlike traditional marketing, you can track the messages you send to see how many are viewed. And they will be viewed —

For example: 95% of all Short Message Service (SMS) messages received are opened within three minutes, according to Nielsen, which is a higher rate than any other medium.

CONTROL

Not only can you target, time, and vary your mobile and POS offers across very specific geographic, demographic, and other parameters, you can more easily maintain budgets and time limits.

LOYALTY

With mobile marketing, you can better understand your customers and their behaviors, delivering more personalized offers that resonate.

With that in mind, we’ve created this guide as a kind of digital marketing menu: here are one of your options, the key ingredients, and advice on how best to serve them up to satisfy your hunger for more customers, more loyalty, and more revenue. Bon appétit!

Apps

ONE OF THE LATEST TRENDS IN DIGITAL MARKETING FOR RESTAURANTS

TRYING TO CREATE AN OWNED AUDIENCE.

Apps are pretty amazing. They deliver the weather, your favorite shows, and make it possible to throw angry birds at pigs without getting arrested. But they can do so much more than that. They can help you build brand awareness and customer loyalty for your restaurant through targeted and cost-effective mobile marketing campaigns.

The Latest Trend in Digital Marketing for Restaurants is a Branded Mobile Application, Or App. You are probably wondering if your brand really needs one, or if this is a case of GMOOTT (give me one of those too)? There are some pretty compelling reasons to invest in this increasingly popular digital marketing trend. The potential market for a well-executed and engaging restaurant app is vast. According to ComScore MobiLens, 188.6 million people nationwide owned smart phones during the first three months of 2015—76.9% penetration of the available market. More important, ComScore MobiLens reports that users are spending the majority of their digital media time—approximately 52%—on apps. Some are posting videos of their cats. Some are watching those videos. But there are many others who are using apps to find something

to eat while they post and watch those cat videos. If you have an app, there's a good chance users are looking at it. If not, there is a good chance they are looking at your competitor's app (or just more cat videos).

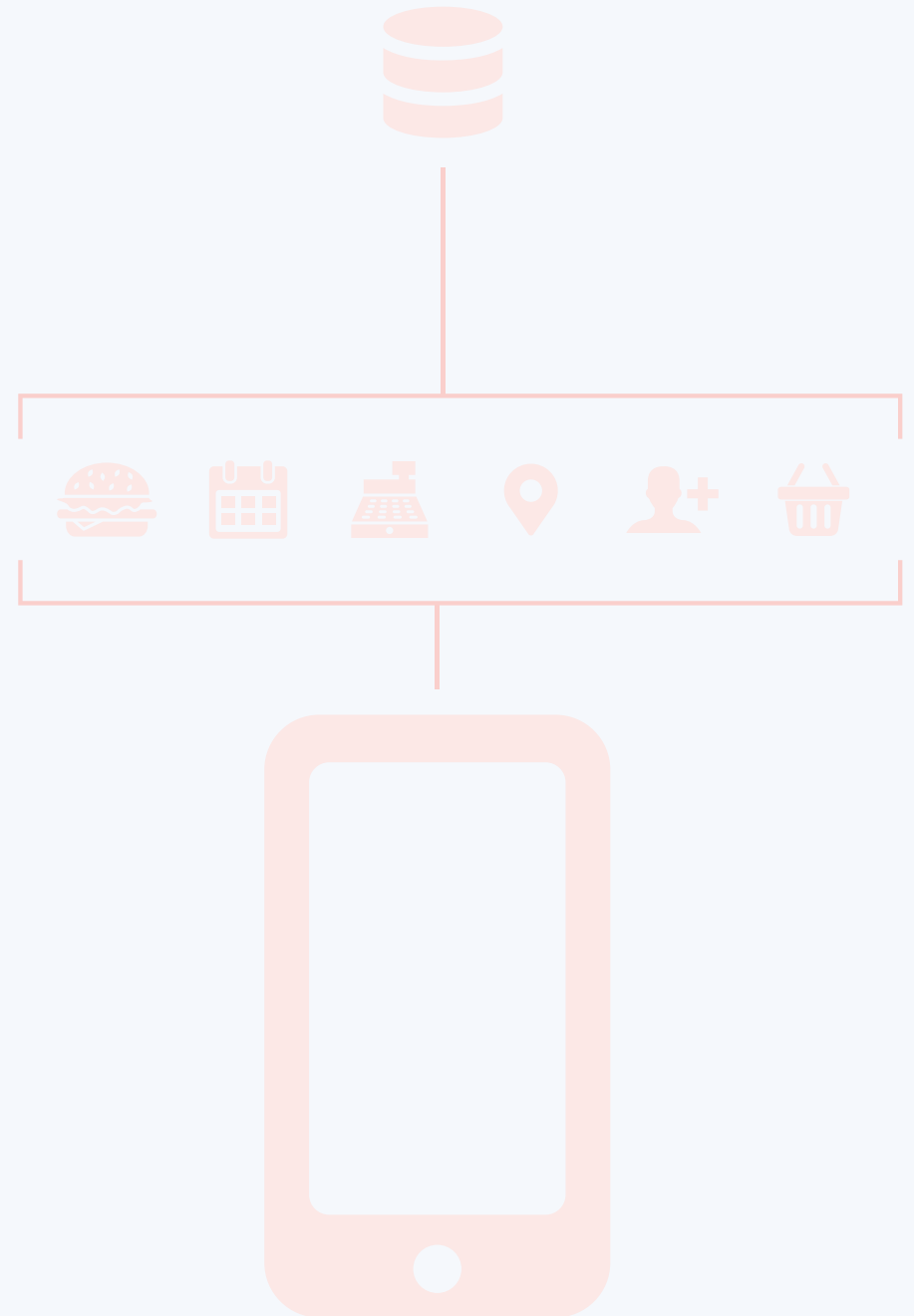
Apps enable you to improve your customer's restaurant experience with anywhere, anytime user access, especially when they are hungry. This is good, because you can showcase timely daily specials, deliver coupons, and entice them with location-based deals or exclusive promotional offers that cause their taste buds to cry "feed me."





Even better, you can drive sales with an app that enables online reservations, orders, and payment—eliminating wait time for your customers. But what is in it for you? It's a great opportunity to gather data on your customers' purchasing habits and preferences, not to mention increase your interaction with these users, offering real potential to drive customer loyalty and sales. See why your brand is craving an app?

However, successfully planning, launching, and promoting an app is as difficult as launching a successful franchise restaurant—even for the biggest brands. There are so many apps available that it is easy to get lost in the crowd. Yes, there have been a few successful launches, but most require a large investment in time and money, and many underwhelm, settling at approximately 5-7% customer adoption. Much like restaurant choices, Adobe Data suggests users prefer apps that are familiar over ones they have never tried before. Even worse, when users do take a chance on new apps, those apps are likely to be dropped as quickly as a call delivered by an unreliable service provider, with only five in 10 used more than 10 times¹.





Launching and Promoting Your App

But let's say that you decide to build and launch an app. Achieving success will be about as complicated as your friends' online relationship status, but there are effective tactics for promoting the app and increasing the likelihood that users will download and use it.

CREATE INCENTIVES FOR DOWNLOADING

It will not come as a surprise that users want to know what is in it for them if they download your app. Research by Judo Payments suggests that 65% of customers would download an app if they knew that they would be rewarded with exclusive deals or offers. Think about the offer you want to make, and budget accordingly. In our experience, the higher the perceived value of an offer (for example, a free sandwich with the purchase of a soft drink), the more likely users are to download your app.

CONSIDER PAID ADVERTISING

Here is something else you'll want to budget for—promoting the app through traditional or digital advertising. Ideally, you'll use both. You also will want to think about your target audience. After all, it is not just millennials using apps—moms use them too2 (and not just ours).

IN-STORE PROMOTION

You have point-of-purchase (POP) marketing materials and signage. You have on-receipt advertising. And you can use both to not only promote your app, but also tell customers how and where to download it, while providing an incentive to do it, like a free sandwich. People like free sandwiches.



EMAIL MARKETING



Do you have an email club? Let members know you are launching an app. Then remind them once it is launched. Ideally, your email program is sophisticated enough to know that an email club member has downloaded the app.

SMS MARKETING



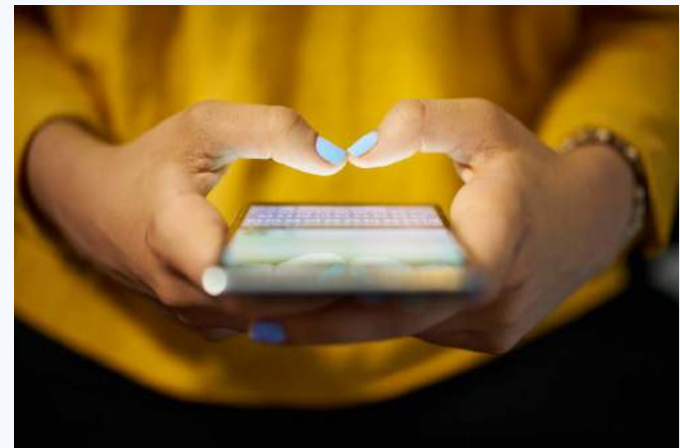
Brands have had considerable success using SMS messaging (e.g., 'text APP to 12345') to drive mobile app adoption. This may seem counterintuitive, but every smart phone has text message capabilities, and capitalizing on that capacity with a bounce-back message is the most direct and easy way to encourage app installation. Also text alerts for informational purposes do not require customer opt-in for a one-time message. It couldn't be easier, or more ethical.

INCENTIVES FOR SHARING



It is one thing to offer incentives to customers to download your app. It is another to encourage them to share it, and the deals you offer through it, with friends and family (maybe not strangers; we

want to be ethical). That means more incentives. Again, think discounts, points, or—yes—a free sandwich. Unless you do not offer sandwiches. In which case, be creative. The good news is that, according to research from Applause, approximately half of the nation's largest 100 franchise restaurants had no app—native or otherwise—as of 2016, which means more opportunity for you to develop a strong mobile presence. Implement an app, promote it with a strategic marketing campaign, and deliver mouthwatering offers and incentives to your customers' phones and they will make more visits to your restaurant and spend more there too. Sounds like a recipe for success to us.



Text Clubs

GET THE MESSAGE—HOW TEXT CLUBS USE SMS TO HELP BUILD

CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIPS AND DRIVE REVENUE.

You have a smart phone, or at least we are assuming you do. And that smart phone is your connection to the world—friends, family, and strangers who accidentally butt dial you. Maybe you use your phone to stay connected through calls or social media. More likely, you use texting. But texting, or SMS, is also a great way to build and maintain connections with your customers, and then use those connections to drive business (maybe even with those who butt dial you).

There are many compelling reasons for restaurants to launch an SMS or text club marketing initiative. For one, it is a very inexpensive means of mass marketing—just pennies per text. When was the last time you could get anything for a penny, much less a customer's loyalty? For another, most people use their smart phones to text—approximately 81%, according to Pew Research³. Given that nearly two-thirds⁴ of all Americans own a smart phone, that is a lot of texts, with Forrester estimating the total number sent each day at six billion.

More important, those texts are being read. People tend to open texts within three minutes of receiving them compared to 90

minutes for email, according to Mobile Squared⁵, making it a more immediate medium. As a result, Nielsen reports that texting is more popular among Americans than phone calls by a two-to-one margin. That is particularly true for the 15-24-year-old demographic, which texts more than any other age group. This demographic also tends to dine out more frequently. Society may refer to them as millennials, but we like to call them potential customers, which has a nice ring to it (despite the fact we are talking texting).

Why has texting become so popular? Texts are quick and concise. They also typically come from someone who is familiar or intimate with you (some texts can be a little too intimate, but let's not talk about that). You likely have established a relationship with your customers—otherwise they would not be customers—and SMS enables you to build on that relationship by sending time-sensitive deals, personalized offers, and weekly specials that appeal to their good taste and their budget.

If it all sounds too good to be true, there are potential pitfalls you will need to address before launching your SMS campaign. For one, SMS is a medium of brevity. You only have 160 characters



to work with, which is not much more than a tweet, so you need to make every character count to avoid overwhelming users with multiple messages that are off-putting or annoying. Basic SMS cannot accommodate any images or audio, so your offer has to be compelling without any frills. But a significant barrier to SMS marketing is ensuring that your campaign is in compliance with the Telephone Consumer Protection Act, or the TCPA. If you are not keeping track of the changing FCC regulations on text messaging and auto-dialing (we don't blame you), an easy way to keep up is by following the Mobivity blog, where you'll get updates on cases like Spokeo, Inc. vs. Robins and the win against regulation trolls creating class action lawsuits against businesses with text programs⁶. Regardless, you should really choose a partner with expertise in SMS regulations so your messages do not leave a bad taste in anyone's mouth. Even better, choose an SMS partner who offers indemnification.

Tips on Getting Started

Once you clear the majority of hurdles, you will find it is relatively easy to create an effective SMS campaign or texting club. The

following are some ideas to help you get your campaign off the ground:

PROMOTE YOUR SMS/TEXT CLUB

The first step is enticing customers to join the club. That means promoting your SMS or text club and tying it to an offer. You may want to consider the following channels:

Paid Media — One good way to get customers to opt in is to let them know you have exclusive SMS or text club offers. That means using your traditional and social media marketing channels to promote your club. Emphasize exclusive specials, free food items, and the type of general incentives that people find hard to resist.

In-Store Advertising — Look around your restaurant. What do you see? Signage promoting your meals? Messages that drive people to your website? If you do—and we certainly hope you do—then you see opportunities to tell people to opt-in for exclusive SMS or text club offers. Consider using products like Receipt to print engaging, graphic-rich club promotions on your receipts.



Staff Promotion — Your staff is one of your most important assets. Staff members make the meals and make people feel at home. But they can also encourage customers to check out your text club in a warm and friendly way, and even help them sign up. Some successful franchises have contests to see how many users each employee or location can recruit, and offer incentives to the employee who signs up the most subscribers.

MAKE IT EASY TO JOIN

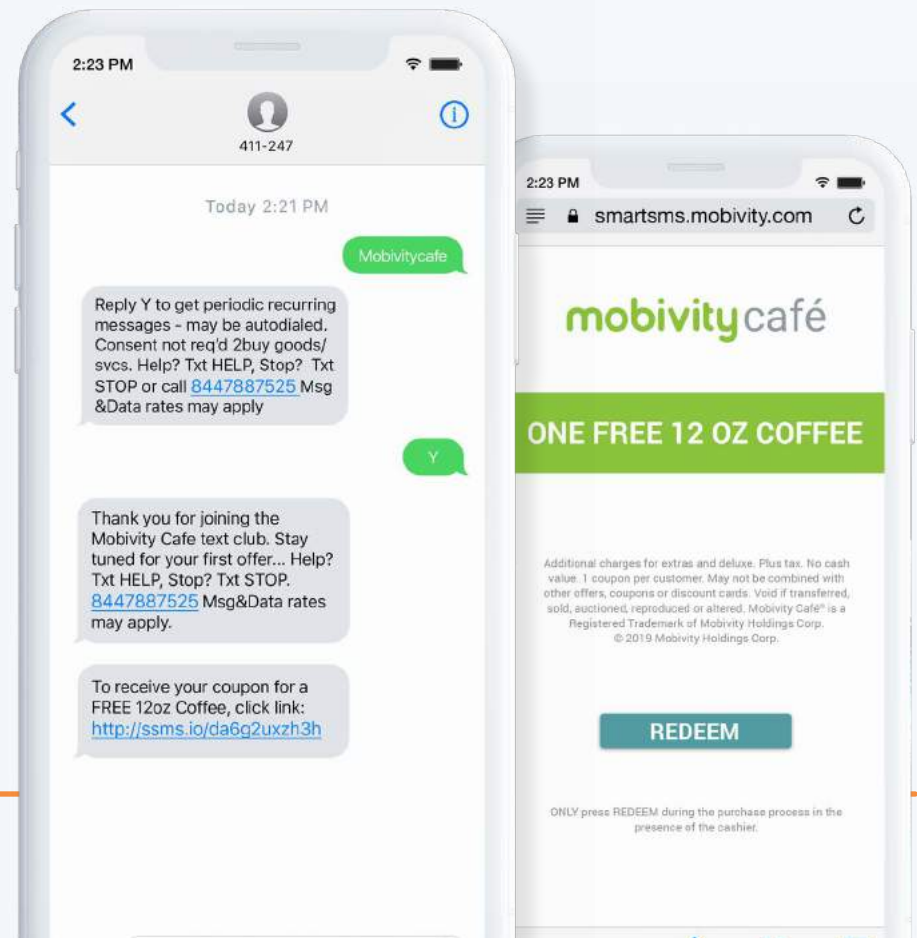
In your promotions, provide clear details on how a customer can opt-in. It can be as simple as 'Text JOIN to 411247 to access an exclusive offer.'

MAKE AN OFFER TOO GOOD TO REFUSE

They say you do not get a second chance to make a good first impression. And they are right, whoever they are. The offer you make should be limited-time to create a sense of excitement. A free food item—either on its own or with the purchase of a refreshing beverage—never hurts. In fact, it tastes like more.

TARGET YOUR OFFERS

Remember that users prefer texting to calling because texts tend to come from people they know and like. Since you know and like your customers, and vice versa, you can personalize or customize the offers you send so that they have maximum appeal.





CONSIDER FREQUENCY

A good, timely offer can turn a slow day into a profitable one. However, it is easy to send too many texts too frequently to the point where people opt out or consider your messages spam. It is also possible to send so few texts that users unsubscribe. One to two messages a week, tied to an exclusive special or limited-time offer, will help you avoid becoming a nuisance or forgotten.

Sure, texting customers may seem a bit intrusive to you, and you may, as a result, prefer tried and true marketing tactics, like FSIs or coupon drops, to lure today's tech-savvy customers. We are not saying they will not work. People like food and savings. But let us be honest: they are not terribly efficient, they are not very targeted, and they are not good for the environment.

SMS and text clubs are efficient, targeted, and environmentally friendly, making it possible to not only engage users with timely offers that appeal to them but also do so using the most personal medium possible—their smart phone.

Still uncertain SMS is for you? Reallocate a portion of your traditional marketing budget and try it out. We do not have any free food offers to entice you, but the increase in traffic and sales you will see will more than make up for that.

“It is easy to send too many texts too frequently to the point where people opt out or consider your messages spam. It is also possible to send so few texts that users unsubscribe. One to two messages a week, tied to an exclusive special or limited-time offer, will help you avoid becoming a nuisance or forgotten.”

Online Advertising

THE TRUTH IS THAT ONLINE MARKETING IS ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL MEANS OF ADVERTISING YOU HAVE AT YOUR FINGERTIPS.

Whether you use your phone, tablet, or computer, chances are you've encountered online advertising in some form while surfing the World Wide Web. Maybe it was a banner on a website. Perhaps it was a news feed ad that interrupted the steady stream of birth notices and videos of dogs freaking out on Facebook. No doubt you've also encountered a variety of articles telling you how effective online advertising can be for your franchise restaurant (spoiler alert: some of those were probably sponsored content too). As with any such claims, you are wondering what is hype and what is real.

The truth is that online marketing is one of the most powerful means of advertising you have at your fingertips (literally, given we are talking about clicks and swipes). For starters, it is quite economical, allowing you to reach a wide audience with a relatively modest investment. It is flexible, giving you many options for serving up content, such as text or video. It is interactive, enabling immediate engagement with users — essentially putting the social in social media. It is precise, allowing you to target users based on a range of criteria from their age to the last website visited (yes, even those websites). But perhaps most important of all, it is immediate, not just in the fact that you can deploy and refine your marketing on the

fly but also generate sales now, meaning quicker return on investment. To use a bad pun, with online marketing, everything just clicks.

There is one other aspect of digital or online marketing that is very appealing: ubiquity. It is everywhere your target audience is, from the boardroom to the restroom. Compare that to other media where you can only reach an audience on the go (such as billboards or radio), at home (the television), or via direct mail. Combined, these tried and true media offer broad reach and build awareness, but they can be considerably more expensive from a production and purchase perspective than digital marketing channels. In some cases, they offer little opportunity for tracking and measurement of results, another benefit of digital marketing. Yet, chain restaurants keep turning to traditional media not because of efficacy, but because that is what they have always done.

But digital marketing is like a new item on your menu: an exciting opportunity to do something a little different. It also has measurable results, and it can be savored in a variety of combos, each with its own advantages and disadvantages. With a little strategy, and a few best practices, you can get a full meal deal that really satisfies your hunger for bottom-line results.



Digital

Essentially, digital advertising is online advertising—any ad that you see when you visit a website. It could be static (i.e. a banner with an image and text) or dynamic (i.e. full audio and video).

It could appear before your desired content loads (i.e. an interstitial ad) or as hypertext in the content. These ads can be targeted to you based on your online behavior (i.e. the websites you visit—yes, all of them), context (i.e. the keywords you use to search for content, such as Google AdWords) or geographical (i.e. where you are based). Simply put, you have as many options for creating customized campaigns that appeal to different audiences and demographics as there are websites. Well, almost.

Not only is digital marketing cost-effective, measurable, and immediate, it also enables you to build brand awareness and achieve improved conversion rates by serving up ads for your franchise restaurant to anyone who visits your site on the sites they subsequently visit — a practice called retargeting. It's kind of like the aroma of your food following them wherever they go — a gentle, consistent reminder that you have so much deliciousness just waiting for them to enjoy.

There are, of course, some drawbacks to consider. For one, display advertising is so pervasive that many users—pardon the pun—virtually ignore it, a trend known as “ad blind,” or they actively hide it using ad-blocking apps. According to the Interactive Advertising Bureau, 26% of desktop users and 15% of mobile users are deploying some ad-blocking technology when they are online. Meanwhile, a growing number of users are adopting apps or setting their browsers to prevent tracking due to privacy concerns, making it difficult for advertisers to retarget. And given the wide range of browsers, operating systems, and devices that people are using to access online content, the ad experience you create may not be as consistent as the quality of the food your restaurant serves.

Much like any marketing effort you undertake, you will need to be strategic if you want to see results. Start by determining your goals, whether it is increasing page views or driving revenue. Next, consider the audiences you want to target, where they tend to live online and what kind of content or messaging is relevant to them. You also want to consider the offer you are making, and how compelling it is. Make an offer that will encourage potential customers to engage with your message, not block it.



As a restaurant, your digital campaign should be developed at the national or regional level to build overall brand awareness, and thus funded through your marketing or advertising fund. Initiatives could include a contest, promotion, or the launch of a new product, possibly tied to a limited-time offer. The key is to create some urgency and excitement around your brand and product that fuels demand.

Yet there is one thing to keep in mind: digital marketing may reach people on social media, but it is not social marketing, if you follow us (and we don't mean on Twitter). Social media is another opportunity to reach people anytime, anywhere, and it has a lot to like about it. Literally. So with that in mind, let's take a closer look at it.

Social

What makes social media unique from other websites or internet content is that it is built on engagement, which means you can interact with users in ways that deepen your relationships with them. That alone distinguishes it from digital marketing, where the communication is one-way and intended to raise awareness. But the real benefit of interaction is that each relationship you develop

has the potential to create another fan who shares your posts, contests, and offers with their friends and followers worldwide, building your brand and your customer base. Given that many users have hundreds, even thousands, of online friends and followers, the return on investment can be significant.

That is not to say that there are not significant risks to launching a social media campaign. For one, social media is a busy and rapid-paced environment, meaning it is easy to get lost in the clutter as thousands of users and brands constantly are vying for attention. You need resources dedicated to the continual creation of new posts, as it is labor intensive, not to mention creatively challenging. There is also the risk that you can damage your brand with an opportunistic, ill-timed, or insensitive post in response to a trending topic (there are many, many examples of this).

Your social media presence also gives users an opportunity to share a negative experience about your brand on every post you make. You may think no one could have the time or energy to do that, but it's amazing what upset or disappointed people will do to let the world know they are not happy with you.

Online Advertising

Given that social media is very social, the most important thing to keep in mind is what and how you will communicate with users so that you engage them. Start by developing a strategy where you establish the types of promotions or messages you will post and then identify resources on your team who have the energy, creativity, and ability to continually upload your content. All posts should be relevant and appealing, focused on generating results but without being aggressive or reeking of marketing. Think contests, discounts, or free item offers that encourage users to share your content. Track the reactions and shares to further refine your marketing efforts.

By and large, digital and social are options you have full control over when it comes to online advertising. But the internet is a mighty vast place, populated by a plethora of sites where people congregate and comment on things, including your restaurant. Quite often you have no control over that chatter, but that does not mean you can shrug it off or ignore it. That means investing more time and effort in your online strategy and activities to be part of that conversation so you do not get swallowed up by negative commentary. That means monitoring third-party review sites.

You should also determine how you and your team will interact with users. Each post has the potential to draw responses, both positive and negative, and you will need to monitor and respond to these comments in a timely manner. It is crucial to keep any interaction friendly, genuine, and helpful regardless of what people post, even if it is mainly four-letter words or variants of them. Remember, each post, and every interaction, is an opportunity to shape opinions about your restaurant. The right approach will go a long way toward establishing a network of influencers, or brand ambassadors, who will not only share your posts with family and friends but also come to your defense when people get angry at you. If no one comes to your defense, it's a pretty clear sign that your social media strategy could use some work.

“Given that social media is very social, the most important thing to keep in mind is what and how you will communicate with users so that you engage them.”



Unlike digital, social allows for a more hyper-local approach to marketing, enabling each local restaurant to break through the clutter and deliver something relevant to consumers in their community. For one, local restaurants can push promotions and offers that reach users at the right place and time, mainly when they are looking for something to alleviate hunger. They can also customize offers based on local preferences and tastes. And they can reach out and engage people in the community who are talking about the type of cuisine you offer, often with a more personal touch.

Third-Party Review Websites

Somewhere out there, someone is telling their friends about you and your restaurant. Not just one-to-one, but on third-party sites such as Facebook, Yelp, OpenTable, or Google Reviews. It could be a glowing review, but more than likely it is not, as people who have had a negative experience are more highly motivated to be vocal about it than those who had a great experience. And they will look for every opportunity to do that, particularly online, because the internet has made it easier for them to voice their unhappiness

than ever before (thanks, internet).

It may seem futile to try and manage your online reputation, given the sheer number of third-party review sites out there and their considerable popularity. However, it is possible. It will just take considerable effort, not to mention engaging with some people who are really not happy with you. But if you ignore their criticism in favor of those who like you, that can cause further damage to your brand.

That does not mean ignoring those who are happy to focus on the unhappy, because then the happy become unhappy and then no one is happy. But if you take the good with the bad, you have more than the start of a TV show theme song: you have an opportunity to gain invaluable insights about your restaurant and your customers that you can use to change negative perceptions and preserve positive customer relationships.

As with any online marketing or engagement, you want to have a strategy for how to handle third-party reviews in place before you start replying to them (big hint: being courteous is more effective than name-calling or using words that are typically reserved for



basic or premium cable TV shows). The aim should be to provide a timely reply to any and all messages, and demonstrating genuine appreciation for feedback regardless of whether it is good or bad. If it is bad, such as a complaint about an order or a concern about service, offer an apology and detail what you will do to make changes that will improve the customer's experience for their next visit. You may even want to offer a discount or free item to the individual as a good faith measure. After all, every negative review or comment is an opportunity to make a lifelong fan, and if you can do that, you may have a future with the United Nations.

Still, depending on the nature of the complaint, or how the customer reacts to your initial response, there may be times where you might want to take the conversation offline relatively quickly to minimize brand damage. Keep in mind that others may see this as an indication that you have something to hide. This is, after all, a social medium. People appreciate honesty and transparency from the brands they know and trust. By keeping the conversation online, or even communicating the outcome of a discussion you took offline, you demonstrate to one and all your commitment to providing the best food and service possible.

In some cases, there is no way to win with an unhappy customer. Not everyone will be willing to let a complaint go, for example. There may be instances where they will falsify or exaggerate an issue for attention, to humiliate you, or just to get a free menu item. You may need to provide evidence that the reviewer has not been truthful. In some cases, particularly Yelp, it may be best to let a falsified review stand without a reply and let subsequent positive reviews minimize its impact and prominence. The key is to know when you cannot win, and have a strategy for that too.

But here's the thing: if you do a good job building your community through your digital advertising, social media outreach, and third-party strategies, your loyal customers will come to your defense online, and that may be the most effective way to neutralize negative comments or falsified complaints. After all, you are in business to feed the people, not the trolls.

“The aim should be to provide a timely reply to any and all messages, and demonstrating genuine appreciation for feedback regardless of whether it is good or bad.”

Email Marketing

EMAIL IS AN IMPORTANT MARKETING CHANNEL FOR YOUR FRANCHISE RESTAURANT, ENABLING YOU TO COMMUNICATE WITH CUSTOMERS AND SEND EXCLUSIVE OFFERS.

When you think of email, you probably think of your inbox filled with messages you have yet to open, or spam imploring you to help someone recover a fortune. But email can be an important marketing channel for your franchise restaurant, enabling you to communicate with customers and tempt them with exclusive offers. The trick is to get them to open that message and prevent it from going into the spam filter.

Yes, it may seem counterintuitive to invest in a medium that experts have predicted as dying, but then experts have been predicting the paperless office for years, and that has not happened. Still, with so many marketing and communication channels available, and growing in popularity, you may wonder what value email has for you. The answer is quite a lot.

Not only is email marketing almost as dynamic than texting, and more customizable to a degree than a social media campaign, it also has proven to be more effective in engaging and motivating customers to dine out. According to McKinsey⁷, email campaigns are 40 times more effective in garnering new customers than Facebook and Twitter combined (so much for followers and

friends). Meanwhile, data from DMA suggests that the return on investment for an email marketing campaign is \$38 for every dollar spent⁸, with one in five companies realizing a return ratio of approximately 70 to one. There are other benefits too, such as coupon security and the ability to track open rates and click throughs, making it possible to further refine your marketing efforts. As a result, it is no wonder that many restaurants are still rather attached — pardon the pun—to email. Before you start sending off emails to customers talking up your menu, you should know that these campaigns are tricky to execute well. For one, the sheer volume of emails sent and received by people and companies each day means your message could easily be lost in the deluge.

For another, users are not very quick to open email, taking 90 minutes to read a message, as opposed to the average three minutes or fewer they take to read a text, making it ill-suited for time-sensitive offers. And those spam filters that protect you from scams and junk? They can flag your email as spam too, meaning all the delicious goodness you baked in it will go unopened.



As with all marketing campaigns, you want to approach your email endeavors with strategy—building a list and working out the content and frequency of emails so your messages are read, not deleted. Consider the following:

BUILDING AN EMAIL DATABASE



This is important. You want your emails to land in the inbox of people who are motivated to read them. Plus you avoid running afoul of the CAN-SPAM Act and some nasty fines if you have informed consent. The good news is you have several options for promoting your email club, including your website, in-store signage, receipts, staff, and joint promotions with other businesses.

SEGMENT YOUR DATABASE



One way to personalize email offers is to group customers based on what you know about them. It could be their age, their zip code, or information you have gathered about their menu or booking preferences. Regardless, the data you have will help you target audiences with more relevant offers and news about your menu or events.

DEVELOP ENTICING EMAIL MESSAGES



This will take a while to master, so consider the following:

The Subject is Key — A subject line that is exciting and personalized, so the customer feels as though you are making an exclusive offer just for them. Using the word 'you' is one way to do that. You also should keep the subject line short and to the point, but not so short it reads like spam or lacks a compelling reason to open the email. Reveal something about one of your most popular dishes. Promote an event. Give customers an opportunity to sample a new entrée before it is added to the menu. Make that subject too good to resist.

Enticing News or Offers —Have you hired a new chef? Introduced a new signature dish? Are you planning a special event, such as a festive holiday menu? A well-timed and persuasive email can get the word out and create excitement such that customers click through for more information, or make a reservation.

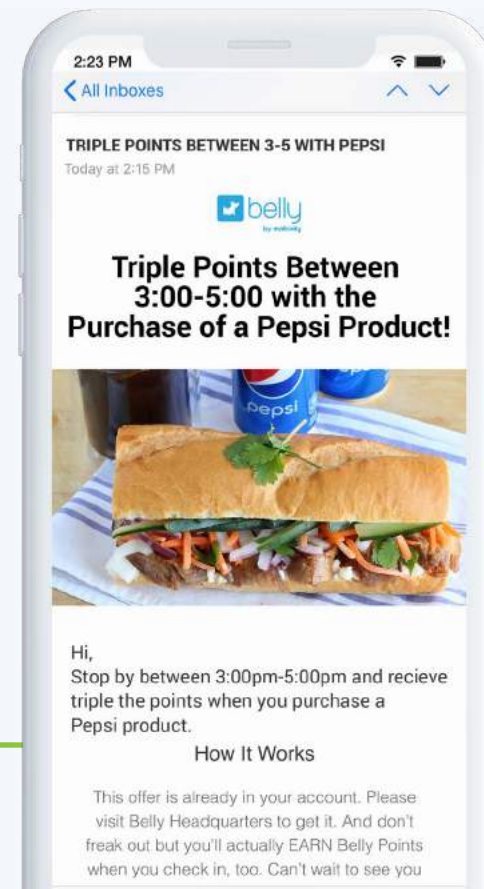


Think Visual — There is a reason why they say a picture is worth a thousand words. A beautifully shot photo of a new dish is more tempting than any sentence could ever be (sorry, writers). So show off that sub sandwich and be brazen with that burger. They will get the message.

Make a Special Offer — Everyone has birthdays, even those who hate to admit it. And everyone loves to feel special on their birthday. What could be more personal than an email wishing someone a happy birthday with a free item from your menu? It also works for other special occasions, like wedding anniversaries, so long as they are still married. If not, it could get awkward.

Optimization for Smart phones — a significant percentage of emails are opened using mobile devices, so you want to ensure anyone can view your email anytime, anywhere.

With each email you send, you gather more information on your customers and their preferences—important metrics that will help you refine offers and announcements based on individual or key demographics. You can also measure your return on investment, enabling you to finesse your messaging to realize better results. All that using email, and all the more reason to work up an offer they cannot resist, or delete.



What's Next? »

SEND PERSONALIZED MESSAGES AND WELL-TIMED OFFERS, ENGAGE POTENTIAL AND CURRENT FANS, AND GATHER INVALUABLE DATA FOR ENHANCING THOSE INTERACTIONS.

As you can see, digital marketing offers considerable potential for your restaurant. You can send personalized messages and well-timed offers, engage potential and current fans, and gather invaluable data for enhancing those interactions as you refine your marketing efforts. That's something you cannot do with any other marketing medium. Well, not as easily or precisely.

Other restaurant owners have realized this, and they are adopting digital marketing tactics and tools as you read this, all to take a bite out of your market share. The more competitors that make the move into this brave new world, the harder it is for you to compete, which means the sooner you get started, the better.

It may seem simple enough to do – launch a Twitter account, start messaging customers, and the like. But this is not something you can hand off to, say, a daughter or a friend who has built up a following of a few thousand people online. Like all of your marketing efforts, you need to be strategic, and you need to ensure your campaigns are not only built around the key strengths of your industry and your specific product offerings but also – and we cannot stress this enough – are not spam and do not violate

any laws about how you can communicate with fans online or via their phones. Like, seriously, don't do that.

So how do you get started on a digital marketing campaign that makes good use of existing and emerging platforms, reflects your brand strengths, meets all regulations, incorporates best practices, and gets results? You were probably expecting this, but it just so happens we can help. Mobivity works with restaurant marketing organizations to drive traffic and increase revenue. Backed by data science and machine learning, our Recurrency suite of products and services support their strategy of increasing customer frequency, spending, and engagement, to grow comparable sales and transactions, year-over-year. With our expertise and proven customer engagement solutions powering your marketing efforts, your competition won't be gobbling up market share, they will be eating their hearts out.

Visit mobivity.com for more information.

About Mobivity

Brick and mortar stores struggle to manage customer connections in a digital world. Mobivity provides a platform to connect national restaurants, retailers, personal care brands, and their partners with customers to increase retention, visits, and spend. Mobivity's Recurrency suite of products increases customer engagement and frequency by capturing details POS transaction records, analyzing customer habits, and motivating customers and employees through data-driven messaging applications and rewards.

SOURCES

- 1 –"App abandonment is on the rise as consumers stick to the apps they know" – TechCrunch – <https://techcrunch.com/2016/11/18/app-abandonment-is-on-the-rise-as-consumers-stick-to-the-apps-they-know/>
- 2 –"2 Target Markets for Restaurants" – QSR Magazine – <https://www.qsrmagazine.com/denise-lee-yohn/2-target-markets-restaurants>
- 3 –"Cell Phone Activities 2013" – Pew Research – <http://www.pewinternet.org/2013/09/19/cell-phone-activities-2013/>
- 4 –"U.S. Smart phone Use in 2015" – Pew Research – <http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/04/01/us-smartphone-use-in-2015/>
- 5 –"Conversational Advertising" – Pew Research – <http://www.pewinternet.org/2013/09/19/cell-phone-activities-2013/>
- 6 –"Ruling has Major Impact on TCPA and Mobile Marketing" – Mobivity Blog – <https://mobivity.com/2016/07/ruling-major-impact-tcpa-mobile-marketing/>
- 7 –"Why marketers should keep sending you e-mails" – McKinsey & Company – <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/marketing-and-sales/our-insights/why-marketers-should-keep-sending-you-emails>
- 8 –"DMA National Client Email Report 2015" – emailmonday – <http://www.emailmonday.com/dma-national-client-email-report-2015>



Operating in Over 36,000 Locations



Over 17 Million Unique Consumers



Billions of Transactions Processed



International Office Presence