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## ROLE OF VERNACULAR LANGUAGES IN DIGITAL MARKETING

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### **Abstract**

Digital marketing also known as online marketing is a marketing component that uses the internet and online based digital technologies such as computers, laptops, smart phones and other digital media and platforms to promote products, services, concepts and brands. Though, it is founded during 1990s and 2000 it has become glorious in the era of 2020 when the world is struck with the inevitable pandemic. We are forced to remain at our places and resume our work using online platforms. In the field of digital marketing this pandemic provides many opportunities as there is increase in the numbers of social media users who are the potential buyers for them. To connect with these buyers they employ many strategies and using vernacular language is one of them. In the present paper the researcher is trying to evaluate the role of vernacular language in digital marketing and how English is replaced by vernacular language.

**Keywords:** Digital marketing, vernacular language, advertisement, lingua franca, etc.

### **Introduction:**

Digital marketing also known as online marketing is a marketing component that uses the internet and online based digital technologies such as computers, laptops, smart phones and other digital media and platforms to promote products, services, concepts and brands. It is nothing else but old wine in a new bottle. This is all about advertisement using latest means of communication. Though, it is founded during 1990s and 2000 it has been at the peak in the era of 2020 when the world is struck with the inevitable pandemic. We are forced to remain at our places and resume our work using online platforms. In the field of digital marketing this pandemic provides many opportunities as there is increase in the numbers of social media users who are the potential buyers for them. To connect with these buyers they employ many strategies and using vernacular language is one of them.

**Digital Marketing:**

Digital or online marketing is an umbrella term comprising various types of marketing of products, services and concepts using internet. It is often referred as 'web marketing' or 'online marketing'. Gheorghe Minculete and Polixenia Olar quoted Kotler's definition of digital marketing, in their paper '*Approaches to the Modern concept of Digital Marketing*' as, "Digital marketing as a concept highlights a set of profile processes that embrace all the digital channels available to promote a product or services, or to build a digital brand".(1) It includes various facets as search Engine Marketing, Social Media Marketing, Content Marketing, E-mail Marketing, Mobile Marketing etc. This type of marketing creates opportunities for companies to expand their business by recognizing and understanding customer requirements. The future of this sector is lavishing. According to the survey of statista.com the digital marketing Industry across India had a market size of around 199 Billion Indian Rupees in the financial year 2020, up from just 47 Billion Indian Rupees in Financial Year 2015. This was projected to go up to around 539 Billion Indian Rupees by financial year 2024.(2)

**Importance of vernacular language:**

English is a lingua franca as it is spoken by large population throughout the world and it has gained a status of office language in India. Nonetheless, there are non-English speakers who are the target audience of digital marketers for whom they create content in vernacular languages. Vernacular language refers to a language spoken by people inhabiting in a particular region or area. It is known as native, regional or local language. In India, where we find various regional languages and dialects that represent particular state, the task of digital marketers becomes complex. At initial stage English is the only language used for social media marketing. But it is spoken mostly in the metro cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Calcutta, Chennai, Bangalore etc. so they use vernacular languages to appeal to the masses for increase in their sale. The importance of vernacular languages in promoting brands is accentuated by Priyanka Singh in

her blog “Why Brands are Harnessing the Power of Vernacular Content Marketing?” where she put forth following facts:

1. According to statista.com, the 77% of the internet users in 2020 were from the lower tiers of India.
2. As per BBC, only 10% of the Indian population speaks English.
3. According to Financial Express, 90% of internet users in India prefer to consume content in their local language.
4. According a report prepared by Kantar, rural India had more active internet users -264 million by May 2020, more than urban India’s 210 million.
5. As per Google India, 9 out of 10 new internet users in the country are consuming online content in Indian languages.(3)

The above data exemplifies the need of using vernacular languages. As the numbers of internet users are increasing in rural area digital marketers should outreach regional languages rather than stick to English only. If we want to connect to the people we should use the language that appeals them emotionally and people feel more comfortable in their mother tongue. Sapna Chadha, Senior Director of Marketing for SEA & India, Google, explains in one of her interviews about how vernacular languages are taking lead on Youtube. With over 500 million Indians online now and with time spent online only going up, we are seeing a preference for choosing to consume in local language and there is no better place than Youtube to do this. We’re inspired by how advertisers are leaning into this and choosing a local language over English today.(4) She gives clear indications that people are demanding contents as well as advertisements in their language. If this continues for a long period English language will be definitely replaced by local languages. She also hints that India’s digital transformation will be incomplete if English proficiency becomes a hurdle.

Language is the powerful medium of communication which can attract the target customers when the message is disseminated effectively but if it fails to do so the customers will turn away from the product or services offered. When we use second language for promoting our products or services there is a possibility that the message is being misinterpreted or fails to convey desired meaning. This

risk can be reduced by using regional or vernacular language. In this regard Caroline Greyling, a research student, states:

Research has established that consumers' level of language identification and language understanding influences brand perception (Puntoni, et al, 2009). For many bilingual and multilingual speakers, it may seem obvious that, one's native language possesses emotional qualities that secondary or tertiary languages do not (Puntoni, et al, 2009).(5)

Keeping in the view this risk many companies are campaigning their advertisements in regional or vernacular languages. Social platforms like Facebook and Google have already started using regional languages to connect more people. Companies like Amazon, WhatsApp, and Lufthansa, to name few, offers digital advertisements in regional languages to take their sales graph upward. It is interesting to note that Lufthansa has witnessed 30% passenger growth in India by merely promoting their advertisement in Hindi language and creating a microsite in native languages. Amazon also launches the advertisement related to *silbatta* in Hindi language which is appealing and expressive because we do not have perfect substitute words in English language for the objects we need in our daily routine. This problem is evoked by the digital marketers to introduce their Hindi version of the App. WhatsApp is the next example who welcomes the change by allowing customers to change their language within the App, the respond of the customers to this move is overwhelming. Approximately 200 million monthly users change their language. These examples indicate the increasing demand of vernacular content in the field of digital marketing.

### **Conclusion:**

Thus, we can say that to overcome the language barriers digital marketers use vernacular languages. They promote their products, services, concepts and brands in regional language to consume local market. Over a period of time the English language is replaced by vernacular language to meet the needs of customers. Marketers have realized that people prefer to purchase products and services which are introduced in their regional languages because they believe

such products are more trustworthy. In this way vernacular language is becoming influential in digital marketing.

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