

Cooperative Education Report

A STUDY ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF DIGITAL MARKETING FOR SME'S IN NEPAL

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This Report Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Cooperative Education, Faculty of Business Administration

Academic Semester 2/2017 Siam University Title A Study on the effectiveness of the digital marketing for SME's in Nepal Written by Mr. Rasin Khadka

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Project Title: A study on the effectiveness of the digital marketing for SME's in Nepal.

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Degree : Bachelor of Major : Marketing

Faculty : Business Administration

Semester / Academic year : 1/2018

Abstract

This document is the report of the internship conducted at Proxy Infotech Solutions Pvt. Ltd, a creative agency in a startup phase aiming to compete against the top notch advertising agencies of the country in the next two years. The internship conducted at Proxy Infotech Solutions Pvt. Ltd. at the Marketing Department was mainly focused on working with the effective and efficient marketing of the Small and Medium Enterprises of Nepal. As a marketing intern I was assigned to activities such as providing support for the sales and marketing team, assisting marketing and sales support to maintain client-agency relationship, planning events with an emphasis on outbound marketing communications, creating analytics research and reports, collaborating with marketing to create new ideas for campaigns related to SME Marketing Package and also to support lead generation efforts, collecting quantitative and qualitative data from marketing campaigns, preparing promotional presentations, assisting with content writing for the website, blog, & social media, providing support to social media efforts, assisting with Press Release distribution and supporting the marketing team in daily administrative tasks. This research aims to understand how Small and Medium Enterprises can use the digital platform to create brand awareness, position their brand message, retain customers and integrate their other marketing activities with the digital media and how big advertisers can, use the medium of Events to market their campaigns successfully in an efficient way.

Keywords: Small and Medium Enterprises/Client-Agency Relationship/Outbound Marketing Communications/ Lead Generations/ Content/Press Release/Brand/Digital/Events

Acknowledgement

"Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much" (Nelson Mandela, n.d.). So this report would never have been completed without the effort of my teachers and friends, so I want to thank all of them.

I wish to extend my sincere thanks Proxy Infotech Solutions Pvt. Ltd. for providing me the opportunity for an internship at Marketing Department during 14 February - 15 May 2018. This project has been successfully completed with satisfaction and memorable experiences.

A big salute to the supervisors of Proxy Infotech Solutions (P) Ltd for supporting me on the every aspects during my internship. I would like to thank my Job Supervisor Mr. Brabim Bikram Thapa for guiding me to complete my internship successfully and teaching me the core of the advertising industry. I want to thank the management of Kathmandu College of Management and SIAM University for giving students an opportunity for co-operative education. I would like to express my special gratitude to my Internship Facilitator, Mr. Chanatip Suskai and my Academic Advisor, Mr. Yutthana Srisavat for guiding me to complete this report.

Rasin Khadka

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Chapter1: Introduction

1.1 Company Profile

Proxy Infotech Solutions (P) Ltd. is a creative agency in a startup phase aiming to compete against the top notch advertising agencies of the country in the next two years. Proxy Infotech is driven by its four core beliefs i.e. research, strategy, design and technology in that order so that they can help brands communicate with their target market efficiently and effectively. Proxy Infotech works for the clients like Air Asia, Ford, Yeti Brewery, Aussiz Group, Jay SB Metal Industries, Meroauto.com, Precast Tiles Industries, Automotives Pvt. Ltd and Radio Kathmandu. Proxy Infotech also provides advertising and communication solutions to Small and Medium Enterprises. Proxy Infotech works with more than 10 SME clients. Proxy Infotech works on its three core areas i.e. Advertising, Information Technology and Event Management as its vertical.

1.2 Work Areas

Proxy Infotech has three core work areas i.e. Advertisement, Information technology, and Event Management. Being under this work areas, Proxy Infotech provides variety of services like Advertisement and Promotions, Brand Strategy and Identity, Re-Branding Strategy, Digital Marketing, Website Design and Development, Mobile Application Design and Development, Software Design and Development, and E-commerce Solutions to all scale of businesses in Nepal.

1.2.1 Advertisement

The advertising industry has changed dynamically over the few years in Nepal. It was more of just creating designs earlier and this trend is still dominant in lots of the advertising agency but Proxy Infotech Solutions Pvt. Ltd has initiated the concept to use Consumer Decision Making Process as its strong tool to create marketing campaigns for products by understanding how the consumer makes decision at the various steps and launching a campaign to trigger the need in every of the consumer decision making process.

1.2.2 Information Technology

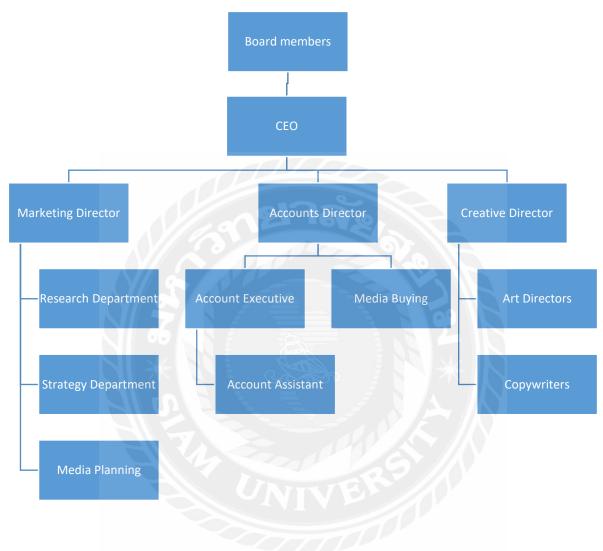
Information Technology has innovatively changed the business processes and helped businesses to scale their operations worldwide. Unlike the other developed countries, the internet penetration rate is growing rapidly in Nepal which is why in order to get digital visibility even SME's are focusing on having a presence in both website and mobile applications. Even for these needs, Proxy Infotech has developed the SME Website Development Package. Whereas it is also providing custom-tailored financial software developed for Cooperative Financial Institution of Nepal.

1.2.3 Event Management

Events are the powerful tools to engage with the customers in an effective and efficient manner. Proxy Infotech Solutions Pvt. Ltd hereby retains the services of Event Management Agency to plan, organize, manage and host events for its clients in such a way that they can get quick results and boost their marketing campaigns. Proxy Infotech also helps brands during product launches, trade fairs and sponsorship to match the brand's need and fulfill the objective of the company.

1.3 Organizational Structure

The organizational structure of Proxy Infotech Solutions (P) Ltd is top-down approach headed by Board of Directors (BOD) that comprises of directors. The overall organization structure of the company is shown in the table below:



1.4 Statement of the report

Marketing has become a dynamic principle in the recent years. The scientific techniques, appropriate media's, trending strategy and integrated medium are chosen by companies so that the marketing actions can be more accurate and scientific. In the western economies, not only the blue chip but also the small enterprises are much focusing on these criteria for effective marketing but in Nepal, advertising is still on the traditional form.

Small and Medium Enterprises are still hesitant about marketing and branding as there is not much concern and knowledge about marketing among these business owners. In Nepal, as many advertising agency are still adopting traditional work practice focusing mainly on the traditional media. Since traditional media's are expensive and their results are ineffective, many SME's are marketing themselves on the social media. But the problem is that Social Media Marketing is only driven by boosting but there are no tactics used to engage customers on the social media by generating better contents.

This research attempts to understand how Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SME's) can effectively use digital media's to communicate their marketing messages efficiently. This study also tries to identify how SME's can integrate their other marketing activities with the digital platform.

1.5 Objectives of the study

This report deals with the study conducted in the Proxy Infotech Solutions (P) Ltd, as one of the advertising agency in a startup phase focusing on the practicality of the core marketing theories in the context of Nepal to help brands communicate properly. Having being assigned to gather work experience regarding digital marketing and events, and being the face of the advertising services in general, had to be guided by certain objectives. The objectives, which had to adhere to the overall objectives of the agency and that of the study, which are listed below:

- To observe the operational functioning of an advertising agency.
- To learn the work culture and environment of an advertising agency.
- To learn about the various advertising products and services.
- To study the impact of digital marketing for Small and Medium Scale enterprises.
- To study about how events can help to position brand message in the minds of the customers.
- To understand strategies to maintain client-agency relationships.

1.6 Expected Outcomes

This research aims to understand how Small and Medium Enterprises can use the digital platform to create brand awareness, position their brand message, retain customers and integrate their other marketing activities with the digital media.

1.7 Limitation of the Study

In spite of the support provided by the agency and the staffs during my internship period to make the work environment conducive, the interns had to face various difficulties during the internship period. The level of warmth and support shown by the supervisor and employees was overwhelming. However, due to various unavoidable constraints, the report could not do complete justice to the study and the few of the limitations faced during the internship period are listed below:

- **Time constraint**: The time frame of the internship program was not adequate for learning such complex advertising system and the functioning in depth.
- **Material constraint:** After the discussion with staffs and the limited access to the information provided by the agency, it is difficult to illustrate the advertising activities and the organizational behavior to the full extent.
- Agency policy for intern: The agency restricts the amount of information and the level of complex work assigned to its interns owing to the confidentiality and competency issues, due to which the interns are confined to do only observation and assist their supervisors.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Digital Marketing has been the most efficient and effective form of marketing in the recent years. The marketing of products or services using digital channels to reach consumers. The key objective is to promote brands through various forms of digital media. (Lexicon, n.d.) In today's digitalized world, people spent much more time on the digital platform than on any other media which has created a lots of opportunities for marketers and brands to pass their message to the targeted audience. In comparison with the traditional media forms, digital marketing is considered to be safer as the marketers can know the boundaries of their campaign even before the campaign is rolled out in the market. If we use strategies such as Consumer Decision Making Process, Digital Optimization Theories, and Information Gap Theory brands can effectively position and communicate with their target audience in the digital media.

2.2 Theoretical Review

The study was based on the theories below:

2.2.1 Consumer Decision Making Process:

Some consumers make buying decision fast whereas some may need to access and filter lots of information to make a buying decision. There are various stages in the consumer decision making process. The model's psychological field consists of the internal influences (motivation, perception, learning, personality, and attitudes) that affect consumer's decision-making processes (what they need or want, their awareness of various product choices, their information-gathering activities, and their evaluation of alternatives) (Schiffman).

The various stages in customer decision making process are as:

- 1. Need Recognition: This is the first process in the customer decision making process. At first, the customers are triggered by the need or desire to buy the product. Need is aroused when a customer faces a problem.
- 2. Information Search: After the need is aroused, then the customer search for the information required to solve his problem. For eg if he wants to buy a car then he collects information through various auto portals, facebook pages and brands websites to find the car to solve his problem. If the customer had purchased a car earlier then he recalls the previous purchase but if he is purchasing a car for the first time then he gets involved in the extensive search and the decision making process will be slow. Digital platforms like
- 3. Evaluation of alternatives: After searching the information, he then sort out alternatives he can go with to solve his problem. At this stage he may message the brands on social media to get more information, consult with his focus group regarding the alternatives, mail the dealer to request more information and consult on various online forums and communities.
- 4. Purchase: He will evaluate the best alternatives. As per the theory, the alternative which seems to be less risky for him, the customers will go with the same product.
- 5. Post Purchase behavior: After the purchase of the product, the customer might share his user experience on social media, rate and review the services, join the product's community pages based on his experience. The customers too analyzes various customer service factors at this stage.

2.2.2 Digital Optimization Theories

Every brands wants to be first and their marketing team work day and night to mark their brand's name first on their brains. Not only on their brains but also on their social media pages and search engine sites due to which we have seen a huge efforts by marketers on optimization technique in the last decade. Search Engine Optimization is one of the theories to mark your brands name on the top list on the search engine sites. Search engine optimization (SEO) is the practice of increasing the quantity and quality of traffic to your website through organic search engine results. (moz.com, n.d.) There are two techniques to optimize on search engine i.e. Organic SEO and Paid SEO. Organic SEO is the technique to use better meta-data such as keywords, better contents, and timely updates to push traffic to the webpage through search results whereas Paid SEO is obtained by paying to the search engines to pull traffic to the website.



Chapter 3: Methodology

When I was assigned with the internship, I have used both primary and secondary sources to collect the data to complete this report. For the preparation of this report various aspects of an advertising agency was explored. Different research methodologies were adopted in order to extract the required conclusion from different sources. It facilitates the research work and provides reliability and validity to it.

3.1 Roles and Responsibilities assigned by the company

As a marketing intern, my role is to help the marketing team on its daily activities. I am assigned under the marketing director of the company. Some of my roles and responsibilities assigned by the company are as:

- 1. Responsible for providing support for the sales and marketing team:
 - One of the major responsibility of my internship is to provide support for the sales and marketing team in their day to day activities. I would facilitate marketing department in various activities like data collection, data entry, printing documents.
- 2. Assist marketing and sales support to maintain client-agency relationship:

 Client-Agency relationship is very vital in the advertising industry. During my internship one of the major task was to set appointments with the clients, communicating them with the progress of the campaigns and creating minutes of the meetings with the clients.
- 3. Plan events with an emphasis on outbound marketing communications:
 As the student of the marketing, I had always considered Events as the efficient and effective medium to connect to the customers. I was assigned to the Marketing team of Ford Corporate Futsal and Meroauto Launch event. I was also involved in planning these events
- 4. Responsible for creating analytics research and reports:
 - Data plays an important role in the success of any marketing campaigns. If data's are used as appropriately then it can act as the strong weapon to make any campaign successful. During my internship, I would use various tools such as Alexa, Google Analytics, Facebook Insights to measure engagement and traffic of the brand's digital platforms. I would present the data collected in understandable format and communicate it with my supervisors.
- 5. Collaborate with marketing to create new ideas for campaigns related to SME Marketing Package and also to support lead generation efforts:

 As I was assigned to the marketing department, I was also responsible to generate leads for the SME Marketing Package by presenting the package benefits to the prospective targets. I was also involved in the process of idea generation regarding the content generation and creative designs for the advertisement of the SME's.
- **6. Collecting quantitative and qualitative data from marketing campaigns:**Data's are the soul of any marketing campaigns. I was responsible to collect data's through various primary and secondary sources. Since my major work area was on SME marketing, I used to collect data mostly through social listening.

7. Prepare promotional presentations:

During my internship period, I was involved in organizing two events. To pitch the event idea to the clients I was assigned to prepare promotional presentations.

8. Assist with content writing for the website, blog, & social media:

Contents are very crucial to deliver the brand message to the customers. Contents are referred as the king of digital marketing. Creative contents help brands to communicate properly with their customers. I was involved in the content creation for the website of Century Concrete Tiles P. Ltd and Abhinjali Suppliers P Ltd.

9. Provide support to social media efforts:

In order to organically grow the reach of the social media pages, the activities should be regularly monitored. During my internship at Proxy Infotech Solutions Pvt. Ltd, I was responsible to monitor the performances of the social media posts and report it to the supervisors.

10. Assist with Press Release distribution:

I was also responsible for the distribution of the press release of the assigned events, product launches and brand offers to the media houses.



Chapter4: Results and Discussions

The three months Internship period at Proxy Infotech Solutions P Ltd has been very much valuable and fruitful to gain the practical knowledge of the advertising sector of Nepal. Although this is a short span of time to learn about any sector of the organization, the experience gained during the period in one of the most important departments of the advertising agency, i.e. marketing which consisted of research, strategy and media planning departments has provided with in depth knowledge of the advertising industry and the technicalities of the job.

The study based on internship period and various tasks performed during the internship period in the agency are the basis for the report. I was faced with various challenges at the beginning during my internship as it was complex for me to understand how agency functions and how marketing campaigns are created.

One of my major core areas during my internship was to work along with the SME marketing and Event management. During my internship, I found that SME's in Nepal are focusing much on creating strong brand image and are on the verge of scaling their business to the national scale. In the context of Nepal, most of the SME's are managed by the business owners who does not have the good understanding of various brand essence due to which they are facing huge problems in creating strong brand touchpoints. Since huge portion of budget is spent if advertised in the traditional media and as the businesses are not familiar to the digital aspect of marketing, many SME's have not been able to communicate their brand message to their customers.

Big brands are much more focused on the uplifting their brand message through every possible marketing activities. Unlike SME's, these brands have strong marketing budget and a pool of competent marketing managers but as I observed during my internship they are also missing on some elements which would help them to communicate with their audience in much more effective and efficient way. During my internship, I found out that in the context of Nepal, Events can play a huge role to connect brands with their customers. As I was engaged in the marketing of the Ford Corporate Futsal, I understand how events can play a role to uplift the image of the brands.

4.1Contribution of the student made during the internship Content Creation

"Content is the backbone of any drive to interact with your readers or customers. It is the most important opportunity you have to impress the reader with your knowledge, expertise or ethos. The quicker publishers realize this, the quicker their websites take the place they expect in the industry of their choice." (Aharony, n.d.)

One of my duties was to help in creating contents of the SME's for their websites and social media. I was engaged in creating contents for the website of Abhinjali Suppliers and Century Concrete Tiles. The content for these websites were written as the description of the companies and their products & services.



Figure 1 Centrury Concrete Tiles Website Content

The contents were written by using keywords to facilitate better Search Engine Optimization. Some of the considerations I used to make to write contents for the website were:

- Better Keywords for efficient Search Engine Optimization
- Target Audience
- Professional Style of writing
- Objective of the content



Figure 2 Website Content Abhinjali Suppliers

Not only for websites, content is even important in the social media. "Content-based marketing gets repeated in social media and increases word-of-mouth mentions; it's the best way to gather buzz about a product." (Collier)

During my internship period, I found out that social media contents should be short, attention-grabbing and should hit to the particular target audience whereas website contents should be informative and descriptive. Social media contents should be powerful enough as they act as the backbone for any social media promotions by grabbing attentions. I found out that since there are huge number of promotions and brand messages on these social platform, users simply ignore the messages due to the overload of communications which is why attention grabbing contents are used in social media promotions.

Event Management

Event Management has been one of the most cost effective tool to generate long lasting impression and engagement with the customers. Brands are spending huge portion of their marketing budget in advertising but it is not enough to build a strong brand foundation. Some of the considerations I take during the planning of these events are as:

- 1. Determining the purpose of the event
- 2. Analyze the attendees profile
- 3. Analysis of the venue
- 4. Timing
- 5. In-house entertainment

During my internship at Proxy Infotech, I was involved in the organizing of Ford Corporate Futsal-2018. Ford is one of the biggest clients of Proxy Infotech Solutions P Ltd. Ford has organized this event with an objective to generate more than 50 test drives at the venue. At this sporting event, there were 20 big corporate houses of Nepal had participated. The participants includes Neco Insurance, Sanima Bank, Century Commercial Bank, Buddha Air, Global IME Bank, Nepal SBI Bank, IME Remittance, Soaltee Crown Plaza, Meridian Hospital, Chanakya Media Group, Hotel Annapurna, Nepal Investment Bank, Shangri~La Hotel, NIC Asia Bank, Mega Bank, NMB Bank, Arna Beer, Karobar Media, Hotel Crown Plaza and Sulux Center.



Figure 2 Ford Corporate Futsal

I was involved in proposing clients to participate in the Corporate Futsal, distributing press releases, preparing promotional presentations, supporting the creative team to generate graphics and advertisements.

During my internship at Proxy Infotech, I was also engaged in the organizing of launch program of Meroauto. Meroauto is the digital auto portal of Nepal launched by the group of the most successful auto journalists of Nepal.



Figure 3 Product Presentation during Meroauto Launch

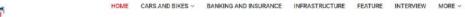
The launch event of Meroauto was organized in Hotel Shangri~La. I was responsible for choosing the venue, sending e-invitation to the guests, distributing press release and drawing the timeline of the event.

Website Wireframing

A website wireframe is a visual guide that represents the skeletal framework of a website, indicating where visual and UI components are located. (Techopedia, n.d.)

During my internship I was also involved in the wire framing of the EMI Calculator page for Meroauto. I was responsible for the selection of table layout, table colors and contents for that page. One of the major concerns I took while wire framing the EMI Calculator page was the uniformity of the designs and table layout with the other pages of the website.





EMI CALCULATION OF TATA ZEST XT DIESEL



Figure 4 EMI Wireframing of Meroauto

Brand Identity

Brand Identity is the first step towards creating a successful brand. I was also involved in the brand identity designs of Belna, a newly opened local restaurant. In order to design its logo, I was guided by the senior designer of the company.



Figure 5 Belna Logo

As a part of the internship, he taught me the insider work of logo designing and graphic designing. I was being assigned to design the logo using Adobe Illustrator and Adobe Photoshop.

Website Speed Optimization

Speed of the website is the crucial factor to reduce conversions and give a pleasant experience to the viewers of the website.

After the launch of Meroauto, in order to score 80 above points in the Google Page Speed, I was assigned to reduce the image size while not deteriorating quality so that the website speed will be further optimized. I used Adobe Photoshop to reduce the various image and vector size of the website to increase the speed of the website.



-world performance of this page was unavailable. PageSpeed Insights was still able to 5 find potential optimizations. Applying these optimizations may improve the speed of this tigate the recommendations below. Learn more.



Figure 6 Speed Optimization

4.2 Details of learning process and new knowledge student has received.

The three months internship period at Proxy Infotech Solutions P Ltd was productive and the working environment was so friendly that many technical as well as human aspects of the work were learned, which in fact was beyond expectations. The time spent at the agency is bound to have practical implication in the career building. Joining as a Marketing Intern, I was exposed to various marketing principles and the nuances of the Information Technology. Some of the lesson learnt during my internship are as:

• Application of the theoretical knowledge

The information and understanding developed during the study has a practical implication in the advertising as in the other areas of application. The marketing, advertising, computer application, concept of law, psychology, human resource management, organizational behavior, marketing communication, business communication, economics, statistics, operation management and many other theories were applied practically during my internship at Proxy Infotech Solutions P Ltd.

Social Exposure

Since being part of the organizing team of Ford Corporate Futsal-2018 and as the marketing intern, I had to deal with different kinds of customers. I had learnt interpersonal skills to make them satisfied and maintain harmonious relationship. Every customer had their own grievances and queries and important lessons were learnt in due process. Handling the different types of customers with a smile, had built my confidence and interpersonal communication skills.

• Understanding the work culture and work setting

The staffs of the agency were very helpful and cooperative to the customers and the interns as well. The interns get to learn the work environment and the professionalism within the period and get to solve the problems of the customers. The interns got an exposure to the work culture, which is the mix of practices and ideologies arising from the interactions of people with their work environments.

• Enhance communication skills

One gets to know to present self in front of the customers in such a way so that the customer feels satisfied in every aspect about their queries that had been presented, which develops the inter-personal communication skills. The regular interaction with the customers had helped a lot to develop the interpersonal communicating proficiency. Answering customer queries, handling of grievances and solving their problems in an effective manner and the cooperation with other members of the organization enhance the interaction skills.

• Advertising Principles

During my internship at Proxy Infotech Solutions Pvt. Ltd, I was exposed to various marketing campaigns of both big brands and SME client's. I was able to learn the basic practices during the creation of the advertisement. Majorly I learnt the steps, Proxy Infotech used to create an advertisement campaigns. At first the marketing team listen to the pitch of the client and transfer to the Research and Strategy executive to draft a creative brief based on the pitch, then the brief is approved by the marketing director of the company and he sends it to the creative department. Then the creative department sits on a small meeting to create a campaign based on the budget, strategy, objective, audience and media. Then the designer team creates certain creatives which is approved by the Creative director and passed

upon to Marketing and Account Director. Upon the approval of all the directors, the creative is sent to the client. Then the advertisement is rolled after the client's approval.



Chapter 5: Conclusion

The three months Internship period at Proxy Infotech Solutions P Ltd has been very much valuable and fruitful to gain the practical knowledge of the advertising sector of Nepal. This internship experience opened my eyes towards the advertising industry of Nepal. One of my major core areas during my internship was to work along with the SME marketing and Event management.

During my internship, I found that are SME's in Nepal focusing much on creating strong brand image and are on the verge of scaling their business to the national scale. Since huge portion of budget is spent if advertised in the traditional media and as the businesses are not familiar to the digital aspect of marketing, many SME's have not been able to communicate their brand message to their customers.

In my opinion, SME's in Nepal should allocate yearly advertising budget and spent it on the digital platform by generating better contents.

5.1 Self-Assessment as future professional

At the very beginning of my career, being the part of a progressive advertising agency as a marketing intern has helped me a lot to learn the nuances of the advertising industry. Being the student of Marketing, one of my major concerns during the internship period was to learn how the agencies apply the theoretical marketing concept in a practical way.

I have always aimed to work in an advertising industry of the country, so, due to this internship I have come one step closer to achieve my aim. I got a lot of opportunities to implement the theories of marketing like Consumer Behavior, Buyer Decision Making Process, Marketing Mix, Advertising, and Digital Marketing that I have learnt in my BBA undergraduate program.

During my internship, I have also been the part of various Events which has taught me the power of time management, rational thinking and crisis management which will help me in the future as a professional.

The start-up culture has recently began in Nepal so unlike my previous internships, I understood the work culture and thought process in a start-up which has again inspired and motivated me to start my own start-up serving the need of the certain market segments of the country.

Form such a fruitful internship program, I found various limitations and weaknesses in me which may affect my performance while working in some organization as the professional. One of the major weakness I see in my self is that lack of time management and work division.

5.2 Comparison of practical learning vs theory

Internship is the tool to bridge the gap between Theoretical and Practical Learning to develop the professionals. After the completion of three month internship at Proxy Infotech Solutions P Ltd, I have found the importance of both practical and theoretical learning even though they have lots of variations.

Theories taught in the classroom helps to develop the intellectual level of the students whereas practical learning develops the rational decision making process and critical thinking. Practical Learning prepares us to deal in the case of crisis and urgency whereas theoretical learning adds the strength while making decisions in the case of crisis and urgency.

During my internship at Proxy Infotech Solutions P Ltd, I got an opportunity to apply most of the theories learnt in the class and gained the practical experience aspects of the theory. Some of the theories that I practically implemented in my internship program that I learnt in the class are as:

- Principles of Marketing
- Digital Marketing
- English for Professionals
- Consumer Behavior
- Fundamentals of Statistics
- Integrated Marketing Communications

I have got a practical insights of these core subjects during my internship. In my opinion, one have to have profound basis of theories and he must play with those theories in a practical world to get effective and efficient results.

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