

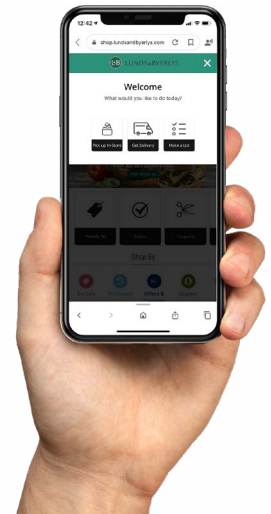


Demystifying Digital Marketing and E-Commerce for Food Businesses

In the current economy, an online presence is imperative for even the newest brands. Few consumers will see a brand as credible if they can't pick up their mobile device and quickly gain at least a little bit of knowledge about it. The obvious question for food entrepreneurs is "what does my brand need to look like online?" For some, it may be as simple as a website, while others may build a community or expand their influence through social channels, and yet others may want to grow their business selling their products online.

The importance of digital marketing and e-commerce has grown steadily over the past decade, but greatly accelerated due to the COVID pandemic of 2020. Whether in response to lockdowns, closures of favorite businesses, fear of in-person shopping or a host of other factors, consumers' shift to the digital world for information and purchases exploded. According to data from IBM's U.S. Retail Index, the pandemic has accelerated the shift away from physical stores to digital shopping by roughly five years.

Digital Habits Influenced by COVID-19



While these surges impact nearly all business segments, food and beverage businesses were uniquely impacted. Pandemic-driven restrictions forced restaurants to adopt pick-up and delivery options often backed by e-commerce platforms and to improve their online presence to stay visible and relevant to consumers. Meanwhile grocers dealt with consumers increasingly looking to alternative models to avoid in-person shopping as well as purchase items that have been hard to find in physical locations. According to Hartman Group, consumers spent 29% of their weekly grocery budget online in June/July 2020 compared to 10.5% for year 2019. And the longer pandemic-related restrictions remain in place, the deeper these new behaviors become entrenched with consumers.

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These changes are likely enduring as the desire for alternative models to traditional brick and mortar shopping such as curbside pick-up have grown.



There has been a clear shift in how consumers discover, experience and purchase food brands, whether new or ones they've long trusted. Navigating e-commerce and online marketing can be both intimidating and overwhelming for scaling food businesses. The following self-guided module seeks to demystify e-commerce and digital marketing for Minnesota's food businesses, providing both fundamental information and considerations for the scaling food business as they consider how to build their brand's online presence.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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Let's get started! Click the button below to move to the first section. You can also navigate through the guide using the menu on the left side of the page.

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