

Artificial Intelligence Enabled In-Video Advertising: Infiltrating The Fashion Industry

Uday Thareja, Ruchi Jain



Abstract: This paper focuses on the enormous impact of Artificial Intelligence technology for enabling the usage of In-Video Advertising as a part of the content marketing strategy for fashion brands. Every brand wants to reach consumers when they are prone to get influenced. However, as the consumers are spoilt for choices and the digital mediums are creating unique customer journeys with an individualistic approach. Hence, there exists a requirement of more engaging advertising approach, to catch the attention of the consumer and to enable discovery of brands at high moments of desire. Since this paper focuses on In-Video Advertising & Artificial Intelligence, thus an understanding of the building blocks of In-Video advertising calls to delve deeper in Artificial Intelligence and content marketing strategy. This paper discusses a unique opportunity for Fashion brands to use In-Video Advertising as a disruptive, efficient and engaging tool to reach consumers when they are in the best state to be influenced. This novel advertising option can benefit marketers in the fashion industry and can generate significant revenues.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, In video Advertising, content Marketing strategy, OTT, fashion industry

I. INTRODUCTION

Traditional marketing mindset focuses on a linear customer journey which starts from creating “awareness” of the product, then generates “interest” which leads to consideration for the product and finally a “purchase” is completed. Thus, marketers have used mass media effectively as the key driver to increase the reach and frequency, & user demographics to understand user intent for targeting and advertising. One of the core goals for marketing is to reach consumers at the moment that influences their decisions the most & at a time when they are paying maximum attention, thus making sure that they are affected by the message. In today’s era, every marketer has the complex task of understanding the consumer journey, and with various forms of digital expression (posts, likes, comment, tweets, search, videos, blogs) and across channels (mobile, web, face to face), this data is ever growing. But today’s digital & mobile

age has put the consumer in control, who now expect an immediate answer in the moments of desire & interest, hence, the consumer can go online to see reviews, prices, payment options (Dasgupta and Grover, 2019). Thus, due to these intent rich moments, the consumer purchase journey is changing from discovery to research to intent.

So, the advertisers need to look beyond funnel-inspired push marketing and invest in platforms which are contextual and aid brand discovery at high points of desire. In such a dynamic environment, Artificial Intelligence (AI) & Machine Learning (ML) gives an opportunity to advertisers in finding more effective ways to reach the consumer across the stages of the purchase cycle. Thus, a more sophisticated approach is required to help marketers navigate the current environment, which is less linear and possibly circular rather than a funnel. Content marketing is the solution as it is based on the fundamental principle of pull or attracting the consumer.

Content marketing is a marketing process of making and dispensing, appropriate and appreciated content to draw, obtain, and involve a defined target audience and drive profitability (Pulizzi, 2012). A more recent study describes Content marketing to be a strategic brand storytelling technique aimed at changing consumers interactive behavior through unobtrusive, engaging brand conversations in earned media (Du Plessis, 2015). This description is based on six elements i.e. medium, strategic, formation, intrinsic, communication and corollary.

This trend is rapidly penetrating in the Fashion industry of India. Here, fashion has become rooted in the cultural substrata, from where user preference flows. The Indian youth constitutes almost 60% of the population with a median age of 27 yrs. The Indian apparel industry is predicted to grow at a CAGR of 13% and should reach USD 124 billion by 2020 (Technopak.com 2019). This higher disposable income, heightened awareness and exposure is making our country a sought-after fashion destination, which has seen an influx of fashion brands both global/domestic, fighting to capture the consumers attention. Furthermore, most of the online fashion purchase today is led by the fact that a consumer has decided what they want to buy and only then do they search for the product, which leads to many brands not being discovered at this stage itself. AI can help in identification of upcoming trends quicker than any fashion industry insiders thus resulting in better process of designing (Milnes, 2018).

By using Artificial Intelligence led In-video advertising, fashion brands can reach out to users who have not yet decided which item is best matched to their needs.

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As the need is already provoked, this is the best time to influence the desire and plug the brand in their sub-conscious. The customer can be targeted by using native and hyperlocal advertising based on the content that they like to watch (Dasgupta & Grover, 2019).

Additionally, as the user is an engaged (opt in) consumer, an extended list of products from the brand catalogue can be showcased, it aids to deeper product discovery.

II. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES & METHODOLOGY

The number of AI led B2C articles published over last 2 decades was miniscule, however they have advocated the requirement of AI to be instrumental in capturing consumer needs and preferences accurately and conveniently (Giri, Jain, Zeng & Bruniaux, 2019). Artificial Intelligence was used to personalize the advertising efforts, which led to a better understanding of the product with the consumer (Even Deng, Tan, Wang & Pan, 2019).

Content marketing uses a series of communication techniques which make the content relevant & applicable to the target groups in daily life (du Plessi, 2016).

During a digital search by a user, sponsored (advertiser paid) and non-sponsored (most relevant results) are thrown up by the tool. An algorithm was suggested, which balanced the trade-off between the two and works on user utility more than only revenue maximization (Malthouse, Hessary, Vakeel, Burke & Fudurić, 2019).

As not too much academic work has been done in this field, the researcher attempts to explore the concept of In-Video Advertising as a valid content marketing strategy which works on the pull strategy with the consumer. The researcher further investigates the inclusion of Artificial Intelligence & Machine Learning in “In-Video Advertising” and its impact on the growing fashion industry of India.

This study adopts case study method as the Research Methodology. The data is collected from Primary sources mainly consisting of the Practitioners of In-video advertising like Zee5.com, Charmboard etc. The authors themselves are proficient in creating awareness about such a latest disruptive technology in marketing. Hence, their day to day observations and experiences have enriched the minimal information available in public domain pertaining to the subject to bring forth a wholistic concept in the paper. Personal interviews were conducted to understand the intricacies of the technology and its effect on the psyche of the consumer.

III. BUILDING BLOCKS OF IN VIDEO ADVERTISING

A. Artificial Intelligence & Machine Learning

To keep abreast with the changing corporate landscape, organizations are investing in Artificial intelligence (AI) & Machine learning (ML), to assist them in steering big data and understanding the value proposition in terms of speed, scalability and convenience. AI and ML help in analyzing complex data quicker thus enabling scale and increasing speed. Furthermore, these analytical tools are reliable and easy to use.

Artificial Intelligence is foreseen to have a direct impact on 30% of the digital commerce revenues and at least 60%

organizations will use Artificial Intelligence for their digital commerce by 2020 (Gartner.com 2019).

Artificial intelligence (AI) is described as a subfield of computer science which aims at developing computers which can do things that would be associated with people acting intelligently (Hammond, 2015). Machine learning (ML) is defined as an application of artificial intelligence (AI) that provides systems the ability to automatically learn and improve from experience without being explicitly programmed (Medium, 2018). This learning process can be across any industry, business or platform and includes information, reasoning and self-correction. Machine Learning (ML) is extremely supportive for advertisers in reaching the right target group at the appropriate moment and further understands the purchase journey across the digital and physical ecosystems.

Once AI and ML algorithms have traced the dynamic users browsing journey, a pattern emerges by connecting the dots. This pattern is used by organizations to show specific and targeted content of the user's choice. All this can help the organizations to get important user analysis and insights, by using a single window dashboard and the ML probability algorithm. This pool of patterns created across millions of users – ML predictive algorithms can create user sample sets which have similar interests and choices (Hammond, 2015). ML algorithms have been applied to the sea of digital information available and thus individual customer motivations can be deciphered and unearthed (Richardson, 2019).

A key building block for marketers to understand more about the user is **Image recognition technology** which decodes the image and videos the user sees / shares on social media, thus giving real consumer behavioral insights. Image recognition also plays on the interdependence between the consumer and the advertiser – the advertiser can contextually show their products against the details that the consumer wants to know more about (Kietzmann, Paschen and Treen, 2018). This gets extended to celebrities who are wearing or using the product which has been detected by Image recognition and a brand is shown contextually. AI & ML can assist in transforming an organizations existing product catalogue into an on-demand creative giving consumers more ways to interact with it and ensuring that brands always appear on the ideal content with the ideal context.

The characteristics of AI advertising as being data based & tool-based assist in generating customer insights, thus making it synchronized & highly efficient (Qin & Jiang, 2019).

B. Video Advertising for content marketing

India has seen a high surge of video content over the last couple of years as the internet has become our lifestyle. Video viewing has doubled in the last 2 years with more than 3.7 billion videos per month & 65% of the viewing is happening on smart phones. These Videos are changing digital marketing scenario as they offer viewer engagement with ease, makes a user more connected to brand and the brand can show the most relevant content to the user (Liao, Chen and Hsu, 2008).

With the smartphone penetration increasing and broadband becoming easily accessible – more eyeballs on mobile videos, thus, video is becoming the king of mobile media. These videos make an integral part of the content marketing strategy by a brand.

Moreover, videos are poised to transform and become more interactive with the user thus becoming hyper personalized, resulting in emergence of more meaningful analysis (Boman & Raijonkari, 2017).

Semantic matching approach has been used as a natural extension of search advertising to get optimal results in contextual advertising (Broder et al., 2007). To make advertising less intrusive, while advertising in online videos, a viable option by pin pointing ad insertion points based on content attractiveness has also been suggested (Tao Mei, Xian-Sheng Hua and Shipeng Li, 2009) and exploration of interactivity on digital media (Lee and Song, 2019).

Also, Consumer involvement effected Internet advertising for clothing, thus suggested that fashion brands need to choose their digital advertising type with great consideration (Ko and Bong Park, 2002).

C. In-Video advertising – The Integration

In-video advertising is a key element in the content marketing strategy of any brand as it focuses on pull strategy & expects the user to lean forward & touch on content, and in some cases lead to purchase. In-video advertising may be described as an opportunity to aid discovery for a brand's product, within contextual content and to an on-demand consumer in a non-intrusive environment.

In-video advertising essentially works within Interactive videos & can lead to product discovery across every stage of the purchasers buying cycle – right from browsing through options to evaluation of possibilities and finally at the point of purchase, thus having the potential to influence consumer behavior, while strengthening a two way conversation between the consumer and the brand This transition from a passive viewing experience to a lean in interactive viewing experience is extremely useful in providing enriching content, creating an interactive & engaging marketing experience (Callanan, 2018).

While marketers are increasing their digital spends, the issue of time shifted viewing & ad skipping haunts advertisers. The slowdown in economy is especially putting great pressure for accurate measurement of advertising return on investment (ROI). This is making organizations strive to adopt different strategies to make their message delivered effectively. Additionally, there is a larger viewer base in India and here lies a massive opportunity for consumer conversions, if this traffic is closer to point of sale. With a huge number of videos from OTT media services, Internet sharing & digital TVs, there is a need and opportunity for non-intrusive and engaging advertising options within videos. In-video advertising is a great solution for such an opportunity.

We have seen Artificial intelligence helping advertisers to scale their operation via content creation, by using chatbots & virtual assistants to improve customer feedback by refining the platforms to understand consumer intent (Schreuder, Schreuder and van Wyk, 201). Thus, without doubt, AI is having a significant impact on product search,

recommendation & categorization besides customer segmentation and (Gartner.com, 2017).

OTT media services are video streaming services offered over the internet without any traditional platform like cable, satellite or other controllers. Today the biggest OTT players (domestic & international alike) like Amazon, Netflix, Zee5 are suggesting content to the viewer that they might like, besides various social media sites are using AI- paired consumer data with their profile information to show relevant content.

The power of Artificial Intelligence has been leveraged to get instant feedback on various products that users desire, like the use of google lens to give last mile connectivity between a product that a user likes & clicks from their phone to buying it there and then from a digital platform whet it is available at (Mageean, 2019). Furthermore, Google has been using and introducing AI algorithms which can provide more accurate search results for users and marketer's alike.

IV. MODUS OPERANDI: IN – VIDEO ADVERTISING

A. The Users perspective

In-video advertising is currently working on an established OTT player Zee5 where in users can interact with the content across all catch up TV content & on an in-video discovery platform namely charmboard. While viewing the desired content on these platforms, the user is shown a non-intrusive prompt which educates them to touch or click on the celebrity looks that they like. On doing so, the user saves that look as a bookmark/ wishlist, on the right corner of the screen, which keeps adding all the looks that the customer clicks on.

There is no pausing or video disruption whatsoever. Once the user has enjoyed the video experience and wants to get augmented information about the looks that they have shortlisted, a simple click on the bookmark / wishlist, decodes all the similar product options that the celebrity is wearing. From there on the consumer can either purchase or perform a desired action on the product. This gives complete control of instant fulfilment with the consumer. The Process can be mapped in figure 1.

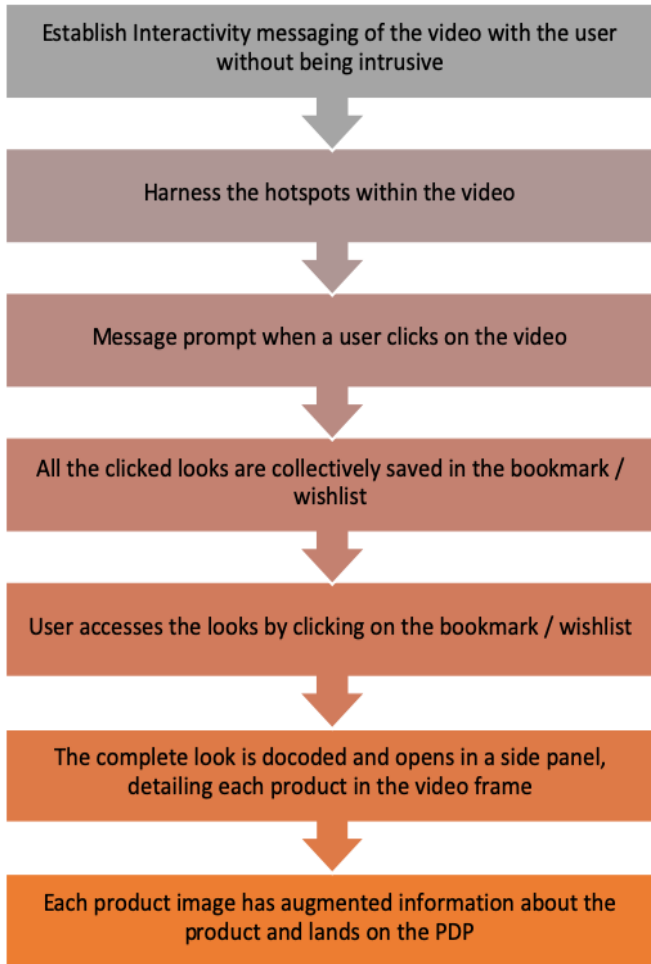


Fig 1: Process of In-Video advertising (Users Perspective)

B. The Advertisers perspective

Once a consumer is engaged in watching the video and has understood the interactivity within the content, they will click or touch the content willingly (when they have seen a look which they are curious about). At this instant, the user is attentive & open to any messaging and thus an engaged customer.

At this very moment, the algorithm scans for the closest match & showcases the advertiser's product with the requisite specs & details. As the customer has opted in to see the product details, they are attentive, participative and involved, there is an optimal chance of an action being performed besides a higher opportunity of the consumer remembering & recalling the brand (all this without compromising on the user experience) as shown below, in the figure 2.

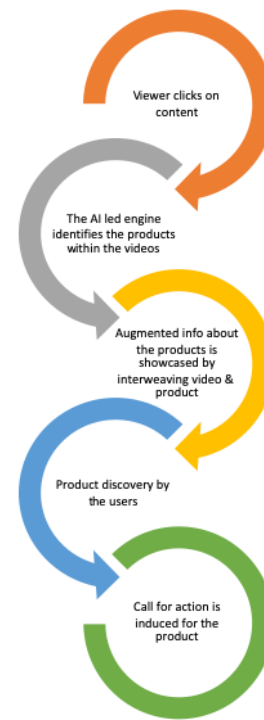


Fig 2: Process of In-Video advertising (Advertisers Perspective)

V. PURCHASE CYCLE INDUCED BY IN-VIDEO ADVERTISING

In-video advertising has impacted the purchase journey to be circular rather than liner as the users interact and pay attention to the brand as shown in figure 3.



Fig 3: Purchase Cycle induced by In-Video advertising

Stage 1 – Awareness: The user discovers the brand by clicking on a look that they are inspired from.

Stage 2 - Education: As the user is attentive, aspirational messaging educates and informs the viewer about the brand.

Stage 3 – Engagement: The brand messaging is shown in a visually pleasing manner with appropriate call for action options, which give augmented information to assist the user to make a decision.

Stage 4 – Conversion: Equipped with better information about the brand & the product, the consumer can take action and even lead to a sale.

Stage 5 – Repeat Engagement: The intense engagement with the user, builds a bond between the brand and the consumer, thus creating long term value & opportunity to introduce new products which might interest the user.

VI. USPS OF IN-VIDEO ADVERTISING

New & quality Traffic: The visitor engaging with the brand is genuinely interested in the product, to invest time and energy, thus is the quality traffic any advertiser seeks. Many of the users, tend to discover new brands as they are still open to fresh options – introducing new users to the brand.

Contextual & Aspirational: In-video advertising matches brands alongside celebrity looks, thus making the brand feel aspirational in the eyes of the user. Furthermore, the product is showcased within relevant content making it contextual.

Less Intrusive: The product is shown only when the user clicks and shows inclination to know more about the look, thus making this form of advertising less intrusive and full of impact.

Engaged User: As the user has chosen to touch or click the content and see the associated product, they are attentive and interested towards the brand. Thus, we have an engaged user.

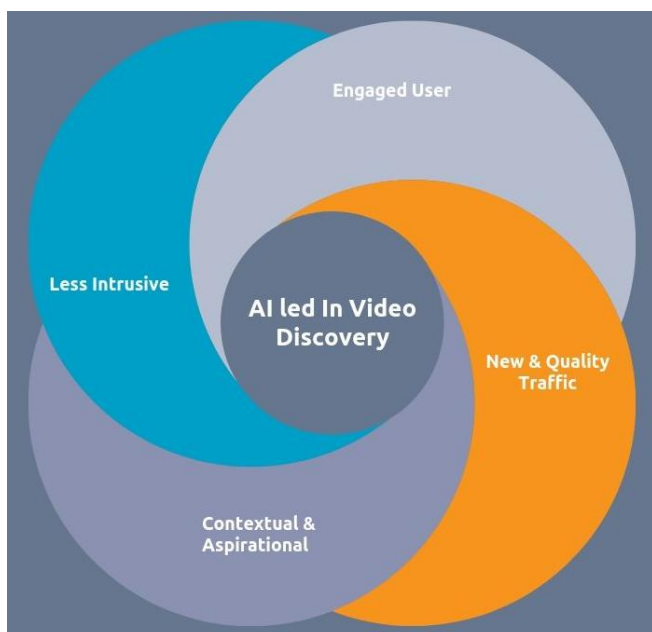


Fig 4: USPs of In-Video Advertising

VII. EFFECTIVENESS OF IN-VIDEO ADVERTISING

A) Creating brand desire

A user logs onto google, Amazon or Flipkart etc when they have decided to search a particular product that they have shortlisted. However, search is futile if an advertiser wants to create desire for their product or brand.

In a case, where a consumer has not yet decided to buy or isn't sure of what they want to purchase, is when they are most

receptive to messaging. Discovery happens when a user doesn't know what they are looking for until they see it in a contextual environment, which leads to a trigger. The consumer has an open mindset, as they haven't zeroed in the exact product or brand and are more attentive towards the product. This is the sweet spot for any brand to present their brand and this is the exact point where in video advertising is most effective.

B) Growing Inspiration & reach

In-Video Advertising can be used effectively to get inspiration on the latest fashion trends (western and ethnic), follow celebrity fashionista & even travel or home décor ideas. This is perfect for visually appealing and style-oriented products & can provide data sets using the quantum of data generated to identify trends, preferences and behavioural insights.

Furthermore, in today's world where ad-blocking and ad-skipping are giving sleepless nights to advertisers, In-video discovery gives the brand receptive consumers who otherwise might find ads distracting and annoying.

The issue of the user feeling blocked by advertising as they are shown pre roll / mid roll advertisements just before the content gets removed by In-video advertising.

C) Improving digital metrics

All brands look at a series of important digital marketing metrics to track and guide the advertising campaigns for ROI & brand awareness, specifically Dwell Time & Click Through Rate (CTR).

Dwell time is the actual length of time that a visitor spends on a page before returning & the longer the dwell time the higher the chances that the user has consumed maximum amount of information on that given page (Shewan, 2017).

Click Through Rate (CTR) is the percentage of impressions that resulted in a click i.e. 1 click from 1000 impressions would be 0.1% CTR. The ultimate goal for any marketer would be to get a desired action from qualified users & a high CTR suggests that the users find the advertising highly relevant (Mackey, 2019).

In-video discovery leads to these important metrics namely CTR and dwell time show a fairly large upsurge compared to regular digital advertising.

VIII. FASHION BRAND: LEADING BY EXAMPLE

Today, brands are becoming more strategic in their use of in-video advertising. A leading iconic fashion used in-video advertising effectively to maximise likeability, preference and purchase intent. Leading OTT player Zee5 & charmboard were used as media vehicles to fulfil these objectives. The fashion brand shared their product catalogue of all the SKUs to be used for discovery by the consumers.

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These SKUs were fed into the algorithm so that they can be matched at all appropriate instances when a similar look / apparel is clicked. This product range was showcased against Bollywood celebs & top TV characters for a time period of four weeks, in a contextual manner. Thus, as soon as a viewer clicked or touched on a protagonist, an event was triggered by the AI tech, to show this opt-in user, the nearest matching product of the fashion brand. Hygiene elements to ensure that the consumer is a part of target group set & the quality of matches was near perfect, were kept in consideration and adhered to completely.

The AI led in-video discovery algorithm assisted the product to be discovered at highly aspirational moments, shared digital brand assets to the consumer at the moment when they are attentive in the purchase funnel and showed right apparel getting discovered in the right contextual setting. Highly important assets i.e. price point, discount, a small note about the product, a CTR button & even an omnichannel option (whereabout nearest store & call) were included. The fashion brand saw a high percentage of new users who showed interest in knowing augmented information about the product. The key metrics of CTR saw a 3 times increase & dwell time was 4 times higher compared to regular digital advertising.

Thus, usage of this advertising technology poses a great opportunity for brands to engage and interact with their target group of customers in a completely novel way.

IX. CHALLENGES OF IN-VIDEO TECHNOLOGY

As video viewing is a lean back kind of experience and users are not programmed to interact with videos & in-video advertising attempts to create this very interactivity for the user. Awareness and evangelizing, this new mode of digital marketing for both the user and the advertiser, are the biggest challenges that plague the quick adoption of this technology. The premise of in-video discovery is based on face recognition, object detection and motion tracking, to showcase identical products to the user, the products which are revealed need to have a high degree of similarity to make the advertising option fruitful and engaging.

At the current speeds, 3G & 4G streaming makes it difficult to get excellent quality of video viewing, hence, doesn't allow to make the video viewing more dynamic. Adoption of In-video advertising can also be another opportunity for OTT & video content owners to increase their revenues, hence adopt this technology on their platforms to make all their videos needs interactive.

As in-video advertising is a part of the digital budget. There is still a small percentage of the media budget which is allocated on digital media. Thus, there is a requirement of higher budgetary allocation towards In-Video advertising, so that there can be a considerable impact on brand discovery and awareness.

X. CONCLUSION

The researcher explored the concept of In-video advertising which is a novel option for fashion brands to use as a part of their content marketing strategy. Video viewing is increasing multi-fold & videos are becoming an integral part of Content

Marketing Strategy. These videos are becoming more personalized, with Artificial Intelligence & Machine Learning leading the transformation by making videos interactive and highly contextual.

AI & ML trace the user browsing journey to give important insights which help to understand customer insights & are extremely supportive for advertisers.

Videos are extremely effective in creating curiosity & inspiration, leading to desire to explore further & eventually purchase. But the path to acquire or explore things that interest one in a video is complicated & often leads to unsatisfactory results.

In-Video advertising is a new Content Marketing Strategy which integrates on interactive videos to enable product discovery right from the awareness stage to conversion stage in a purchase cycle & furthermore engages with the user. It also contextually showcases the brand's product to the user & thus positively impacts important digital metrics like dwell time and CTR besides increasing new users getting introduced to the brand. Early adoption of this technology can have positive impact on the consumer engagement scores too, as the brand is seen in an aspirational & contextual environment.

By providing clear and precise directions and enticing the user to click and touch the content without being intrusive on the video viewing and user experience, will catapult the adoption of this technology by the consumers in a much faster rate.

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marketing, digital marketing & how technology is impacting companies and consumers alike.



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